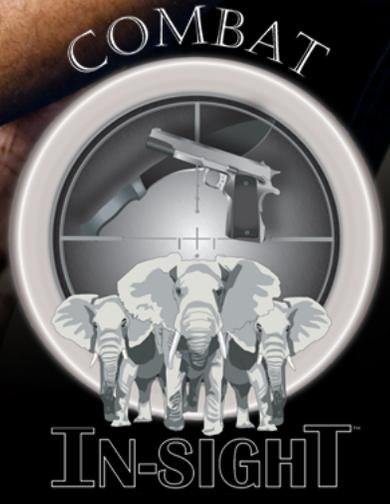




# INSIDE THE FIGHTING MEASURE



# Inside the Fighting Measure

Close Quarters Tactics from the JKD Wednesday Night Group

by Mike Blesch

Check out the companion videos  
at [CloseQuarterJKD.com](http://CloseQuarterJKD.com) to see the  
techniques in action!

## **Author's Note:**

The bulk of the material presented here was derived from the teachings of Sifu Dennis Blue. Certain elements have been modified to better fit within the context of the JKD Wednesday Night Group curriculum. Tactics and strategies dealing with weapon defense, deployment, and retention have been omitted completely.

Should you find any of the information within this document valuable, much of the credit belongs to Sifu Blue.

-Mike Blesch



# FOREWORD

When I started taking Jeet Kune Do around 1970 we were mostly working on the kickboxing phase of JKD. We mostly trained for combat by keeping the fighting measure which is a distance that you keep between you and your opponent so that he has to take a step toward you to be able to hit you with a hand or foot attack. The only close quarter combat we worked on was to enter with a hand or foot attack. We would follow that up with some sort of trap followed up with a strike, lock or throw, or all of the above.

You can see some of this type of training in the book that Larry Hartsell and I wrote called "Jeet Kune Do: Entering to trapping to grappling". While these tactics work very well if you and your opponent are squared off and you can maintain the fighting measure, sometimes you are taken by surprise. When that happens, you need to be able to defend yourself in close when you are taken unaware by your opponent.

When I started teaching JKD in my garage around 1975, I was fortunate that a warrior named Bert Poe showed up to help me teach. Bert was trained as a Marine Raider at the end of World War II. What he added to our knowledge was military close combat tactics which fit in with JKD principles of efficiency and simplicity. Bert worked with us on reactions and techniques to defend a surprise attack. In the article below we show the fighting measure as well closer attacks.

-Tim Tackett



# INTRODUCTION

Nearly 40 years after the death of its founder, Bruce Lee's "Way of the Intercepting Fist" is alive and well thanks to a small group of brilliant and dedicated proponents. A handful of Sijo Lee's original students deserve much of the credit for continuing to teach Jeet Kune Do to small groups in backyards and garages, just as it was done in the 1960's. They have also authored numerous books and videos that give us insight into the origin, development and technical aspects of the art.

We can derive from this pool of knowledge as well as from the name of the art itself, that the primary objective of the Jeet Kune Do practitioner is to "intercept" an opponent either before he attacks, or during the initiation or execution of his attack. Following the JKD principle of "longest weapon to the nearest target", the intercepting strike is typically a lead hand finger jab to the eyes or lead leg kick to the shin/knee of the opponent.

In order for the tactic of interception to be successful, we must control two key elements of the fight: distance and time.



# THE FIGHTING MEASURE

The concept of the Fighting Measure was borrowed from the sport of Foil Fencing. The distance between two fencers is maintained so that neither can attack the others body from the on-guard position without a forward lunge. This is called the Fencing Measure. A similar measure is used with the Epee, although the distance is extended due to the targeting of the weapon hand. The JKD practitioner measures off against his opponent in almost the exact same manner as the foilist.



► Correct distance



✘ Incorrect, the distance is too close



## KEEPING THE MEASURE

In theory maintaining the Fighting Measure is simple. We must mirror the opponents movement. However, against a skilled and/or unpredictable opponent is where problems may arise.

*What if the opponent has great initiation speed?*  
A fast fighter may bridge the gap and attack so quickly that you do not have time to intercept (even from the fighting measure).

*What if you are attacked by surprise at close range?* Is retreating to gain distance possible or even desirable?

The end result is that the measure has been broken (and you probably got hit). The fight is on at close quarters and interception is no longer an effective tactic.

## THE JKD ANSWER?

It is said that the specialty of the Wing Chun system is close range fighting. Although it is one of three arts that form the base of Jeet Kune Do, many of it's close range techniques are not included in the original material that Bruce lee taught to his students (elbows, knees, and sweeps for example).

“Go straight to the heart of danger,  
for there you will find safety.”

- Chinese Proverb

The Western Boxing elements of JKD do provide some basic tools for infighting, however these strikes alone do not provide a complete solution. I think it's fair to say that there is a gap to be filled. Let's look at some proven techniques for dealing with close range problems the JKD practitioner may encounter.

# THE EMERGENCY RESPONSE

*Note: This is what we call an "Oh Crap! Response". It's used when you are attacked by surprise or caught off guard for any reason.*

To keep things simple and direct, we will begin by using the emergency response as a point of reference from which we defend the vital areas of the upper body and launch our counterattack. Almost anyone can do this with no training at all as it's a natural human instinct to lower the head and raise the arms when caught off guard. An added benefit of this posture is that it helps those with lesser body awareness feel more comfortable when faced with an attack because it is essentially a standing fetal position!



It's important to remember that this is a transitory position. We will never maintain this position for more than a split second. The priority is to safely move off the line of attack. This forces the opponent to reorient his body in order to continue attacking, thereby gaining us time and the opportunity to attack his structure at a point of weakness.

- The tips of the points of the triangle represent the points of structural weakness



We get off the line by stepping with either foot at a 45 degree angle; The 11 o'clock position when stepping with the left foot, or the 1 o'clock position if stepping with the right. Depending on the opponent's line of attack, we will end up either inside or outside of the opponent's attacking limb.

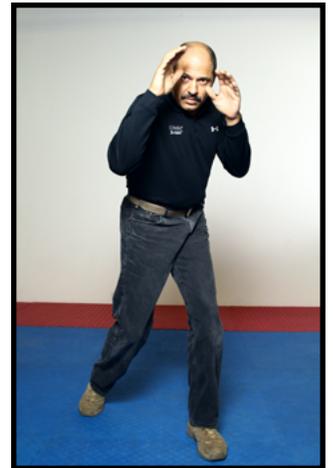
## KEY ELEMENTS OF THE EMERGENCY RESPONSE



- ▶ Sink at the knees to create a strong base
- ▶ Inward tuck of the midsection to facilitate proper posture for both defense and attack (power)
- ▶ Shoulders projected forward
- ▶ Head angled down but always looking towards the opponent (never turn away)

## CHANGING DIRECTION

A crucial component in making any of the following counterattacks work is a sudden change of direction from the 45 degree outward angle of the emergency response to a 45 degree inward angle to take away the opponent's balance. Change direction as many times as necessary, from outside to inside or vice versa.



## WALKING THE LINE



- ▶ Once Joel's balance has been compromised, Dennis walks through to the point of structural weakness – the tip of the triangle.

## FIGHTING TO THE HEAD

- ▶ Any time we take an opponent to the ground, we will immediately circle around to his head and away from his legs. This is to avoid any possible counters from the downed opponent.



# COUNTERATTACK

Following the JKD principle of “offensive defense”, we use the emergency response as the initiation of our counterattack when caught off guard. The primary objective is always striking. Secondary is manipulation of the arms or legs.

Let’s look at a few examples of attacks from both the inside and outside positions.

## FOREARM SHUNT TO TAKEDOWN (INSIDE POSITION)

Bruce Lee often reminded his students to “take the closest available shot.” The logical follow up to the emergency response is the Forearm Shunt. This is a forward and upward strike with the outside of the forearm which is very effective at knocking the opponent off balance.

- ▶ The primary target is the side of the neck.
- ▶ Contact is made first with the ridge of the hand, followed by the forearm as the strike travels through its forward and upward arc.



Ideally, the Shunt is accompanied by two or more simultaneous strikes. This is referred to as “overkill” in the Filipino Martial Arts. Some potential weapons are the forehead (headbutt), the 2nd forearm, the point of the elbow, and the shin.

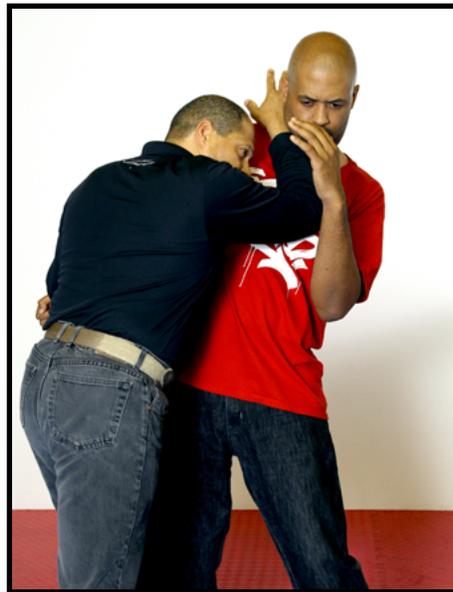
# SEQUENCE 1



1. Dennis Blue and Joel Brown square off.



2. Joel executes a looping right punch or haymaker. Dennis crashes using the emergency response on the inside.



↑ Front view

↓ Side view

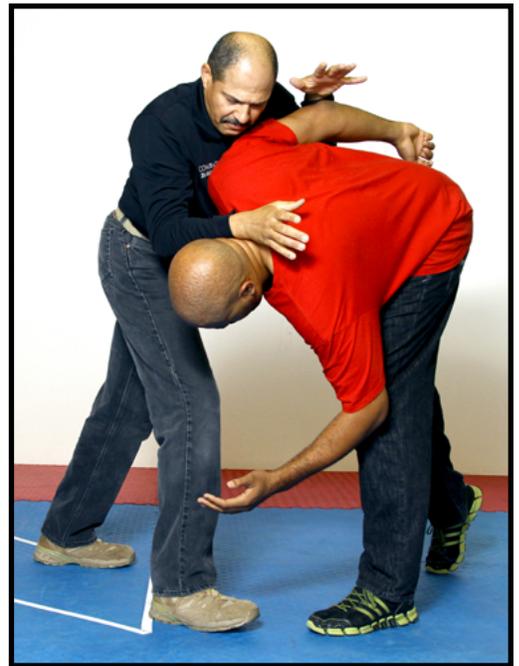
3. Using his forearms, Dennis strikes Joel across the side of the neck with his right arm while simultaneously striking the attacking arm with his left and headbutting. Repeat this 3 times, driving forward with each hit.



4. Dennis controls Joel's attacking arm and forces his head down while changing direction.



↑ Front view



↑ Side view



5. Dennis then delivers a knee strike but rather than retract the leg, he steps through and stomps the foot down to the ground (Repeat the 'knee and stomp' motion as many times as necessary to take the opponent down)

6. Dennis finishes his opponent.

We only need to modify this sequence slightly to make it work from the outside position.

► *Note: Steps 2,3,4, & 5 are performed in one continuous motion.*

## QUARTER SWING TO FOREARM SHUNT TO TAKEDOWN (OUTSIDE POSITION)

Here we'll use a "Quarter Swing" strike with the rear hand to enter from the outside. It's important to note that we use a drop step (falling step) when executing the quarter swing. The strike itself in this example is a downward chopping motion into the opponent's attacking arm, right at the bend of the elbow. This will clear the line for an immediate Forearm Shunt to the neck.

- ▶ Using the quarter swing to clear the opponent's arm.



## SEQUENCE 2

► *Note: Steps 2,3,4, & 5 are performed in one continuous motion.*



1. Dennis Blue and Joel Brown square off.

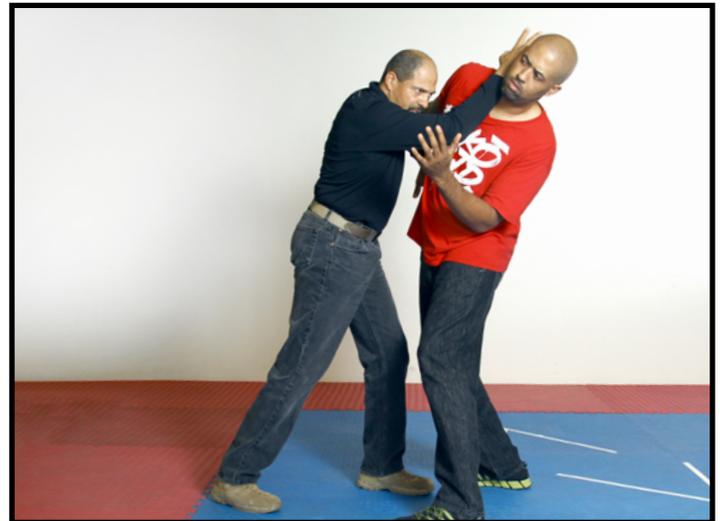


↑ Front view



↑ Side view

2. Joel executes a straight right punch. Dennis crashes using the emergency response on the outside.



3. Dennis steps inward at a 45 degree angle, chops down on Joel's arm, and applies the forearm shunt to the side of Joel's neck. He now has control over the attacking arm and Joel's balance has been compromised.

4. Dennis controls Joel's attacking arm and forces his head down. He then delivers a knee strike but rather than retract the leg, he steps through and stomps the foot down to the ground.



5. Dennis fights to the head.

There are several variations of these sequences.  
Watch the companion videos at [CloseQuarterJKD.com](http://CloseQuarterJKD.com) for more!

# CLOSE QUARTER STRIKING TOOLS



► Fingertips



► Palm Heel



► Hammerfist



► Forearm



► Elbow



► Shoulder



► Forehead



## PRIMARY TARGETS

- Eyes
- Base of nose
- Base of chin
- Throat
- Side of neck
- Bladder
- Groin

# STRIKING PROGRESSION

Sifu Dennis Blue taught us this progression and it's been very helpful in getting us to focus on just a few primary shots from the multitude of striking options available in close quarters.

1. Shocker (heart strike)
2. Choke (throat grab)
3. Chin Jab (base of chin)
4. Throat Jab (jugular notch)

## SHOCKER



► The Shocker is a blow which uses an outward snap of the wrist just before impact to send a shock wave through the target area of the chest directly over the heart.

► Dennis can also apply a mid-post if needed

The next three strikes are initiated using mechanics similar to the Shocker.

## CHOKE

The striking surface here is the web of the hand between the thumb and index fingers. The strike makes impact in the center of the chest first, beginning from the sternal angle and driving upward to the throat. The impact of the strike will get the opponent's head moving up and back, at which point the fingers will grasp the trachea.



## CHIN JAB

Just like the previous strike, the chin jab begins low and centered on the chest. It then drives straight up, making impact on the base of the chin with the palm heel.



## THROAT JAB

Once again, the strike begins at the sternal angle and moves upwards to the throat. Two or more fingers press into the jugular notch (in and down) while maintaining forward pressure to drive the opponent straight to the ground.



# TRAINING DRILLS

Instead of going straight to force-on-force training, we start out at a low level of resistance and steadily increase from there. The first stage is what we call the Zombie Drill. Beginning from a neutral position at arms length, the trainer will attack in one of three ways:



▶ Both hands on the shoulders



▶ On the chest (grab jacket or other clothing if available)



▶ Around the neck (choke)

Now we'll begin to integrate the striking progression and some trapping into our counterattacks.

## SEQUENCE 3



▶ Dennis Blue and Joel Brown square off.



▶ Joel executes a looping right punch or haymaker. Dennis crashes using the emergency response on the inside.



▶ Dennis controls Joel's striking arm and uses it as an anchor point while applying the Choke technique from our striking progression.



▶ With Joel's bodyweight moving up and back, Dennis uses a low post (slaps the kidneys) while continuing to drive forward. The forward drive takes Joel down to the ground.



*Note: The Chin Jab, Throat Jab, and Choke are interchangeable.*

## SEQUENCE 4



- ▶ Dennis Blue and Joel Brown square off.



- ▶ Joel executes a straight right punch. Dennis crashes using the emergency response on the outside.



- ▶ Turning in at a 45 degree angle, Dennis lop saos Joel's attacking arm with an anchor step and fires a finger jab at Joel's eyes. In this case Dennis stepped back with his right foot, using the same 'drop' as with a falling step.



- ▶ Dennis changes direction using a knee strike.



- ▶ Dennis maintains control of the arm as Joel hits the ground, finishing with the technique of his choice

# APPLYING THE “JKD FILTER”

The first question we must ask is do the techniques presented here provide answers to a problem that a simple trap and straight blast or short flurry of shovel hooks and uppercuts can't solve? Undoubtedly, the answer is yes when dealing with surprise attacks or an opponent who is able to bridge the gap at will and deliver his attacks accurately. The opponent has seized a momentary advantage and we must turn the tide back in our favor.

- **Adaptability:** Will the technique work against both straight and curving strikes as a single attack or combination?
- **Vulnerability:** Does it leave me exposed to counterattacks which may be more damaging than the initial attack I'm defending against?
- **Structure:** Do the takedowns involved allow me to stay on my feet with only the opponent going to the ground?



## CONCLUSION

While simplicity is always crucial to the JKD'er, here it is critical. How much practice will these techniques require before they can be used effectively in combat? After all, these are secondary responses. The greatest returns will come from cultivating awareness to prevent surprise attacks along with preparing for when they do happen. Emergency responses and improved reaction speed to counter an opponent's initiation speed can be a worthwhile investment of time, but to practice Jeet Kune Do at it's highest level is to intercept on intention. Stop the attack before it starts.

## About the Authors:

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