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# The Joy of Breaking

## For want of a board holder . . .

by Master Wiz

When I started teaching Tae Kwon Do, it was (as in many schools past and present), during the evening and in school gymnasiums. Board holders back then were big metal behemoths weighing about 200 lbs that required a truck to haul around, and the only boards available were wood boards. This made practicing breaking with students challenging and expensive.

Without a board holder, students and instructors had to hold boards for each other. The joke back then was “Why do I need a board holder? I have students.” The problem was

- A. When kickers missed, they often mashed the fingers of the holders, or sometimes (if they were really bad), they actually kicked them in the body or head. Injuries were fairly common.
- B. Broken boards could scrape exposed arms or even fly into the holders’ face.
- C. After getting hit a few times by either the kicker or the boards, holders developed a “flinch reflex,” whereby they would “flinch” or pull away when someone tried to break a board.

So I, along with other desperate instructors, developed home-made portable board holders. Some instructors made wooden contraptions, while others were welded steel “heads.” Mine was a little more inventive than most in that it had legs to bear the weight of the head and was designed to be braced against a wall. These homemade board holders worked . . . to a point. However, they still left a lot to be desired. They were more portable than the “behemoths,” but they were still too heavy and bulky. Also, adjusting the height was difficult, or they required people to hold them. The major advantage that the behemoths had over the portables at

this point was that the students could practice breaking solo.



An unexpected breakthrough occurred when I was flying across the country to test under the president of the ITF for my 6th degree. I and was told

- A. Expect to power break.
- B. Bring your own boards.
- C. No board holder was available.

The fact that my fellow examiners were my 110-lb wife and a friend with neck and back issues made a successful “power” break impossible unless I got creative.

The board issue was resolved by bringing UMAB re-breakable boards of various strengths because it was impossible to bring 45 wood boards on a plane due to luggage limits. Our portable metal board holder was also too big and heavy to pack. In desperation, I wired a piece of wood to the inside top and bottom of a plastic soft drink crate to support the re-breakable boards that were held in place using bungee straps. The existing handles of the crate allowed two holders (one each side) to brace the crate against a wall and the breaker to smash the boards and transfer the impact to the wall rather than to the holders. Although the crate sides limited the strikes to perpendicular strikes (side kick and punch), the contraption performed like a charm, and we all broke successfully and earned our next rank.

It was at this point that I determined that the issues I had been experiencing were common to all Tae Kwon Do practitioners.

In order to get breaking BACK into Tae Kwon Do curriculums, we needed to solve the following problems:

1. Prevent students from having their fingers kicked and boards flying into their faces (thereby also reducing potential liability issues).





2. Create a stable breaking platform to allow successful power breaking.
3. The holder had to be small and light

weight enough to be easily packed into airplane luggage or the backseat of a car.

4. Students needed to be able to use it by themselves.
5. It needed to be safe and easy for children to use.
6. It needed to be affordable for students in order to encourage practice at home.

Using the plastic soda pop crate as a foundation and with the aid of an engineer, the Gorilla

Board Holder was created, and I am proud to say that breaking is making a steadily increasing comeback in schools, events and training.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nkGEu-ZmE8s&feature=youtu.be>

<http://tkdcoaching.com/power-breaking-theory/>

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