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 II

Pulling Power

Although Bruce Lee first studied
wing chun kung fu, he improvised so
many different techniques to it that
jeet kun do seems to have no bearing
on kung fu. Lee did not completely
discard the wing chun’s techniques.
He retained some of them but also
altered them so completely that they
are not recognizable as the original
art.

Two techniques he continued to
practice were the “lop so” (grabbing
the hand) and “pak so” (slapping
block), especially after doing the chi
sao. He was forced to revise both
techniques, because in wing chun both
partners stand with their bodies facing
each other squarely and their feet
parallel. But in the JKD on-guard
position the partners stand with one
foot forward, and the hand extension
is not the same.

Lee always felt that correct weight-
training could increase his power. But
he was very selective in his exercise. He
avoided drills that would develop
muscles which would interfere with his
performance in sparring or fighting.

Besides the abdominal muscles, he
concentrated heavily on his forearms
because he felt that these were the
muscles depended on in punching and
in pulling, as in lop so. His drills in-
cluded the reverse curl. To receive the
most benefit from this, he covered the
bar with a sponge so he lost his gripping power as he wrapped his hands over the sponge. When doing the exercise, he depended heavily on his forearm muscles to carry the weights to his chest.

Another excellent exercise for the forearms was the reverse extension. Instead of curling his arms, he lifted the weights straight out in front of him. With his arms fully extended, he supported the weights for as long as possible at the chest level.

He also squeezed a rubber ball in his palm and worked with the wrist roller, as in photos 1 and 2. Using the dumbbell without the plates on one end, he twisted his wrist back and forth.

Lee developed such a strength in his arms that when he jerked his partner, he snapped his head backward as the body flew toward him. A contributing factor that developed the pulling power was his persistent training of lop sao on the wing chun's "dummy," as in photo A. Besides developing the forearm muscles, he also toughened his arms by slamming them into the wooden arm.

While working out with weights be sure to include speed and flexibility exercises congruently. A heavy weight lifter with a great deal of power but no flexibility or speed will have a problem hitting his opponent. It will be like a rhinoceros trying to corner a rabbit.

Power in Kicking

Striking with your foot has several advantages. First, your leg is much more powerful than your hand. Actually, kicking properly is the most powerful and damaging blow you can administer. Second, your leg is longer than your hand so it is your first line of attack, normally preceding your punch. Third, to block a kick is very difficult, especially on the low-line areas like the shin, knee and groin.

Unfortunately, too many martial artists do not profit from their assets. They do kick but without any power. Flicky or pole-like kicks, as in photos 2 and 3, are still being used. They do not generate enough power to hurt or damage. In the flicky kicks your weight is not behind the blow and in
the pole-like kick your body is too off-balanced.

Bruce Lee's forte was the side kick, as shown in photo A, which differs from the classical side kick. In the classical, the side thrust kick has power but no speed. The side snap kick has speed but no power. In the JKD's side kick both the snap and thrust are combined so there is no lose of power and speed. Lee used to drop a two-inch board from his shoulder height and shatter it in half before it landed on the ground. If his kick had only power but no snap, the board would be hurled at a distance without breaking, unless it was braced. If his kick had the snap but no power, the board would not break because a two-inch board without support is too thick to split with a snap kick.

To do the side kick, stand with your feet apart and parallel to each other. Lift your right foot about 12 inches from the floor as you balance on your left. Stomp your right foot straight down with force and let it snap upward about an inch from the floor. Like punching with the flowing energy, here again, you should concentrate with heaviness in your foot. In other words, the water is now flowing through your leg (hose) and when it is fully extended by your downward stomp (gushing of the water), it snaps upward (splashes explosively). Until you warm up your legs by light kicking, do not stomp your foot violently.

Now you are set to kick sideways. As in stomping, place all your weight on your left foot as you lift your right foot, and kick straight out instead of down. Your left knee should be bent slightly so you can lean a little backward and not forward, as most beginners do. Pivot on the ball of your left foot as you thrust your right foot forward. For the extra power, twist your hips just an instant before the full extension of your leg—it gives you the screwdriver or the twisting force in your kick. Then snap your foot at the full extension for the whipping effect.

If you like to kick something solid, you can hit any wood or concrete wall. Measure your distance to the wall and just kick it. Since your foot should be landing flat, you will not hurt yourself. A forceful kick will just bounce your body backward, as the wall will
After you have the knack of doing the side kick, you are prepared to kick the heavy bag. From the on-guard position, do the forward burst as previously described. Aim your blow directly at the center of the bag, as in photos 1, 2 and 3.

At impact, your foot should land horizontally on the bag, not obliquely. The sound at impact should be a loud, cracking thud like a whip if you have kicked through the bag and snapped your foot at the end. If there is more push than hit, the sound will be a light or weak thud. In both kicks there is force exerted, except the hit will do the damage and the push will just knock the opponent down innocuously.

If you lunge at the bag swiftly and keep your body in balance, you can generate more power in your kick than you ever thought possible. Generally, the kick is delivered with your body lunging close to the floor to keep you in balance even after the execution. But for a much more powerful blow, lift your body a little higher while moving toward the bag and, just as you are propelling your right foot through the bag, stomp or drive your left foot downward. In other words, the force is now being exerted from both legs. This may be the ultimate in delivering a punishing blow without a weapon.

One note of caution: If you miss the bag completely or don’t hit it solidly, you can hurt your kicking knee. The reason is that your foot is hurling much faster than your body and when you miss, it is like someone jerking your leg off the knee socket.

In real fighting or sparring it is not too practical to utilize the latter kick, as it can easily leave you off-balance if you miss. And furthermore, the higher you leap, the more time you allow your opponent to avoid your attack.

The heavy bag is one of the most valuable apparatuses in JKD and, as a matter of fact, in the other martial arts, too, because one can practice on it alone. You can have a good workout by just doing the side kicks on it continuously for several minutes. As you kick the bag, let it swing back each time before kicking it again.

To teach a beginner in kicking, hold the bag for him by placing your
knee at the bottom rim of the bag and both your hands gently behind the center area of the bag to avoid having your fingers crushed. Before you ever stand with your back facing the bag, be sure you know the strength of the kicker. In photo 1, Lee hit the bag so hard that the impact sent the person behind it flying across the room, causing an injury to his neck, which lasted for several days, from the whiplash.

Lee always believed that one should practice hitting different types of targets to get a different feeling from each on impact. He used the heavy bag mostly, but often kicked at the wall canvas, bean or sand bag, the punching pad, the wooden dummy, as in photo A, and the portable heavy shield, as in photo B.

After the heavy bag, Lee's next favorite apparatuses at which to kick were the heavy shield and the air bag because he could exert all his power onto a moving target without really hurting the holder, as in photos 1, 2 and 3.

Although the front kick is not as powerful as the side kick, Lee increased the explosiveness of his kick by the use of his hips. Instead of relying only on the snap of the foot from the knee, he jerked his hips forward just an instant before his foot makes contact, as in photos A and B. The timing of this movement is very important and difficult to do. Practice it daily until you have the knack of it.

The text attempts to illustrate a step-by-step instruction of doing the side kick. But once you understand how to deliver it, you should do it without hesitation in one smooth, fluid motion.