

HSFA Insider

Texas' Martial Arts News Source



Volume 3, Issue 2

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Any martial artist concerned with evolving their art for the better knows that self-examination is a never ending process. So in the spirit of the never ending pursuit of perfection in your art, I have to ask, what's up with your sticks?

Across different times and cultures, warriors have preferred to carry into battle a primary weapon that was fitted to their personal tastes and dimensions. So why do so many modern Filipino systems set a standard for their stick sizes? In a modern American school it wouldn't be uncommon to find students that range between 5'6 130 lbs. to 6'2 240 lbs. Why should two students who are so radically different in size use an identical weapon to train with? If you knew your students were likely to be in a life and death situation in the very near future, wouldn't you want them to be equipped with the best possible tool for their survival? The beginning students on the other hand might benefit more from choosing the right size stick to train with from the start. Now, I definitely believe that a practitioner should experiment with sticks of different diameter, length, and weight. In fact most of the long-time arnisadors I've known have built up quite a collection of different sticks and various impact weapons over their

What's Up With Your Sticks?

careers. My suggestion is to keep a collection of sticks that are in the size range of what you feel comfortable teaching and matching your students up with the stick that fits them best. I know some systems teach techniques that simply can't be done properly with sticks that are too small or too large. I'm not suggesting doing away with these techniques but simply re-categorizing them in a way that best fits your art. Sometimes this creates sub-systems in your art, such as small stick and big stick techniques.

While we are on the subject of sticks, let me talk to you "My stick is a sword" people. The history of why practitioners of Filipino martial arts use a stick instead of a sword is well known, but it's now 2018, and you can now buy sword trainers on the internet made of wood, aluminum, steel, and various types of synthetics and plastics. Making your own training swords isn't out of the question either, which can be especially useful for those people who have rare sword types in their systems. Bringing your students together to make your own training blades could be a good time for you and them to bond as a tribe. The advantages of using a training sword should be pretty obvious; you can get a better feel for the weight of a real weapon and properly index where the

edge is on your angles of attack. Sword trainers are also a good way to teach new students the proper mechanics of how to swing their weapon properly on those angles. The down side of the sword trainer is that if you want to spar with your swords at full strength and speed (and you do want to spar hard right?), then you're going to need better protective gear. Better protective gear can be very cost prohibitive, but slowly gaining the pieces you need over time should be worth what you gain in knowledge in the long run. If your reason for continuing to use a stick is solely about tradition, remember that there is a larger tradition in the Filipino martial arts and that's one of practicality. The students and masters that came before us only began to use sticks instead of swords out of necessity, not because the stick was something special to them.

Well, I hope this has given you something to think about when it comes to your choice of training tools. If you're already doing these things, then I applaud you, and I'm curious what your results have been. Also, if you're thinking of making some changes, feel free to drop me a line and we can compare notes. Thanks for reading.

- Billy Atwood, Davis Martial Arts Academy.

School Spotlight — F3 Cross Training

F3 Cross Training provides a unique program incorporating fully functional fitness as a training staple. Their Group Fitness and Powerflow Kickboxing workouts are strategically planned to challenge your body in ways that will optimize your fitness, strength, speed, and agility with a maximum calorie burn. They pride themselves in offering a dynamic and varied fitness program.

“We are proud to say we offer more variety of training than any other Houston gym. We don't get our WODs from a franchised website, and we have

not done the same workout of the day in three years! Our programming is designed by a professionally trained personal trainer with a Master's Degree in Human Performance.”

F3 has two locations in the Houston area: their 2012 Center St. location and their (EaDo) location at 912 Saint Charles.

Check out their website for more details —

www.f3crosstraining.com



Recommended Reading — Facing Violence, Rory Miller

This book stands alone as an introduction to the context of self-defense. There are seven elements that must be addressed to bring self-defense training to something approaching 'complete.' Any training that dismisses any of these areas leaves you vulnerable.

1. Legal and ethical implications. A student learning self-defense must learn force law. Otherwise it is possible to train to go to prison. Side by side with the legal rules, every student must explore his or her own ethical limitations. Most do not really know where this ethical line lies within them.
2. Violence dynamics. Self-

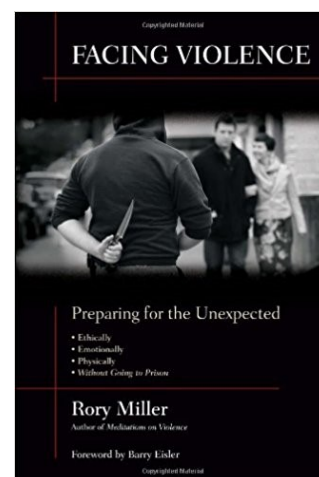
defense must teach how attacks happen. Students must be able to recognize an attack before it happens and know what kind they are facing.

3. Avoidance. Students need to learn and practice not fighting. Learning includes escape and evasion, verbal de-escalation, and also pure-not-be there avoidance.
4. Counter-ambush. If the student didn't see the precursors or couldn't successfully avoid the encounter he or she will need a handful of actions trained to reflex level for a sudden violent attack.
5. Breaking the freeze. Freezing is almost universal in a sudden

attack. Students must learn to recognize a freeze and break out of one.

6. The fight itself. Most martial arts and self-defense instructors concentrate their time right here. What is taught just needs to be in line with how violence happens in the world.
7. The aftermath. There are potential legal, psychological, and medical effects of engaging in violence no matter how justified. Advanced preparation is critical.

Any teacher or student of self-defense, anyone interested in self-defense, and any person who desires a deeper understanding of violence needs to read this book.



Performing Under Pressure

“Even though there are no trophies, winners, or losers at a Gathering, there is still that internal drive to do your best...”

I was attending one of my son’s soccer games this Spring season and noticed something about the amount of time players got to play. Now, this article is not about “fair play” or “everyone gets a trophy”. It is about how without actual gameplay experience, one cannot truly know how well their skills hold up from practice, no matter how long or often the practice. After the game I, asked the coach why certain kids only played for a few minutes while other kids played for the entire hour long game. He was unable to answer and only stuttered profusely. I didn’t get angry or even aggravated that my son was one of the kids that played for a short amount of time that one game. It reinforced my resolve of the Houston Stick Fighting Association and what it stands for at it’s core.

HSFA stands for elevating One’s martial arts in a combative environment. Now, I understand that the goal of sports is to win, and winning is much better than losing. We won that game by the way. In soccer, you can practice drills, skills, and techniques all day long, but without

another team to play against, you cannot hone those skills in the adrenaline filled nature that is needed to see how your skills hold up under pressure against someone who wants to win the game just like you do. HSFA is a suitable place to test your skills under pressure and against an opponent who wishes to come out not looking like a fool who got their ass handed to them by someone else. Even though there are no trophies, winners, or losers at a Gathering, there is still that internal drive to do your best, that part of you that wants to walk away from the match going, “Yeah, I got him more than he got me.” If you do not acknowledge that you are lying to yourself. One of greatest things about a Gathering is that your only true opponent is yourself, not the person you are facing off against in that 2-minute round. You cannot truly test yourself practicing techniques and blocks against a classmate who knows what you’re trying to achieve and lets you so you can get the reps in. You need someone in your face who does not want you to get that technique or does not want you to pull off that block or deflect. They want their technique,

block, or deflect to work against you. Plus, not every martial arts school, style or system has the exact same drills, skills, and techniques as the one you train in.

You need that uncooperative opponent from another school, style, or system than you to test you and to test you in an environment different from practice/training. You need that other person coming at you with the same intent and purpose that you have. Yes, there are no trophies, no ribbons, no winners or losers at a Gathering, but there is personal growth. Personal growth in your skills, abilities, and confidence in yourself. Without that pressure testing, you will never know if what you are practicing/ training is working and what you need to work on to be a better version of yourself.

- Jason Evans,

Houston Martial Arts Academy

Hip’s Fit Corner - Weighted Vest Training

Back in the day (actually years) ankle weights were the rage. Just about every sport had training routines involving these ankle weights. The idea was by performing specific skills with added weight the level of performance was enhanced after training with them. The problem was the placement of the

weights at the lower leg level led to a changed movement pattern. A pattern that eventually became a detriment to performance and possibly led to injury.

Nowadays, we know better. The weighted vest focuses all the extra weight in the core area and allows for

complete freedom of movement of the limbs. Using the vest, an athlete can perform specific skills with added weight and not have to worry about possible injury from the knee and ankle. In Filipino martial arts, the vest can be used in footwork drills as well as sparring. The body re-

sponds to this training by strengthening neuromuscular connections. This leads to faster movement with more power added to it. Basically, you become more athletic, which will make you a better fighter.

- Hip

Instructor Spotlight — Sean Lester, F3 Cross Training

It seemed a natural transition to go into personal training. My first job was lifeguarding and I began to compete in lifeguarding competitions. The thing that drew me into personal training and instructing people was the ability to make a change for someone that for them could be drastic. I enjoy watching my clients achieving goals.

My first job personal training was in 1992 at a fitness facility in La Porte, Texas. I don't exactly know how I got all the energy, but I was on a mission then. I was going to college, personal training, teaching water aerobics (of all things), bouncing at a Tejano club, training and teaching two systems of kung fu, and competing nationally in N.A.S.K.A. (North American Sport Karate Association). My mind at that time almost completely submersed and transforming my mind and my body.

There has been a long path since I was young when it has come to athleticism and training my body. I have trained off and on since I was a child in different forms of martial arts ranging from Karate, Aikido, five systems kung fu (primarily seven Star Praying Mantis and Wah Lum kung fu), three systems of Jujitsu, Muay Thai, MMA, FMA, and Krav Maga. It seems like so many systems, but when you consider most of those systems I've spent the last 29 years studying, it makes more sense. I honed a lot of my skills mentally and physically bouncing at clubs for 12 years in Houston. Those years of training lead me to what I study now in Muay Thai, Krav Maga, and combative shooting. I have trained extensively with 360 tactical and combative shooting and have been lucky enough to also train with Travis Haley, formally of Magpul. Just as your everyday life goes through changes, so did my experiences and goals

for my martial art training along with my concept of athleticism.

My training and certifications vary quite a bit because my goal was more of a combat IQ yearning along with manipulating my body in a similar fashion. I was awarded the national championship in two different divisions in 1993 and 1994 in N.A.S.K.A. thanks to sponsorships. I have a Masters in Strength and Conditioning, and I had the honor to study under Dr. Coleman, who trained the Astros for over 30 years. I was also fortunate enough to assist in training the Houston Rockets and Houston Comets under their head coach Anthony Falsone in 1996 and 1997.

I found that all of my previous experience leads me to share with my clients' form of training that you can seldom get anywhere else. I've trained with so many instructors in so many forms of physical training, but I have also made many mistakes

and learn from others mistakes as well. I feel my clients get the opportunity to learn with more pure and thorough intent because of my knowledge and past experience.

To see as they say, "the lightbulb go off" with the client and see results that they try to achieve in the past but couldn't is one of the most rewarding things as a personal trainer. To bring a smile to an achieving client because of something that you showed or allowed them to find the path that accomplished their goal lets me know I'm doing something good and right.

I feel like you don't need to search out a key to success if you're training people in something that you cherish yourself; I feel nothing but good things can happen.



Apparel designs inspired by Filipino culture,
simple countryside life,
past times, crafts and the great outdoors
in a comic book art style.

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Linear and Spherical Arts?

Martial art systems develop through outside circumstances more so than personal growth. An artist may really like doing jumping and spinning kicks, but if they live in a rain forest and there's always mud on the ground, spending years developing a jumping spinning hook kick is useless. Or if a martial artist likes low stances and doing punches to the body, but they live in Alaska where most of the year people wear thermal underwear, a sweater, a hoodie, and a heavy coat, all at the same time, their punches won't have the same effect as leg kicks or grappling techniques. So, systems grow from what's happening around you. Southern Chinese systems don't have long, deep stances because of the crowds in the cities. Japanese systems may have rooted stances because their practitioners had to bury

their feet into the ground, in a field where they're planting a crop. Obviously, today, we can search out almost any system we're interested in and what we train in is more personal than practical, but the systems we choose normally have a root someplace other than just a martial art school where everyone's having fun. This brings us to using straight lines in our system or using circles. Is one better than the other? Which has more power? Which is faster? Which better fits what you want it for? All systems use portions of each, but many have their foundations in one or the other. Although both have their uses, and some can be applied in any situation, I personally believe that linear systems are easier for begin-

ners to learn and develop power from, while spherical systems require more balance and strength. The quickest distance between 2 points is a straight line. That's simple to remember. If your hand or foot draws a straight path and then at the last moment your entire body snaps into place behind your technique, there's an amazing amount of power there. On the other hand, as a student progresses and starts to gain balance, focus, timing, and strength, circles come into play. As momentum builds through a swinging strike or sweeping step, an opponent has a harder time absorbing the energy from the motion. As a fighter progresses...in either method of combat...being able to turn a cir-

cular strike into a straight line attack or moving in a direct path and then circling to another target, becomes confusing to an opponent. There's little to compare to the expression on someone's face as they prepare to defend against one attack and at the last moment, something totally different hits them that they just weren't prepared for. So whichever system you practice, blending these two motions together is a fun way to enhance your training into something different than what you started with.

Curt Doyle,
NASDI

Upcoming Events



2nd Quarter Gathering will be held in September, with a date and location TBD



Past Events



1st Quarter Gathering was held on June 16, 2018 at Graci Barra Westchase. 11 participants had over 19 matches. This gathering saw people from multiple schools get together and trade ideas, philosophies, and strikes.

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[htownstickfights](https://www.instagram.com/htownstickfights)



[JasonREvans](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCv8v8v8v8v8v8v8v8v8v8v8)

The Houston Stick Fighting Association ("HSFA") founded in 2006 is an association for like-minded martial artists that engage in simulated combat to test and improve their skills in the blade-based and stick-based fighting arts. Membership in HSFA is open to martial artists of all styles, all systems, of all ages, from beginner to advanced levels. Members of the HSFA are striving to develop and improve their skills through simulated combat to see what works and what does not with a resisting opponent. Along the way, we build friendships and camaraderie with our sparring partners and share our respective arts with each other.

Schools - Associated with Houston Stick Fighting Association

[Houston Martial Arts Academy](#)

[Ground Dwellers BJJ](#)

DAMAG-INC Kali Combatives

Combat Nation

[Texas Jeet Kun Do](#)

Southeast Texas Escrimadors

Westchase Warriors GB Westchase

[TX 3rd Coast MMA](#)

North American Self Defense Institute

SwordtoSword

