

# Totally TaekwonDo

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**The Sparrer's  
Toolbox  
'Points Fighting'**



**Grandmaster  
Kyu Hyun Lee  
'Promoting Do'**



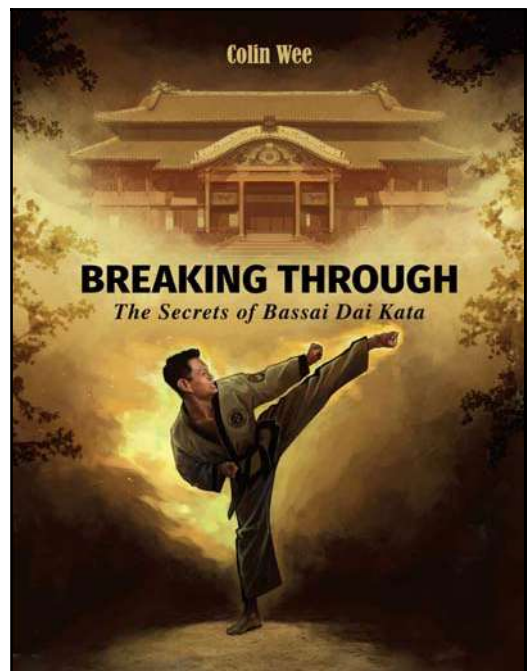
## **Breaking Through The Writing of a Martial Arts Book**

*Plus much more inside*

# **Breaking Through: *The Writing of a Martial Arts Book***

**By Colin Wee**

I recently published a martial arts applications book. Much of the writing was done through COVID, so my experience may differ from others. However, had I known how much work was involved, I might have had second thoughts on starting the project. The writing of the manuscript itself took about a year, another two years were spent submitting it to the publisher, re-writing, and editing the document. Additionally, the cover artwork had to be commissioned, several photo shoots were required to gather photos for the book, and we worked tirelessly with a focus group for feedback on the developing material.



There were numerous reasons why I began writing: to seek approval from my teachers and seniors, the requests for a publication I've received from friends over the years, and the desire to share valuable material with others who are on the same path as myself.

I had worked on a previous manuscript about two decades ago titled Fighting Heaven and Earth. I wanted that project to be a resource to map out applications within the Taekwondo pattern set. However, upon finishing, I realized it wasn't the book I had intended to write, and it prompted more questions than it provided answers. That early manuscript might as

well be a lament of what I didn't know at the time.

Though at first that manuscript seemed a waste of effort, it became a fortuitous roadmap which soon set us on the path to develop the distinct training methodology used in our school today, sorting out what we practice — and, more importantly, how we practise, which we now call the JDK Method. So, you see, this work was far from wasted and in fact became the foundation upon which all else has been built.

I use words such as “our” and “we” because it was a collaboration between me



***L -> R: Master Mike Swope, GM Keith Yates, and Author. GM Keith Yates, head of American Karate and Taekwondo Organization is a renown instructor, competitor and prolific martial arts author. Mr Yates wrote the foreword for the book, invited Colin to lead three seminar sessions at AKATO's Annual Seminar event, and has been extremely supportive throughout the book's development.***

and my students as the JDK Method developed. Though I steered our school into the future, without them and their feedback and cooperation, the JDK Method might not exist. (A detailed account of the development of the JDK Method appears in the book which as the subject of this article, the recently published *Breaking Through: The Secrets of Bassai Dai Kata*.)

When the idea to write another book resurfaced in the spring of 2019, my school had just spent an intense year and a half focused on the practice of one kata: Bassai Dai. Although we are a Taekwondo school, our syllabus contains legacy classical Karate forms, and we often do a deep dive on specific forms. Bassai Dai seemed the perfect subject since a wide range of Okinawan, Japanese, and Korean stylists practise the pattern. The depth of material

we had gathered and developed about the form also seemed promising. Additionally, we found the irony of a Taekwondo instructor publishing a Karate instructional book as a chapter in the already compelling story of Bassai Dai amusing.

The various COVID-19 lockdowns in Western Australia and the hard border erected in 2020 was a blessing in disguise. Time on my hands breathed life into this project. I was busy keeping fit, working from home, cooking for my family, and enjoying the game nights and movies we scheduled. Then taking time to put my thoughts down onto a page had a lovely meditative quality. Of course, it didn't make up for the lack of training partners, but it was a fine use of that unfortunate downtime. *Breaking Through: The Secrets of Bassai Dai Kata*, the book which

emerged as I emerged from Covid into the new normal is not your straight-up martial arts picture book. I initially contemplated illustrating the applications with the help of a manga artist. Manga has an amazing kinetic quality and its ability to establish the presence of both the protagonist and the antagonist is next level. But the idea quickly fizzled as each page had to be drawn by hand. Though the idea was awesome and would produce a book most unique in the field of martial arts books, it was simply cost prohibitive. (However, I still feel this would make a ground-breaking book. So if you are a manga artist and would be interested in a project like this, please contact me.)



***L -> R: GM Mike Proctor and the Author. Colin gifts a few copies of his book to his instructor at the pre-seminar training event. Mr Proctor went through the book later that evening, and was extremely complimentary the next day.***

Breaking Through: The Secrets of Bassai Dai Kata has two distinct parts. The first is a historical discussion about the development of the JDK Method. Stated plainly, the JDK Method is training for a dynamic situation using a fixed pattern set. Seems simple, yes. But I have seen firsthand that it is deceptively so. The second part of the book features the how-to pictorials of a dozen applications inspired by the movements within Bassai Dai. Like the first part, the second part summarized like this seems conventional. I assure you, feedback from teaching classes and seminars to other martial artists indicates that the content is anything but conventional.

While I have no bragging rights without those manga drawings mentioned earlier, the first part of Breaking Through tackles huge issues for hard style martial artists. It dissects the evolution of hard style martial arts and identifies areas of deficit in hard style training. The journey within traditional systems often inflicts a shared pain on many forced to conform to a very structured system. This is in contrast to the nurturing environment which I had found with the American Karate and Taekwondo Organization (AKATO) in the United States, one that encouraged me to not only cross-train but supported teachers who

encouraged me to seek progressive solutions where I saw fit.

As a result, my school — which I named Joong Do Kwan, or JDK for short, which means “school of the middle way” — developed a unique perspective on training that has produced gains far exceeding any of my early expectations. It was such gamechanger that we felt compelled to share our findings as we trained with other schools. In fact, we even created a flowchart for the book to emphasize its logic. We believe this very modern take is the key to unlock a fixed, unchanging pattern (such as Bassai Dai) to work unscripted and dynamic situations — though work is an oversimplified word, as readers will see.

You can of course just enjoy the fun photo spreads of the applications in part 2 of the book. But when you link the applications with the how we got there — the logic of why they work and how they address a dynamic situation — this solves for the deficits within traditional Karate training mentioned above (and at length in the book). This link is where the magic of the book truly happens.

It is truly the book's subject. Once you establish the link with the applications and the methodology, you can apply this knowledge to any other form in any other system, and it instantly levels up your understanding of how traditional training can be put to work.

I had confidence in the martial arts content for the book, but as a novice writer I sought inspiration on how to develop the book

from a number of sources. I found there were Masterclasses on YouTube offered by renowned authors. One in particular by Dan Brown taught me that the focus should always be on the reader. Writing this way meant that I needed to develop the story to be experienced by the reader, as opposed to simply doing a brain dump onto a page. Of course understanding this and then putting it in action would have saved much time during the editing process. To make up for my inexperience, I am grateful to my editor and focus group for all the questions and the numerous suggestions they sent my way.

When I reached a point where I couldn't continue the book on my own, I contacted Master Mike Swope. I met Mike through The Study of Taekwondo group on Facebook a few years earlier, and our



***L-R: The Road Trippers were invited to Marudo Dojo by Dojo Cho Kelly Cox. The session with his students included material from the book but also featured high level connections with other Karate and Taekwondo patterns. It was amazing to work with passionate and talented practitioners. A huge thank you to Caleb Skipper who understood the assignment and brought the book into our photo.***

online friendship grew with our interest in the martial arts, movies, and some shared life experiences. However, it was a huge honor when Mike invited me to write a recommendation for Taekwon-Do: Origins of the Art: Bok Man Kim's Historical Photospective (1955 – 2015), the book he published for his teacher, Supreme Master Bok Man Kim, one of the founding pioneers of Taekwondo. Mike also interviewed me for Totally Tae Kwon Do magazine, an interview which became the cover story when it appeared. These things, IMHO, showed off his skills to eke out a story from what otherwise would be the mundanity of practice. I noticed that he also respected the progressiveness I sought within my traditional practice and likewise enjoyed my off-the-wall sense of humor. So I knew he was the guy to work with.

I was hoping to just hand off the project to him, but that happened to be only the beginning. When I submitted the manuscript, I felt an instant relief. I thought I was done with the hard work of writing, which had taken a lot out of me. However, Mike's initial feedback was to consider re-

writing the manuscript using my own voice and telling my own story because I could look at my journey in tandem with the journey to understand kata-based training. Of course, I trusted his expertise and insight, and I knew logically it would elevate the project. So, despite feeling like there was no gas left in the tank, I began contemplating an overhaul of the manuscript.



**L -> R: The Author and GM Stephen Starnes. The Breaking Through Road Trip 2023 made our first stop at North Texas Karate Academy for a series of Taekwondo seminars and to begin direct book sales. Mr Starnes invited me to his school when we first met in 2016. It so happens we both appear on facing pages in GM Keith Yates' book Out of the Dojo.**

I decided mentally that re-framing the project with a new start date from Mike's suggestion — and returning to that meditative calm needed in writing — was the best way to proceed. Then it was just pacing myself through hours of re-writing and editing to get the manuscript ready for re-submission. And yet this was still only the beginning of the process. We edited the book, not just for layout and flow, but for grammar and punctuation, blurred and missing pictures, and to ensure the accuracy of headers and sub-headers. You might be surprised to know we were doing that right through the hard copy proof and up to the final upload for the printer, two years after working together on the project.

In the editing process, Mike asked me to explain many

concepts through the chapters which were foreign to him and quite probably readers as well. The JDK training methodology seeks out same-side and opposite-side solutions wherever possible. Additionally, we often reach toward both hard-style and soft-style training as we deep dive traditional techniques, which adds complexity. Training is no longer about physical technique, and the JDK Method had long since shown that readers need to know why such tactics might fail and how to proceed.

In the world of martial arts book, none of this is what martial artists expect to read in an instructional manual. In that regard, we feel that this makes Breaking Through unique and valuable in the field of martial arts book. In the hard style “One Hit-One Kill” world view, many practitioners are taught to believe that each technique comes with a guarantee of success. To assume the possibility of failure and introduce workarounds is simply unprecedented. For this reason, the JDK Method invites non-compliance from the opponent so that we ultimately expect and train for it.

What a great lesson! But one which didn't help when it came to our photoshoots! We had organized the first shoot with the initial manuscript submission. Two years later we discovered we needed additional photos and re-takes on some of the originals. And then, like a bad habit, we needed to book

another session at the end of 2022 to capture the needed instructional photos.

Despite the challenges we faced, including the global pandemic, dealing with time zones, working our day jobs, and portraying 3-dimensional applications on a 2-dimensional page, we were progressing and clearing our hurdles with good timing. We had to get final edits in, submit the manuscript to the printers, get an e-proof of



***At a Tex Mex restaurant, Will Just whets everyone's appetite by showing off a few souvenirs from the gruelling role being the Author's demonstration partner.***

the book, set up a pre-order webpage, and ensure that the printed copies would be available for our road trip to the AKATO Annual Seminars and Book Launch, scheduled for the end of March 2023 in Dallas, Texas.

I wanted my seminar for AKATO to mirror what is presented in the book. Ignore the title, the aim isn't simply a study of a pattern. In case you haven't already surmised. Breaking Through leads a person to discover combative insights while doing a deep dive in traditional forms in their martial

system. Likewise, my aim in Dallas was to present high-level concepts to the seminar attendees, and for those attendees to then make connections to their own training.

As luck would have it, Mike was available to meet me in Dallas, and thus began plans for our road trip. As I shared these plans for this seminar, training, and book launch on Facebook, two additional black belts were so inspired that they made plans to come to Texas and spend time



***L-R: Master Mike Swope, the Author, Will Just, and Jeff Palm. The Breaking Through Road Trip 2023 crew poses at the end of a long day of seminars done at the American Karate and Taekwondo Organization Annual Seminar event 2023. Having a few guys helping with the book displays, knowing what it is we were doing in the training sessions, helping others, and travelling well together was more than I could have hoped for.***

with me.

The first was Jeff Palm, who trained with my school in Perth, Australia, about 10 years ago. Jeff came from a Kobudo lineage, earned his black belt, and discovered that what we were teaching complemented his own training. I was pleased over the long weekend in Dallas to see that he had since grown as a practitioner.

The second road tripper, Will Just, reached out to me about 5 years ago. Will happened upon my martial arts blog, searching for knowledge to plug gaps in his understanding and his own training, and started communicating with me by email. Early this year, he took a larger-than-life leap of faith, purchased a ticket to fly to

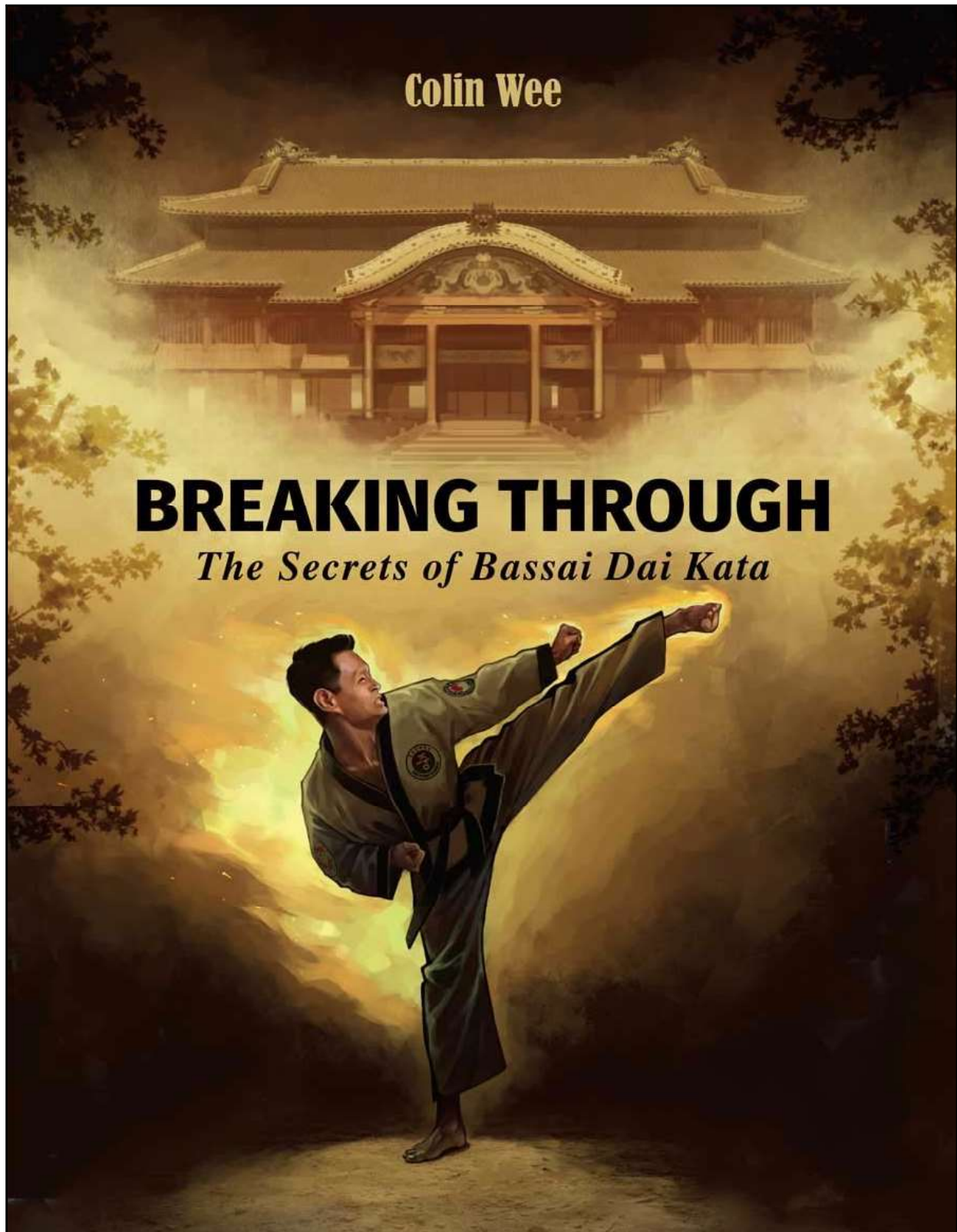
Dallas, and agreed to become my demonstration partner for the seminar and training sessions scheduled in the area. He felt there was no better way to learn what I teach.

My school isn't about inflicting unreasonable pain and suffering. However, there is measure of such in respectable training and a benefit to feeling traditional tactics firsthand. Unknown to many, I literally tortured Will over the five days he trained with me. By the end of the week, he was covered with bruises, had been spun around, had his legs taken from under him, had his limbs numbed by pressure point strikes, and experienced hydrostatic shock applied right through his body.

Yet, in his pursuit of the way, he accepted

the demonstrations without complaint and offered a smile which only grew larger and more satisfied as each training session progressed.

I began writing *Breaking Through: The Secrets of Bassai Dai Kata* because I simply wanted to express my gratitude for all I've received in the martial arts from my teachers



*The front cover of Breaking Through: The Secrets of Bassai Dai Kata show Shuri Castle in Okinawa as a backdrop shrouded in the mists of time, and with the author in sharp focus in its foreground.*

and share the insight I had acquired from my forty years in martial arts and from my experience as a National Representative and National Coach in Archery in Singapore. Those who know me best know that it is in my nature to feel compelled to share with people who are searching for the same path as I.

It was overwhelming to receive such a positive reception from about 170-180 martial art practitioners who attended those seminars in Dallas and who looked through the book over those five days. And it was amazing to have the opportunity to share the essence of my training system with other passionate practitioners. While it was surreal to hold the book when it was first printed and to feel thankful to everyone who had supported me through my 40 years of training, it was perhaps more surreal to feel my gratitude mirrored by others on a similar journey.

Since Dallas, the meditative and introspective mental state adopted during the writing and re-writing of the book has now been replaced by more than a little self-consciousness as friends, martial arts peers, seminar attendees, and my own teachers ask for an autograph or praise the book.

The whole experience – from writing the book, preparing photographs, editing, participating in its publication at every turn, holding the finished product in my hand, and sharing it with others – is going to feed my soul for many years to come.

**About:** Colin Wee has trained in three martial arts over three continents since 1983. His lineage was brought out of Korea in 1956, and he continues this lineage within Joong Do Kwan Tae Kwon Do in Perth Western Australia. More information on his book *Breaking Through: The Secrets of Bassai Dai Kata* can be at <https://moosulpublishing.com/international/>.

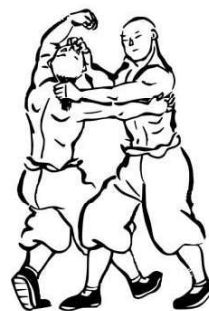
and another well-timed strike or kick. Few traditional takedowns can be practiced without a gymnastics foam pit and all require maximum concentration to ensure partner safety.

While we seek to maintain safety in our training, a clean fall for a Judo tournament is far from the design of this application.

As our opponent drops to the floor, we follow through with a drop on the back of his head which meets the upward recoil of his bounce. This move with the help of gravity snaps the head forward and down into an unnatural and unpleasant landing, hyper flexing his neck.

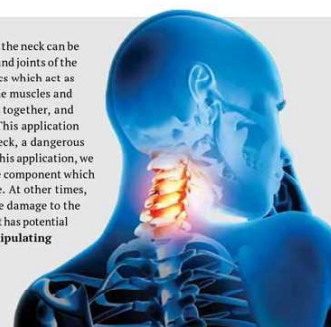
Hyperflexion occurs when a joint is flexed beyond its maximum safe range of motion. Such extreme movement can result in life-long injuries to the opposing ligaments, tendons, and muscles.

*Be likewise mindful of these dangers while training!* ■



1.1.12 – This illustration of “General Holding a Seal/Stamp” from the *Bubishi* shows a counter using a grab to the back of the head while lifting the chin, similar to Step 1b from *Bassai*.

**Be aware and cautious when training!** Injuries to the neck can be life altering – even deadly. They involve the bones and joints of the cervical spine (neck region), the intervertebral discs which act as shock absorbers between the bones of the spine, the muscles and ligaments that hold all these wonderful elements together, and the ever-important spinal cord (“Neck Injuries”). This application involves manipulating the opponent’s head and neck, a dangerous proposition when one is careless. Sometimes, as in this application, we manipulate the head/neck as part of a larger, single component which allows us to likewise affect the opponent’s balance. At other times, we manipulate the head/neck to purposefully cause damage to the opponent, as in hyperflexion. The slightest movement has potential to cause injury. **Practice extreme care when manipulating any part of the head/neck.**



**Alternate Applications:  
General Holding a Seal/Stamp to  
Wrecking Ball for Multiple Opponents**

An alternative to this spin takedown is a tactic featured in *The Bubishi* called “General Holding a Seal/Stamp” (Pic 1.1.12.) *The Bubishi* directs us to cross-step around the opponent’s base and push his head straight up and back, ending with a hard connection to the floor (McCarthy 169). In this variation, the opponent-as-a-shield no longer applies. It gives us the opportunity to remove the opponent from the equation.

However, the off-balancing phenomenon from the opening moves of *Bassai Dai* affords us a unique advantage in a multiple opponent scenario.

As our opponent’s cronies circle us, with our grip clamped down on our opponent’s neck, prepared to drive his head to the ground, wouldn’t some sort of weapon come in handy?

We need look no farther than what we already hold in our hands! The opponent teeters on his toes, trying to extricate himself from our grip and regain his balance. We, in contrast, hold in our hands an improvised 10-pound blunt-edged impact tool!



1.2.1 – The opponent on our right crosses the gap while the thug on our left scans for witnesses.



1.2.2 – We parry and roll around the attack...



1.2.3 – To slam a heel palm into the opponent’s face/head...



1.2.4 – As we side step to increase our distance from the second thug and reach around to grasp behind the opponent’s neck.



1.2.5 – We cross step and circle around the opponent and grasp his neck with our other hand to control and use him as a shield.



1.2.6 – We surge forward with a picture-perfect General Holding a Seal/Stamp to drive our opponent’s head into the second thug.

**An inside peek shows off the pictures we had to take, an idea of the applications drawn from the pattern, and the stark contrast between such training and sport based training.**