



ROOTS OF COMBAT

PART 1

The Birth of Jeet Kune Do and How It Grew Into the Ultimate Fighting System

by Harinder Singh • photos by Peter Lueders

For Bruce Lee, *jeet kune do* was not a style; it was a process of self-discovery and constant growth. He refused to refer to it as a style because he believed doing so would be tantamount to limiting it. He often said, "There is no such thing as a style if you totally understand the roots of combat."

The genius of Lee is evident in the genesis of JKD and the way it's grown over the decades. From its classical *wing chun* beginnings, it morphed into an ultra-effective fighting system that meets the needs of civilians, military personnel and law-enforcement officers around the world.

To truly understand JKD in its most modern incarnation, we need to map Lee's progression from when he was a teenager studying *wing chun* under Yip Man to when he was dubbed the grandfather of MMA by UFC President Dana White. >>

One of the jeet kune do techniques that can help even the odds when a smaller person must defend himself against a larger attacker is the eye strike. Paul Vunak (left) demonstrates.



Wing Chun

Even though Lee cut his teeth in *wu*-style *tai chi* under the tutelage of his father, he didn't begin serious training until, at age 13, he enrolled in Yip's school. His sole purpose was to acquire the skills needed to survive the street fights that ruled Hong Kong's back alleys and rooftops.

Lee learned all three classical forms: *si lum tao's* "little idea form," *chum kil's* "seeking the bridge" and *bil jee's* "shooting fingers" from Yip and his senior students. To that base he added *chi sao*, or sticking hands, and 60 of the 108 movements designed for the wooden dummy.

Wing chun was the only formal training Lee received. The ideas of economy of motion, simultaneous block and hit, centerline theory, interception, constant forward pressure and sensitivity must have struck a chord with him because they became the core of JKD.

Even as a youth, Lee possessed an inquisitive mind. He'd seek out masters of other styles and trade martial arts secrets with them. To further build his foundation, he learned the principles of fencing from his brother and participated in—and won—a high-school boxing tournament.

At 18, Lee left Hong Kong for America, where he began to adapt his system to his new environment, which meant larger opponents with different fighting styles. Considering the traditional form of combat he'd learned "too rigid," he adjusted the angles, stances and footwork. He believed it placed too much emphasis on close-range hand techniques at the expense of long-range kicks.

Jun Fan Gung Fu

A major turning point in Lee's metamorphosis was his clash with kung fu master Wong Jak Man. Lee ended the fight within minutes and had to be pulled off the challenger. Afterward, he analyzed his actions and was less than impressed with his performance—he believed he should have ended it within seconds. Adherence to his style had kept him from adjusting to his opponent's *law horn kuen* techniques, and he thought he was unusually winded at the end of the encounter.

The altercation intensified Lee's search for the ultimate fighting method.

Through this lens, he saw the limits of wing chun and realized the importance of physical conditioning, functional strength and attribute development. He became devoted to overall athletic development—so much so that the principles and training strategies he employed are still cutting edge nearly half a century later.

Jun Fan gung fu derives its name from Lee's Chinese name. It's a hybrid system in which wing chun forms the nucleus and 26 other styles revolve around it. Its kicks are based on northern Chinese styles of kung fu and French *savate*.

Jun Fan gung fu is what was taught at Lee's schools in Seattle and Oakland in the early '60s. During that period, Lee and Dan Inosanto trained using reference points. Their workout partners didn't contest any of the techniques they tried. When they were grappling or practicing takedowns, matches didn't degenerate into force-on-force wrestling.

Jeet Kune Do

On the last page of *Tao of Jeet Kune Do*, Lee wrote that JKD was just a name and that we shouldn't fuss over it. As a matter of fact, the term dates from 1968, when Lee and Inosanto were driving home from an intense sparring session. Inosanto said, "You have gotten so good that you hit us before we can do anything." Lee responded that what he was doing was intercepting, or stop-hitting, his opponent before the opponent could launch his attack. Inosanto asked, "What do you call this method in Chinese?" Lee replied, "Jeet kune do," the way of the intercepting fist.

Jun Fan gung fu naturally evolved into JKD. The latter's purpose was to introduce practitioners to the basic principles and provide them with the essential truths about the reality of combat. From there, it was up to the individual to expand on that knowledge and find his own personal expression.

JKD is not a product; it's a process of discovering the cause of your ignorance. Only by knowing your own strengths and weaknesses can you exploit your opponent's weaknesses and avoid his strengths.

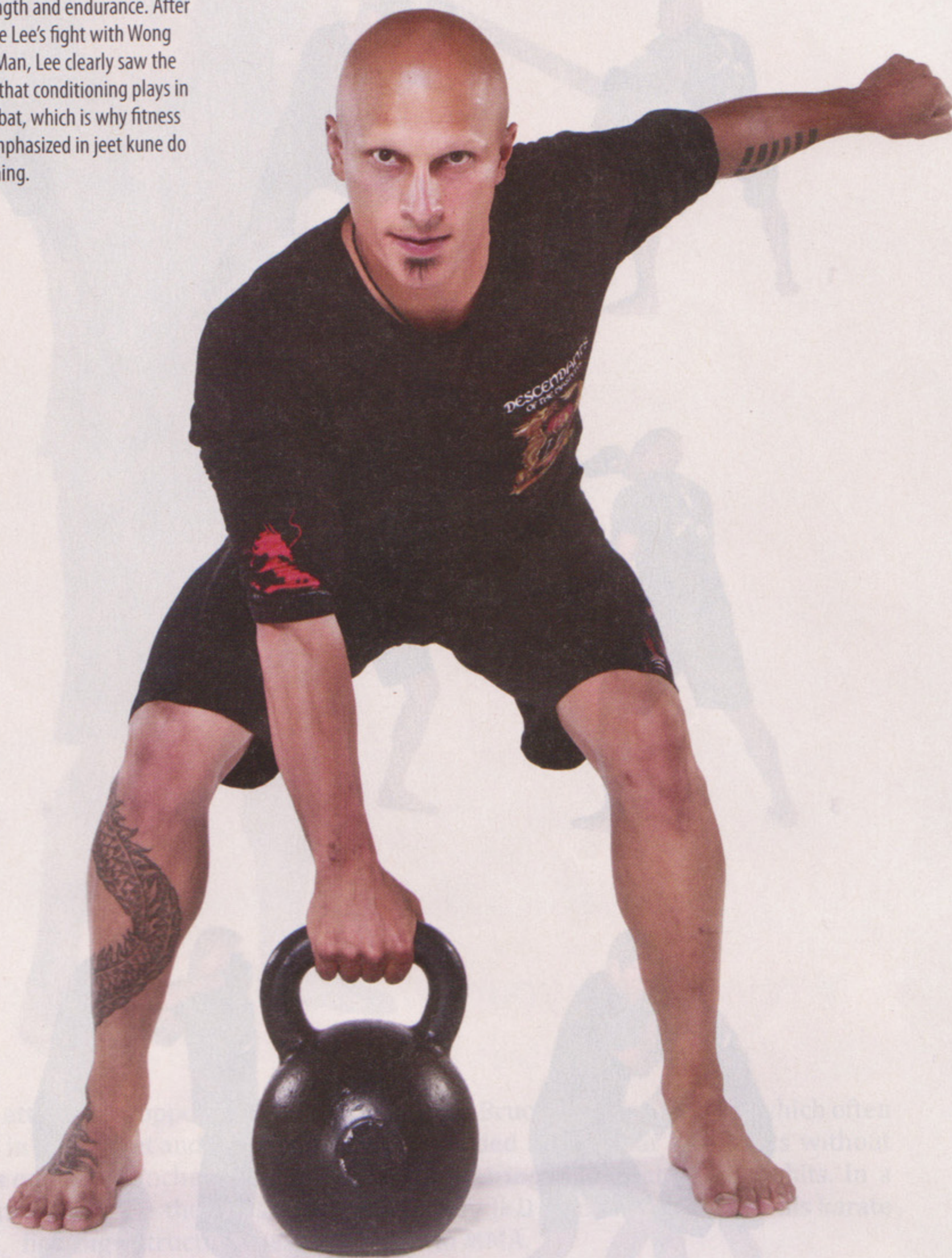
Lee's system is much more than a collection of techniques and strategies from different arts. It unites diverse styles by identifying central themes like using broken rhythm, preserving the centerline, maintaining rhythmic flow and "fitting in" to the opponent's techniques. It was Lee's way to challenge martial artists to continuously grow, to evolve as the times or situation demanded.

One of the crucial lessons Lee conveyed was that students needed to find the best art for a given situation and then figure out a way to cheat within that art. After all, when you're fighting for your life, it's not unsportsmanlike to gouge eyes, kick groins or bite faces.

Before he left for Hong Kong to do films, Lee tasked Inosanto with teaching JKD. After Lee passed away in 1973, Inosanto "inherited" the art. He continued to propagate and develop it at the Kali Academy. Inosanto traveled the world for 35 years, perpetuating the art and philosophy of his master.

The beauty of JKD lies in its adaptability. Over the years, Inosanto and Paul Vunak added Brazilian *jiu-jitsu* and *kina mutai* (the Philippine art of biting and gouging) to address the dangers of ground fighting. They realized that when a person is facing an attacker who outweighs him by 50 or 60 pounds

Harinder Singh works out with a kettlebell. Martial artists around the world have begun using the device to boost their strength and endurance. After Bruce Lee's fight with Wong Jak Man, Lee clearly saw the role that conditioning plays in combat, which is why fitness is emphasized in jeet kune do training.



or, even worse, multiple attackers, the ability to fight on the ground and pop back up is essential for success.

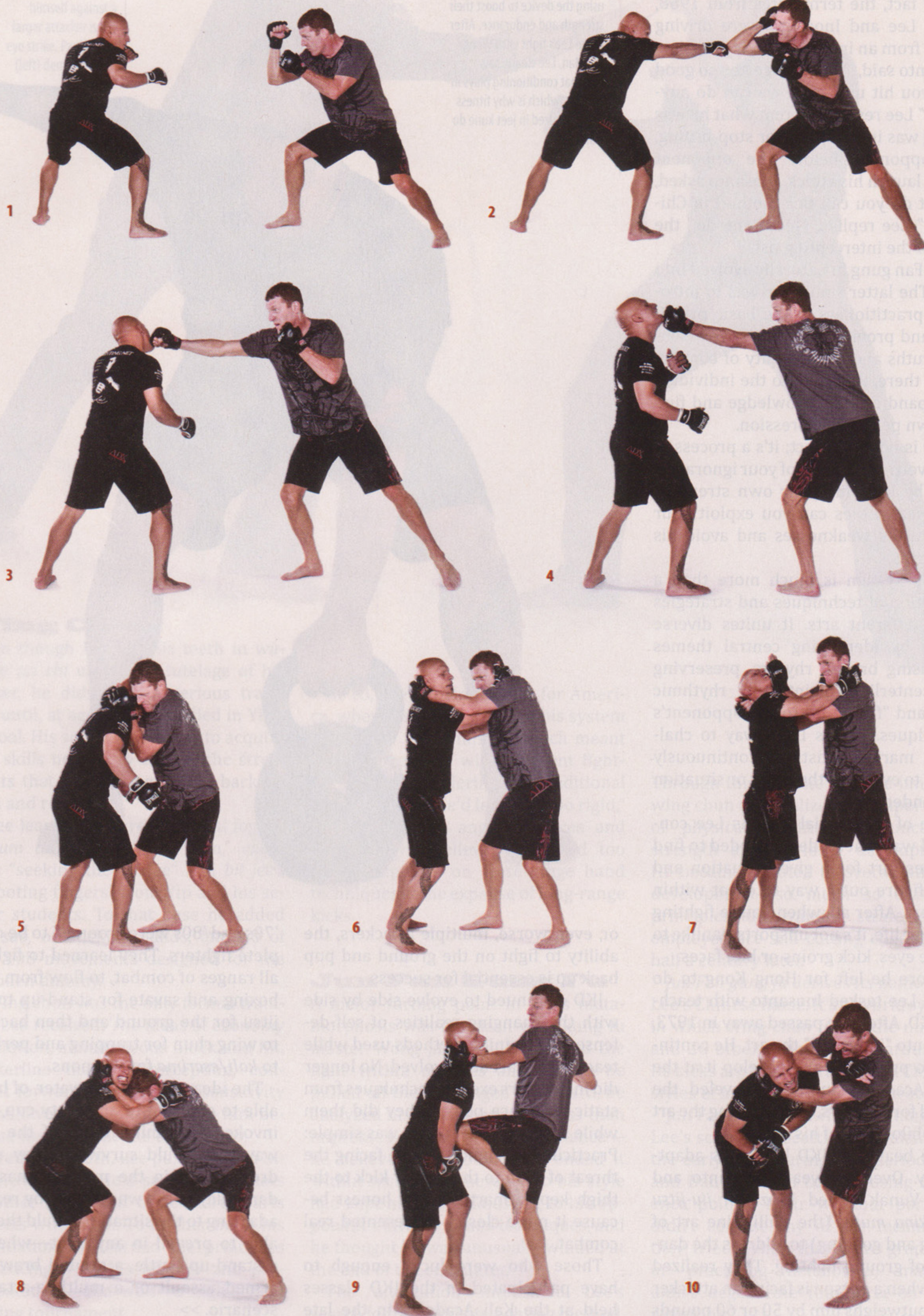
JKD continued to evolve side by side with the changing realities of self-defense. The training methods used while teaching the art also evolved. No longer did instructors execute techniques from static reference points; they did them while sparring. The reason was simple: Practicing a technique while facing the threat of a jab to the face or kick to the thigh kept a martial artist honest because it more closely represented real combat.

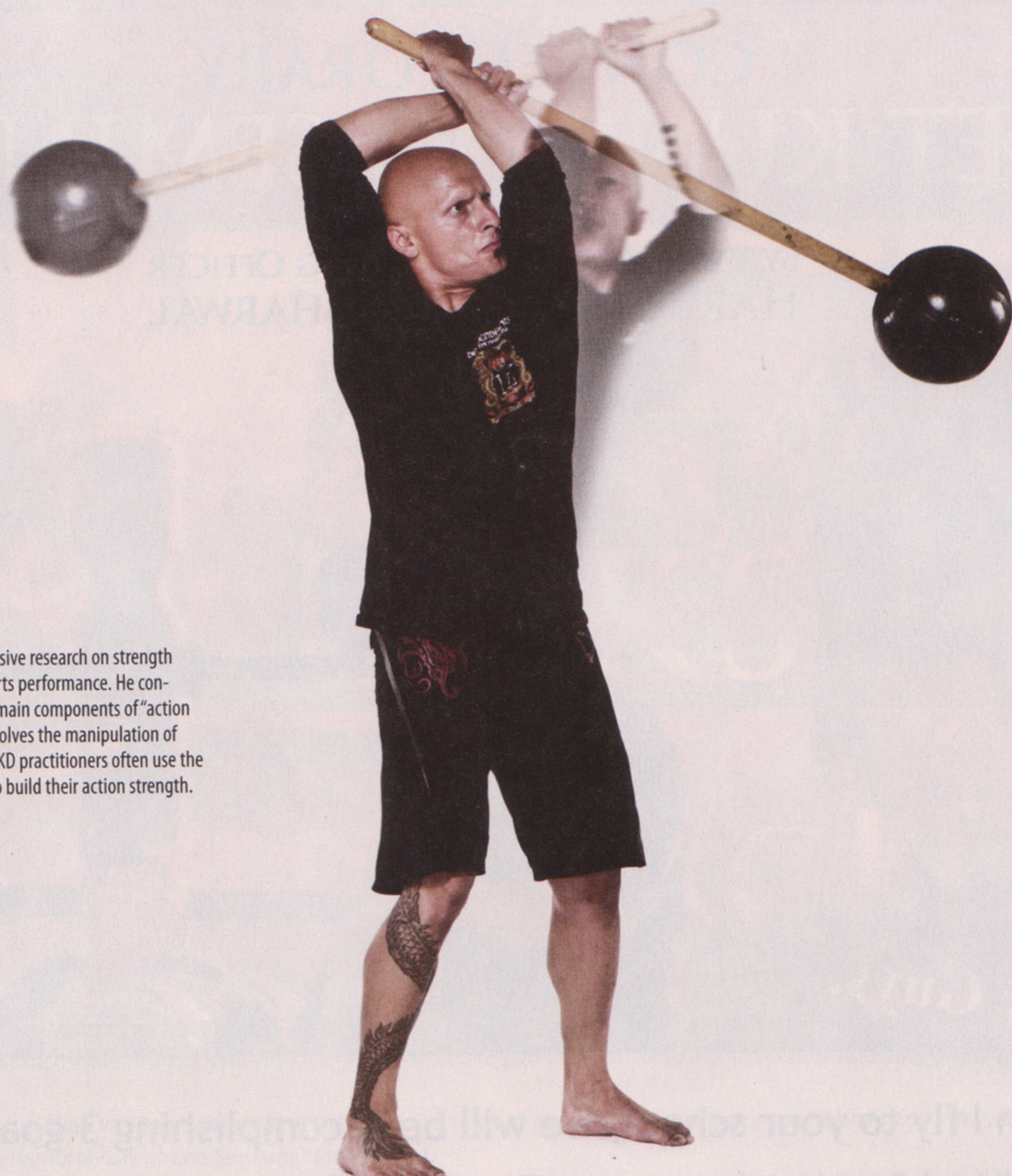
Those who were lucky enough to have participated in the JKD classes held at the Kali Academy in the late

'70s and '80s were groomed to be complete fighters. They learned to fight in all ranges of combat, to flow from Thai boxing and savate for stand-up to jiu-jitsu for the ground and then back up to wing chun for trapping and perhaps to *kali/escrima* for weapons.

The idea of being like water, of being able to conform to an empty cup, was invoked to remind them of the only way they could survive if they were dropped off in the meanest, nastiest dark alley in the world. Only by readily adapting to the situation would they be able to prevail in any fight—whether a stand-up battle, a ground brawl, an armed assault or a multiple-attacker scenario. >>

Tom Cruse (right) faces Harinder Singh (1). Singh punches, and Cruse executes a destruction that entails placing his elbow in the path of the fist (2). Cruse immediately follows up with a right-left combination delivered while advancing (3-4). He then clinches (5), and Singh reciprocates (6). Cruse pushes him away (7) so he can execute a head butt (8), which he follows up with a knee thrust to the solar plexus (9) and an elbow strike to the face (10).



A man with a shaved head and a black long-sleeved shirt is performing a gada exercise. He is holding a long wooden staff with a large black ball at each end (gada) with both hands above his head. He is standing on a light-colored floor against a plain background. He has a tattoo on his right leg.

Bruce Lee conducted extensive research on strength development for martial arts performance. He concluded that there are four main components of "action strength," one of which involves the manipulation of external weight. Modern JKD practitioners often use the gada (Indian mace) to help build their action strength.

Mixed Martial Arts

In 1993 the Ultimate Fighting Championship debuted. In the beginning, there were no weight classes or time limits. Practitioners of one style faced practitioners of another: boxing vs. wrestling, jiu-jitsu vs. kickboxing, karate vs. judo and so on. In almost every case, the conflict boiled down to striking vs. grappling.

By 2010, the UFC had become a global phenomenon, and MMA was the fastest-growing sport on earth. Weight classes and timed rounds were the norm, and to succeed, martial artists had to have a great striking game and a great grappling game.

When fans first watched *shotokan* karate stylist Lyoto Machida ply his trade in the octagon, they got a chance to see martial arts principles exhibited at their highest level. His mind, body and spirit flowed together to create a martial symphony. He used his attributes of footwork, distancing, line familiarization and spatial relationship to set up and

then attack his opponents. He didn't stand in the pocket and attempt to trade blows or block punches. He showed his understanding of the most common MMA fighting structure—essentially, Thai boxing for stand-up and Brazilian jiu-jitsu for the ground. He demonstrated that he knew his opponents weren't going to crouch in a low stance and approach him with a cocked reverse punch the way a fellow *karateka* might.

Instead, his opponents were on their toes using boxing footwork and launching jabs and crosses. They weren't throwing side kicks to the head; they were launching Thai kicks. At any time, they could dive at his feet for a take-down—which is why he supplemented his *shotokan* arsenal with a black belt in Brazilian jiu-jitsu.

That understanding of the MMA fighting structure enabled Machida to apply the attributes he'd developed from his traditional karate training. Whenever he fought, he intercepted his opponents

in a Bruce Lee-esque fashion, which often yielded spectacular knockouts without requiring him to absorb any hits. In a very JKD manner, he adapted his karate to MMA.

It's now 2011, and traditional martial artists still look to Machida as a stellar example of how a striking base can be supplemented with grappling to make something that's greater than the sum of its parts. Now the challenge for martial artists is to develop a better ground game. One option is to spend 10 years learning Brazilian jiu-jitsu—which is fine if you have the time. If you don't, you need a shortcut—in Lee's words, you need a way to cheat. ✕

(To be concluded in the August 2011 issue.)

About the author:

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ROOTS OF COMBAT

PART 2

**The Birth of Jeet Kune Do and
How It Grew Into the Ultimate Fighting System**

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In the art of contemporary *jeet kune do*, the preferred strategy for fighting on the ground mixes *jeet kune do* with Brazilian *jiu-jitsu* and a Philippine style called *kina mutai*. *Kina mutai* is an ancient system that revolves around uninterrupted biting and gouging. Dan Inosanto learned it for use in life-or-death altercations. Note that neither *kina mutai* nor Brazilian *jiu-jitsu* was among the 26 original fighting arts Bruce Lee studied and researched; they were added later by Inosanto and Paul Vunak to help students deal with the 90 percent of street fights that go to the ground.

Before delving into the specifics of *kina mutai*, it's important to point out that they're among the most effective techniques on the planet. There are only two justifiable reasons for using them on another human being: You're in a military engagement, or you're forced to defend yourself or your family from a lethal threat.

Anyone can bite; the challenge lies in biting effectively in a self-defense situation. That entails knowing when, how and where to do it. Your goal is not to incapacitate an attacker with a bite; it's to inflict pain for five to eight seconds without interruption so you can create space and escape from the altercation. To ensure your ability to function in all kinds of altercations, you must be able to bite in combination and even lure an attacker into a bite. You need to know how to fake a bite in one direction to open a path to a softer target—a technique called “progressive indirect biting.”

The biting and gouging in *kina mutai* is like the tip of an iceberg: The remaining 90 percent of the art is unseen. A big part of that unseen component is how Brazilian *jiu-jitsu* can be integrated with *kina mutai* and how mind/body

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coordination can help you conserve your physical, mental and spiritual energy while you defend yourself.

BJJ Is the Tank

In *kina mutai* combat, Brazilian *jiu-jitsu* is the battle tank that provides you with mobility on the ground, taking you from position to position with a proper base, adaptable balance and dynamic posture.

When a larger man slams you to the ground, you need to instantly put him in your guard and latch on. He'll probably pick you up and slam you again. He'll probably punch you in the side—you need to be able to take it, wait until he gets tired and then bite as soon as he runs out of gas. Exhausted, he won't be able to escape or defend himself.

If you try to bite him before he's exhausted, his adrenaline will kick in and he'll throw you off. You'll have revealed your secret weapon, and it will be difficult to use it again. You need to be cunning, maybe whispering in his ear to get him riled up, and hold on. Let him struggle as you relax and hold on. Let him punch as you absorb it and hold on.

To do that, you need isometric

strength; otherwise, it'll be impossible to outlast your attacker. Isometric development targets the tendons, which are many times stronger than muscles. The benefits are everlasting: Once you've got it, you've got it. Most traditional martial artists know the necessity of isometric training because they've been doing it for years.

In *kina mutai*, biting and gouging are uninterrupted. You latch on to your opponent like the face hugger from *Alien* and attack for five to eight seconds. The pain renders him physically and emotionally unable to continue. Remember what happened to Evander Holyfield, one of the toughest heavyweights ever to box: He took round after round of pounding from Mike Tyson, one of history's best punchers, but as soon as Tyson bit off a chunk of his ear, Holyfield jumped up and down, screaming. He couldn't continue. In the eyes of a *kina mutai* practitioner, that was the equivalent of a white-belt technique.

Consider Brazilian *jiu-jitsu* ground positions such as the guard, closed guard, side control, mount and full mount. Notice how close your mouth is to your opponent's vital points—ears, neck, lats, biceps, Achilles tendons and so on. Vunak, an avid practitioner of Brazilian *jiu-jitsu* who's trained with the Gracies for years, devised a list of 144 bites that combine the Philippine art with Brazilian grappling and its most common positions.

Body and Mind

Mind/body coordination is crucial to success when you mix *kina mutai* with Brazilian *jiu-jitsu*. The concept entails developing functional fitness along with physical and mental attributes—all of which make up the contemporary *jeet kune do* training methodology known as “action strength.” >>

Train With the Best

On August 12-14, 2011, Paul Vunak, Thomas Cruse, Harinder Singh and others from the Descendants of the Masters organization will host Vunak's Bash on the Beach in Dana Point, California. Courses will cover Rapid Assault Tactics, ground fighting, *kina mutai*, edged-weapons defensive tactics, the law-enforcement force continuum and the MMA matrix.

Word to the wise: Go if you can. I attended Vunak's PFS Instructor Summit last year and was astounded by the quality of the organization's teachers, the attitude of the participants and the amount of fun that was had by all. Vunak is a master storyteller, and when it comes to realism and effectiveness, his material is top-notch. (His bongo playing ain't too shabby, either.)

—Robert W. Young, executive editor

FLOW PATTERN: Harinder Singh starts from the bottom of the mount (1). He bridges and rolls to his left to dislodge his opponent (2) and achieve a top position (3). Once he's in the opponent's guard, he underhooks his shoulders and simulates a bite to the chest (4). Singh then pins his biceps (5) and simulates a head butt (6). He jumps to his feet (7) and feigns a series of groin punches (8). Next, Singh moves the man's right leg to the side (9) and drops for some knee-on-the-stomach, ground-and-pound action (10). To keep the flow going despite the use of fight-ending techniques, Singh pins him in the cross-side position, making sure his right knee is positioned so the man can't spin to re-establish the guard (11). From there, the kina mutai stylist can simulate a bite without exposing himself to one. The opponent executes the only possible counter: He creates a frame with his arms and tries to push Singh away to stop the bite (12). Singh slaps the arm to the side (13), regains his hold and simulates a bite to the lat muscle (14).



1



2



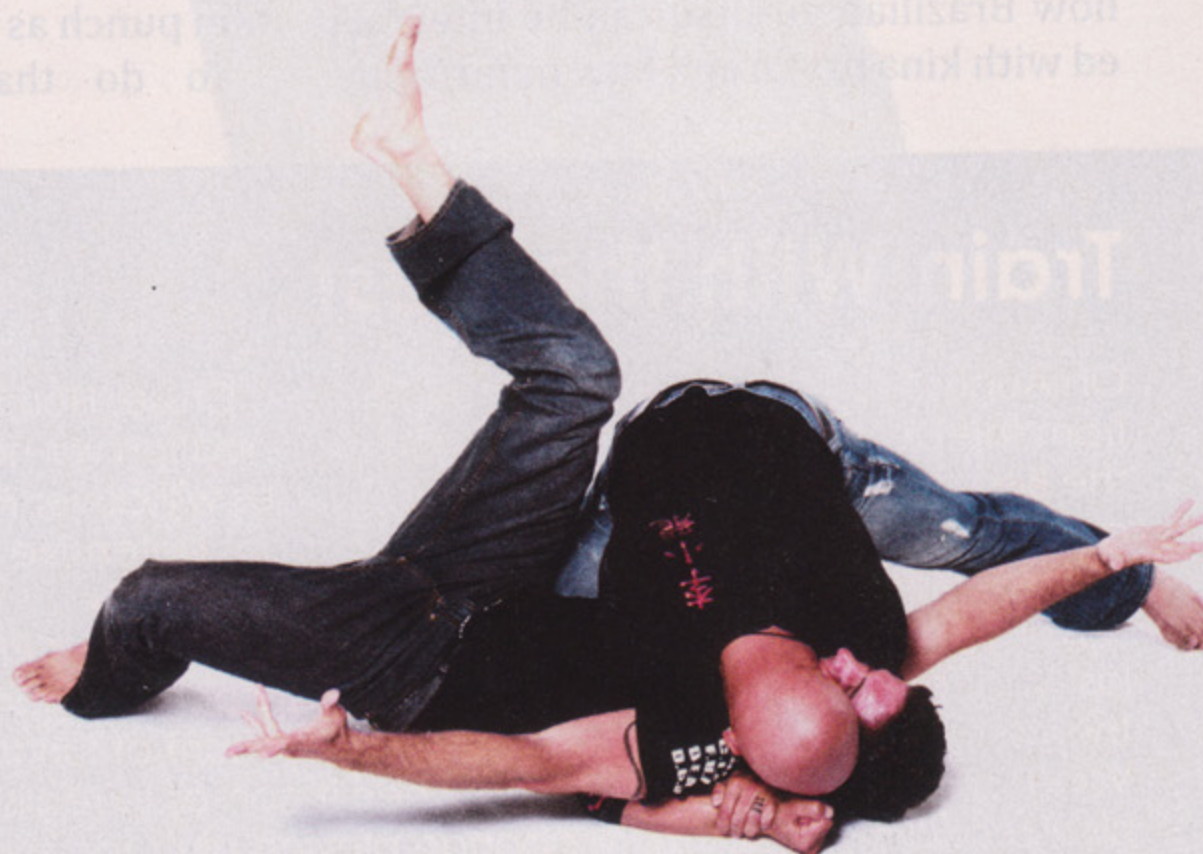
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10



11

FLOW PATTERN: To practice the skills needed to escape from a rear choke, Harinder Singh allows his opponent to nearly complete the maneuver (1). Singh immediately grabs the choking arm with his right hand and tucks his chin to protect the flow of blood to his brain. Next, he extends and circles his left arm to free it (2), then uses his left hand to hold the opponent's right wrist while he moves his right hand to the man's shoulder (3). With the opponent secured, Singh simulates a bite to the arm (4). When the man lets go, Singh turns toward him (5). To continue the flow, Singh purposefully extends his right arm, leaving it vulnerable to an armbar or triangle (6). As soon as the opponent grabs the limb (7), Singh postures up (8). He takes advantage of the closest target—the man's leg—and simulates a bite (9). When the opponent releases the hold, Singh transitions to the cross-side position (10).



1



2



3



4



5



6



7



8



9



10

Listen Up, Doubters!

If you have doubts about the effectiveness of biting in a self-defense situation, it's probably because you missed the March 6, 2011, report from ABC 7 News and TheDenverChannel.com. In a nutshell: Local man attempts to sexually assault woman; woman fights back, biting assailant on neck; assailant flees. Nuff said?

Physical conditioning and strength development are among the most neglected facets of the martial arts. Before any movement can take place, there must be a change in muscular tension on both sides of the involved joints. The effectiveness of this muscular teamwork is one of the main factors in determining the limits of speed, endurance, power, agility and accuracy.

Endurance, or energy conservation, is the most important attribute you can develop for fighting. You can look at endurance as doing more reps and getting stronger, or you can look at it as performing your technique or exercise in the most efficient manner so you don't waste energy. When a large man has you pinned to the ground, you're finished if you don't know how to breathe and conserve energy. You'll need to weather the storm before pulling the trigger on your kina mutai response.

There are four main components of building action strength:

- Manipulation of external weight (kettlebells and the *gada*, or Indian mace)
- Manipulation of your bodyweight in all planes of motion
- Isometrics
- Development of body mechanics and reflexes specific to the sport or technique being performed

All the exercises should integrate the mind and body into a whole. There should be no isolation of individual muscles and no split between resistance training and cardio.

A crucial component of kina mutai is total-body grip strength, or your ability to latch on to someone like an anaconda, wrapping your arms and legs around him. You develop this functional fitness using kettlebells, the Indian mace and isometrics. The following three exercises are recommended:

- **KETTLEBELL SNATCH.** It teaches you how to align your body, conserve energy and develop a powerful core.
- **INDIAN MACE.** Swinging it builds an

awesome grip, as well as stronger forearms. Both will help you hold on to a struggling opponent.

- **ISOMETRICS.** It bolsters your ability to grab your opponent and enhances your capacity to maintain that position long enough to ensure a successful and uninterrupted bite.

Sumbrada Training

"When a large man has you pinned to the ground, you're finished if you don't know how to breathe and conserve energy. You'll need to weather the storm before pulling the trigger on your kina mutai response."

This training method comes from the Philippine art of *kali*. The word *sumbrada* means "counter for counter." Developed by Inosanto, it teaches students proper techniques and the appropriate counters. Vunak borrowed this method when he incorporated biting into jiu-jitsu ground maneuvers. The result is a series of bite-flow patterns that focus on target acquisition in a dynamic environment and train the student to execute single direct bites, combination bites and progressive indirect bites.

Vunak has stated that devoting an hour a day for 30 days is sufficient to develop the attributes needed to acquire a target and execute a bite at the appropriate time and in the appropriate way to counter most grappling positions. Note that to flow properly in training, you and your partner don't have to bite each other. It's enough to

press your mouth against the targeted body part. If he can't push you away within eight seconds, the technique can be considered a success.

Once you've learned to flow within the patterns, you'll be able to contemplate breaking them, which is how kina mutai sparring begins. It's the fastest way to develop functional attributes—and the best way to maximize your chance of surviving against a master ground fighter.

Summary

Knowing how to mix kina mutai and Brazilian jiu-jitsu using the principles of jeet kune do enables you to flow with your opponent on the ground, no matter what actions he takes. It allows you to adapt to his movements and make his techniques your techniques.

As Vunak likes to say: "The end result of jeet kune do training is the production of a martial artist who possesses no structure or form. Hence, he possesses all structures, all forms. He is able to adapt to any situation, like water adjusting to the shape of any container." ✕

About the author:

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