

POWER

*Power in hitting
depends not on your strength.*

*But it is the way,
you throw your blows.*

*It is not whether
you are close or at length.*

*If you're too near,
use your striking elbows.*

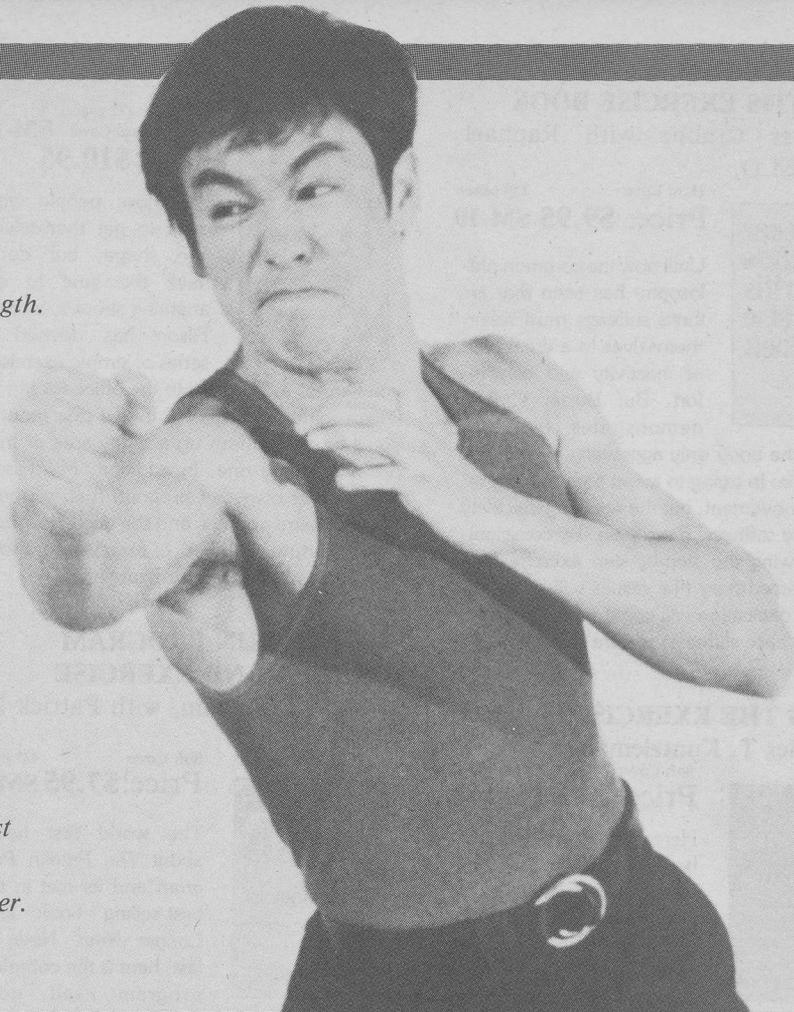
*If you're too far,
use your kicking feet.*

*But it is the hands that
you'll employ the most*

*In a sparring session
or a martial arts meet.*

*And when it is all over,
hope you can silently boast*

*That you have learned
to hit with speed and power.*



Bruce Lee's Fighting Method Self-Defense Techniques

by M. Uyehara and Bruce Lee

POWER TRAINING — PART 1

Power in hitting is not based strictly on strength. How many times have you seen a boxer who is not muscular but packs a wallop in his punch? And then you see a heavily muscular boxer who can't knock anyone down. The reason behind this is that power isn't generated by your contractile muscles but from the impetus and speed of your arm or foot. Bruce Lee, a 130-pounder, was able to hit harder than a man twice his size, because Lee's blow with a heavy force behind it, was much faster.

In jeet kune do you do not hit by

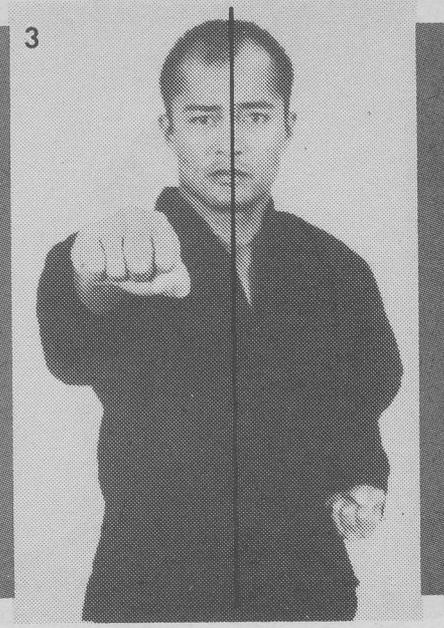
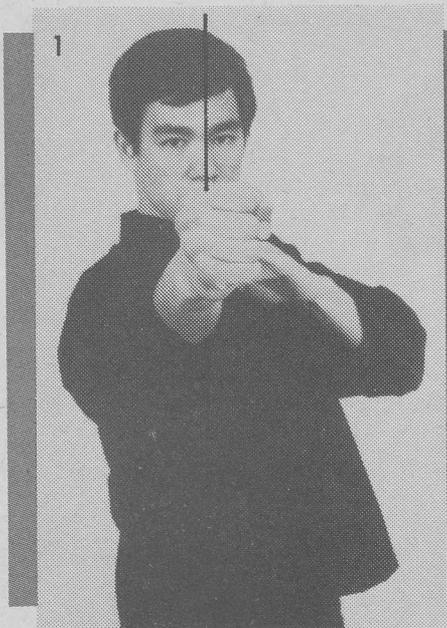
just swinging your arm. Your whole body should participate in the impetus—your hips, shoulders, feet and arms. The inertia of your punch should be a straight line in front of your nose—using it as the guiding point, as in photo 1 on page 51. The punch originates not from the shoulder but from the center of your body.

In photo 2, the fist lands too far to his left, exposing his right side for a counterattack, and not allowing much time to recover for a defense. In photo 3, the punch comes from his shoulder

with not much power behind it. He is too rigid to take advantage of his hip and body motion.

Punching Power

Straight punching or kicking is the basis for scientific and artistic fighting. It is a modern concept in fisticuffs derived from the knowledge of body leverage and makeup. A punch from your arm alone doesn't supply enough power. Your arms should be used strictly as bearers of your force; and the correct application of your body should furnish the



power. In any power punching, the body must be balanced and aligned with your lead foot, forming a straight line. This section of your body is the mainstay, functioning as an axis to generate power.

Before you can punch with power, you must first learn to clench your fists properly, otherwise you are liable to injure them. From an outspread position of your fingers and thumb, as in photo A, roll your finger tips into your palm, as in photos B and C. Then overlap your thumb tightly over your clenched fingers. The tip of the thumb extends to the center of your middle finger, as in photo D.

There are several training exercises that you can utilize to learn power punching. One of the best ways is to learn the use of your hips. To do this, tie a string to a piece of paper, about eight by ten inches, and hang it from the ceiling to your chest height.

Using this thin paper as your target, stand about seven to ten inches away with both of your feet parallel to it. Keeping both loosely-clenched fists in front of your chest, elbows hanging freely at your sides, twist your body clockwise as far as it will go on the balls of your feet. Both knees must bend slightly for your body to twist fully. Now, your body should be facing to your right, 90 degrees from the target, with the weight shifting to your left foot. But your eyes must constantly be fixed on the target.

Pivot on the balls of your feet, with

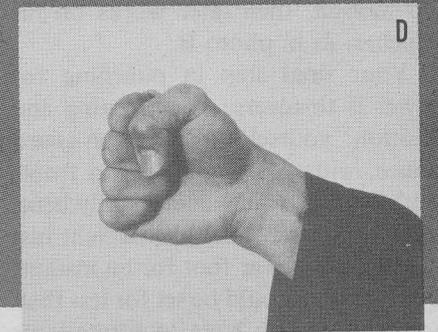
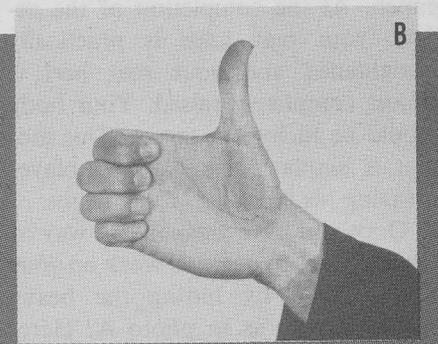
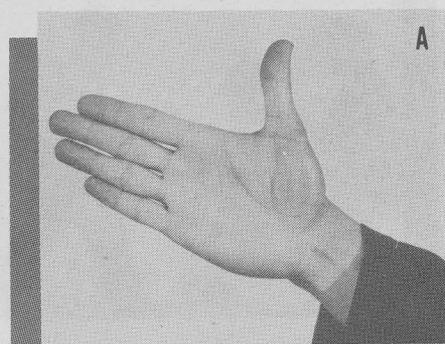
your hips initiating a sudden, rotating motion. Your weight quickly shifts to your other foot as your shoulders automatically rotate after your hips. Simultaneously, as your body is rotating, raise your right elbow to your shoulder height just in time to apply an elbow strike to the proper target. The momentum should turn your body 180 degrees so it faces the opposite or left side. It is very important that your hips rotate slightly ahead of your shoulders, to obtain maximum power.

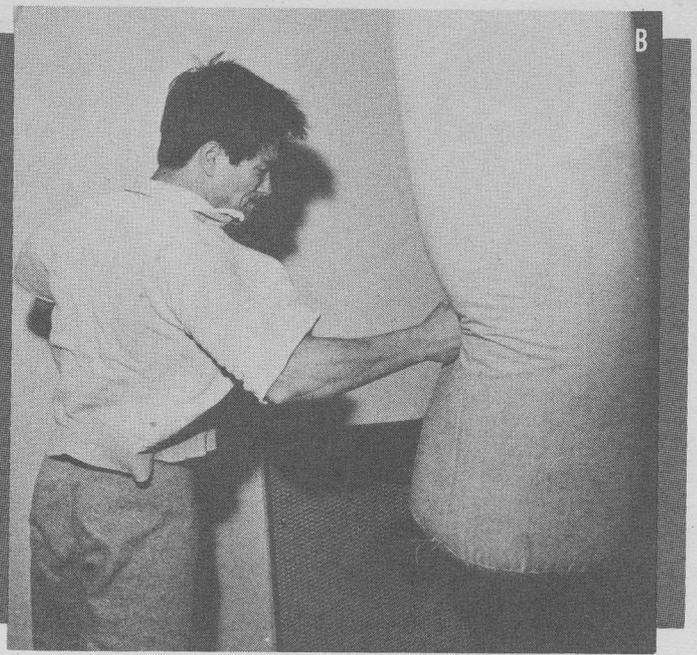
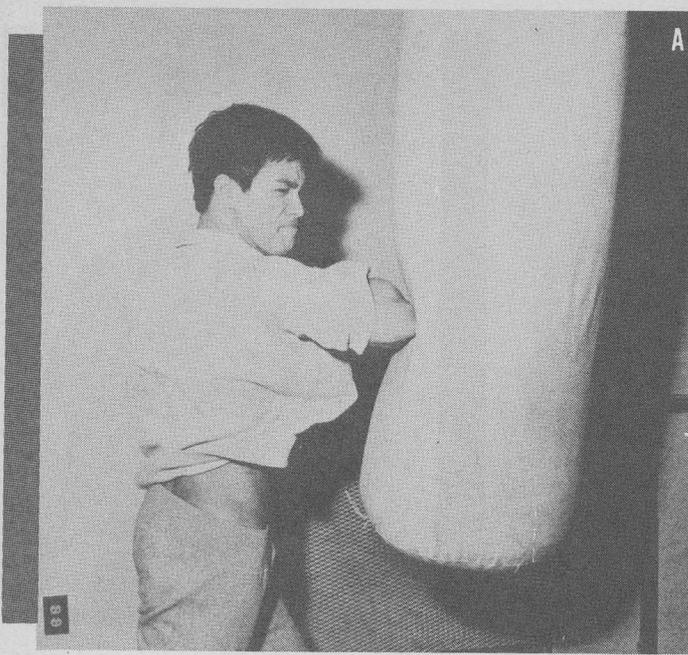
Repeat the same motion from the

left side, striking with your left elbow. Once you have learned to control your body and begin to feel at ease in this exercise, you may use your fists.

Step back about 20 to 25 inches from the target. Keeping your exact body position, swing at the target with a straight punch. At this point, your body should be aligned properly, you should have good balance and your motion should be fluid, with your hips initiating the rotation. Your power in the punches should have increased between 80 to 100 percent.

Gradually, to keep your body in





balance, especially after the completion of the swing, place your left foot forward and your right foot back (orthodox stance). From this position, twist your body clockwise until your shoulders are in a straight line with the target. Your front foot should be about 15 inches away. Now your weight leans heavily on your rear foot with both knees slightly bent. As the hips initiate the movement, you pivot on the balls of both feet, and your body is driven forward by the impetus from the rear foot. Your rear heel rises as your weight quickly shifts to the front foot with the delivery of the punch. At the completion of the action, your rear knee is practically straightened and your rear heel is almost completely raised. Your body should be facing the target. This motion is similar to a baseball player swinging his bat with all his might.

Once you have grasped this way of hitting, you can begin to work on your power blows by hitting the heavy punching bag, as in photo A. Here, Lee uses his elbow strike to develop his hip motion, then later works on his punches, as in photo B.

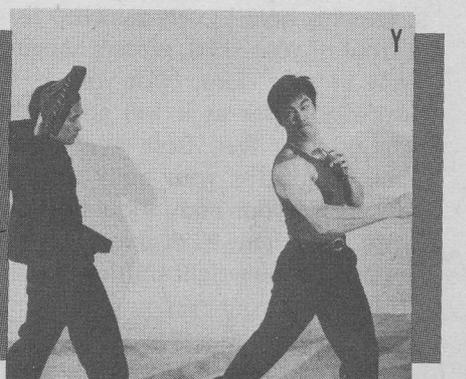
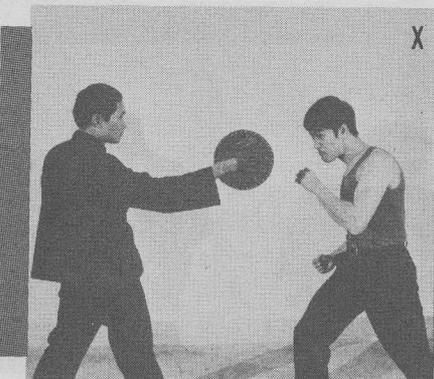
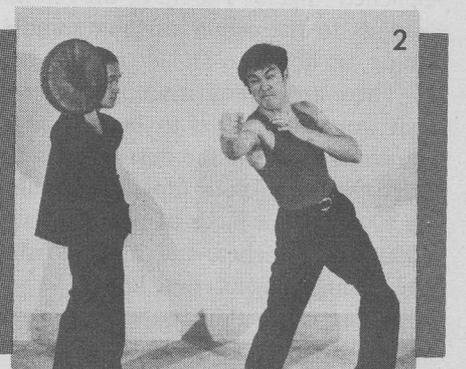
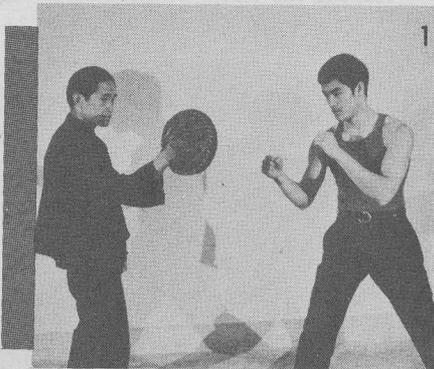
Your final step in punching for power is to reverse your footing and position yourself in the on-guard stance, with your right foot in front. With both of your knees slightly bent, rear heel raised, shift your weight just slightly to the rear foot for an instant. Your weight should be set for less than a second as you have to rotate your

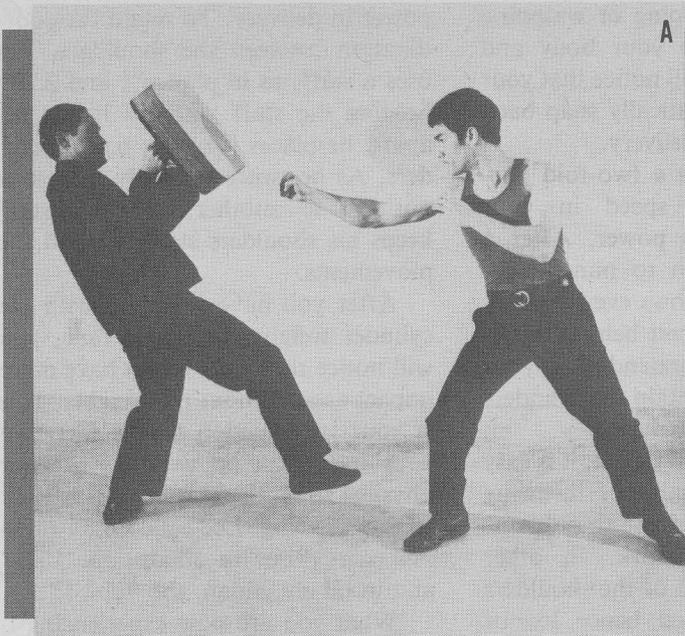
hips counterclockwise, and your weight switches to the front foot just before you throw a punch. This leading straight punch doesn't have as much power as the others, which have access to a freer and fuller rotation of the hips. But if you can master this punch with the right timing of rotating your hips, you have a punch much more effective than a jab and very instrumental in the success of your sparring and fighting. It will be your most usable and dependable weapon. Like

the other punching techniques, from the paper target you can substitute more solid targets to develop your power.

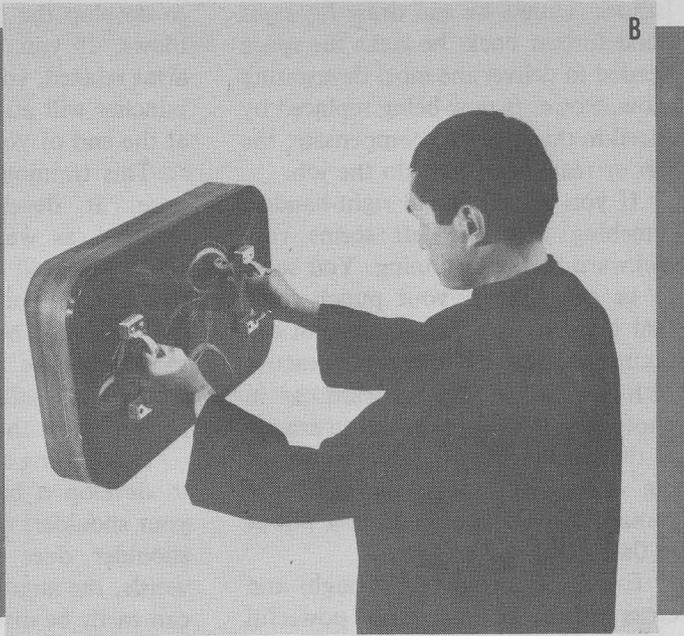
Lee used to concentrate heavily on the straight lead punch in his daily training schedule, using different apparatus. In photos 1 and 2, he uses a punching pad. Sometimes he drew his right hand back to throw a much heavier blow, as in photos X and Y to simulate close fighting.

Another apparatus used in his





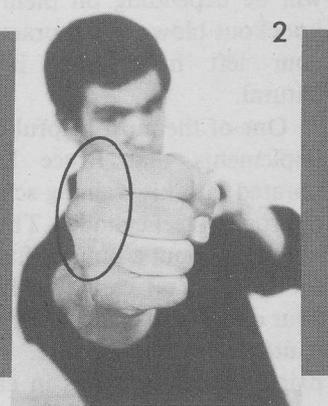
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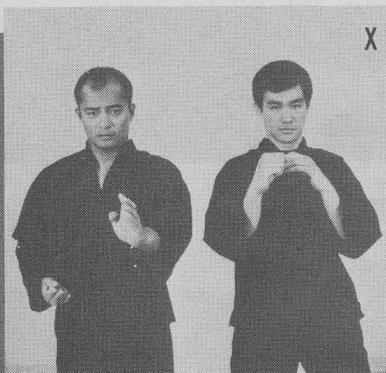
B

training was the light shield, as in photos A and B. Lee liked to use various hitting equipment, because he used to say, "I don't know the true feeling of hitting a person. First of all, each part of the human body has a different composition. You may hit a hard, bony substance or a soft, fatty area. And second, hitting with gloves on is different from bare knuckles. Unfortunately, using bare knuckles on your partner is not too practical."

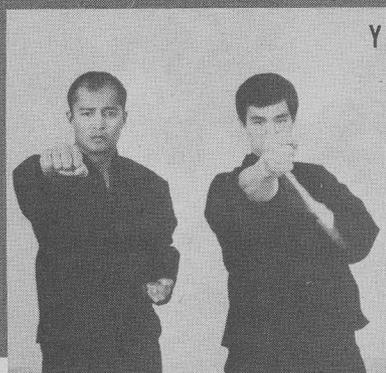
The shield presents a different feel-



2



X



Y

ing when there is a contact. The shield is more solid than the pad and since the holder stands more firmly with both hands on the equipment it will not give in as the pad will. For a more punishing punch, Lee selects the canvas bag, as in photo 1. He usually had three bags hanging on the wall. One was filled with sand, another with gravel or beans and the third with steel sawdust found in any machine shop. In the beginning it is wise that you wear light boxing gloves on the heavy canvas bag as well as these wall bags. You must first toughen your knuckles before going bare-fisted.

In jeet kune do your punches are not thrown as the classical stylist's. Instead of using the first two knuckles (the index and the middle fingers), use the three knuckles, as in photo 2. The punches are not thrown from the hips in JKD, as the figure on the left, below, but from the chest as Lee is

about to do in photo X. The delivery should be straight and not with a twist of your hand. If you twist your hand, the knuckles will align horizontally at impact but if you deliver straight out it will hit the target either vertically or obliquely, as in photo Y. Consequently, you should toughen the three knuckles, as in photo 2.

Besides punching the wall canvas bags for toughening, you can also train with a sand or gravel box, as in photo A on page 54. Other exercise includes push-ups with your clenched fists. Place the knuckles of your index finger and the two small fingers on a hard floor so your palms face each other. This is an excellent exercise for beginners as they can gradually toughen their knuckles without risk of injury.

By being on the southpaw or JKD on-guard position, it is apparent that the right or lead hand will lose considerable punching power to a right

hand. Unless he can draw his right hand further back, he lacks the space needed to deliver the most devastating blow. Power is now being replaced by speed in this case. To compensate, the left or rear hand must do the job.

If you are a natural right-hander, punching with the left seems very awkward in the beginning. You seem to be off-balance, your punch from that hand is weak, slow and not too accurate. But by constant practice with your right foot forward, as in photo Y, and doing the motion exactly as the second exercise, except now using your right foot as the lead, you should develop your punching power in that hand.

Eventually, your rear straight and cross would be the most powerful punches available in your arsenal. You will be depending on them for your knockout blows. Keep practicing with your left hand until it becomes natural.

One of the most helpful but simple implements that Bruce Lee incorporated into his training schedule was the round steel cylinder. The cylinder, weighing about a pound, fits snugly in the hand. You can quickly improve your delivery of punches by taking advantage of this exercise. Holding a pair of these cylinders in each hand, stand with your feet parallel and punch directly in front of your nose several times. The idea behind this is

to develop the snapping or whipping blows. If you keep your body and arms relaxed, you will notice that your punches will automatically snap back at the end of your delivery.

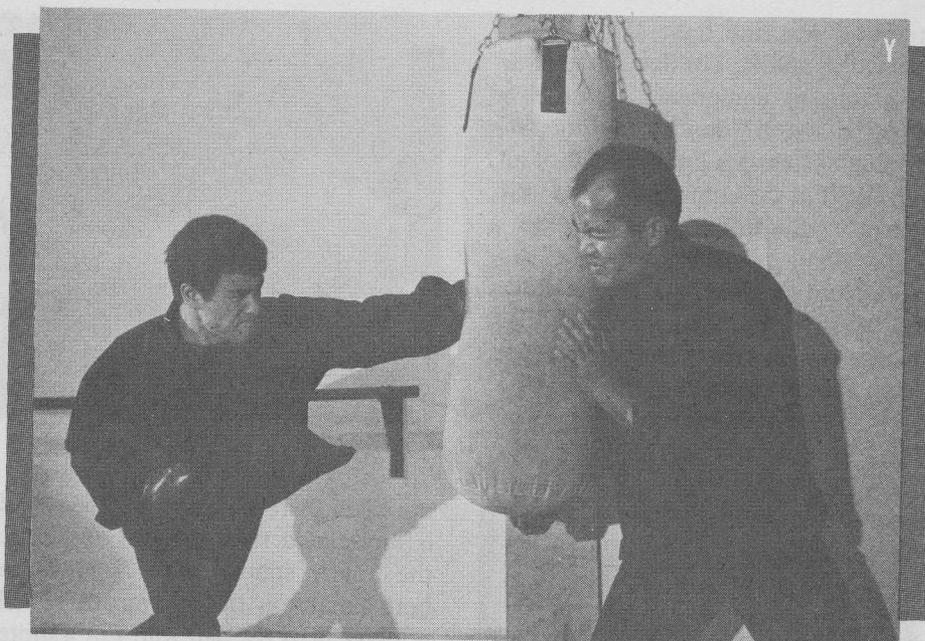
This training has a two-fold purpose. It develops speed in your delivery, as well as power. After a while you will learn to punch with heaviness in your blows even without the weights. The secret behind this is to concentrate or pretend that your empty hands still contain the cylinders as you throw the punches.

In throwing a hard punch, it is easy to develop a bad habit of throwing your shoulders out of line so only one shoulder does the work. In other words, the alignment of the shoulders can easily be disturbed; hence, loss of

power in delivery. To retain the coordination between the shoulders, Lee uses a staff, as in photos 1 and 2. By holding the staff with his hands far apart, he places it on his back shoulders. As he twists his body from one position to another, the long staff keeps his shoulders straight in all the movements.

After you have practiced with the cylinder weights for some time, you will notice that your blows have more impact even without the weights. This is your introduction to the fact that your mind can do wonders to your physical strength. This extra power or strength is what Lee called the "flowing energy" or in aikido, the "ki," and in tai chi chuan, the "chi."

What you are now experiencing is



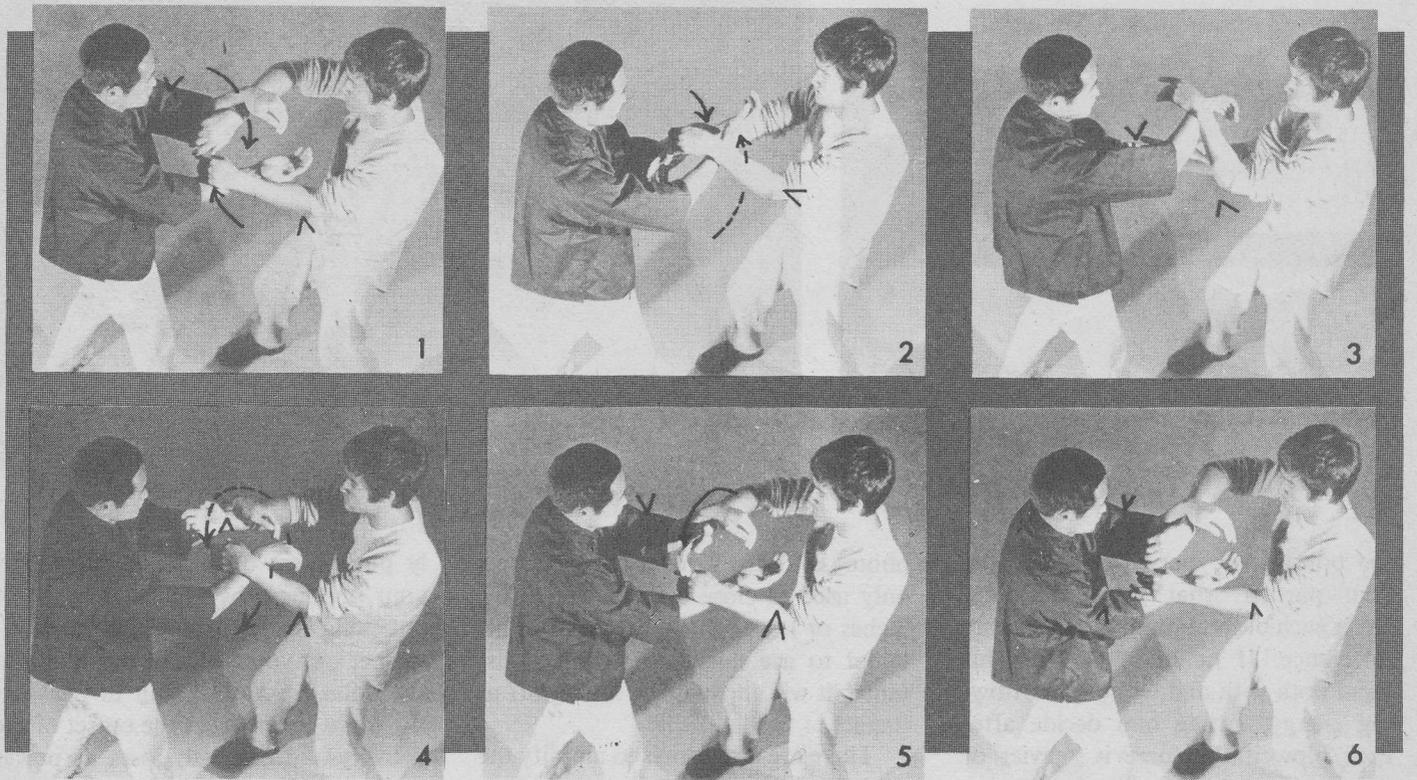
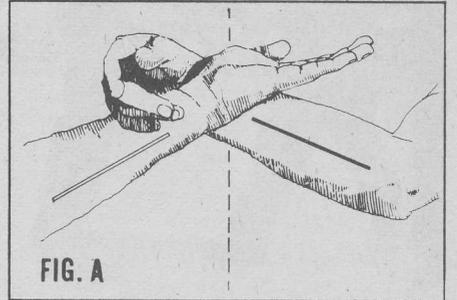
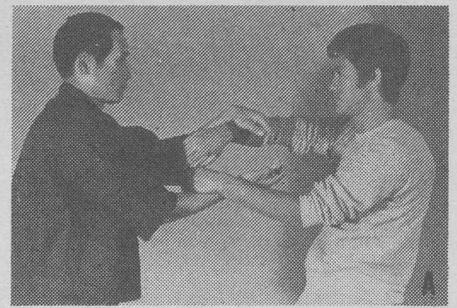
just a small degree of the flowing energy. To enhance this energy, there are several exercises. One of the best that should be an integral part of your training, is the "chi sao" which was briefly described in the chapter on balance.

In performing the chi sao to develop your energy, keep your body and arms relaxed, as in photos 1 (bird's-eye view) and A (side view). As your wrists touch your partner's as in drawing figure A, just put enough stress in your hands to roll your arms back and forth. In the following photos from 1 to 6, Lee demonstrates how your arms should be rolling. Arrows are indicated in each photo to illustrate the motion of the hands. The elbows' positions are closed to their

become rigid. You will then lose your balance and begin to rely on brute strength instead of the flowing energy.

The energy must flow from the pit of your abdomen, instead of your shoulders. To do this, imagine that water is flowing through your arms like a hose, being fed from the center of your body (about) the navel. This causes the under part of your arms to become heavy. Keep your fingers loose and outstretched, as the water has to flow out from the little fingers.

If both partners emit the same degree of energy or water through their arms, either will penetrate the other. The motion will be constant, even and rhythmic. Each partner will feel the other's arms as supple but firm. Arms look weak but they are



body as they roll their arms constantly and smoothly.

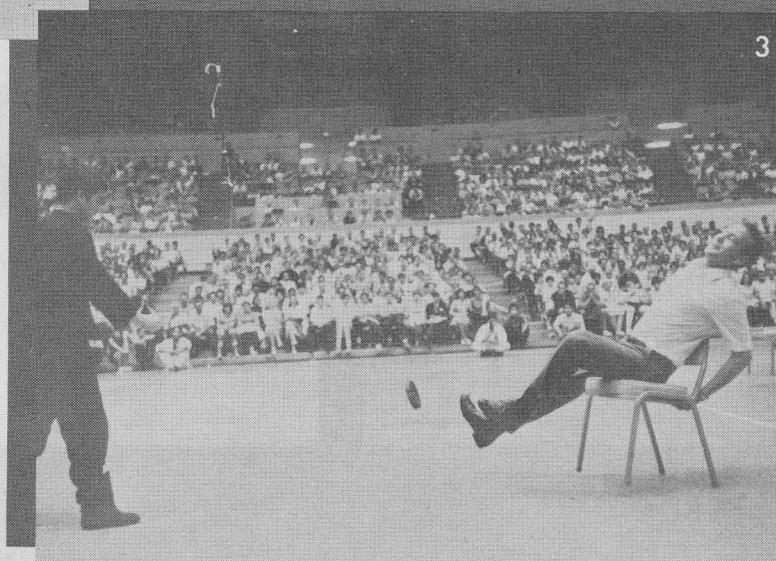
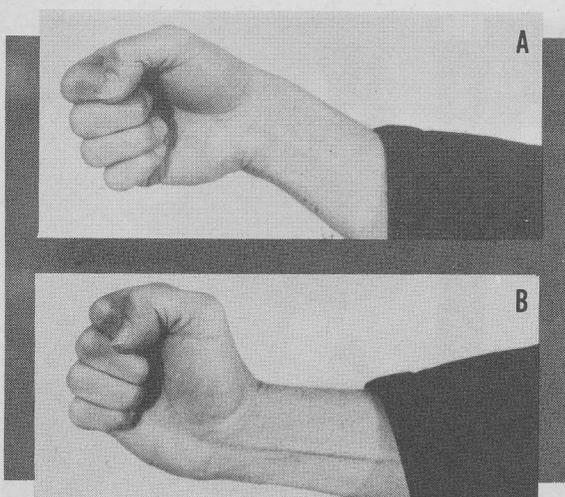
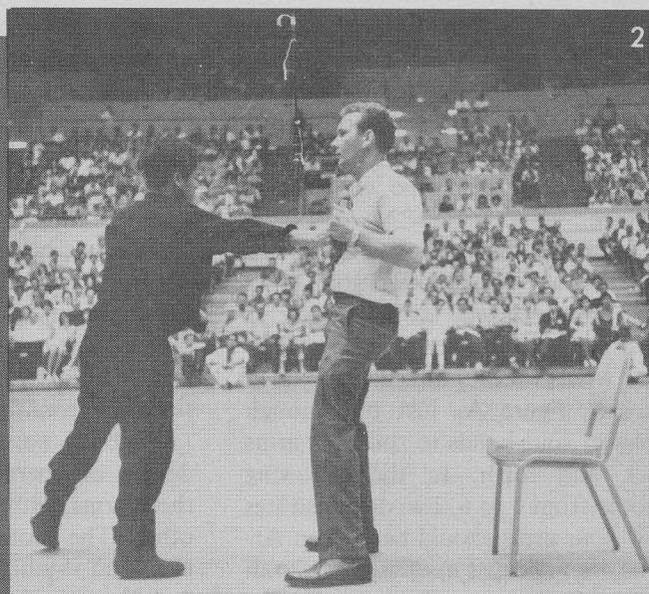
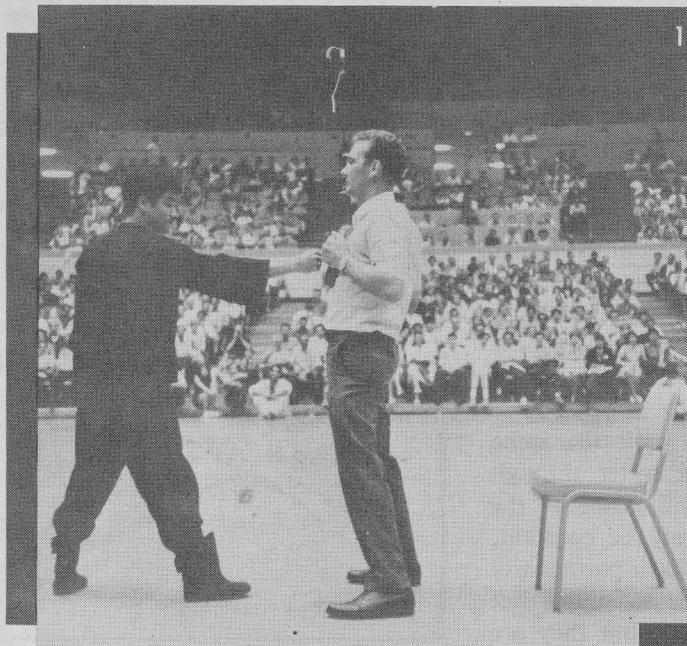
The rolling motion is not the essence of chi sao. It is the flowing from your arms that is important. The idea in the early stages is not to fight each other's strength but to concentrate on getting the feel of this energy. If you attempt to shove your partner backward, you will be missing the whole purpose of chi sao. This forceful movement will tense your arms, and consequently your shoulders will

very potent. Your elbows should be immovable—they can't be coerced toward your body. Your pliable arms can be moved from side to side but not toward your body. As you become more proficient, the circumference of your motion or rolling becomes smaller and smaller, as if the water flowing through your arms is now trying to penetrate and cover all the smaller cracks.

Chi sao is an important part of jeet kune do because its efficient applica-

tion of techniques relies on looseness of arms and body. This exercise is the best way to develop your flowing of energy so you can be constantly relaxed and loose and yet not sacrifice power.

To test if your energy is flowing, have someone extend his hand to you and land a chopping blow to his hand. First, do it normally and then do it with the flowing energy—concentrate on the heaviness of your hand, keep your arm loose and place the weight at



the bottom of your arm. Don't tell your partner what you are doing. After each blow ask him if he feels any difference. If he does, then hit his hand both with and without the flowing energy, letting him decide after each blow if the force is heavier or lighter. If the blows with the flowing energy are more powerful, you know you are doing it right. If you are unable to find anyone to cooperate with you, you can also test it on your own hand.

The incredible one-inch punch, as in photos 1, 2 and 3, that Lee used to awe the crowd in demonstration, was possible because of his proficient use of his hips, flowing energy, punching through and the delivering of the punch. This fist is vertical and cocked at the wrist, as in photo A. The fist turns upward suddenly at impact, as in

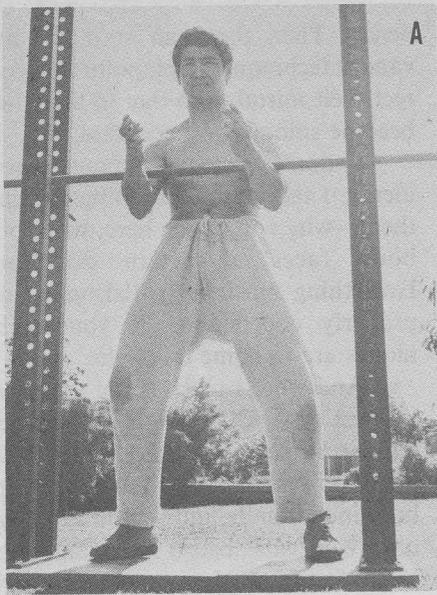
photo B. This vertical-fist punch is only used in close quarters from five inches or less to the target. If you attempt to use this punch from a distance, it will throw your timing off at impact.

There are other ways to amplify the power of your flowing energy. You can do it while driving your car. Place your arms on the steering wheel as though you are doing chi sao and put pressure on your arms. In photo A on page 57, it seems like Lee is doing isometric exercises but he is actually pressing his arms to the bar, flowing his energy. Fortunately, developing your flowing energy can be practiced anywhere that allows you to put pressure on one or both arms.

Many who attempt the one-inch punch knock their opponents off their feet, but instead of punching, they on-

ly push them down. You can't hurt your opponent by a push. The art of punching is not pushing. In punching, the peak of your force or strength is at the point of contact, but in pushing, the force begins from the outset of the delivery and generally loses its power by the time your arm is fully extended. Punching comes from the rotation of your hips, while pushing is usually from the rear foot, propelling your body forward.

When you are hitting, especially the heavy bag, punch through the bag. You will find that you will have a deeper and stronger penetration if you do that instead of concentrating on the surface of the bag. Follow-through means continuous acceleration of your punch to the target. However, the momentum or power does not cease there but extends through the target. It



isn't hitting your opponent but driving through him. After driving through him, your punching hand should be withdrawn as quickly as you thrust it forward.

Don't throw your punches in a windup motion; they should be thrown straight. Your fist clenches just before your whip-like impact. To

add additional power, the free hand can be drawn suddenly and conjuctly toward your body at the point of impact.

If you are taking a step to throw a punch, your fist makes the contact before your foot lands on the floor; otherwise, the body weight would be assimilated onto the floor instead of behind your punch. Your hips and shoulders must initiate the action before your arm, to deliver a rapid, precise and powerful blow. Although your foot-movement adds to your power, you can actually knock out your opponent without taking a step or showing any strain in your action if delivery was correctly done.

A powerful blow depends on leverage and timing. Right timing is a must for a powerful blow. Without it, your impact is lost in motion—it may reach too early or too late. ★

Editor's Note: Due to the length of this chapter, Part II of Power Training will appear in the June, 1981 issue of FIGHTING STARS.



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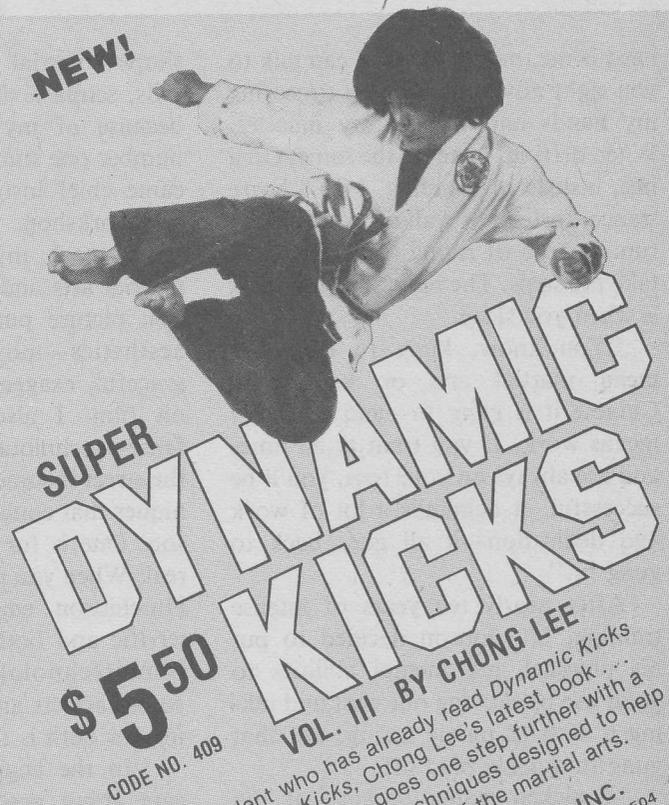
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