

NODAN KARATE



The Five Principles

by Nodan

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Warning !

The breaking and self-defense demonstrations shown in this book can be dangerous and should not be attempted without the supervision of a qualified instructor!

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Who is Nodan?

After years of intense training during the 1960s and '70s, I reached the upper limits of my ability as a karateka. The martial arts, however, can be performed on two different levels. The first level is physical, where only one's natural abilities are used. The breaking demonstrations seen in my videos were all performed at this physical level.

The second level is the metaphysical, in which certain "enlightened" masters can exhibit extraordinary psychic power and superhuman strength. I trained with such a sensei in the 1980s. Unaware that his power came from the "dark side," I pursued an occult path to enlightenment in the hopes of becoming a great master like my teacher.

In time, I came under the influence of a malevolent martial spirit and entered into the outer darkness, a timeless void where the negative consequences of every bad thing I ever did were exposed before my eyes. I was only delivered from this spiritual darkness when I surrendered my life to Jesus and accepted his forgiveness.

In spite of my years of rejecting him, Jesus loved me enough to save me from a spiritual death. He loves all people at all times and calls every soul to himself when he declares:

"I am The Way, The Truth, and The Life.

No one comes to the Father but by me." *

In 2004, I released a dvd intended to warn practitioners against seeking "enlightenment" through their martial arts. At that time, I created my "no dan" character as a disguise, in order to protect the identities of people associated with my former occult practices.

* The Gospel According to St. John 14:6

Nodan Karate

My last karate teacher, Master Li, was influenced by the Okinawan karate jutsu that Gichen Funakoshi introduced to Japan in the early 1920s. This style, also known as Shuri-te, was invented during the 19th century by Shuri castle bodyguards who protected the Okinawan king and his family.

Karate jutsu was originally invented as a defensive strategy against multiple armed adversaries, and throughout this book a number of street attack scenarios have been included to show how “one strike” power can be applied in a variety of assault situations. Martial artists should be ever mindful of this fact: *what we practice is what we will do when faced with a real street attack.*

In this present volume, I describe my approach to self-defense, which utilizes flexible makiwara training and five striking principles to develop “one strike” power. The videos at the “nodankarate” channel on YouTube contain most of the techniques seen in this book. Hopefully, these YouTube videos, along with this book, will be of some value to students of the arts.

Master Li



Master Li's speed, power, and technique were a benchmark of excellence for the striking arts.

Aikido's Founder, Morihei Ueshiba



I trained in aikido and incorporated its circular movement, extension of ki, and unbendable arm techniques into my karate jutsu street defense.



Along with aikido, I studied kendo (way of the sword), which provided insight into the unarmed striking arts. My brother (right) has trained in aikido for 25 years.

The Traditional Makiwara

The traditional Okinawan makiwara is a wooden post wrapped in rice straw, and buried three feet in the ground. These outdoor striking posts were hard and stiff, with limited flexibility. Over time, serious practitioners developed thick calluses and bone calcifications on their hands and feet.

Sometimes, this hard method of makiwara practice led to debilitating conditions later in life. One of my teachers trained with the legendary karate master, Mas Oyama, who once told him that, by the age of forty, he always knew when it was about to rain because of the pain in his knuckles.



Master Funakoshi (left) practices on traditional makiwara. Thick calluses are visible on Mas Oyama's hand (on right).



Oyama was known for his breaking demonstrations, in which he broke objects like boards, bricks, and stones.

Flexible Makiwara Training

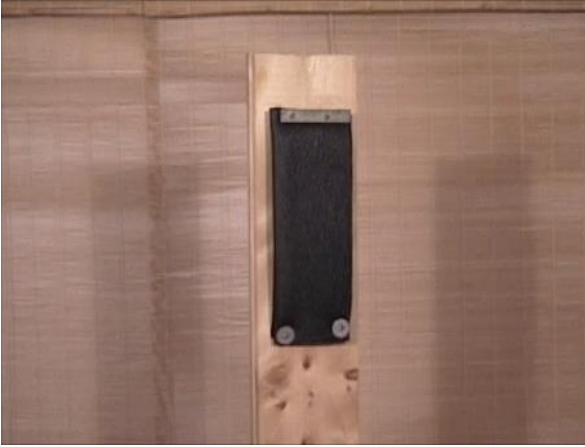
In the early 1990s I taught karate jutsu to two young men, Yakov and Yohan, who were avid guitar players. In order to minimize their risk for hand injuries, I designed a flexible, rubber padded striking post that was based on graduated resistance, in which resistance increased over distance. This proved to be a safe and efficient way to develop powerful one strike techniques. Moreover, callus formation is not necessary for effective street defense.

For instructions on how to construct a flexible indoor makiwara with materials that are commonly found in most home improvement centers, see the YouTube video, “Nodan Makiwara.”

Flexible Makiwara based on Graduated Resistance



I trained on a flexible makiwara for 12 years before filming my breaking demonstrations.



The post is made from two 1x8 inch wide pine boards. Several layers of soft rubber have been attached to the post using a bracket and two fender washers. Stiffness can be adjusted by changing the width of the boards.



The post holder is made from 2x4s and framing brackets attached to $\frac{3}{4}$ inch plywood with $4\frac{1}{2}$ inch bolts extending through base and metal bracket.

The correlation between flexible makiwara practice and one strike power is illustrated in the following suspended board breaks, in which I used my “weak side” left hand to highlight the effectiveness of this method. These demonstrations were filmed while I was in my late fifties, in order to show the advantages of using sound technique (The Five Principles) over sheer physical prowess.

The details of my breaking methods and how the board strength was determined are provided on pages 12-13. This information is made available so that interested karateka can accurately replicate these demonstrations for themselves.

5 Board Break with “weak side” left hand



5 board stacks are nearly twice as thick (3¾ inches) as the ideal 2 inch penetration for a horizontal strike. A 5 board un-spaced stack can support a 650 lb. (295.45 kg) barbell placed across the centerline of the wood running parallel with the grain (see “Board Breaking” segment on p. 12).

5 Board Break with Elbow Strike



Nodan's shoulder is held down and back, in order to reduce power losses through the shoulder joint.



Elbow strikes also eliminate power losses through the elbow, wrist, and knuckle joints in the hands. (This was my easiest suspended horizontal break)

4 Board Break with Bent Wrist Strike



This break took three attempts and proved to be the most difficult of all my demonstrations.



WARNING! Nerve damage to the wrist and arm can occur if the hands are not properly conditioned beforehand with the makiwara.

Training Both Sides

Training both sides of every technique is an important part of karate jutsu training, because an injury to either side can occur before or during a street confrontation. Street attacks are fluid and unpredictable, and having the option of using either hand is a major strategic advantage.

Left and Right 4 Board Palm Breaks



Palm strikes from a neutral stance position can be effective close quarter self-defense.



One strike power from neutral stance position requires a proficiency in The Five Principles.

Left and Right 7 Board Bottom Fist Breaks



Nodan's left and right hands break the 7 board stacks with relative ease, because rigid supports make downward breaking considerably easier.

Board Breaking

Appearances can be deceiving. To provide evidence for one strike power, I used un-spaced suspended horizontal board breaking. This kind of breaking is difficult, requiring both a substantial body weight transfer into the boards and enough speed to overtake the movement of the bag. In addition, these kinds of striking and kicking techniques are most commonly used in real street defense situations.

My boards were cut from 1x12 inch wide (actual mill size $\frac{3}{4}$ x 11 $\frac{1}{4}$ inches) white pine donor boards, which are available at home improvement centers throughout Canada and the U.S. White pine boards are used in breaking competitions and demonstrations, because they are relatively easy to break. This makes it possible to test the strengths of a variety of striking techniques (compare the 7 board bottom fist breaks on the previous page with the 1 board push break on p. 38).

All of my breaking demonstrations used 1x12x10 inch wide pine boards. Testing revealed that each board could support, on average, a 130 lb. (59 kg) barbell placed across the centerline of the wood running parallel with the grain.

Wood strength can vary widely depending on type, size, and moisture content, so a sample from each donor board should be tested beforehand to insure consistency. Each stack should be assembled from the same donor board with the grain patterns aligned and facing in the same direction. This causes the boards to break along a fairly straight line, which is important when using suspended un-spaced board stacks.

When the boards are un-spaced, the resistance increases proportionally. So, each 5 board stack could support at least a 650 lb. (295.5 kg) weight ($5 \times 130 = 650$). Board strength can be adjusted by changing the width of the boards. For example, five 8 inch wide boards @ 130 lb. test strength are equal to five 10 inch wide boards @ 130 lb. test strength.



Board strength can be adjusted by changing the width.



A barbell was used to measure board strength. On average each board could support 130 lbs. (59 kg).

Strength and Speed Factors

The traditional karate masters advocated a variety of training methods to increase strength, which included weight-lifting. I never used steroids and did not develop large muscles, but lifting heavy weights for seven years strengthened my body core. This helped me execute the four and five board suspended board breaks seen in my videos, especially when using my weakside left hand.



I began lifting heavy weights in high school (left photo). My weight lifting coach (on right) performs a one arm bent press with 150 lbs. using techniques similar to The Five Principles.

Hand and foot speed is a function of genetics, flexibility, and many thousands of repetitions of each technique. Because flexibility increases speed and quickness, karateka should maintain a stretching routine that works the entire body. The significance of speed (Velocity) as compared to body weight transfer (Mass) for suspended board breaking is reflected in the following formula, in which the Velocity is squared:

$$\text{Force} = \frac{\text{Mass} \times \text{Velocity}^2}{2}$$

The Five Principles

1st Proper Bone Alignment

Stances are *centered* in the hara, a point two inches below the navel

2nd 1-2 Timing

The hips are fully rotated *before* the striking arm or leg is extended

3rd Extension of Ki

Follow through with every striking technique, “all the way to infinity”

4th Correct Breathing

Inhaling through the nose and *exhaling* through the mouth using the diaphragm

5th Soft and Hard

The correct sequence of *relaxation* and *contraction* of all major muscle groups

1st Principle: Proper Bone Alignment

Proper Bone Alignment is foundational to all martial arts. Whether training stances are low or high, the center of gravity must be located, or “centered,” in the hara, a point two inches below the navel. The ability to “move in center” becomes critical for the effective transfer of power through the hips. To learn this principle, students should practice putting their minds in the hara, in order to “think from the center.”

Below, Nodan stands at attention with his hands in the closed gate position. His feet grip the floor as he draws strength up into the hara. His spine is straight, his head erect, and his shoulders are held down and back. With his hips in a pelvic tilt position, his “centered” stance is immovable.



Yakov, “the hammer,” is unable to push Nodan out of his stance.

Stance Testing Demonstration



Nodan is assisted by Yakov and three former students in stance testing demonstration, in which the three men will try to push Yakov out of his one-leg crane stance.



Yakov holds center as the men try to push him out of his stance. Then, by moving in center, he pushes the three men backwards.

Immovable “centered” stance (Fudodachi)



Yohan shoots for the leg in a takedown attempt, but Yakov will thwart this move by stepping back into a Fudodachi.



Yakov punches to the back of the head. In the immovable stance, the feet “stick” to the floor.



Yakov follows up with a downward elbow strike.

“Moving in center” with cross-step



Nodan assumes a centered fighting stance.



He moves in quickly to block the attacker’s weapon hand.



He maintains center as he cross-steps toward his opponent.



Nodan executes a knife hand strike to his attacker's throat.

“Moving in center” with side step



Yakov waits in the “surrender” position for Yohan to attack.



Yakov blocks as he side steps and assumes a centered front stance, from which he throws multiple punches.

Fore Fist Alignment

The interosseous membrane connects the two bones in the forearm (the radius and the ulna), and a 45 degree fore fist rotation maintains the proper amount of tension in the membrane.

Besides properly aligning the two bones in the forearm, the 45 degree rotation makes it easier to keep the elbow under throughout the movement of the arm. This is critical for the straight line thrust punch, because a significant power loss can occur if the elbow is allowed to turn outward.

To find the ideal fore fist thrust position, extend both arms against a wall as if trying to push it over. Then, with the arms held straight and the elbows turned under, form a fist from the hand position as it pushes against the wall.

The fore fist thrust punch is commonly delivered from a reverse punch position or with a lunging forward step. An effective variation of the 45 degree position is the vertical or standing fist, which is used extensively in the Chinese arts.



Nodan's 4 board break from the Crane Stance used a 45 degree fore fist rotation (p. 36-37).

2nd Principle: 1-2 Timing

In the example below, Nodan's hips are fully rotated before his upper body and arm are actively extended into the target. The 1-2 Timing utilizes the first principle, Proper Bone Alignment, to generate speed and power. This concept must be studied well.



Step 1- As the hips are fully rotated, the upper body and striking arm move naturally and remain relaxed.



Step 2- Nodan's upper body is rotated 45 degrees into the target and his punching arm is extended.

In step 2, Nodan's upper body is rotated strongly toward the target and his striking arm is extended through the boards. In the 1-2 Timing, the hip rotation (step 1) and the upper body rotation (step 2) are distinctly separate actions that transfer body weight and accelerate the striking arm.

Note Nodan's bone alignments in his finishing position. His fore fist forms a 45 degree angle, his shoulders are held (not locked) in the down and back position, and his rear leg and spine form a straight line.

Because the hand is quicker than the eye, full speed strikes appear as one continuous motion. Therefore, beginners must consciously separate the two steps within each blocking, kicking, and striking movement until the 1-2 Timing becomes a naturally "contiguous" part of every technique.

Close Hook Punch using the 1-2 Timing



When he is grabbed and held tightly by the lapels, Nodan feigns non-resistance and raises his hands in the “surrender” position.



He abruptly drops his arm into a ready-to-thrust position, from which he will immediately punch to his attacker’s solar plexus.



Step 1- Nodan rotates his hips sharply toward target as his striking arm moves naturally and remains relaxed.



Step 2- His upper body rotates towards the target and his striking arm is extended through the board stack.

5 Board Break with Circular Palm Strike



Step 1- Hips turn as the arm moves naturally and stays relaxed.



Step 2- He rotates his upper body and arm into the 5 board stack, while applying the “unbendable arm” (p. 52). This is similar to a boxer’s hook punch to the head.

Circular Palm Strike Defense



Grab and choke holds from the front can be defended with a circular palm strike to the temple or rib cage.



One strike power from a neutral stance position is especially useful in close quarter self-defense. Nodan uses the “unbendable arm” technique to eliminate power losses through his elbow joint.

1-2 Timing in Lunging Elbow Strike



**Nodan steps into a diagonal straddle stance (left photo).
Step 1- He rotates his hips toward target (right photo).**



Step 2- He rotates his upper body and elbow into board stack.

To learn the 1-2 Timing, the mind must remain in the hara or center, a point approximately three inches below the navel. If the mind locates in the striking hand, the arm will lead rather than follow the hip rotation, resulting more in a push rather than a thrust. The movements within steps 1 and 2 must be studied well, because all striking, kicking, and blocking techniques emanate from the center and rely on this leverage principle to generate maximum speed and power.

It is noteworthy that precision bone alignments and 1-2 timing are used by athletes to hit a baseball, strike a golf ball, and stroke a tennis ball. While these principles are routinely applied to many sports techniques, they have become largely lost to modern karate. The four and five board suspended breaks demonstrated in this book are not possible to execute without some proficiency in these two principles.

Throwing a baseball using the 1-2 Timing



Step 1- Nodan's hips rotate toward his target (center photo).

Step 2- His throwing arm is extended forward (right photo).

Thrust vs. Push



Yakov executes a simultaneous downward forearm block with reverse thrust punch.



With the 1-2 Timing, the bag rebounds off Yakov's fist like a pin ball. This distinguishes a thrust from a push.

Front Thrust Kick



Yakov executes a reverse front thrust kick.



With 1-2 Timing, the bag caroms off Yakov's foot as he withdraws his leg to the chambered position. (Note how he stays in center throughout the kick.)

3rd Principle: Extension of Ki

Ki (chi) is the vital energy and activating life force inherent in all living things. Extending ki is foundational to all striking, throwing, and weapons arts, and requires a concentrated mental effort to follow through with every technique, “all the way to infinity.”

It may be easier for Western practitioners to think of this principle as Follow Through, in which one’s physical and psychic energy is projected through every technique.

It is worth adding that, in addition to the Proper Bone Alignment and 1-2 Timing, Follow Through (Extension of Ki) is also an important component of many athletic techniques.



Flexible makiwara training that utilizes graduated resistance promotes development of Extension of Ki. As post stiffens, he follows through, in order to force it to the maximum distance.

Extending Ki from cross-chest position



This challenging bent wrist break from a weak, cross chest position requires concentrated follow through.



Ki must be extended beyond the 3 board stack.

4 Board Break from Crane Stance



For this difficult break, Extension of Ki must be applied, along with Proper Bone Alignment and the 1-2 Timing.



Step 1- he rotates his hips sharply towards the target.



Step 2- His upper body rotates and his arm is extended.



His follow through (Extension of Ki) causes the 75 pound suspended bag to absorb the excess energy of the strike.

Extending Ki with the Push Break

This very difficult board break is, nonetheless, a simple and relatively safe test of hip rotation and thrusting power. The “push break,” however, has been deceptively named because no amount of pushing will result in a successful break. The challenge is to “thrust” abruptly against a 1x12x10 inch wide pine board with approximately 135 lbs. (61.4 kg) of force before the suspended bag moves. This is actually a zero inch break, because the initial position of the thrusting hand is fully extended against the board. Along with the explosive hip rotation, the push break requires a concentrated follow through (Extension of Ki).

In the photo below, Nodan’s stance is relaxed, his rear leg and spine are straight, and his shoulders are held down and back to reduce power loss through the shoulder joint. His head is held erect, as if suspended on a string and his elbow is held under to minimize power loss through the elbow joint.





**Step 1- The explosive hip rotation is barely discerned (left photo).
Step 2- Nodan's Extension of Ki (follow through) is evident as his upper body and arm rotate into the board (right photo).**

Step 1- He rotates his hips sharply toward the target. The legs, hips, and abdominal muscles are focused hard. At the same time, his upper body, shoulders, and arms remain properly aligned and relaxed (left photo).

Step 2- He rotates his upper body and thrusting arm into the board as he focuses hard and exhales with a kiai yell. Throughout the technique, Nodan follows through with a concentrated extension of ki, as if projecting a stream of energy all the way to infinity (right photo).

During the break, Nodan's hand never breaks contact with the board. The break occurs when the pisiform bone located on the outside part of the base of the wrist is pressed firmly against the board. This action causes the ridge of the hand to rotate slightly off the board, which can give the false impression that his hand has momentarily broken contact with the board. In fact, it hasn't.

4th Principle: Correct Breathing

Breathing must be controlled with the diaphragm, inhaling through the nose and exhaling through the mouth. Shuri-te styles like Shorin-ryu and Shotokan prefer to train using a natural breathing pattern. Naha-te styles like Goju-ryu and Uechi-ryu practice Sanchin, a kata that utilizes a forced breathing technique and dynamic tension to strengthen the body core. I have trained in each one of these styles and can attest to the fact that they uniformly teaches to inhale through the nose and exhale through the mouth using the diaphragm.

“Kiai” is the union of mind, body, and spirit at the focus point of a technique. When vocally executed, the kiai yell is a primal roar that emanates from the depths of the hara. When executed without a vocal yell, the kiai manifests as a forceful rush of air on every focused technique.

Uechi



Yamaguchi



Funakoshi



I trained in Uechi-ryu and Gogen Yamaguchi’s Goju-ryu which emphasized Sanchin dynamics, and in Funakoshi’s Shotokan style, which used a natural breathing pattern.

5th Principle: Soft and Hard

The Soft and Hard principle is the sequential contraction and relaxation of the major skeletal muscles in the body. For example, in the reverse thrust punch, the legs, abdominals, and hips are contracted first, while the muscles in the upper body remain relaxed. Next, the torso and arms are contracted and the entire body focuses hard upon impact. Immediately after the strike, the body again becomes soft, prepared for a follow up technique.

Developing proficiency in Soft and Hard requires many thousands of repetitions until the transitions within each technique flow without tension. Not surprisingly, this is the last of the five principles to be fully mastered.

Soft and Hard Defense and Counter Attack



WARNING! Wear safety goggles when practicing eye strikes.



Nodan deflects the knife thrust with a bent wrist block.



Using a continuous soft and hard movement, he executes a spear hand strike to attacker's eye.



He follows up with a continuous motion snapping punch, in which the striking arm withdraws as fast as it was extended. This technique depends upon the Soft and Hard principle.



His punching hand is ready to execute a follow up strike.

Soft and Hard Combination Break



Nodan's first strike is a snapping back fist, in which his lower body is focused hard as the hips throw out his striking hand. During this movement, his upper body stays soft until focusing hard on impact.



The second strike flows out from the first. From the start to finish, these two breaks take .5 second to complete. The Soft and Hard principle quickens transitions between techniques. (The elapsed time between the two breaks is .2 of a second.)

Kicking Techniques

Kicking techniques also follow The Five Principles. For street defense, the middle and lower level applications of the front, side, and back kick are the most practical. Lower level kicks are easier and safer to perform, and are more effective against un-trained street criminals.

Front Kick

In the front thrust kick, the hips are rotated 45 degrees as the knee is raised. This opening of the hips releases the hamstring muscles, which allows for greater speed and flexibility of movement. The knee should be raised higher than the intended target, because a “down and in” motion gives the front kick exceptional power.



5 Board Break with Reverse Front Thrust Kick



Nodan raises his knee well above the intended target.



The “down and in” trajectory gives the kick its power.



Nodan follows through with an extension of ki.

Kicking with the lead foot



Kicking with the lead foot is more difficult, because the center must first be shifted back away from the target.



By maintaining a strong centered stance, Nodan can follow through and break the 3 board stack.

Low Back Kick Defense



As Nodan turns, his lead hand feigns a strike toward the attacker's face and then transitions into a block.



He does not look down at his target until he is ready to extend his back kick through the attacker's knee.



Head to heel, Nodan extends ki through a 4 board stack.

Blocking Techniques

Blocking techniques also follow The Five Principles. The formal downward, middle, and rising blocks are striking movements that hit with the entire body, and not only with the arm and shoulder.

These blocks apply the “unbendable arm” technique, in which the arm is extended in a soft/hard state of tension using the triceps muscles in the back of the upper arm and the latissimus dorsi muscles that run along the upper sides of the back. The unbendable arm has the effect of making the blocking arm feel like, “a slightly bent steel rod wrapped in cotton cloth.”

The blocking techniques in karate jutsu use the full range of motion to develop form, speed, and power. With practice, however, karateka learn to project strength into the shorter and quicker street applications of these formal kata blocks.

Formal Downward Block



Yakov blocks Nodan’s full power lunging thrust punch.

5 Board Break with Downward Block



**Formal striking blocks incorporate the 1-2 Timing.
Step 1- Hips are rotated sharply toward the target.**



Step 2- The arm is extended through the board stack.

Downward Block Street Defense



From “surrender” position, Nodan waits for his assailant to initiate a front kick attack.



From his “surrender” position, Nodan steps slightly back and to his right, even as he thrusts his blocking arm downward and intercepts the attacker’s kick.

Formal Rising Block



The blocking arm moves to the front and the hips are rotated.



Nodan lifts his arm using latisimus dorsi and shoulder muscles.

Rising Block Defense

Nodan steps in and jams an overhead knife attack. A simultaneous rising block and palm strike to the jaw gives his adversary no time to counter attack.



Nodan projects his rising block outward to intercept the $\frac{3}{4}$ swinging arc of the assailant's attacking arm.



Formal Middle Block

As his hips rotate, Nodan's jacket seam moves from right to left.



His hips are fully rotated before the blocking arm is actively engaged. He maintains an unbendable arm as he rotates his upper body, shoulders, and arm into a hard focused block.

Middle Block Defense



Nodan defends against a thrusting knife attack by using an angle step with abbreviated middle block and hook punch to the head.

Street Self-Defense

During the 1960s, I trained with Tex Barnes, a college classmate who practiced a style of combat jujitsu. Tex brought a metal training knife with a dull rounded blade to our first practice session together. He succeeded in stabbing me a number of times and afterwards I had large red welts all over my body. This was a wake-up call, exposing the fact that real street defense was different from the traditional training I was receiving at the dojo. My sweeping formal blocks were too slow, my body was out of position, and I lacked a strategy for defending against a skilled knife fighter's flowing combinations and varied angles of attack.

Tex taught me wrist locks and joint holds that were useful in close quarter situations involving guns and knives. We practiced against the kinds of grabs and holds street criminals were likely to use and against moving knife and club attacks. Lastly, Tex introduced me to a combat maneuver that used a quick head feint and two angle steps, in order to counter attack and disarm a gunman from more than six feet away. Because of my interest in practical self-defense, this early jujitsu training has been the most important influence on my approach to the martial arts.

Today, the mixed martial arts (MMA) have taken center stage as an entertainment blood sport. At the professional level, world class athletes compete for fame and fortune in heavily promoted cage matches. This latest expression of the martial arts, however, is different from real street defense.

There are no rules in the street. Strikes to the eyes and throat, attacks to the groin, and biting are among the effective defensive strategies that are prohibited in sport competition. Sport fighters use safety equipment, are monitored closely by a referee, and have warm up time before each match.

Finally, sport competitors do not defend against armed or multiple attackers where grappling skills are less effective. To be practical as street self-defense, a martial art must be adapted to respond to specific kinds of street assaults, because what we practice is what we will do when faced with a real attack.

The Best Martial Art

Debates over which is the best martial art should begin with the question, best for what? There are traditional throwing and striking arts, competitive fighting styles like sport karate and mixed martial arts (MMA), and reality based self-defense systems like Krav Maga, the Israeli hand-to-hand combat method. Each of these arts develops its own set of tools and strategies.

Ultimately, the best martial art is the one that best addresses your needs and goals. Those who seek instruction should take the time to research and visit their local schools, because there are good and bad instructors in every art, and each style has its strengths and weaknesses.

Self-Defense Examples

The following street scenarios illustrate the advantage of one strike power in a variety of attack situations. In reality, street attacks are fluid and unpredictable and require on site adaptations. Thus, one strike power can give a defender a strategic advantage amid the chaos and confusion of a real street assault. Most of the self-defense examples illustrated in the following section can be seen in the YouTube video, “Nodan Self-Defense.”

Back Head Strike Defense



Nodan pins his attacker's arms as he leans forward and prepares to deliver a stunning back head strike.

2 Board Break with Back Head Strike



The speed required to execute this 2 board break is generated by a reverse "double whip" hip thrust, in which the head is thrown backward into the target.

Back Elbow Strike Defense



Nodan is grabbed in a one arm choke hold. He drops into a centered stance and prepares to throw an elbow strike.



He can use both arms for added power (left photo). Note that the 1-2 Timing is applied in the reverse direction, in which his hips rotate backwards and the elbow follows.

Defending against a Machete Attack

Every year, numbers of people are assaulted by an assortment of unconventional weapons, such as machetes, hatchets, pitchforks, and baseball bats. Practicing to defend against these kinds of attacks is an essential part of realistic street defense training.

Defending against a slashing machete attack is similar to confronting an overhead or side arm club assault, in which the weapon is large enough to require a quick “hitch” in the attacker’s swing. (**WARNING:** This may not always apply when facing a skilled knife fighter or swordsman who has been trained to wield rather than swing a live blade.)





As the adversary hitches his swing to begin the assault, Nodan steps up with his back foot to close the distance.



He executes a front kick to attacker's solar plexus and simultaneously blocks the weapon arm (left photo). He follows with an elbow strike to the throat (right photo).

Defending against a Pitchfork Attack



Nodan assumes a defensive fighting stance.



Maintaining a guard position, he makes a quick head feint that momentarily freezes his assailant. Then, he begins to spin outside the line of attack.



He continues to spin behind the adversary's back.



Nodan counter attacks with a reverse punch.

The Two-fold Gaze

The twofold gaze of perception and sight enables Nodan to see the larger picture and not be distracted by small details or sudden feints by his opponent. With a clear mind devoid of anticipation and emotion, Nodan can better perceive the adversary's strength and intention.

In the scenario illustrated below, Nodan uses the twofold gaze and perceives that his assailant is about to launch a sudden thrusting attack.



Nodan will surprise the adversary with a quick head feint, which he will immediately follow with a sliding step toward his opponent. As he moves in, he will use a sweeping knife hand block against the attacker's weapon hand. He will continue stepping through and execute a palm heel thrust to the jaw before the assailant can react and counter attack. This entire maneuver will take him only .6 of a second to perform.



Following a quick head feint, Nodan pre-emptively moves in and executes a knife hand block against the attacker's weapon hand.



He continues stepping through and executes a palm heel strike.

Gun Holdup Defense from the back



Nodan raises his hands to give gunman false confidence. Defense strategies are psychological as well as physical, and engaging in small talk before initiating a maneuver can be an effective distraction that creates an opening.



Nodan's initial pivot moves him out of the line of fire.



He continues to spin into a straddle stance, while trapping the gunman's weapon arm.



He counter attacks with a hook punch to the temple. From start to finish, this maneuver took 1.1 seconds. (At 30 frames/second, each frame is .03 seconds)

Gun Holdup Defense from the front



First, Nodan subtly moves his head out of the line of fire. Next, he applies a wrist lock to assailant's weapon hand. After securing the gun, he executes a side head strike.



To generate enough speed to break a suspended board, Nodan must use the 1-2 Timing, in which his hip thrust "throws out" his head. After stunning attacker, Nodan can break assailant's arm using a twisting maneuver.

The Black Belt Test

The black belt rank did not exist in karate jutsu until the 1930s when Gichen Funakoshi, the founder of Shotokan karate, adopted judo's ranking system. At that time, Master Funakoshi awarded black sashes to a group of his most advanced karate students.

Following this early tradition, my students Yohan and Yakov trained with me for five years without receiving any rank. These young men, however, became so proficient in karate and street defense that I arranged to have them tested for the black belt rank in "Shotokan Karate Jutsu" by an independent panel of judges.

The test evaluated their proficiency in basics, punching and kicking power, and self-defense against full speed street attacks.

The first part of the testing consisted of combination techniques that develop power and fluidity of movement. This was followed by full power three-step and one-point kumites.

Next, a series of hand and foot strikes were executed on a suspended bag to test for Proper Bone Alignment, the 1-2 Timing, and the Extension of Ki. Afterwards, each man was required to perform two Shotokan black belt katas, Jion and Kanku Dai.

Finally, Yohan and Yakov were asked to defend against a series of street attacks that included a variety of armed and unarmed assaults. This last phase of testing culminated with free-style sparring against an opponent armed with a knife.

The YouTube video, "Nodan's Students," is an edited version of the thirty minute black belt test that provides a sampling of some of the required techniques.

Yohan “the bull”



Yakov “the hammer”



Yohan and Yakov receive black belts and pose with the judges.

website: nodankarate.org



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