

TKD TaekwonDo TIMES

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CHIEF MASTER KATHY LEE

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2013 in Trinidad

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Breaking

THE JOY OF BREAKING

by Master Wiz

This is the first column I've written for Taekwondo Times and I am honored to join the premier publication dedicated to our art/sport. Through the upcoming months I'll discuss various aspects of breaking: its history, the reasons why breaking is so important to the development of the student, how breaking can be an important element in the success of a school, the various kinds of breaking, proper techniques, the innovations now available in boards and board holders, and the all-important mental preparation. I welcome all feedback.

Before we get into tradition and technique, let me begin by saying that breaking is just plain fun. It's clearly one of the most exciting parts of most martial arts, and so it should be! After all, everybody loves to break things and everybody likes to watch stuff be broken: plates at a Greek restaurant - OPAH! pumpkins after Halloween, toasting glasses at weddings, and even pencils karate chopped by kids at school. Watch the crowd at any martial arts demonstration; when the breaking starts everybody stops to watch the show. Somehow it's part of human nature.

In Taekwondo, breaking is both elevated and elevating. Who can forget the opening ceremonies for the 1988 Olympics and the awesome breaking sequences, pieces flying everywhere! The acrobatics, timing and showmanship were spectacular and unforgettable.

Go to you tube and look up 1988 Seoul Olympics Opening Ceremony or link in at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a4xjV99gDw0>.

Then search ITF Taekwondo breaking

or http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_sHB79NnMiA

to see power breaking

that will make your jaw

drop. ITF competition

includes Power

Breaking, with medals

awarded based on the

total number of boards broken cleanly with a single hit, and Individual Special Techniques, where competitors break with flying kicks.

My dad put me in Judo when I was around 7 years old because he said I was tiny and had a big mouth, so I'd better learn how to protect myself. Over the years I trained in various disciplines and eventually settled into Taekwondo. For me Taekwondo provided the discipline, focus and outlet a hyperactive kid like myself needed to stay balanced. The sparring gave me an outlet for the personal freedom that I craved while the patterns and etiquette provided the structure I needed to do well in school.

I saw board breaking for the first time at a martial arts demonstration when I was 12. Standing no more than ten feet from the action, I was amazed when one guy flew through the air and shattered a board with a back kick. Coming up through the Taekwondo ranks we focused on patterns, sparring, and self-defense techniques. In my club (like most others) breaking was a part of promotion testing even though we never practiced in class. This always seemed a little odd; I mean, how fair is it to test us on something we never really practiced? The other students and I worried about whether we would break our hands or the boards. Inevitably the instructor's

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as well as 2 branch schools also with full time instructors (Learn more about his schools at www.tienlung.com). As a 9-time coach for Team Canada he has trained World Champions in Patterns, Self Defense & Power Breaking. To advance safe breaking skills, he invented and currently markets the patented Gorilla Board Holder. Master Wisniewski enjoys travelling the world giving seminars and looking for talented instructors. Contact him at masterwiz@BoardBreakingHQ.com.



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advice before the breaking test was “just hit it hard” or “it’s no different than the way you do your pattern”. That advice didn’t always work and the lack of preparation proved painful.

Eventually I met Master Andre Blake who taught me the science and joy of breaking. He was a close disciple of General Choi and one of the few eighth degrees in the ITF back in the late 1990’s. His knowledge of proper angles, biomechanics, and physical conditioning was astounding. He would drop information that to him was obvious but to me was earth shattering, seemingly little things like how to stop my knuckles swelling when I broke with a punch; (that tidbit I’ll share that with you in a later column) to practical explanations in understanding power generation. Master Blake said that practicing Taekwondo without breaking is like punching without a thumb-it can be done but the result will never be as good. (He was referring to the encyclopedia of Taekwondo where dallyon/breaking is 1/5th of the composition of Taekwondo. He was comparing the five

elements to the thumb and 4 fingers of the hand that becomes a fist when trained.)

Through my sessions with my mentor I learned how easy and fun board breaking can be. Over time I began to more fully understand the role and importance of breaking in the development of the psychological preparation for self-defense situations and the immediate benefit of empowerment on a personal level. Breaking symbolizes “breaking through” negative thoughts and the development of a “yes I can” attitude, look at how often it is used in self-empowerment seminars. We as martial artists have the opportunity to continually imprint these important messages into our psyche throughout our training. Breaking is visible proof of our successful training and our personal growth.

In my next column I’ll discuss the mechanics and methods of a power side kick. I’ll teach you the technique that worked for the boy whose side kick earned Team Canada a gold medal in the 2006 Junior World Championships in Honduras. **TKD**