

# Martial Arts Training and Technique

By Brian Copeland, RKC

Why is it that boxing and martial arts coaches always get us tired as heck and then want us to practice punching the bags or working our techniques?

Well their heart is in the right place but unfortunately the practice sabotages our goal to increase the speed, power and timing of our techniques.

The reason that your coach puts you through endless bag-work, jump rope, sprints, push-ups, etc.; and then wants you to spar, practice techniques, work the bags or focus mitts is to toughen you up and increase your endurance. Or he could just be an unhappy evil Satan worshiper who derives pleasure from your pain.... Let's assume he just wants to increase your conditioning.

Great concept but at what sacrifice and can we do it better?

According to Thomas Kurz in "Science of Sports Training" the ideal way to structure any given training session is:

- 1<sup>st</sup> – Learning new techniques or tactics (while fresh)
- 2<sup>nd</sup> – Developing speed and/or coordination (while fresh)
- 3<sup>rd</sup> – Developing strength (while still fairly fresh)
- 4<sup>th</sup> – Developing endurance (who cares if you are fresh for endurance training?)

Why follow the above principle? Well by definition endurance training is meant to increase your ability to keep on going, you can do that in a somewhat fatigued state after your other training. But have you ever tried to be really quick with clean technique while you were exhausted? As President George Bush Senior (or at least Dana Carvey acting like George on SNL) liked to say "not gonna do it."

See, when you are in a fatigued state your speed, coordination and strength have all gone down in the dumps. You will not be able to train at your potential strength or speed while tired; hence you will not be able to push your strength or speed to new limits. You might say, "well it is better to train them while I'm tired so they will be even better when I'm fresh." Well for reasons that are too complex to dig into in this article, it doesn't work that way. When you are fatigued you will replace fine motor functions with gross ones. What does that mean to you? Well let's look at your jab (choose any punch); you want to lead from the fist so you don't telegraph your punch to your opponent. But then you have to mobilize your hips and legs, etc. behind the punch or you will have no power and just be an

arm puncher. Tall order right? You work very hard to master this complex technique, are you sabotaging it?

What happens when you are tired? You start leading with the hips and a turn of the torso to get your tired arm and body to move. You telegraph your punch to your opponent, you lose timing and power, and your opponent easily counters your punch!

Bottom line, if you train fine technical movements when tired you will get sloppy. Think of the final round of a heavyweight fight!

### **So what do I do?**

After your warm-up, which should not make you tired but just get your blood flowing so you don't get injured when you violently flick your limbs around, you should concentrate first on any techniques you want to improve upon. Don't allow yourself to get fatigued at any point. Take brief rest periods as needed. This is not Mr. Tough-Guy-No-Pain-No-Gain-Gung-Ho, there is plenty of time for that when you move to your endurance training. Next work techniques that you are already proficient in, perhaps this is where you could work on strategy, timing or speed with the focus mitts or a training partner. Next work on power, hit the heavy bag. The heavy bag should be a strength-training device not an endurance device. Don't let yourself get too fatigued or you will start swinging sloppy punches and kicks at the bag. Finally, as you are getting tired; time to work endurance. Simulate your sport's conditions as much as possible. Boxing would be 3 minutes of work that varies from moderate to intense followed by 1-minute rest intervals. You could jump rope for 1 minute, do 20 pushups or better yet 20 kettlebell snatches, another minute of jump rope and then rest for a minute as an example.

If you work your cardio/endurance hard then your tolerance for getting tired will go up. You will be able to train techniques, hit the bag and spar longer before you start getting sloppy. Work on this because the longer you can train with good technique the more your central nervous system will ingrain those good techniques. It takes 75 good techniques to undo 10 bad ones (by the way, 72.3% of all

### **Ladder Technique:**

Stay fresh and crisp!

This is an awesome strength training technique used to blow through plateaus in progress and it works great with speed and coordination as well.

Take any technique (we will use the jab) and train it on both sides of your body increasing 1 rep at a time as follows:

1 jab left (hand)  
1 jab right  
2 jabs left  
2 jabs right  
3 jabs left  
3 jabs right  
etc. etc.

By the time your ladder hits 10 reps you will have thrown 55 jabs with each hand. And it only took you 2-5 minutes to do this!

By switching hands you extend the amount of time it takes before fatigue sets in. This allows you to spend more time practicing good clean technique. Move onto a different punch or a kick now.

Once you are too tired to continue with good technique, move to endurance.

statistics are made up.) Regardless of the exact amount it is true, practice enough sloppy techniques and you will spend a good deal of time relearning good ones.

**“My coach sometimes has us push sparring or training sessions to the point of complete exhaustion, is this good?”**

Well, assuming you don't have any medical conditions that this type of training could cause harm and assuming you have built up a level of conditioning so that you won't have a heart attack! Occasionally pushing your body to this point is good for making a real man or woman out of you and should be done occasionally. But this kind of training will lead to burnout and overtraining very quickly and should be used very sparsely. No, your precious techniques won't be lost for good in one of these occasional sessions, especially if you have spent all of your prior training following the guidelines in this article.

Conclusion:

- Don't train technique, speed, power or strength while you are exhausted
- Pace your training sessions so you delay fatigue
- When you get fatigued switch to high intensity cardio/endurance training and kick your butt here instead of with your hard-earned techniques
- When training endurance, simulate the intensity (but not the movements) of the sport as close as possible, even push it further to get an edge over your opponent
- Train in this order:
  1. Technique, timing and speed (stay fresh)
  2. Power and strength (stay fairly fresh)
  3. Once you are tired, switch to endurance

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Brian is available for private and group lessons and personal program design. If you are tired of not seeing results contact Brian, he will design a personalized program based on YOUR goals, YOUR time and YOUR lifestyle.

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