

## LETTER FROM THE EDITORS

By Shir Konas

### HOCKEY AND MMA???

Lately I've been hearing more and more about professional athletes training in traditional martial arts and modern MMA.

At first, I had warm and "fuzzy" feelings at the thought that today's athletes are so open minded, inquisitive and disciplined to pick up a martial art. But as I've been discovering more and more Football, Hockey and even Basketball players that take their martial arts training seriously I started to suspect that there's more to the phenomenon than just a downtime activity or interest.

Recently, a friend sent me a link to an interesting article on a site called MMA on Tap ([www.mmaontap.com](http://www.mmaontap.com)); The article talks about how martial arts, and specifically MMA because of the media attention of late, are getting a lot of respect from athletes of other sports that are considered more "violent." Quote from *The Globe and Mail*, from an article about Hockey player Riley Cote (Philadelphia Flyers):

"It's a sentiment shared by many of the toughest players in the NHL. The growth of the UFC has earned the sport many fans in dressing rooms around the league. It's also earned MMA fighters a lot of respect from NHLers.

Even the worst UFC fighter that there is would beat me because of their training," said Pittsburgh Penguins enforcer Georges Laraque. "It's so much harder than anything I've ever seen. I'm a fighter, so I know how hard they work and I know how hard it is to go against someone."

According to the article, Cote supplements his on-ice fighting with MMA training. Cote says: "I've dabbled with mixed martial arts and Brazilian jiu-jitsu... I did that for training and conditioning, getting my hands going. I'm just trying to get an edge. I'm going to do the most I can to keep my job and be the best at my job."

MMA isn't the only martial training that athletes focus on, however. Many NFL players spend hours in the boxing ring, training with some of the best boxing trainers out there; Others, like Football player Amani Toomer (NY Giants), train in more traditional styles like Kung-Fu.

So yes, there definitely is an open mindedness happening here, but more than anything else it is a smart business decision for any serious athlete to add martial arts practice to their training schedule, to give them a significant advantage and help them become even better in their respective sports.

Keep your game sharp (and your guard up...!),

Shir



## QUALITY OF LIFE

By John Peponias

**An 8-Part Series on some of the factors that can significantly impact the quality of your years.**

### PART III: SURROUNDING YOURSELF WITH POSITIVE INFLUENCES

Considering the dozens of books, motivational seminars, and articles written on this subject, there is certainly something to be said for how significant an impact this principle can make in your life. Take a moment and think about how this information and its' practice can affect and enhance your life.

There is an old adage that says, "Show me your friends, and I'll tell you who you are." Basically, you are a product of the company you keep.

The people you spend time with at work and in your leisure hours have the greatest influence on your mind. They also have the most profound affect on what you can ultimately achieve. These associations are mostly referred to as positive and negative, or sometimes you may hear "nourishing" and "toxic" relationships.

An ideal friendship or relationship is one that offers support, encouragement, and reinforcement in tough times, reminds you of your strengths when you lose sight of them, and can provide insight and sound advice when you've simply lost your way. People that are positive or nourishing influences in your life should also inspire you to reach greater heights, and are also more than likely the ones that are the most fun to be with when times are good.

Negative or toxic friendships are ones that simply seem to drag you down. These relationships are just down-right exhausting, and extremely taxing on your energy levels. These people always seem to be downbeat, glum, unenthusiastic, and tend to have a generally pessimistic outlook on life or when facing challenging times. It is difficult to maintain this type of association or friendship and you will find it often times to be unconstructive and draining. Inevitably, these people will bring you down to their level! Please know, I am not saying that a person you consider to be a friend who is this way should not receive your help and support, but you really should be careful to manage or regulate the amount of time you invest these friendships.

Even the most positive persons can be de-energized by negative people. Examine your friendships and associations closely, and make it your responsibility to surround yourself with upbeat, supportive, constructive, and positive or nourishing people. In addition, thinking positively and being optimistic will help you to overcome difficult problems by allowing you to view things more objectively.

Finally, remember one other simple notion. Like minds attract! If you are positive, you will attract more positive people to you. Conversely, if you are negative, you can expect to attract negative people.

Make it a point to surround yourself with positive influences and people. This principle is sure to have a profound impact on your quality of life, and your ultimate success.



## WORTH THE REPS\*

Story and Illustrations by Luis Bonnet

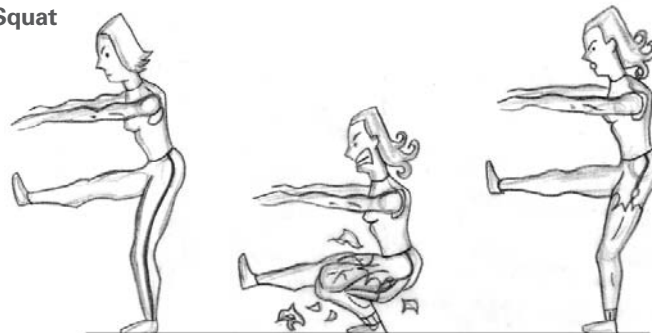


Luis Bonnet

### SPICE UP YOUR WORKOUT

When looking for something extra to add to your routine, try one of the following exercises. These can be done with or without added weight:

#### Single-Leg Squat



#### 1. Single Leg Squats

A great exercise for building strength and balance. It's an advanced exercise, which can be done without any weights. To start you can use a sturdy object to hold on to. If you are squatting on your left leg you can hold on to an object with your right arm. Another good way to help you balance your weight on the way down is to hold your arms straight out in front of you.

#### 2. Squat Jump

This is a great explosive exercise to help develop agility. To perform this exercise you want to execute a half squat keeping your hands behind your head. Leaving your hands behind your head, jump as high as you can in the air. Land with control and repeat with another squat.

#### 3. Duck Walk

Squat down onto the floor as low as you can go. Keep your hands behind your head. Make sure to lean your bodyweight forward. What you want to do is walk forward keeping your body close to the floor. Make sure as you step that you plant each foot flat on the ground before you make your next step.

\* For more exercises please visit our Archives at [www.better-human.com](http://www.better-human.com)

Luis Bonnet is a 2nd Degree certified Kung-Fu Instructor with over a decade of experience in traditional Kung-Fu Wu-Su. Years of experimentation and a rich personal training history inspire his workouts. Luis is also an illustrator versed in the usage of traditional and digital mediums. His work can be viewed at [www.luis.xbuild.com](http://www.luis.xbuild.com).





## IN COMBAT CONDITION

By First Lieutenant Jennifer Sheringham



Jennifer Sheringham

### MAKING CHOICES IN THE COMBAT ZONE

Staying fit and eating healthy is tough if you are an individual who is on the go and have to juggle a career, a mortgage, household tasks, a social life and a family life. Occasionally, working-out is the last thing on your mind. Everyone today understands the importance of staying healthy and eating right, but what happens when you are a Soldier in a combat zone?

The American military creates standards, and expects every Soldier to maintain a top physical fitness routine. As a rule, the United States Army conducts Army Physical Fitness Tests (APFT), semi-annually. The APFT gauges the progress and even maintenance of a Soldier's readiness and basic health. For Commissioned Officers it is a huge indicator of discipline. During wartime deployment, how is it possible to maintain a healthy lifestyle and uphold the Army Standards?

Most Soldiers work a twelve-hour day, sometimes more, and may not even get a day off. During Soldiers' non-work hours they want to sleep. Healthy nutrition choices are not abundant at the Chow Hall. The Chow Hall generally serves fried food, oily rations or canned goods packed with not-so-healthy ingredients. Another huge factor that adds an element of nutritional danger and disrupts the healthy lifestyle are the countless care packages that come in. Care packages always contain perfect homemade American baked cookies and extra double fudge brownies! They are greatly appreciated but, you can easily see how the cycle can turn against us in a deliciously ugly way!

Our current environment is no picnic either. The ground consists of gravel, fine baby powder sand, and slippery muddy clay, which prevent us from running outdoors. Some Forwards Operating Bases (FOBs) have gyms, but those are crowded. Picture yourself stopping in the middle of a rep to let another gym member squeeze by you in order to get to a piece of equipment. Weightlifting becomes exceptionally impractical.

As a First Lieutenant, Certified Personal Trainer and Certified Group Instructor, I must keep myself disciplined and keep my troops actively wanting to improve physically. This at first it was a very difficult task.





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## IN COMBAT CONDITION (Cont'd)

By First Lieutenant Jennifer Sheringham



Jennifer Sheringham

Currently my unit is stationed at FOB Stryker located on Baghdad International Airport. When we first arrived here, there were two gyms. Recently one gym closed while contractors started building a larger gym that will not be open for one to two more months. The craving for weight training gets on our nerves because we literally cannot move. So how have I mitigated the risks of becoming idle when it comes to Physical Fitness? Get a friend or a Personal Trainer, it motivates. Working in a group has kept others from interfering in our workout space.

Sometimes our care packages are better than fudge brownies. Recently my friend and mentor, Dave Bluman (see the article in Gym Rat) sent me two stability balls. Stability balls are a great tool as they amplify any workout when incorporated.

After our twelve hour work cycle, I bring my two Soldiers to the gym and perform two/four circuit training stations in which we do three iterations or sets. We have only racked up about eight exercises per day but a variety of different exercises to keep it fun. It's great because for that 45 minute time frame, we are keeping our heart rates up. I have also integrated Dave B's homework technique in which I have my Soldiers do cardio training on their own, approximately 30-60 minutes per day plus intervals.

Working out in a group injected great energy into my Soldiers. I am now noticing that it has even affected their daily eating choices. They are avoiding the dangers of fried food and baked goods. It also helps them deal with combat stress, and I believe that this has helped my Soldiers cope mentally and emotionally with being away from their families and children.

If you think you have it hard, do not make excuses not to stay healthy, because even in Iraq we maintain a healthy lifestyle, and with the odds against us. **YOU ARE FREE TO MAKE YOUR OWN CHOICES MAKE NO EXCUSES!**

*Jennifer Sheringham is a Lieutenant in the US Army National Guard and has been in military service for more than six years. She has a Bachelor's Degree in Business Management and is working on a Master's Degree in Homeland Security. She is an ECITS Certified Personal Trainer and Group Fitness Instructor and creates programming for Kettlebell Concepts. Jennifer has made her passion for fitness her own personal mission. She was a competitive gymnast for eight years and has incorporated belly dancing, martial arts, and a sports-specific training regimen in preparation for several fitness competitions prior to deployment.*



## FIGHT DIET

By Blake Baxter, HHC

### NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTION? SLOW DOWN.

It's 2009. For many people, getting in shape and losing weight will rank high on their list of New Year's Resolutions. Before you jump into any drastic changes, altering your diet in masochistic acts of self-denial and self-deprivation, allow me to suggest two very simple, easy-to-implement, changes that will help you lose weight and get in shape.

**1) Eat Slower.** It's very simple. The slower you eat, the less you eat - without feeling hungry or as if you've denied yourself something you enjoy. This is a very simple exercise, and all it takes is two very simple actions:

- a. Put your fork down between bites
- b. Chew.

That's it. Most of the time we eat much too quickly, chewing just enough to allow us to swallow, before picking up the next bite and shoveling it in. Slow down. Take a bite, put down your fork, and chew until there is almost nothing solid left in your mouth, then swallow. This allows you to feel full sooner, and digest your food more readily, giving you more energy and power from less fuel. You will find that you are able to eat less without feeling hungry if you just eat slower.

This may take a little adjustment. In the beginning, you may find that you're not actually as good at chewing as you think you are. You're jaw may become tired and you may bite your tongue or other parts of your mouth as you eat. You're out of practice! That's OK, you'll adjust quickly. You may also find, when eating with others, that they are done eating much sooner than you are. When I eat lunch with my co-workers, they are usually finished eating in half the time it takes me. And I end up eating less.

There's no shame in leaving a little food on your plate if you are no longer hungry. Save it for later or dispose of it, it's better than eating more than you need. When eating at a restaurant, it is almost inevitable (in the United States at least) that you are going to be served more than you need. Food portions in the U.S. are enormous. Don't be misled, you don't need that much food at every meal. A supersized "meal" at a fast food establishment will most likely deliver more than enough calories for an entire day's sustenance.

So, put down your fork between bites and chew your food thoroughly. This will help you gain control over your appetite quickly and effectively.



## FIGHT DIET (Cont'd)

By Blake Baxter, HHC

**2) Drink water.** Review my article from the May 2008 issue of Better Human. Start to replace sodas and other beverages with water at every meal. Drinking water not only helps you stay hydrated and perform better, it helps you digest your food, feel full, and eliminate empty calories by replacing sugary sodas with something you were actually designed to digest. Also, drinking diet soda is not a substitute for water, just because it may have no calories. Diet soda is filled with artificial ingredients you were not designed to absorb. In addition, some studies have found that simply tasting something sweet, even if it has no calories, creates a carbohydrate craving. This makes it difficult to manage your appetite, and causes your organs to prepare for digestion of carbohydrates when none are being eaten. It's not nice to fool your body like that.

Most diets will not emphasize the importance of drinking water when you eat and throughout the day. Start to think about where you get your water, and think about investing in a water filtration device or entire system. This doesn't have to be an expensive endeavor: a basic pitcher-style water filter costs between \$15.00 and \$40.00, with the filters running about \$5.00 a month. This is not a major expense when you consider what a liter of soda costs (both in terms of your pocketbook and your health!)

In addition to your basic water requirements, try some sparkling mineral water, or a club soda with lemon, at your next meal, rather than soda. As an experiment, go to the market and pick up several bottles of different types of mineral waters. Sit, relax and sample each one, as if you were tasting wine. You may be surprised to find that the waters have different tastes and "feels". Learn to enjoy water, ask for it whenever you eat at a restaurant and always have fresh, filtered water available at home.

Eat more slowly and drink more water. These are two, very simple, low-cost, resolutions you can adopt for 2009. You will find them easy-to-do and infinitely beneficial to your health.

*Blake Baxter is a Holistic Health Counselor and Kung-Fu instructor. He works with other martial artists to help them incorporate better eating practices and create awareness about the ways in which food impacts performance and recovery.*





## THE NEUTRAL CORNER

By Terry Southerland



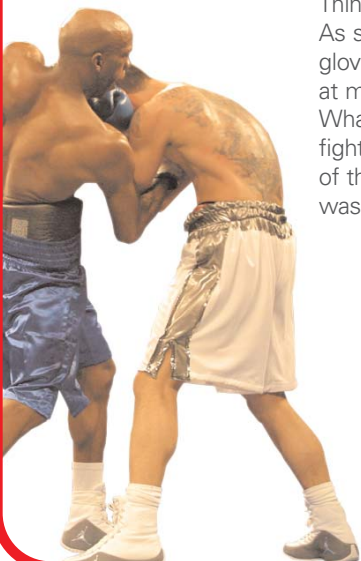
Terry Southerland

### TOP DOWN / BOTTOM UP?

I was always taught that boxing was a sport that was 75% Mental, and 25% Physical. Even though it is a physically demanding sport, when you get in the ring, you both have two arms and two legs. Needless to say, it's what each person chooses to do with those limbs that makes ALL of the difference. All of the movements are controlled by the mind. Oftentimes, the mind during a match is controlled by emotions.

The very first crucial lesson I learned in Boxing, was explained as "Control your emotions, Control your world!" I was in my first tournament, and I was fighting a kid that was really a dirty fighter. He was a very tough Mexican fighter from California. He was full of elbows, knees, shoulders, and anything else that was illegal in amateur boxing. The first two rounds were this close and I needed to do something to pull away. My trainer, a legendary trainer from Cincinnati, named Mazaughn Kemp, told me when I came back to the corner before the final round: "When you get in the clinches, call him a "Putá!" I had no idea what "Putá" was, but whatever my trainer said to do, I did. Almost immediately we got into the clinches. I called the kid a "Putá," and he went ballistic. He got so angry that he chased me with so much rage, that without even realizing it, the fight was changing. He no longer cared what I threw at him, thus, not being able to avoid the many jabs and straight rights I placed on his head. Pretty soon his mouth was wide open and he was sucking air, trying to avoid the uppercuts I was throwing when he tried to go underneath my jab. The point was: He stopped thinking. We all know—the fighter who cannot think, loses. This was a lesson that stayed with me for many years. In fact, it caused me to clown many fighters when I was growing up. I would act like I might pull their shorts down in the clinches, stick my tongue out, and many times said crazy things in the clinches. Not surprising, most fighters talk crap in the clinches. All in the name of inducing anger. Getting in your opponent's head.

Think about it: Before Roy Jones Junior's first fight with Antonio Tarver, was Tarver in his head, or What? As soon as he called him out, asking "You got any excuses tonight Roy?," when they went to touch gloves, you knew it was over. For Roy not to say a word, you knew, the fight was over. Another master at mental warfare is in my opinion one of the greatest Middleweights that ever lived, Bernard Hopkins. What about when he threw the Puerto Rican flag to the ground while in Puerto Rico, promoting the fight between him and Tito Trinidad. Unsportsmanlike, yes. Risky, yes, considering that he had to run out of the stadium. But—given the pride that Tito, like just about any fighter, feels for his country—this move was ingenious.





## THE NEUTRAL CORNER (Cont'd)

By Terry Southerland



Terry Southerland

Those of course, are historical examples of external mental warfare. But let's think about Internal Mental warfare. YOUR mind. A very good friend of mine, Prince Charles Williams, held the Light Heavyweight belt for many years. He was fierce in the ring. I asked him once, where does all of that fierceness come from? Is there ever fear?? He said to me his affirmation, what he says to himself about 50 times a day while training is: No matter who he is facing, he is stronger, faster, and always a winner. He was such a strong fighter. And, because he was such a fighter, an opposing World Champion at the time who was standing next to him was shaking while taking promotional pictures. He could be Vicious.

One time I entered the locker room in Gleason's Gym, many years ago, while I was training. I noticed out of the corner of my eye that there was someone reading the bible with his locker open right next to mine. After I got dressed, he was still there and I noticed it was the legendary fighter Iran Barkley. I was a bit blown away. We had never met before. I said "Excuse me Iran, I hate to interrupt you reading the bible, but I have to say, before you started the fight with Tommy Hearns, you had the craziest look on your face. I've never seen anything like it. You have to tell me, where was your head at? What were you thinking about at that time??" Surprisingly enough, he had a very simple answer for me. He said: "I had just found God. I felt like no MAN could hurt me." Needless to say, I was surprised. Not that it came from him, and I grew up in a religious family so saying that it came from god didn't surprise me. What surprised me was that this was the source of all of what I thought was rage, when it was really just strength.

I have a very good friend named Maureen Shea. She is one of the top Jr. Lightweights and one of the most talented female fighters in the world. Before every fight she reads a book by Paulo Coelho called "Warrior of the Light - A manual". She says it relaxes her and reminds her every time that we are human. We can only do our best. It puts her mind in a place where she can do her very best. She says, "It's not the kind of book that you read cover to cover, but when going to battle anywhere in life, there is always something in there to encourage you." I've read parts of it, and it really is a remarkable text to take into battle.





## THE NEUTRAL CORNER (Cont'd)

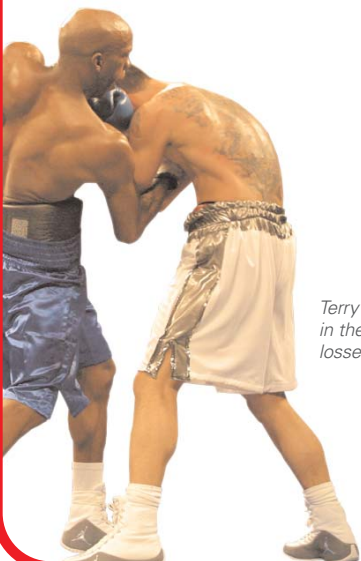
By Terry Southerland



Terry Southerland

Every one of us has to find his or her method of getting to that place where you can give it your very best. Whatever the method, it's all yours. Personally, isolation did that for me. My optimum training scenario would be to stay in a room filled with only books, boxing tapes, music, and myself. I would do nothing else after every run, or every training session but come back to my room and think boxing. Needless to say, I was a caged "Panther" when it was time to fight. My first professional trainer in Cincinnati (Ohio) was George Foster. He always made me go into a corner and visualize what I've worked on in training, and me doing the same things to my opponent. Isolation allowed me to go inside to find the dark place that I sometimes needed to be in for my fight. It was the total opposite of the gregarious personality that would be normal for me.

So, whether you're getting into your opponents head or dealing with your own, top down (head first), might be a good place to start. My challenge this time is for you to find that place or method needed to be your best in a match or fight. I would also love to hear from some of you, your methods and mental preparation. I'm sure that judging from past emails I received about previous articles, you'll all have much to say. Please feel free to write to me here to comment and tell me what you do, and how you get your mind ready. I will be posting some of my favorites, along with the names of the fighters who wrote them, in upcoming articles. You can reach me here at: [terry@better-human.com](mailto:terry@better-human.com).



*Terry Southerland was a 3 time National Champion, All Navy Champion, and winner of many International bouts, including participation in the first Goodwill Games representing the U.S. in 1986. Compiling an amateur record of 147 wins & 18 losses, and a professional record of 21 wins & 3 losses in his Boxing career.*





## NZ ON MARTIAL ARTS

By Neal Zephyrin



Neal Zephyrin

### THE 'CULTURE' OF MARTIAL ARTS: PART I

We previously defined Martial Arts as "being skilled in the relations of war ." We also defined a martial artist as "an individual who is skilled in the relations of war ".

War, in early history was "personal ." It was often fought in close range between warring factions and many times required proficiency in hand-to-hand combat. The common belief is that the first version of martial arts was a fighting system developed in Asia, more specifically China or Japan. While there is a definite truth to this assumption, it is somewhat limiting in its scope.

If we defined martial arts as being skilled in the relations of war, clearly Asia cannot be the sole originators, or practitioners of martial arts. That would mean that all other civilizations and cultures lived harmoniously with no wars or civil strife. History has successfully proven this not to be the case. While encyclopedic volumes have been written on the history of martial arts, the goal here is to only briefly touch upon the roots of martial arts in various cultures and subsequently the role of martial arts in our current culture.

Research indicates writing was invented in Sumer at about 3000 BCE. Earlier historic accounts were deciphered from hieroglyphics found in tombs in North Africa. These artifacts often displayed drawings of men kicking, punching and grappling, more specifically wrestling. Wrestling was the most popular martial arts of ancient cultures.

When we think of wrestling, we don't usually associate it directly with martial arts. It is more widely known as a sport. However, military officials in ancient civilizations had to be adept in wrestling as part of their military training, which makes wrestling's relation to war very significant. Based on the definition of martial art, this would qualify wrestling as such.

Wrestling flourished in the Middle and Far East. Accounts of wrestling matches in Babylonia and Assyria date back to 2000 BCE. In Mongolia, wrestling was practiced in religious festivals and Mongolian soldiers were required to learn it. In Eretria, a city on the Greek island Euboea, vases show well-drawn scenes of wrestling and Pankration. Accounts of East-Indian and Turkish martial arts predate the birth of Christ. (We will delve more into Indian martial arts in subsequent issues).



## NZ ON MARTIAL ARTS (Cont'd)

By Neal Zephyrin



Neal Zephyrin

Let's briefly look at the origins of the popularity of Asian (Chinese and Japanese) martial arts in the west.

Okinawa's first recorded contact with the Chinese was during the Sui Dynasty in 607 AD. However, because the Chinese were not able to understand the Okinawa dialect, they had returned without setting up any meaningful trade agreements. Then in 1372, four years after the Mongols fell to the forces of the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644), state representatives were sent to an Okinawan city to establish an alliance. In 1393, a Chinese mission was established in the capital of Okinawa, where Chinese immigrants had settled. This is important because it illustrates how the Chinese fighting traditions were first systematically transmitted in Okinawa.

In our next issue, we will continue on this brief cultural and historical journey of martial arts and their influence on the west.



Neal Zephyrin is a 3rd Degree Instructor at Alan Lee's Chinese Kung-Fu, Wu-Su Association. He has been studying martial arts for over 18 years. He is currently an AVP at an investment bank, and an assistant professor at a local college.





## KUNG-FU MASTER

By Master Robert Thomas



Master Robert Thomas

### TRADITIONAL MARTIAL ARTS (TMA) VS. MIXED MARTIAL ARTS (MMA)

I was speaking with one of my students a few weeks ago and he said that a friend of his exclaimed that Mixed Martial Arts (MMA) is better than Traditional Martial Arts (TMA) because of the now tired axiom that "All fights end up on the ground." He indicated if he had to have a fight on the street he would fare better than a traditional martial artist.

There are a number of misconceptions and problems with that statement. One, all fights do not end up on the ground. It is simply not true. Even if they do or a high percentage does, what does it matter? The fight could have ended on the ground because one person was knocked out and fell to the ground. In this case was the person who threw the knockout punch an MMA artist or a Boxer? If a Boxer, he has no ground fighting skills. Who knows or cares.

Let's break the statement down statistically and determine how the person ended up on the ground. Statements can be misleading. When the statement was originally uttered in the media, "All fights or 80 or 90 percent end up on the ground," the original intent of that statement was to infer all fights end up in a grapple, so a grappler had an advantage. This statement came out to hype a particular style of fighting. Show me the empirical study that proves the assertion to be true. Let us not blindly accept it and utter the phrase like automatons. This is a statement that was born out of a highly successful commercial phenomenon, called the Ultimate Fighting Championships or UFC. It pertained to Jiu Jitsu and not MMA in particular.

After so many UFC's, which is what influenced the current wave of interest in MMA fighting and spawned so many schools it has been proven that there is no one superior style.

Almost all so-called mixed martial artists participating in the UFC (today's Mecca for mixed martial artists), actually show a predilection for a particular style of fighting. Rarely in a contest do you see true mastery of Mixed Martial Arts. You will usually see one or the other of these during the contest, Sprawl and Brawl, Ground and Pound, Clinch or Submission style or straight Stand Up. The proponents of these different types of MMA styles will usually stick with the type they are best at, during the fight and from fight to fight.





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## KUNG-FU MASTER (Cont'd)

By Master Robert Thomas



Master Robert Thomas

A person may say that they would be crazy not to go with what works. But if you are not mixing it up all of the time, are you truly a mixed martial artist or a fighter who participates in a MMA contest? If the MMA fighter switched between one and another style of fighting effortlessly, then I would call what we see true MMA or at least we would see true MMA fighters, but most are not.

This defeats the argument that an MMA practitioner is better than a TMA practitioner, because most MMA fighters rely on one aspect of the art from a traditional root. My student's friend, who made the statement being discussed, is actually limiting the scope of MMA fighting because as indicated above, a true MMA fighter should have more versatility than to only have to win on the ground. The "All fights end up on the ground" mantra is good for Jiu Jitsu, but it is not a statement that should be made by an MMA fighter. If the greatest component, or sole component, of a practitioner's training is Jiu Jitsu—which is often times the case—then the person is not a true MMA fighter, but a Jiu Jitsu artist, and therefore a traditional martial artist, or someone utilizing most of their techniques from a traditional root.

So now the circle is complete...



*Master Robert Thomas has been a member of the Chinese Kung-Fu Wu-Su Association since 1974, where he currently holds the position of Kung-Fu Wu-Su Master Instructor and Co-Director. He has also served as an expert on the allexperts.com website for six years, February 2002 to February 2008, answering various questions concerning Chinese martial arts. Most recently Master Thomas was profiled in a documentary entitled "Natural Mystery," that aired on The Learning Channel (TLC) and was distributed worldwide. You can contact Master Thomas directly concerning martial arts issues at kungfuwusu@aol.com.*



## GYM RAT

By Shir Konas

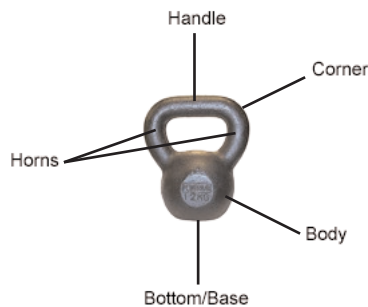


Shir Konas

### KETTLEBELLS: PART I – PREPARATION

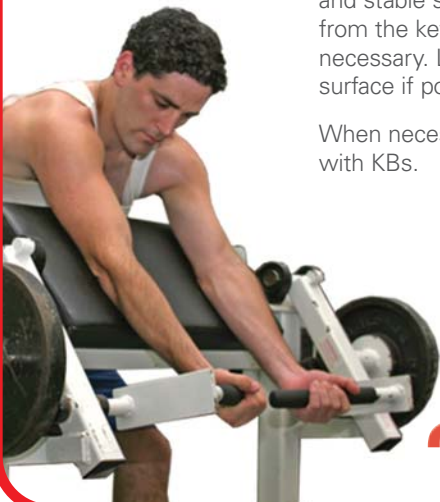
In the last issue, we introduced the Kettlebell, its history and benefits. Now, I'd like to present some basic facts that will help you better understand how to handle the Kettlebell.

For starters, let's look at the structure of this weight and its simple-yet-brilliant engineering:



Since kettlebells have a different center of gravity and are made of iron, one should always handle them with respect and caution. Before you learn how to perform any of the basic exercises, you should make sure your area is safe and clear of obstacles. You should have at least your height squared in space around you, and that others around you don't walk into that space while you're training, as they (and you!) can easily get injured if careless. You should wear comfortable but not baggy clothes, and flat-soled and stable shoes. It is not recommended to wear lifting gloves or anything that separates your hands from the kettlebell – you will develop calluses, and please don't pick at them – instead, file them if necessary. Lastly, KBs can be used almost anywhere, but it is recommended to work on a slightly softer surface if possible.

When necessary, use spotters, and make sure they are alert to your needs and understand how to work with KBs.



**GYM RAT (Cont'd)**

By Shir Konas



Shir Konas

**Other Ways to Hold the KB:**



KB top/bottom/  
side in palm



On fingertips



Bell up



KB forward



KB backward

Images courtesy of Kettlebell Concepts.

**Missing a Lift**

The use of a softer surface is recommended because you may need to drop the weight. If you're working on a surface that may cause for the KB to bounce back, please lower the KB in a quick yet controlled manner.

If you are too fatigued to keep the KB overhead or hold it during a swing, you will have to "miss":

> **KB Overhead** – Missing to the front. If the center of gravity is already forward of the body's midline, then the lift should be missed to the front by quickly guiding the fall of the KB back to the rack position, using the free hand to help catch and control the KB, or guiding the fall of the KB in a controlled manner to the ground/if necessary dropping the KB in front of the body while simultaneously moving the body backwards.

> **KB Overhead** – Missing to the back. If the center of gravity of the KB is already behind the body's midline, then the lift should be missed to the back by lowering, or if necessary dropping the KB in back of the body while simultaneously moving the body forward.

**Hand fatigue:** If the lifter's hand is fatiguing and cannot hold onto the KB, you should be able to feel this coming. Once you start feeling this is about to happen, you should end your set. If, however, the KB slips, it is important that there was enough concern given to space before you started! Do not use lotion or anything else that may decrease hand-KN friction just prior to a session. You may use chalk to keep hands dry and add friction.



## GYM RAT (cont'd)

By Shir Konas



Shir Konas

### Warming Up

In order to awaken your nervous system, as in any other type of exercise or training, it is necessary to warm up. A very useful method to warm up is active isolated flexibility: bringing the body segment to its stretch barrier (the end point of comfortable range of motion – see Sean’s stretching series in our first few issues of Better Human), then mechanically moving that segment slightly further into the range of motion, for no more than 2 seconds. This should be followed by some dynamic exercises when warming up, and by static stretches held for longer periods when cooling down.

Here are links to videos that show you how to miss and give you some warmup ideas as well, courtesy of David Bluman and Kettlebell Concepts:

### References

1. Cronin, Khai, Ganulin (2007) *Kettlebells Level 1 Instructor Training Manual*
2. To see a demonstration for this article, please visit [www.youtube.com/user/BetterHuman](http://www.youtube.com/user/BetterHuman). Kettlebell demos by David Bluman. To read more about David Bluman, visit [www.ri-pt.com/meetthetrainers.html](http://www.ri-pt.com/meetthetrainers.html)

For more information and workshop schedule, please visit [www.kettlebellconcepts.com/](http://www.kettlebellconcepts.com/)

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