

CONTACT TRAINING FOR

Jeet Kune Do

Contact training is one giant step in learning to absorb what is useful, rejecting what doesn't work, and discovering what is uniquely your own.

By Jerry Beasley, Ed.D.

During the formative years, the elements that separated original jeet kune do from other arts of the 1960s included its emphasis on independent research and immediate application of skills in a realistic environment.

The environment was the fighting gym, and the application was in full-contact sparring. In sparring the JKD man can absorb what

works and reject what is simply cultural art. Even so, JKD's rise to prominence has not failed to create controversy. An art as revolutionary as JKD has naturally attracted many who have differed in opinions regarding the nature and intent of the art and the way it should be practiced.

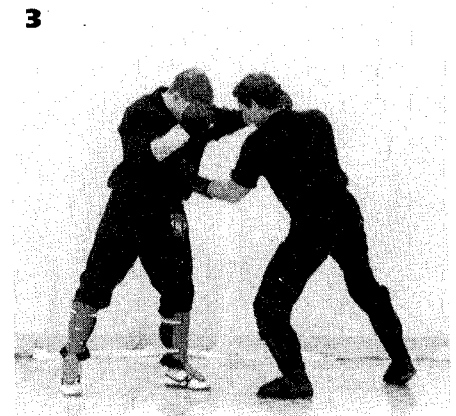
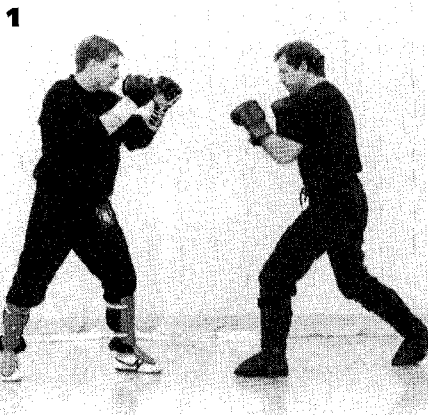
In the beginning, JKD was purely a method of self-defense; non-classical, simple and direct. It

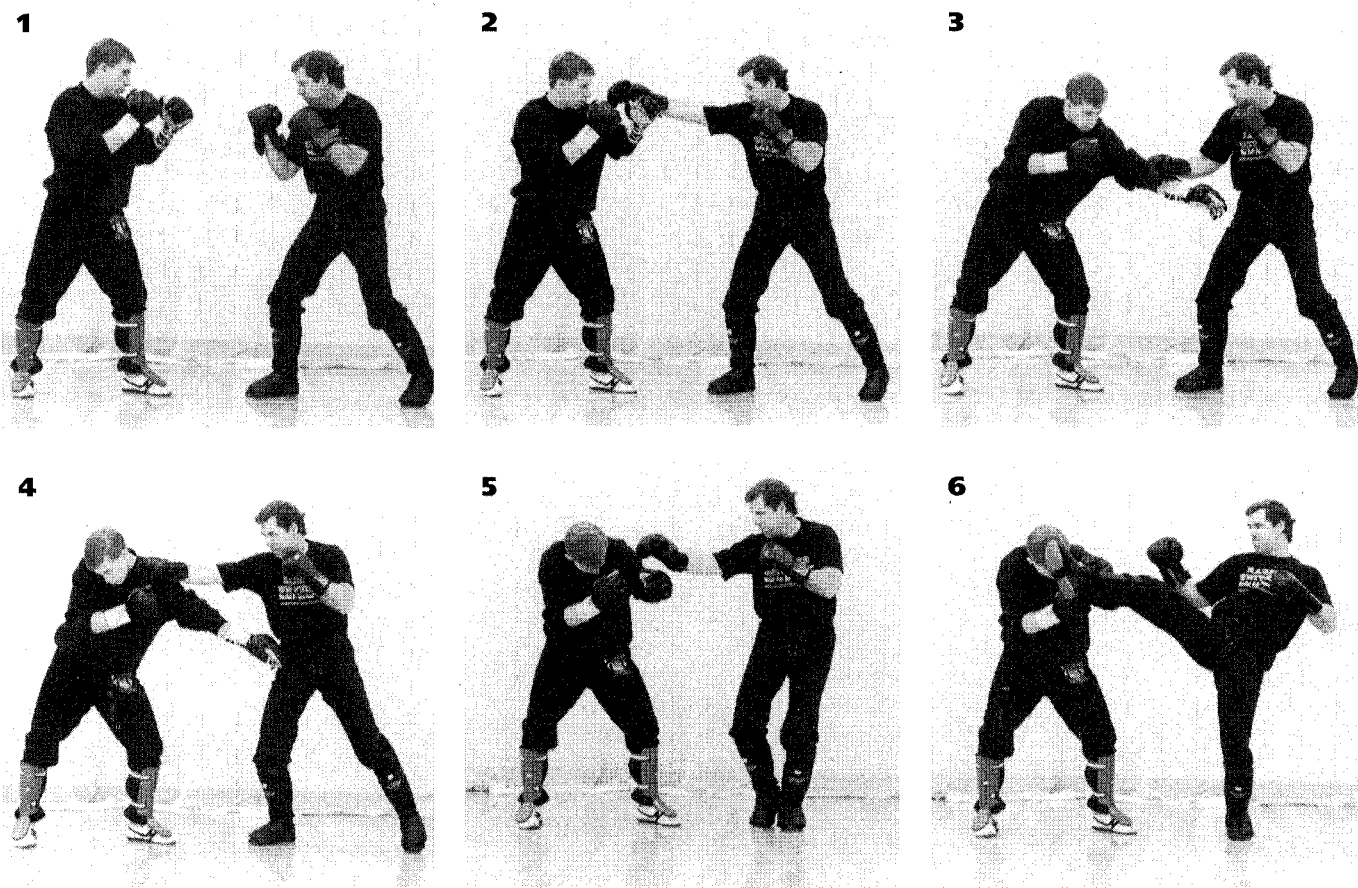
now has evolved to a level in which key individuals have greatly differed in an interpretation of the concepts and, consequently, influenced the development of their followers.

For example, while all JKD

stylists seem adept at trapping/grappling range, some focus on kickboxing range while others interpret combat in terms of stick-fighting and weapons. Each interpretation is useful and represents the "my truth is not your truth"

Contact sparring is essential to JKD. In the first series Jerry Beasley (1) positions inside the hook (2) to set up an uppercut to the body (3). In a natural follow-up, Beasley tags the opponent with a right cross (4), then controls the opponent's shoulder (5) for a knee or leg destruction (6).





In this series (1), Beasley fires a jab to set up the opponent for a HIA (hand immobilization attack) (2). The jab is used to immobilize the opponent's guard (3), at which time Beasley employs a forward hand strike (4), and follows up with a JKD inward kick (5-6).

principle.

In this article we will examine how the concepts can lead us to the (original) kickboxing approach. The original concepts of JKD include: Seek the truth in combat; experience and master the truth; forget the truth and the carrier of the truth; and repose in the

and striking an opponent with destructive intent.

To become a successful boxer you must, in JKD terms, "seek the truth". You must quickly discover what techniques and principles work and which skills may be discarded as unessential. The penalty for failure is the knockout and a

have proven effective for different types of boxers.

It may be that the beginning boxer receives instruction from only one coach (himself the product of many styles), or he may on his own explore different styles to discover what works best for him. For awhile, he may, for example,

Let's say he can flow from Frazier to Tyson, but for him, the Ali style has little merit. Indeed, he finds that his own skill and talent can best be expressed by dropping the attachment to a specific style (or boxer).

Using elements of those styles he has tried, he no longer is limited to the "Ali style" or the "Tyson style". In JKD terms, we say he forgets the carrier of the truth. At one point Tyson and Ali were partial truths. But he must move on to avoid the limitations of each style.

The boxer is now ready to discover his individual truth or style. Using all the styles he originally learned, he has become a reflection of many elements from each style. Yet he can be called no style. He simply fights. In JKD terms, he reaches the highest phase, "to repose in the nothing"—using no way (but his own) as way. It can be said that he has reached the level of JKD in his boxing expertise.

"Becoming JKD means using whatever art or method is necessary to discover what works for you."

nothing—using no way as way. These concepts are to be employed to best identify one's personal style of self-discovery. To illustrate those concepts, let's apply them to the art of boxing.

Boxing has all the elements of a realistic fighting art for punching range. The combatants learn proven skills for avoiding an attack, maneuvering into position,

short career.

The beginning boxer finds a role model, or trainer, to lead him into combative experience. Slipping and weaving, hitting and taking a punch, are basic requirements for sparring. In this phase of training the boxer seeks to experience the truth about fighting as a boxer. In so doing, the boxer may find that different styles of boxing

examine the "Ali style" of footwork and the "Tyson style" for aggressive attacks. He may model the "Robinson style" for finesse and the "Frazier style" for defense. At one point in his training he may flow from style to style. In fact, many beginning boxers mimic proven styles to find initial success.

The boxer quickly finds that each style is only a "partial truth".

Original JKD concepts for martial arts

Seek the truth, experience and master the truth, forget the carrier

Dr. Jerry Beasley is a certified full instructor of jeet kune do. Along with partners Ted Wong and Joe Lewis, Beasley promotes the popular original jeet kune do summer camp each June at Radford University (Radford, Va.). Beasley is the only person in the country to offer a college-credit JKD class.

of the truth, and repose in the nothing—no way as way. This is JKD. Learning the truth about martial arts initially requires that we understand that most classical and non-classical systems are designed to reflect the values, expressions, and desires of the

develop within the chosen style we become like the founder of that style. Those who gain rank in the style do so because they have learned to model the founder and teacher.

Lee intended to avoid this tradition of modeling a founder and becoming a style. His goal was to abandon the style and experience individual expression. Lee found that combat was in many ways opposed to the limitations imposed by style. Most styles (and founders) focus on one, perhaps two, ranges. Hence, in JKD style becomes only a partial truth—something to be experienced and mastered and just as efficiently discarded.

Because a “style” can give us recognition and a sense of belonging, it becomes an area of controversy in JKD. Do we demonstrate our individual freedom by flowing from style to style, thereby proving

that we own more than a partial truth? No. Each style is a limitation. The ability to flow from limitation to limitation has no merit. This flow from art to art is actually a journeyman phase identified by those in search of JKD.

For the boxer, JKD meant absorbing the training, running the miles, sparring the rounds, and discovering his own style. In martial arts we must do the same. Bruce Lee experienced boxing, gung-fu, judo, and fencing as partial truths from which he found his own way (JKD). In his research he was said to have experienced many other arts as well. His focus on realistic combat, using what works, helped him discard much of the skills and techniques he examined as being unessential to his truth (JKD). For anyone in search of discovering his own JKD, contact sparring becomes a major focus.

Contact sparring: The foundations of JKD

Just short of actual street encounters, full-contact sparring represents “hands-on” experience.

Full-contact sparring allows the combatant in search of JKD to daily decrease as he hacks away that which is unessential to his personal method of combat.

In contact sparring “style” can be truly abandoned. While quality contact sparring is essential to JKD, it is often neglected or reduced to the performance of training drills. The following are several factors that may aid in developing functional contact training.

- *Sparring partner*—It is important that you select a good partner(s). Some partners are valued because they are not aggressive and allow you to work on your offensive game. Other partners may be selected because they are always “coming at you” and invite counterattacks.

In some cases, sparring partners may be chosen because they lack strength or skill and afford you the opportunity to practice defense (slipping, weaving, etc.). At other times a stronger or more experienced fighter will allow you to test your skills. Regardless of your



founding masters.

Just as we may use the “Ali style” of boxing, we may also experience the Funakoshi (shotokan) style of karate, the Choi (ITF) style of tae kwon do, or the Inosanto style of kali. As we

choice of partners, they should be spontaneous and not simply perform drills that are often used for focus pads. Get a partner whom you like, and spend a lot of time together—fighting.

• *Protective equipment*—If you spar, you're going to get hit. Expect to get hit, but don't expect to get hurt. Do your training drills before you begin sparring so that you

the plastic will “fog up”.

Some people use motorcycle helmets for drills. The motorcycle helmet will prove dangerous in spontaneous contact sparring when the weight of the helmet causes extra stress to the neck. Boxers have more experience in contact sparring, so stick with quality boxing equipment (head gear, mouthpiece, etc.).

• *Distance*—Generally speaking, you can best work on kicking skills at long range and boxing skills at short range. You'll quickly find that the most functional range is toe-to-toe. This range is called in-fighting. At long or short range you can get hit hard. In close, the blows often lack power. In close, you can work on head positions, elbows, and knees.

While most beginners start at kicking range, a better way to begin (with an equally matched partner) is toe-to-toe. Learn the in-fighting skills first. You may get hit more often at first, but you will seldom get hit as hard (as long range). Since combat may often begin face-to-face, the person with in-fighting experience has an advantage.

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develop a good defense. Once you begin to spar, attempt to make good contact. You must invest in high-quality protective equipment. Buy a professional head protector. Some head protectors come with chin bars to give more protection. Head gear with full plastic face guards are for drills—not for actual sparring. In actual sparring,

Gloves should be 16 ounces-to-20 ounces. Larger gloves give more protection. Usually, shin and ankle protection is worn by JKD practitioners. You can add forearm and elbow pads, etc., depending on which body parts are to be used as weapons. If you intend to perform hard contact, you must use professional, tested equipment.

In-fighting is a sophisticated art, not unlike chi sao. However, the variables in in-fighting are considerably more complex. An experienced kickboxer will often want to experience his opponent up close (in-fighting). In-fighting is safer and more challenging for the experienced fighter and a place to be avoided for the beginner.

Summary

People who practice JKD do so with the desire to be combat effective. One way to experience and master the truth about combat is to spend many hours in functional, spontaneous, and unrehearsed contact sparring. As long as the fight takes place standing up, the person with contact experience will have the upper hand.

Becoming JKD means using whatever art or method is necessary to discover what works for you. Contact training is one giant step in learning to absorb what is useful, rejecting what doesn't work (for you), and discovering what is uniquely your own (JKD).