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**A KEMPO  
CONDEMNATION!**

***Were  
James Mitose's  
Techniques  
Ineffective?***

**PORTRAIT OF A  
SHOTOKAN SAMURAI**

***The Saga of Karate's  
Osamu Ozawa***

**TAE KWON DO  
TRAINING  
DANGERS—AND  
SOLUTIONS!**

**KAJUKENBO  
SURVIVAL TACTICS!**

***Destroy Your Attacker!***

**YOSHUKAI  
TOUGHENING  
TECHNIQUES**

***Are They  
Too Dangerous?***

**MY DAD,  
YIP MAN**

***Wing Chun  
Expert's Son  
Reveals Father's  
Inner Secrets***





# BLACK BELT

AUGUST 1990, VOL. 28, NO. 8

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**PORTRAIT OF A SHOTOKAN MASTER:  
FORMER KAMIKAZE PILOT  
OSAMU OZAWA SURVIVES PLANE CRASH  
TO BECOME KARATE GREAT**

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Before he was a *shotokan* karate master, eighth-degree black belt Osamu Ozawa was first a *kamikaze* pilot, nightclub manager, card dealer and poker player. He survived a fiery plane crash during World War II, nearly attempted suicide years later, but earned his black belt from the great Gichin Funakoshi and is today one of the United States' most respected karate instructors.

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Osamu Ozawa's tenth annual Traditional Karate Tournament International may have been his biggest and best yet, with nearly 1,600 competitors and an impressive lineup of karate masters from around the world.

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Tired of everyone else's interpretation of his late father, Yip Chun has stepped forth to present the most accurate account to date of the man who introduced Bruce Lee to *wing chun* kung fu.

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*Yoshukai* practitioners take their shin toughening seriously, to the point of breaking bats over their legs. But is this type of conditioning safe?

**THE AMAZING ATLATL:  
A WEAPON WITH POWER ENOUGH  
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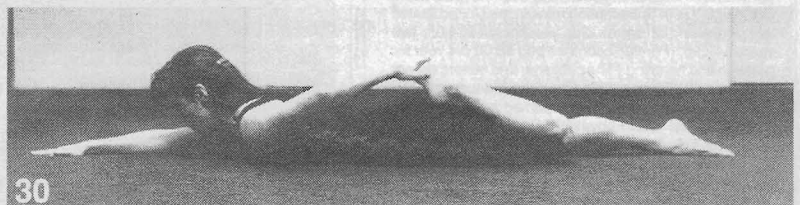
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Although rarely seen today, the unusual *atlatl* was used by early man to fell the giant mastodon, and is still used for hunting by peoples in Australia, New Guinea and Northeast Asia.

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ABOUT THE COVER: Eighth-degree black belt Osamu Ozawa, who trained under *shotokan* karate founder Gichin Funakoshi, delivers a crushing front kick to the abdomen of student Afshin Kateb during a recent visit to the *Black Belt* offices. Staff photographer Doug Churchill snapped the picture.



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# TAE KWON DO TRAINING DANGERS

Modern Methods Can Make Traditional TKD Safer  
by Jack L. Amsell

Imagine that you are a world-class *tae kwon do* competitor. You have proven your skills time and again, and your techniques are so quick and crisp that you rarely lose. There is only one problem: your knees and ankles become swollen, painful and weak after a day of competition. Why?

You are the victim of poor training methods.

A recent article in the U.S. Taekwondo Union (USTU) newsletter noted that 15 of the 16 members on America's 1985 World Championship team suffered training injuries prior to the competition. Moreover, training injuries are common among older practitioners and people in poor physical condition.

This article will explore traditional training methods, particularly regarding *tae kwon do*, and recommend new methods of training for today's martial artist.

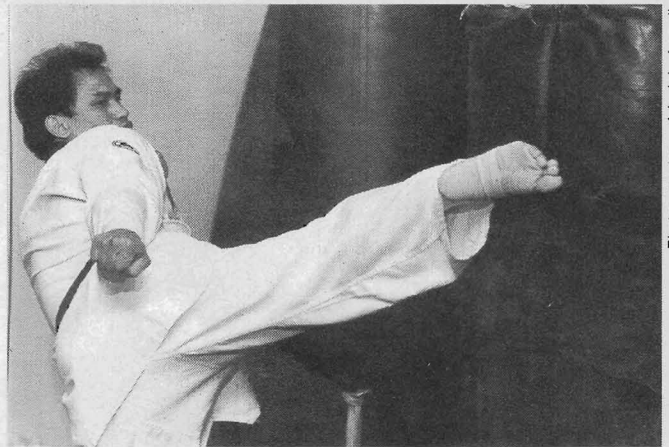
## Background

A tremendous amount of information has been collected on the subjects of exercise and kinesiology due to increased interest in physical fitness. Recent research studies have alerted fitness experts to the fact that many well-established fitness theories are potentially counterproductive.

Research has confirmed that repeated, long-term jumping, bouncing and jogging are clearly the cause of many of today's fitness-related injuries. Additionally, the concept of "working through pain" was found to be directly responsible for chronic training injuries. As a result, physical fitness programs in the U.S. have made some major renovations. International training programs are also beginning to confirm U.S. findings, and some of those programs are being modified.

*Tae kwon do* uses exercises that hurt joints or bend the body into uncomfortable postures in order to gain flexibility. *Tae kwon do* also employs jumping techniques to gain stamina or "springiness." Some martial arts schools use heavy bags or impact-resistant devices (called *makiwara* by the Japanese or *dallyon joo* by Koreans) to develop bodily weapons. All of these training techniques greatly increase the risk of injury.

Many *tae kwon do* stylists claim there cannot be authentic traditional training without such exercises, but this is simply not true. Traditional training techniques were relative to the time of



Photos courtesy of Jack L. Amsell

***Traditional tae kwon do training often includes repetitive high-impact kicking on a heavy bag with the instep of the foot. Such training is a major cause of foot injuries in tae kwon do.***

their creation. In other words, they were the best techniques known at the time. Modern training methods will not be the demise of traditional *tae kwon do*. For example, aerobic exercises have not disappeared even though the techniques are being modified to feature "low-impact" rather than "high-impact" training. As a result, more people than ever are now able to train, regardless of age or physical condition.

## Exercise Dangers

The following exercises are the most dangerous:

- Repetitive jumping in place, such as jumping jacks, especially when performed on a hard floor, can injure joints and the spine.
- Exercises that bend joints beyond their normal limits, or exercises that stress joints, such as kicking and punching into the air, can cause hyperextension injuries.
- Exercises that require strikes against resistive objects such as a *makiwara* can cause significant injuries.
- "Forging" exercises that are intended to toughen students prior to sparring, if done improperly, can cause severe physiological trauma.

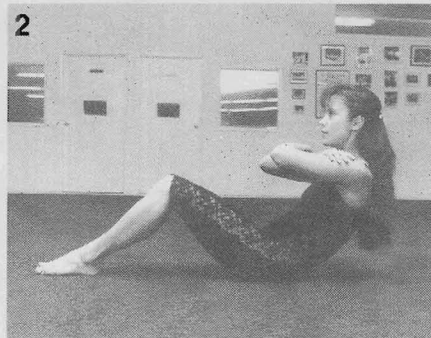
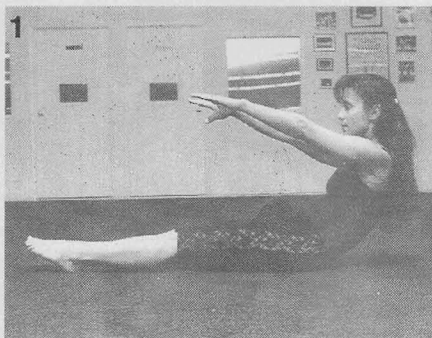
## Ballistic Injuries

The most dangerous and damaging exercises are those classified as "ballistic." These include jumping, bouncing, and punching or kicking into the air. Most modern exercise programs





**Performing sit-ups incorrectly (1) can cause severe back strain. Former U.S. Olympic tae kwon do team member Cheryl Kalanoc demonstrates a safer method (2) known as the "stomach cruncher."**



have begun to eliminate such drills in favor of nonballistic exercises.

Today, most fitness authorities reject the philosophy of "no pain, no gain." Proper exercise should not hurt; it should only make a person tired or sore after using new muscles.

### Hyperextension Injuries

Another serious danger is posed by exercises that hyperextend joints. Tae kwon do training utilizes two classifications of hyperextension techniques: exercises that bend the joints beyond normal limits, and exercises that hyperextend the joints because of ballistic thrusting of the limbs. The second group of injuries usually involves excessive kicking or punching techniques that do not encounter a resistive target.

### Improper Use of Weapons

Because tae kwon do uses various parts of the body as weapons, they are susceptible to injuries. The example cited at the beginning of this article described a tae kwon do champion who suffered from injured ankles.

The injury was the result not of sparring competition, but of pre-event training used to develop powerful kicking.

By analyzing typical tae kwon do sparring training, the source of the problem becomes obvious. The turning kick, *tollyo chagi*, is often used to deliver a speedy, powerful blow to an opponent's body or head. In training, competitors use a kicking pad or heavy bag to simulate contact to an opponent's body. The training often features powerful repetitive kicking to the target with the instep of the foot. This is the primary cause of tae kwon do ankle injuries.

The injury is caused by two related traumas: the hyperextension of the ankle joint and the impact of the heel bone against the lower leg bone. Bringing the instep into forceful contact with a resistive target such as a heavy bag applies excessive force to the top of the foot. Since the foot is only attached to the lower leg by ligaments, the force pries the foot away from the lower leg and

stretches or damages the surrounding ligaments. This same lever action forces the calcaneus (heel bone) into the tibia (large lower leg bone). While infrequent incidents of this trauma are often sustainable, repeated use of this training technique will cause permanent, chronic injury.

### Dangers of Forging Training

Traditional martial arts have a long history of using "forging" (toughening) training. Many people are familiar with the story of Mas Oyama pounding on a oak tree for many months until it was finally felled. Such exercises are directed at toughening the attacking tools.

There is also another type of forging training which conditions

the body to endure pain and injury. In a martial art such as tae kwon do, where contact is required, the ability to endure pain can give a practitioner an added edge.

There is, however, a great risk of "hidden" injuries when conducting such training. Instructors and practitioners must be very careful to avoid dangerous techniques.

If agonizing pain is experienced during the training session, it is an indication that something is wrong.

**"If agonizing pain is experienced during the *tae kwon do* training session, it is an indication that something is wrong."**

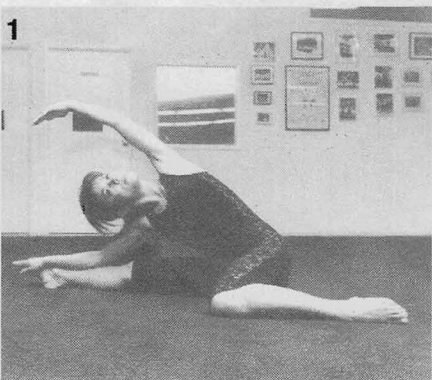
### Modern Training

The previous segments described injuries caused by a training attitude that encourages practitioners to push their bodies beyond comfortable limits. Hence, an effective exercise strategy requires a new attitude.

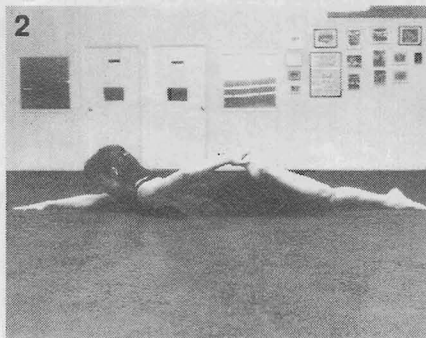
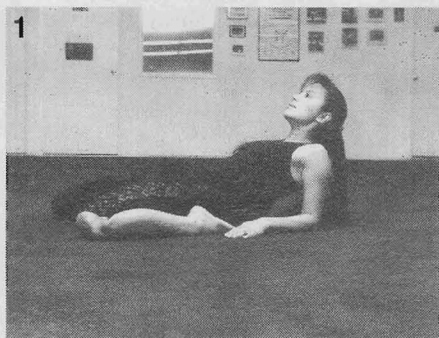
Ancient tae kwon do training exemplified qualities of self-termination and survival. Training focused on mental tenacity and discipline. The goal was self-defense and survival in a hostile environment. Modern tae kwon do training is practiced for physical fitness, sport, recreation and stress reduction, as well as self-defense. Instructors must therefore implement a new training philosophy to satisfy modern needs.

The four areas of training previously discussed are still nec-

**Performing the hurdler's stretch in the wrong posture (1) can pull or tear muscles. Former U.S. Olympic team member Cheryl Kalanoc demonstrates (2) the safer and more correct method.**







**The traditional method (1) of stretching the quadricep muscles is more likely to cause muscle pulls or tears than the safer, low-impact method (2) demonstrated here by Cheryl Kalanoc.**

essary for a successful tae kwon do program. However, training refinements can be made in each area. The most critical measures are: low-impact, nonballistic, nonhyperextension drills; safe and effective power and strength training; proper development of body weapons and body forging techniques.

### Fundamental Concepts

A training program should be both safe and effective. Modern exercises will change the look and feel of the traditional tae kwon do workout, and instructors may find it initially difficult to teach drills gently, but it must be done. Quite often students believe that exercises must be punishing to be of value. The enlightened instructor must re-educate such students. Eventually, the instructor will be rewarded by a class full of students who are stronger, healthier and injury free.

The training program must be based on three fundamental concepts. First, there must be exercises that provide aerobic (oxygen consuming) cardiovascular fitness. Second, there must be some form of progressive resistance training, such as weightlifting or water resistance training. And third, there must be some form of stretching for flexibility. These concepts need to be merged into traditional tae kwon do training.

### Warm-Up

Excessive jumping or jogging must be eliminated from the training program. Such exercises do not improve an athlete's ability to be light on his feet, nor do they build stamina safely; they only jar the body. An exercise routine should start slowly. Participants should begin by shaking out their limbs and getting the joints moving.

A more vigorous exercising of the limbs comes next, followed by similar exercises for bigger muscle groups. A typical sequence might begin with the student swinging his arms front to back, both horizontally and vertically. That might be followed by light kicking simulations in all directions. The neck can be ex-

ercised by bending it first forward and back, then side to side, and finally rotating it both clockwise and counterclockwise. Slow side stretching can be conducted, but not to the point that it places the body in any uncomfortable posture. The thighs and buttocks can be exercised by assuming the *joochoom* (crouching) stance, then raising and lowering the body. Body twisting and turning may be used to warm the trunk area.

The purpose of the warm-up is to get the body ready to exercise; it is not supposed to be intense. The warm-up prepares the cardiovascular system for a level of activity that is in excess of normal. Additionally, the increased cardiovascular activity warms the muscles and lubricates the joints. As a result, the body is more safely prepared for intense physical activity.

**"Excessive jumping and jogging must be eliminated from the tae kwon do training program....They only jar the body."**

### Calisthenics

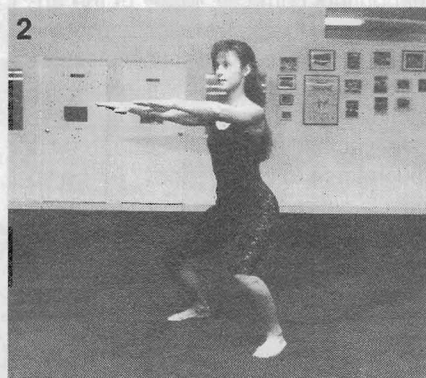
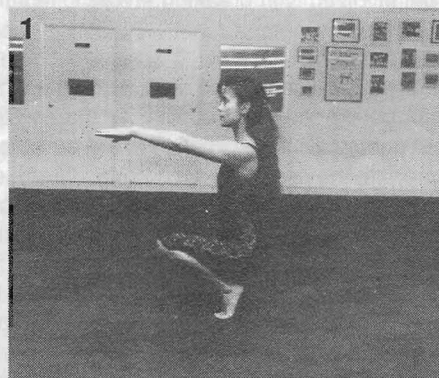
Once the body has been warmed up, vigorous exercising may begin. There are a number of directions that may be taken during this phase of the exercise regimen: strength and endurance exercises, *poomse* (forms), water training, sparring, etc. Typical exercises include

push-ups, sit-ups, leg raises, and basic tae kwon do fundamentals.

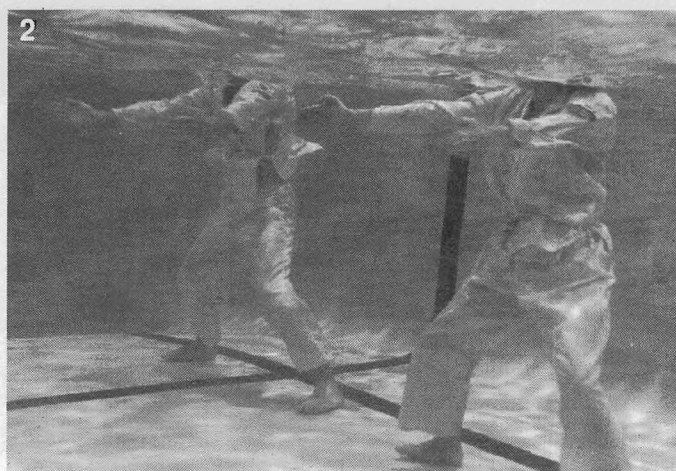
Tae kwon do is learned through fundamental exercises and *poomse*. Therefore, it is essential for the instructor to develop a program that protects students from the kinds of injuries related to those types of training. There are at least three methods of training that can be beneficial: progressive resistance training using weights, which is helpful in strengthening muscles, connective tissue and joints; water training, which can be used as a combination of progressive resistance and aerobic exercise; and heavy bag training, which can be used to develop powerful kicks and punches while minimizing hyperextension injuries.

### Power and Strength Training

Tae kwon do strength training has traditionally consisted of weightlifting, heavy bag work, and the use of the *dallyon joo*.



**As Cheryl Kalanoc demonstrates, there is a right and wrong way to perform squats. The traditional method (1) places stress on the knee joints. A low-impact method (2) can achieve the same results without undue strain on the body.**



These types of training are excellent, yet there are other effective methods perhaps less well known. Water training, bag work, and resistive-device training will be the focus of further analysis.

### Water Training

Traditional tae kwon do training puts a lot of stress on the body's joints, and practitioners often develop long-term chronic injuries. Water training, however, can prevent and even cure chronic injuries.

The basic concept of water training is that of anaerobic variable resistance. It begins with a brief warm-up similar to normal tae kwon do practice. The next stage is strengthening calisthenics, which allows participants to use the resistance of the water in a controlled fashion to apply any amount of resistance to the muscles or joints. The final stage of the training involves intense aerobic exercise and the use of maximum muscular effort. The result of the training is an increase in stamina, strengthened joints, and an improved ability to apply peak output very quickly. If conducted once a month for an hour at a time, this type of supplemental training can be quite productive.

### Body Weapon Training

Resistive-device training employs special forging tools to strengthen parts of the body used as weapons. One such device is the heavy bag, another is the forging post. Both devices have injury risks.

Obviously, any time a practitioner hits a resistive device with any part of his or her body, the potential for injury is extremely high. The following precautions are recommended:

- Never hit anything without preparation. Forging techniques require the same consideration as any other training method. Warm-up exercises and calisthenics should be performed before any effort is attempted.
- Use the required weapon/tool correctly. Many of the ancient masters analyzed the proper anatomical alignment of the hands and feet when used as weapons. These concepts have been ignored in recent years because of the limitations imposed on competition techniques.
- Never train with reckless abandon. It is possible to hit a training device with enough force to break bones, yet be so mentally focused that pain is never felt. That type of attitude might be required for a life-and-death circumstance, but it is counterproductive in the training environment.
- Build up slowly to higher resistances. It takes years to prepare the body to be used as a weapon.
- Allow the body enough time to recover from the punishment it receives from forging training. Joints and tissues that may

**Traditional tae kwon do training puts a lot of stress on the body's joints. By punching (1), conducting isometric exercises (2), and sparring (3) in water, you can prevent—and even cure—many chronic injuries.**

have been traumatized must be massaged. Ice and heat may be necessary to treat swelling. Most importantly, affected implements need time to rest.

### Heavy Bag Training

Heavy bags come in several shapes, sizes and weights. The most common size used is between 40 and 100 pounds. On one hand, bags are supposed to represent the feeling of hitting the human body. On the other hand, they provide resistance for the application of techniques. The theory is that strong resistance will develop more powerful techniques.

Trainees must observe precautions similar to those for forging training: proper warm-up, correct utilization of body weapons, etc. Most heavy bag injuries are caused by excessive or repetitive use of a particular technique.

### Forging Post Training

Forging training for body weapons is a popular technique in many martial arts. The most popular tool is probably the *dallyon joo* (makiwara). The *dallyon joo* is a tapered, chest-level post anchored at the base that features one or more impact pads. Modern *dallyon joo* have foam rubber pads, although many advanced students use pads made from bundled rice straw.

Practitioners who use the *dallyon joo* must realize that hematoma (bruising) is a natural result of the training. Therefore, the training must be gradual to allow the body to accommodate and lessen the injury. Also, rice straw acts just like sandpaper. It helps the trainee build calluses, but will induce abrasions and bloody knuckles if not hit in a gradual manner.

Tae kwon do students can become very skillful without resorting to forging training. However, it is essential for those who plan to get involved with breaking (*kyokpa*) techniques.

### Body Forging

Forging training is also done to toughen the body itself. Instead of controlling the force applied by the practitioner, the instructor must control the force applied to the practitioner. The objective is to prepare the body to react quickly to a strike by training muscles to contract instantaneously and simultaneously. Such training allows the body to become extremely resistant to injury.

Psychological conditioning is also necessary to prepare human beings to endure physical punishment. Most people have an aversion to being hit. Instructors must therefore "desensitize" their students.

The first step in either body or limb forging is to lightly strike the



Not every student desires forging training. However, the very nature of martial arts demands some level of forging practice, regardless of whether the student is studying for self-defense or competition purposes. Instructors who do not provide some level of this training fail to prepare their students for the reality of a potentially dangerous encounter.

A discussion on training procedures would not be complete without mentioning the warm-down period. The warm-down is very similar to the warm-up. It is used to transition the body from a high-energy state to its normal, resting, state. Failing to utilize a gradual warm-down period can cause traumatic shock to the body, possibly culminating in cardiac arrest.

### Other Considerations

Both instructors and students must constantly monitor bodily functions during tae kwon do training. Each should be alert to potential dysfunctions such as heat fatigue, circulatory problems, or breathing difficulties.

Another area to be considered is the intake of fluids. Time must be set aside for replenishing liquids. Most students can tolerate an hour of vigorous activity without adding fluids. However, it is beneficial to add fluids about a half hour before class. No workout should run for more than an hour without a break for fluids.

Students should also be taught to monitor their bodies for unusual pain or discomfort. Naturally, new or poorly conditioned students will experience discomfort from training. However, minor injuries that are ignored can be aggravated to a point where they became permanent. A little prudence in training will translate into years of enjoyable exercise. ❧

*About the Author: Jack L. Amsell is the chief instructor at the American Moo-Do Kwan school in Fullerton, California.*

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