

## *The Doc Is In :*

# More Keys To Improving Your Game

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In the May issue of IKF, I wrote a column entitled "Keys To Improving Your Game." The response to that article was positive, and the request for a follow-up, gratifying.

In all probability, most people who decide to learn martial arts do so with the goal of learning how to defend themselves. A secondary consideration may well be the desire to lose weight and get in shape. It is unlikely that most are even remotely aware that, to study martial arts is to learn some of the most important lessons life has to offer.

The first lesson is this; you are who you are because of the decisions you make. For example, if you choose not to study for a test in school and fail, it is your decision. If you decide not to practice leg-checking low-kicks and then sustain injuries when sparring, it is your decision. If you choose not to practice how to properly execute a basic side fall, back fall, forward or back roll taught in judo class, you will be injured, and, once again, it is your decision.

The second lesson; you are where you are in life because of the decisions you make. For example, if you fail enough tests in school, you will not graduate. If so, in all likelihood, you will have a difficult time finding a decent paying job. In the martial arts, not learning the blocks, falls, and rolls will not only result in injury and pain, but you will not progress through the various belt ranks. Injury and pain, plus failing to advance will probably result in quitting. Failing and quitting will chip away at your confidence, self-respect, and self-image.

The third lesson; you will be held accountable for your actions, even if you

choose not to hold yourself accountable. At home, your parents will hold you accountable. In school, your teachers will hold you accountable. On the job, your employer will hold you accountable. In the martial arts, your instructors will hold you accountable. In the ring, your opponent will hold you accountable. If all of them fail to hold you accountable, at some point, it is possible that the law will hold you accountable. *WINNERS HOLD THEMSELVES ACCOUNTABLE!*

Here are some sparring techniques that if practiced will make you a better fighter. Are you ready to be a winner? The choice is yours!

Your jab sets-up your offense and keeps your opponent off balance. Keep your opponent at the end of your jab. Practice doubling and tripling your jabs. Angle your jabs; jab the center of the chin, then the side, and then the center once again. Turn your jab into a punch by stepping with it and through your opponent. Also, think of your front kick as a long-range jab.

Don't load up on every punch or kick! Doing so will not only drain your energy, but will leave you vulnerable to counterpunches. Move your head after throwing a punch. Make your opponent work for his shot. If he likes to load up with left-hooks and overhand rights, your best friend is an inside leg kick to his lead leg.

Stalk your opponent, don't chase him! Learn to move in inches not yards. Learn to move with a purpose. Never move straight back! Since your opponent can move faster going forward than you can going backward, you will get knocked down.

Don't become a predictable fighter! Learn how to change the speed and angle of your punches and kicks. Staggering the rhythm of your attack will prevent being timed and countered. Don't pace your combinations, explode into your opponent with them.

Learn the art of feinting! It's an excellent tool for creating open targets. Learn to spot two and three openings at a time.

The best way to practice each of the above techniques is the same way you would eat an elephant, one bite at a time. Each time you enter the ring do so with a plan and purpose. Take one technique at a time and concentrate on making it happen during each sparring session. As you become more comfortable with each technique, move on to the next.

When all else fails, remember the motto of champions, "when in doubt, duck."

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