

THE JKD FILTER

截拳道



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A JKD Wednesday Night Group Article

by Mike Blesch



Dedicated to Bob Bremer



Bob Bremer was/is the most important member of the JKD Wednesday Night Group.
It was Bob who made us really understand the meaning and
importance of daily decrease.

- Tim Tackett

By labeling Jeet Kune Do as “just a philosophy” with no curriculum or progression of techniques, we rob it of the technical merits of the material taught by its founder, Bruce Lee. On the other hand, by crystallizing the art as “only what Bruce Lee taught,” we deprive ourselves of the free expression and naturalness (or natural-unnaturalness!) advocated so strongly by Sijo Lee.

Our group does not believe that either approach is wholly correct. The Original JKD material (so-called) combined with the philosophical elements contained within Bruce Lee’s notes and writings provide a foundation upon which we build our own personal martial art. In our case, this is the origin of “Old School JKD.”

Using the principles laid out by Bruce Lee along with an understanding of the foundation and function of Jeet Kune Do, we can investigate other arts and draw out their essence. We call this the “JKD Filter.”



JACK OF ALL TRADES OR MASTER OF SOME?

Many will say that the only way to be a true martial artist is to train everything. Boxing, Wrestling, Jiu-Jitsu, and Judo for competition. Kali for weapons, Reality-based martial arts for self defense, and so on. All have been pressure tested and proven effective. No doubt. However, there are two significant questions that I feel every martial artist who cross-trains in this manner should ask himself:

1. Is it more efficient to flow from one art to another (and one delivery system to another) than to have a single platform from which I can utilize all of my attacks and defenses?
2. Does an accumulation of techniques make me a better fighter or would I benefit from limiting the amount of tools I train in order to hone each one to a very high level?

Time is every human beings most valuable asset. When taking into account that fighting arts like Boxing, Wrestling, or JKD require athletic ability which often begins to disappear as we reach middle age, efficient use of training time becomes critical. This is one of the reasons why daily decrease is such an important JKD principle. How can I perform the required repetitions to “master” any given technique if I’m spending my training time adding new techniques or practicing many different arts using different structures?





APPLYING THE JKD FILTER

We are always looking for a better way, trying to find more efficient tools and examining our own weaknesses. Constant research and experimentation are necessary. However, in order to get maximum benefit from our training time we must have some way of filtering a vast amount of material without having to train everything. In simple terms, this is how we analyze new material:

It's not what you can learn,
it's what you can throw away.

- Bruce Lee (to Bob Bremer)

- **Necessity** – Does it add something that is lacking from our game?
- **Structure** – Do we have to change our delivery system to accommodate the new technique or does it fit in with what we're already doing? A basic example of this would be a technique which doesn't work well from an unmatched stance (i.e. Right lead vs left lead) forcing us to change leads in order to use it and thereby negating the advantage of the dominant side forward structure and telegraphing our intent.
- **Adaptability** – How limited is its application? Will it work against different types of fighters? Against different methods of defense? Under less than ideal conditions?
- **Vulnerability** - Does it leave us exposed to counterattacks which may be more damaging than the initial attack we're defending against?

EXAMPLE 1

Some of the first techniques we added to our expression of Jeet Kune Do were elbow strikes from Muay Thai. This is the most basic example of tools which meet all of the above criteria. For demonstration purposes we will discuss only how these strikes fit into the JKD structure. Technical explanations of how to perform each technique are not necessary here.

It's worth noting that elbow strikes are close range tools that will most often be executed from a "compressed" Ready Stance. Naturally, as range is decreased hand position must be adjusted to provide defense against the opponents close range attacks. Without the distance and time required to intercept it no longer makes sense to extend the lead arm as far as we would in the typical Bai Jong.



DIAGONAL DOWN ELBOW



HORIZONTAL ELBOW



DIAGONAL UP ELBOW



VERTICAL ELBOW



(Note: Some JKD practitioners may prefer to use the diagonal, downward, and horizontal elbow strikes of the Wing Chun system instead.)

EXAMPLE 2

“Heavy” palm strikes generate tremendous power while reducing the risk of injuring your hands. Sifu Tim Tackett learned some of these techniques in Taiwan, while others came from an instructor in our group named Bert Poe.

PALM HOOK



PALM SMASH



WILLOW LEAF



SIDE PALM



EXAMPLE 3



On the street, we want to avoid going to the ground at all costs. Should we end up there, the objective is to damage the opponent and get back to our feet as quickly as possible. That said, it is still highly desirable for us to take the opponent to the ground and finish him while we remain standing and in the best possible position to deal with multiple attackers and ultimately to escape the situation altogether.

Let's look at a takedown that is often successful in MMA.

Any fighter who often throws fully committed lead hand strikes (like the JKD'er) needs to be aware of his or her own vulnerability to the type of entry used here. Jeremy Lynch uses Steven Resell's commitment against him by shooting under the punch, applying a body lock, and hooking the lead leg to execute a takedown. (This is a good example of why stop kicks are so important for bridging the gap)

When looking at this technique as a potential offensive tool we can quickly determine that it violates our structural principles (see the final photo of the sequence). Jeremy ends up on the ground along with Steven and does not have dominant position (half guard). In a no-rules environment this can be very dangerous due to the likelihood of Steven having a weapon, not to mention Jeremy being in a very bad position if there are multiple attackers to deal with. There are times when it may be necessary to take an opponent to the ground in order to neutralize a striking advantage for example (faster, longer reach, more skilled, etc.), but for us there are more efficient ways.

► Alternate angle view.



DISCARD, DE-EMPHASIZE, OR REPLACE?

Sometimes a technique that we really like may not pass through the filter. The question then becomes do we need to keep the technique if only to train against it? Even when the answer is no, we have still gained some experience from the process and will, at the very least, be more familiar with a technique which may be used against us.

Here's how we handled the 3 examples above:

Added	Discarded
Muay Thai Elbows	Tackle & Hook
Heavy Palm Strikes	

THE 80/20 RULE

Also known as the "Pareto principle," the 80/20 rule states that quite often 80% of your results will come from 20% of your efforts. Therefore, to achieve maximum results, you should spend 80% of your time on the 20% that matters. This is a very useful idea which has been applied successfully to numerous disciplines. For our group, it essentially functions as a 2nd level to the JKD filter by reminding us to focus on the core techniques and principles of JKD. The trick is figuring out exactly which techniques make up the vital 20% that will deliver 80% of the results.

Spend 80% of your
time on what you will
use 80% of the time.
- Tim Tackett

When it comes to combat sports like MMA and Boxing the task is somewhat simpler because of the detailed statistics available. We can discern that for a lightweight MMA fighter more fights are finished by submission than KO, so the fighters training habits need to reflect that. The opposite becomes true for the Welterweight class and above. Admittedly, there is more than one way to interpret the data (ie. Smaller fighters need to work on their punching power and larger fighters need to work on their submissions) but that isn't relevant to the current discussion.

In Boxing we find that the fighter that throws the most jabs usually wins. The trouble with a "street fighting" art like Jeet Kune Do is that there is no accurate way to obtain those types of statistics. Then how do we decide which techniques will be our primary responses (the vital 20%)?

The solution for us has been threefold:

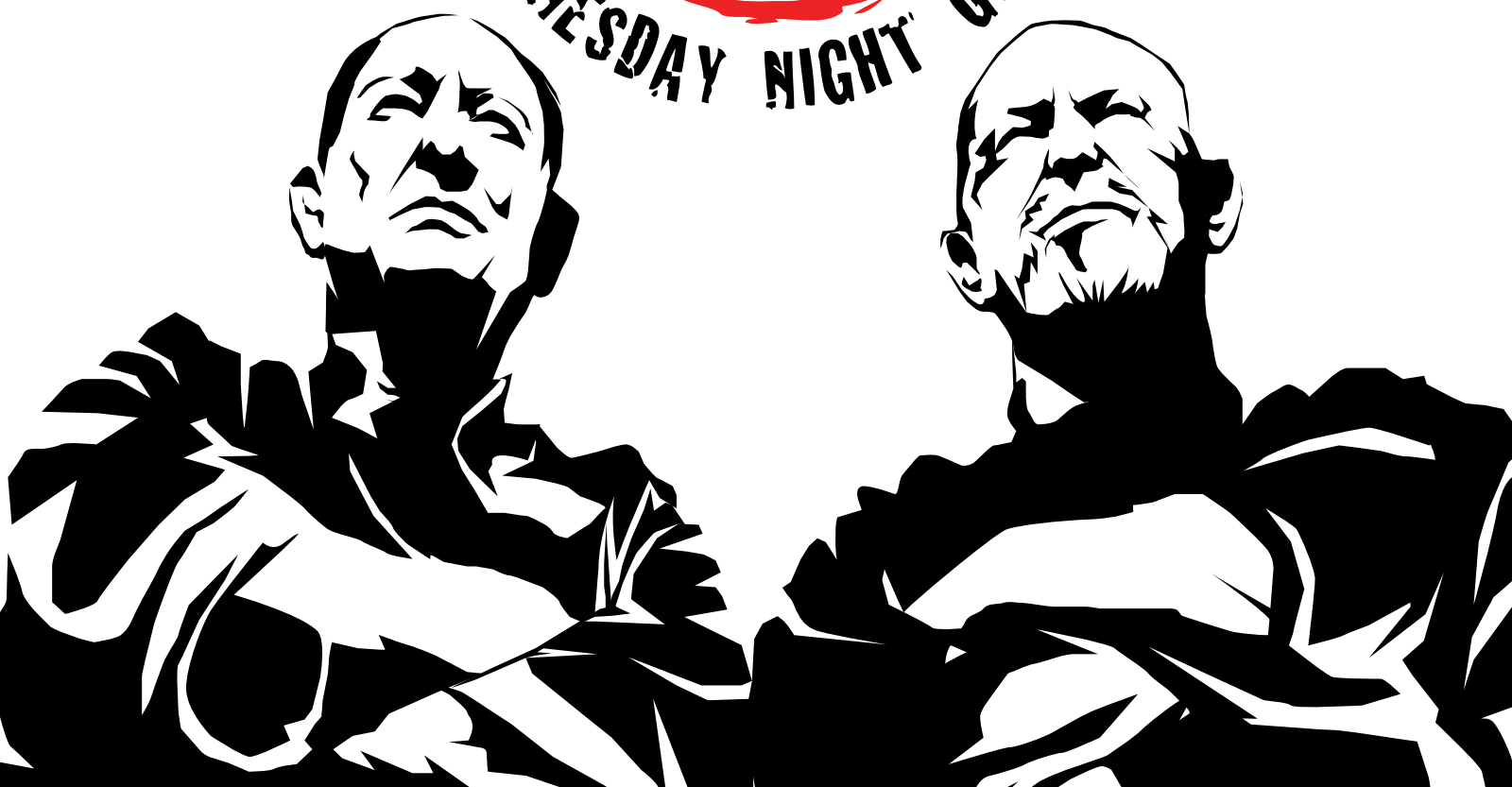
1. **Following JKD principles** – Particularly "economy of motion"
2. **Individualization** – Accounting for strengths, weaknesses, and temperament
3. **Testing** – Learn from successes and failures in sparring and scenario training, as well as in the ring/cage.

Our final analysis of the 3 examples looks like this:

Primary Techniques	Secondary Techniques	Discarded
Muay Thai Elbows	Heavy Palm Strikes	Tackle & Hook

CONCLUSION

The JKD Filter and the principle of Daily Decrease can be applied to any martial artist's training regimen, regardless of style. Whether your base art is Muay Thai, Judo, or Karate, and you train for self-defense, competition, or both; strong fundamentals will force your opponents to respect and prepare for your most basic tools, making all of your secondary responses more effective and maximizing your training time.



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