



Internal Fighting Arts

Students Take Home the Gold in Chicago Internal Competition



The three students who won 10 medals at a Chicago martial arts tournament are—from left to right—Chris Miller, Kim Kruse, and Kim Miller (standing next to Sifu Gullette).

Three of Sifu Ken Gullette's students competed in a major kung-fu tournament in Chicago on March 29, winning six first-place medals, three 2nd place and one 3rd place medal.

Brown sash Chris Miller won first place in tai chi forms, first place in internal forms competition, and 2nd place in weapons.

Brown sash Kim Miller won 2nd in weapons, 3rd in tai chi forms, 3rd in internal forms, and first in northern forms with a tournament form that we do called "Mountain Storm."

Blue sash student Kim Kruse swept her division, winning first in empty hand internal forms, first in tai chi forms and first in weapons forms.

The three students are the highest ranking in a small core of students that Sifu Gullette practices with in the Quad Cities. Black sash student Rich Coulter did not compete in the Chicago tournament.

"I'm incredibly proud of these guys," said Ken. "They have worked consistently to improve their body mechanics and technique. These are the type of people who make martial arts a key part of their lives, and it's great to see their progress."

Chen Bing Sets 2009 U.S. Seminars

One of the best young Chen family masters will be in the U.S. for nearly two months beginning in May. Chen Bing is the nephew of Grandmasters Chen Xiaowang and Chen Xiaoxing. He is considered among the best of his generation and is a generous teacher who is more willing than the older masters to go deeper in what he teaches to others. We don't have all of the names of his hosts, but here is his schedule:

Check out Chen Bing performing the Chen 38 form at <http://tinyurl.com/d65kun>

May 18-June 1 -- Columbus, OH

June 1-8 -- Miami, FL

June 8-15 -- Dallas, TX

June 15-22 -- Houston, TX

June 22-29 -- Philly & D.C.

July 6-13 -- Phoenix, AZ

July 13-20 -- Orange County, CA

July 20-28 -- San Diego, CA (contact Bill and

Allison Helm at tao@taoistsanctuary.com)

June 29-July 6 -- Seattle (contact Kim Ivy at kim@embracethemoon.com)

My Favorite Techniques

Insights into techniques and body mechanics for more powerful self-defense with Tai Chi - Hsing-I - Bagua



Capturing the Center - A Key Concept in the Internal Arts

One of the fighting strategies that Sifu Gullette teaches is called "Join and Unite." The key principle of this strategy is to capture the opponent's center during an attack. This is also an important concept in push hands. You're always trying to capture an opponent's center so you can control them.

The technique shown in the photos above are related to Bagua, but are also present in Tai Chi movements. Rich Coulter attacks Sifu Gullette with a punch. Sifu Gullette anticipates the attack and moves in close to Mr. Coulter, grabbing the wrist and lower bicep of the attacking arm. Sifu Gullette continues to turn, cuts downward on the arm, throwing Mr. Coulter to the mat.

If you look at the photos, Mr. Coulter's center is turning to the left as he attacks. Sifu Gullette simply captures his center and keeps him turning in the direction he is going--to the left.

A simple internal arts fighting concept -- if an opponent's energy is traveling in a certain direction, don't oppose it. Keep it going in that direction. "External" martial arts often oppose force with force. The internal arts have a different idea -- take advantage of the opponent's energy and use it against him. The photos above represent a perfect example of this concept.

You can capture your opponent's center in a variety of ways. If he is pushing at you -- pull. If he is moving away from you -- push. Wherever his energy is going, let it go that way and help it along.

Using It in Daily Life

From a philosophical perspective, you can capture your opponent's center even when you are attacked verbally or emotionally. Most of us don't encounter violence on a daily basis; not physical violence, anyway. But we do encounter people who attack us verbally or emotionally. We encounter them at home and at work. How does this concept work against this type of attack?

When someone attacks you verbally or emotionally, they are trying to control your center. For a variety of reasons, they are looking to unbalance you. They know they can do it. All they have to do is say the right thing to 'push your buttons.' Don't let them do it. Remain calm, put part of your mind on your dan t'ien, do reverse breathing, and deal with the attack calmly and rationally. If it's an email, don't respond. If it's a verbal attack, smile and let them know by your reply that their attack didn't work. We'll have much more on verbal self-defense in future issues.

The Philosopher's Corner by Sifu Ken Gullette

Connecting -- Exercises with a Partner

Last issue, I talked a little bit about the importance of connecting -- with opponents, with other people you encounter each day, even with the world around you. From a martial perspective, connecting means "becoming" your opponent. You don't see yourself as separate -- you try to feel what your opponent is feeling and you try to know what he is going to do at the same time he does. An old tai chi saying is: "When my opponent moves, I move first." By taking your ego and your "self" out of the situation, calming yourself and connecting, you can improve your ability to anticipate and respond to an opponent's movements.

In this article, I'll describe two exercises you can do with a partner (illustrated by students Kim Kruse and Chris Miller. One involves using a staff (photos 1 and 2). Place the staff at dan t'ien level and your partner does the same. One partner steps forward across the length of the room while the other partner moves with him (or her). The goal is to anticipate your partner's stepping and to avoid letting the staff fall. Don't make the mistake of putting too much pressure on the staff by pushing it into each other. Use the least amount of pressure you need to keep the staff from falling. Think of connecting with your partner and move when he or she moves.



PHOTO 1



PHOTO 2

In the next series of photos, Chris and Kim Miller practice another connecting drill. One partner will do the stepping across the entire room. In these photos, Chris is stepping toward Kim. He will either take a full step through with the rear foot, or a short step with the front foot. Kim must connect and move with him. If his rear foot advances, her front foot must move back--all the way through in a full step. If his front foot moves forward it's a short attack, so her rear foot moves backward.

The goal in this drill (photos 3-5) is to connect with your partner and maintain your distance, moving "with" your partner.

In photo 3, the partners face each other. At this point, Chris is moving toward Kim. He decides to take a full step through with his left leg. In photo 4 he's taking his step. Kim

must move her front leg all the way back--a full step. Next, Chris will decide to take another full step or he could take a short step forward with his front leg moving first. Kim connects and moves in mirror fashion, depending upon his movement. Both of the drills on this page help, but you must work hard and take it seriously.



PHOTO 3



PHOTO 4

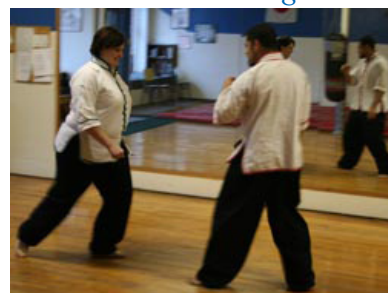


PHOTO 5

Continued on Page 7



Guest Editorial by Sifu Phillip Starr

AN INTERVIEW WITH ZHAO DAOXING Part 2

This is an interview with Mr. Zhao Daoxin that was conducted in the 1980's by Huang Jitao and translated by Andrzej Kalisz. This interview reveals what Chinese martial arts were like back in the early part of the last century and provides some real insights into the current state of the Chinese martial arts. Additional commentary by Sifu Phillip Starr, founder of Yiliquan.

Huang:

"What are the shortcomings of Chinese martial arts as far as fighting is concerned?"

Zhao:

"There are a lot of shortcomings and taboos. Apart from those that are common for all (Chinese) martial arts, there are others that are style-specific. For example, everyone fears that their style will resemble some other style, so they try hard to make it look different. If you tell a baguazhang practitioner that his movements resemble taijiquan, he will hardly accept your opinion. If you tell some xingyiquan practitioner that you see some similarities between his art and western boxing, he'll feel bad about it.

Actually, the differences between styles are more in ritual gestures than in their way of fighting. These gestures are useful only for demonstrations; in fighting they are useless and stupid.

There is also the taboo against falling down. In challenge matches there was an unwritten rule that touching the ground with any part of the body other than the feet meant defeat. So, in the south they stress the "ma" (horse-riding stance), and in the north they practice "zhuang" (stake standing).

In many styles, long, low postures and a centered torso are emphasized but what is the real value of these stable forms? There is a principle that says, "When the leg is raised, the body is half empty." Following this advice results in losing the opportunity of efficient kicks and striking with the knee! What is rejected in Chinese martial arts is exactly what is most valuable on the international martial arts stage (of fighting competition).

Traditional Chinese martial arts seem like old man arts. Old is seen as being equal to a saint who has great authority and deep knowledge. But for old men it's hard to raise a leg to kick and falling down can be dangerous. So this weakness becomes the taboo of not risking one's balance."

Commentary from Sifu Starr: It's very true that everyone wants the style that he or she practices to be separate from all others and bear certain hallmarks that no one else uses. Zhao chides the old teachers who don't want to admit that they can no longer perform as they did when they were younger, and who subsequently make up stories about why techniques such as kicking are dangerous and shouldn't be used. In studying his remarks, I think he is laying a lot of the blame for the deterioration of kung-fu squarely in the laps of the oldsters who will not teach the truth and who emphasize following tradition over and above studying martial arts.

Zhao:

"Next is the discrepancy between fatigue and the intensity of training. Traditional teachers talk about practicing many hours a day but this is just long-time training of low intensity. The muscles and nervous system are not activated in the way that is necessary for fighting. Those teachers hate using modern training devices and routines and will not ask that students train together. They prefer to hide in a dark place, repeating the same movements over and over, and pondering theory."

Then there is also the discrepancy between theory and practice, between physical technique and physical attributes, and between what is practiced in public and what is done behind closed doors. These are only some examples."

Commentary from Sifu Starr: Yes, I have had students tell me that they practice several hours each day but the fact is if they did such a thing, they'd quickly pass out from exhaustion...if they're training correctly. If they practice just low-intensity stuff, they can go on for a long time but such training will not beget fighting skill.

Many old-time teachers refuse to look at improving or changing training routines. In kung-fu, students spent the majority of their time practicing alone; they didn't practice fighting drills at all. Zhao strongly disagrees with this form of training. I think that he is mainly ranting about the old teachers who claim to possess great knowledge and fighting skill but who, in reality, just sit in a chair while they watch class and do nothing...they like to talk about fighting and get into intellectual discussions but they themselves no longer train as they should.

Huang:

"We were talking about Chinese martial arts in general. Would you care to talk about specific styles?"

Zhao:

"Let's start with xingyiquan and baguazhang. First, xingyiquan...in the 1920's and 30's there were many representatives of xingyiquan who won the leitei tournaments. But today the "power" of xingyiquan has decreased. The reason is that apart from problems common to all Chinese martial arts, this one stresses harmony and unity (between body parts). There are many aspects of this art where there is a great lack of harmony (in body structure and technique).

For example, there is a lack of harmony between technique and force. In xingyiquan, the hitting technique is powered by a pushing force (with the feet). Fist or palms may hit the opponent but it doesn't allow you to push the opponent very far away as in when people perform push-hand exercise. Actually, it seems as if xingyiquan people have not decided whether their technique is for sanshou (freestyle fighting) or tuishou (push-hands exercise)."

Commentary from Sifu Starr: It would seem that Zhao is lamenting the fact that many xingyiquan practitioners have neglected proper body alignment in the practice of their techniques. He is also distressed about xingyi practitioners having taken up the practice of tuishou (push-hands), which is not really a part of traditional xingyi. This has resulted in them becoming confused about how to issue power; they tend to try to push with their fists or palms. Back in the 1920's and 30's they concentrated on fighting and their technique was much superior.

Zhao:

"And there is a lack of harmony between form and intention. Everyone talks about form and intention being important but actually, they tend to go towards one extreme or the other. There is also a lack of harmony between fighting exercises and methods (tactics).

People like to compare xingyiquan to western boxing but they're also afraid of doing so. They want this Chinese "thing" to be pure. So, when there is even a small similarity they prefer to get rid of it. I think, as far as training methods and competition goes, that xingyiquan should learn from boxing."

Commentary from Sifu Starr: Zhao states (and rightly so) that most people who stress the importance of harmony between form and intention actually tend to sway further towards one of these aspects than the other. Thus, their teaching methods are unbalanced and students cannot learn how to harmonize form and intention because their teachers don't do it. He complains about a lack of harmony between fighting exercises and tactics. That is, the exercises that are practiced primarily for the purpose of developing skill are not in harmony with the actual tactics that xingyi emphasizes. So, the exercises become useless. In a way, he is saying that you must train in the same way that you will fight.

As far as his statements about learning from boxing, look again at what he says...xingyiquan should learn from the training methods used in boxing and from the methods that they employ in competition (probably referring to rules). Boxers train as they will fight and they train with great intensity. Modern xingyiquan stylists tend to practice only their basic postures and forms without regard for how they are applied freely in fighting.

Huang:

“Was the creation of xingyibagua the result of trying to fill the shortcomings of xingyi by using baguazhang?”

Zhao:

“Mutual supplementing started from friendly contacts between Dong Haiquan (founder of baguazhang) and Guo Yenshen (the “Divine Crushing Fist” of the xingyi school), and between their students. Then Zhang Zhaodong linked them together into one system. But the shortcomings of xingyi cannot be filled by using bagua...

Bagua also has its own shortcomings and they can't be filled by using xingyi. Baguazhang has a thick outside layer through which it is difficult to see anything. If you look in from the outside, there is only an impression of complexity and mystery.”

Commentary from Sifu Starr: Yes, the first layer of bagua keeps most people (including bagua teachers) from truly understanding this enigmatic art. This is its most serious shortcoming. Bagua forms seem to have nothing whatsoever to do with fighting...

Zhao:

“A big part of this first layer are legends about Dong Haiquan and his students. The second layer is the unnecessary and forced use of the theory of the eight trigrams. Bagua teachers always talk about the Yijing (“Book of Changes”) but nobody could explain even one link between the art and the book!”

Commentary from Sifu Starr: In my latest book, Martial Maneuvers (to be released August 4th), I make remarks about this very subject. There is not and never has been any relationship between the art we know as baguazhang and the eight trigrams or the “Book of Changes.” However, the vast majority of bagua practitioners (even in China) are convinced otherwise and continue to waste their time speculating about such relationships.

Huang:

“Taijiquan is attracting a lot of people because of its theory and health benefits. However, many people doubt that such a soft and slow method could work against explosive power.”

Zhao:

“Laypeople”, who know nothing about martial arts, are unbiased and their first impressions can be very accurate. Taijiquan has its own form of comparing skill - tuishou (push-hands). Why should we not be happy with using this as a measure of skill? Is every martial art good for real fighting?

I remember back during the days of the Republic (prior to the communist takeover in 1949) that taijiquan experts would say that they could not prove their fighting skill at leitei tournaments because taijiquan is too profound (and dangerous) and it's very difficult to master. Was this some kind of weak excuse or was it a sincere statement?

Taijiquan theory looks great and could serve as a model for other classical martial arts theories/ The main idea is the relationship between yin and yang. You want to achieve real hardness? Start from becoming as soft as possible, because great softness ultimately changes into hardness. Do you want to be fast? Then start from slowness.

This philosophy that says that when a particular attribute reaches its extreme, it becomes its opposite...is attracting many people. But has anyone tested this idea to see if it's true? No.

But if you could see what the real taijiquan masters - those who can issue real power - are practicing in secret, you will understand.”

Commentary from Sifu Ken Gullette -- These are statements that people misinterpret and it shows that even Huang doesn't understand tai chi, which is not “soft” or “slow.” When someone like Zhao says in tai chi, you become “as soft as possible,” people read that and become limp in their practice of tai chi. It also causes “external” artists to use a term that I despise when they discuss the internal arts. They call them “soft arts.” There's nothing soft about them if you use correct body mechanics.

Sifu Philip Starr is the founder of Yiliquan and Sifu Ken Gullette's teacher from 1987 to 1991 (Ken earned a black sash in Yiliquan, learning the basics of Hsing-I, Tai Chi and Bagua). Starr was named to the Inside Kung-Fu Hall of Fame in 1991. He is the author of “The Making of a Butterfly,” “Martial Mechanics,” and his next book, “Martial Maneuvers” will be published August 4 and will be available at amazon.com and in bookstores. Sifu Starr lives and teaches in the Omaha area.

More Photos from Connecting Drill Practice

Continued from page 3



In the three photos above, the connecting drill continues, with Chris stepping toward Kim. A moment before (on page 3) he took a full step, moving his back leg all the way through. Kim had to connect and move her front leg all the way back so she could maintain her distance.

In the above photos, Chris takes a short step, moving his front leg forward. Kim connects and moves her rear leg back in a short retreat.

Practice this drill (and the staff drill) with a partner. Try to avoid laughing. You must be serious and try to connect with your opponent's intent.

Join Sifu Gullette and Students for a Practice Session

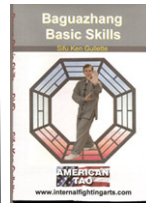
If you live near the Quad Cities or are planning to be in the Illinois or Iowa area, you're invited to join Sifu Gullette and his students in a practice session.

He meets with students three times a week to practice Chen tai chi, Hsing-I Chuan and Baguazhang.

In spring, summer and fall, the class often meets outdoors.

Practices are held Monday and Wednesday evenings starting at 6:45 p.m. (6:30 if practice is held outdoors). Saturday times vary from 10 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. so if you're planning on being in the area and want to join the practice, email Sifu Gullette at ken@internalfightingarts.com or call him at (309) 912-9544.

Check Out These Popular DVDs



Basic Bagua Skills

The skills you need to build a solid foundation for baguazhang. Two and a half hours of instruction on one DVD. A great bargain!



Hsing-I Straight Sword

Learn a great Hsing-I straight sword form and fighting applications. Bonus section -- straight sword techniques for any style.



Chen Broadsword Form

Learn the Chen Broadsword Form including body mechanics and fighting applications. Also broadsword techniques for any style.



Tai Chi Push Hands

Learn five patterns of Chen tai chi push hands -- join a workshop where students are coached through patterns and body mechanics.

DVDs Normally \$25 Each

Buy 2 Get the 3rd Free

www.kungfu4u.com

This “Exceeds My Expectations!”

Try two free weeks and find out why members of Sifu Gullette’s online school rave about the training!

“I’ve heard (of these internal body mechanics and principles), but apparently never really understood it as well as through your clear instruction and effective demonstration. I’m quite inspired by it.”

A website member in Oakland, CA



www.InternalFightingArts.com

**HOURS OF VIDEO TRAINING
IN CHEN TAI CHI, HSING-I,
AND BAGUAZHANG!**

What You Get as a Member:

- Videos, e-books, discussion board, teleconferences!
- Discounts on DVDs!
- Learn forms, techniques, china, weapons, and applications!
- Low monthly fee - quit at any time with the click of a mouse!
- Lessons on demand!
- COMING SOON - Chen spear form & double broadsword form!



Money Back Guarantee!
Try Two Free Weeks Today!
www.InternalFightingArts.com

Internal Fighting Arts is published by www.InternalFightingArts.com. Address--1517 13th Street, Silvis, Illinois 61282. Phone (309) 912-9544. Email ken@internalfightingarts.com. Copyright 2009 - Ken Gullette. The images and content are protected and may not be reproduced or distributed without permission.