

A Bag, A Belt and

Lots of Aggression

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HOW GOOD ARE YOU, do you have what it takes to fight off an attacker? This type of question you, and I and many more like us from martial artists to members of the public ask ourselves sometimes on a daily basis. I'm sure most people would like to know just how good they would be under pressure. I am talking about getting into a fight on a daily basis, mind you some of the hard images that some people like to give off could land them in trouble. Sometimes with the threat of trouble often not far away, a misread look can lead to a lot of problems. With the reality being that some people will last out over the smallest thing, it may not have a coolly scripted reply but it will hit you harder than any film action sequence.

A few weeks ago I hired out the film 'Crouching Tiger Hidden Dragon' and enjoyed the story along with the exciting fight sequences. My son and I were lost in the film fantasy, when my son asked "Dad can you fight like that?" I said "Yes I can son, but I am not as fast as the people on the film and the people are acting, and the only type of roof I can run over must be a very strong one". I have often written and talked about the way the fighting arts are shown on the screen and that we can all see the fantasy from the reality. But we do get de-sensitised to it, so look at it like this. When something is over the top we can sit back and say to ourselves. "How did they do that stunt?" From Steven Seagal clearing a bar room single-handedly or the great filming ideas of the 'Matrix'. But something like Mel Gibson hitting the drug dealer or knocking out the bodyguards in the film 'Payback' or Vinnie Jones in the film 'Lock Stock and Two Smoking Barrels' can get our reality meter running.

Reality comes from something we can relate to. A multiple car crash in a film has us thinking of the stuntman and the actor. But something like a film out take of a small boy throwing a tennis ball and hitting his father in the groin, may make us laugh but also have us mentally feeling the pain. Our reality comes from what we have experience of, and that is the true lesson. So what's this got to do with training? Well if you don't feel and understand what confrontation feels like along with your personal level of aggression when reality hits you, you



Hold the bag by the belt.



Striking hard for fifteen seconds.

away their ability. Having a high skill level on the mat doesn't mean the same thing on the pavement; pavement skill is hard basic aggression. When it's all gone wrong and you feel like you're fighting a pit bull that's got his testicles wrapped in barbed-wired, how can you keep going?

Don't think of street violence as a ring



Striking.



Kneeing.

could be left like a fish out of water.

Thirty seconds of pressure can tell you more about yourself than a year of training. You may not agree with that statement, but I have seen people who have trained hard for many years, but when in the middle of a confrontation the overwhelming reality of the situation took

fight that's going twelve timed rounds. At the time it may feel that the nightmare is going on forever but most street fights are over quickly. I know some confrontations can be carried on for years, people carrying grudges and wanting some form of payback (that's called getting married). Before my wife reads this and beats me unconscious, I will press on and hopefully finish this article before it's time for me to go to the local A & E department.

Feeling the Pressure

I spend a lot of time with the people who train with me covering the feelings that will surround them before, during and after a confrontation. The physical bit to throwing a punch or a kick most people can pick up quite quickly. But from the talented student to the beginner they both have to control and understand their ability to fight under pressure, and how explosive their aggression can be. The following training drills and ideas I have had great success with when it comes to getting the student to be explosive in their attack. The core idea for these drills comes from my good friends Darrin Richardson, British Sambo champion and Kevin O'Hagan, 5th Dan Goshin Jutsu whose video 'Impact Ju-Jutsu' is full of great training and conditioning ideas.

So what can we train with, and would be willing to let us kick and punch them as hard and as often as we like? All the following ideas you can train on a six feet punch bag, or if you're lucky to have something like the TAO G-man grappling dummy at your club even better. You may be saying to yourself, "Bags and training dummy's don't fight back", well that's as may be, but nor do many people once they have been hit. Many people will fall apart when the first hit has landed or the threat of violence has wrapped the fear and consequence of violence around the victim. So don't think of these drills as a ring or match fight, the drills are for training an explosive and sustainable attack. Whether you put an old jacket on your punch bag to make it look more realistic or a training dummy. Both require you to imagine the reality of the situation, turning the punch bag or dummy into your nightmare attacker. Take care with the drills; they may look and read as easy in this article, but if you do them right they are hard work.

Why the Belt?

If you tie an old belt around the punch bag this helps you keep control of the bag, pulling the bag in for a head-butt or to pull the bag up off the floor after a kick. Also your holding on can be seen as your attacker has hold of your lead hand as you



Headbutting.



Striking hard.

strike with your rear hand. If your bag has hanging straps it's a good idea to tape them down to the bag to stop them flying into your face. The belt also gives you a realistic range to strike from by keeping the bag close to you all the time, this keeps you working in a realistic fighting range.

Drill 1. Striking and kicking: Holding the bag in front of you with one hand. Strike, punch and kick as hard as you can continuously. Start with just 15-second rounds, rest for 15 seconds and repeat for 2 minutes. Remember you are not tapping the bag you are hitting with full power and being as aggressive as you can, if you've had a hard week at work take it out on the bag. As the bag is pushed away from

you by your strikes keep pulling it back with the belt.

Drill 2. Striking and taking it down: Using the same striking rounds as before. This time you can add low powerful kicks to drive away the bottom of the bag, or move in and throw the bag to the ground. All the time keeping hold of the belt, be careful as the weight of the falling bag can pull you over, in the same way someone in the street can pull you down with them. If you like to kick high, try it but keep hold of the belt.

Just reading them will not make you appreciate how gruelling the drills can be, but if you find them easy try upping the time of the drill, say striking for 30 seconds and resting for 15 seconds. Or



Take it down.



Striking hard on the floor.

just add a lot more aggression.

From your first strike to the last they have to be explosive, hard and aggressive attacking not only with your head, hands and feet. But also the aggression from inside you, by shouting and screaming you will begin to feel the reality of the training. Your body will release more adrenalin into your system the more real you make it.

Drill 3. Turn up the pressure: Keep hold of the belt; strike four times hard to the top of the bag, then come in low pushing your shoulder into the bag. At the same time grab around the bag and force the bag to the floor. Strike the bag on the floor for 30 seconds as hard and as many times as you can, also add kicks and knee strike on the floor. Then stand up and pull the bag up by the belt resting only for 15 seconds, repeat the drill.

Drill 4. Choke the bag: Kick four times hard and low at the bag, stop the bag from falling over with just the grip you have on the belt. Then strike four times hard to the top of the bag. On the fourth strike put one leg behind the bag and take the bag to the ground. You fall with the bag to the ground, strike the

bag four times on the ground then grab and hold around the bag, (like a chokehold). Pull in hard and count to ten, release your grip, strike the bag four more times then move to the other end of the bag grab and hold and count to ten, stand up pulling the bag up by the belt. Repeat as many times as you like.

Determined to Win

The drills are something you can make your own, you can come up with different ideas about how you can make them harder. But the key point is to get you to work at building up your aggressive attack. There are hundreds of combinations you can put together and any pad or bag training will get you great results. With any form of sparring you will learn by the pressure of someone throwing strikes and kicks at you, from kick boxing to all out contact fighting anything you can do to feel the pressure will help you. But what I have found with the four drills, is the insight it gives you into your training to build an explosive attack. The standard of people who step into any ring to fight takes hard work and guts. But because it's a matched fight with rules and the time and date of the fight set, means both

fighters have time to think in advance about it. The street ring has almost no thinking time, but a deadly explosion of violence that can start and end in seconds. The drills are hard work and fatigue sets in quickly. When you feel that you can't hit any more or pulling the bag off the floor with the belt feels like your arm is going to come away from your body, it means you are building a stronger and tougher you inside.

You need to be confident that your skill is matched by your aggression to win. Street combat is on a different level to ring fighting, if you like a lower level because it is raw and deadly. The drills will bring out your basic fight instincts in you, if you find you can do anything complicated you are not gifted you are just not doing them with aggression. I hope you will try out the ideas and add to them. Working with a partner is great but just sometimes it great to hit something hard. Remember it's your right to protect yourself and only you can do anything about it.

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