

Is Taekwon-Do Practical for Street Self Defence?

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The effectiveness of many traditional Martial Arts styles and fighting techniques for street self-defence has come under some scrutiny since the arrival of competitive Mixed Martial Arts (MMA). MMA is widely considered to be the closest to “no rules” real street fighting compared to any other form of combat sport as it allows the use of fighting techniques from all styles of Martial Arts and



combat sports such as punching, elbowing, kicking, grappling, throws, sweeps, chokes, joint locks, holds and ground work etc. Most Martial Arts and combat sport competitions are limited to the use of a smaller range of fighting techniques that are restricted to that specific style.

MMA bouts have revealed that many of the more flashy, softer and complex Martial Arts fighting styles and techniques either simply do not work, are less effective or rarely work in the Octagon. MMA has displayed that the more direct, simpler and harder fighting techniques from styles such as Boxing,



Kickboxing, Muay Thai, Judo, Wrestling and Brazilian Jiu Jitsu



are more effective in the Octagon. Notwithstanding, MMA does have its limitations in its application to street fighting as it does not allow more vicious and deadly fighting techniques such as eye gauging, hair pulling, scratching, head butting, biting and strikes to the grind and back of the head, which are not off limits in “no rules barred” street fighting and survival.

The street effectiveness of the Korean Martial Art Taekwon-Do is also being questioned. This may be because of the confusion between the two styles of Taekwon-Do. World Taekwondo (WT) or the



Olympic style which was created in 1973 predominately as a competitive sport where competitors wear body protection and predominantly use kicks above the waist with no punches to the head. Any combat sport that does not allow head punches is significantly deficient in one of the main and most effective striking weapons used in fighting and self-defence. The other style is

the International Taekwon-Do Federation (ITF), which is considered to be the original and traditional form of Taekwon-Do and was created in 1955 as a fighting art and later as a competitive sport where the competitors wear little body protection and predominantly use kicks and punches to the body and head. For the purpose of this article, I will be referring to the ITF style of Taekwon-Do.



Taekwon-Do was specifically developed by General Choi Hong Hi, a company commander in the Korean Army, who initially taught Karate to his soldiers to strengthen them mentally and physically for warfare.



He intended to create a superior Korean fighting art in the form of Taekwon-Do, which was based on the principles of modern science and physics to maximise power.



General Choi was instructed by the South Korean President Syngman Rhee to officially introduce the art into the Korean Army to develop the fighting skills of the soldiers.

Since then Taekwon-Do has become the most popular and widespread martial art in the world and is practiced by a wide range of population groups for many reasons including self-defence, fitness, recreation, self-confidence, competition and the development of moral character.



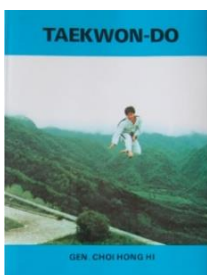
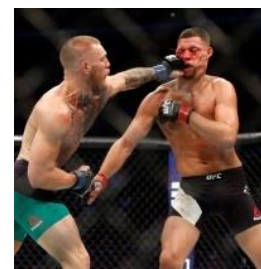
Many people take up Taekwon-Do for street self-defence because even though street fights can and should be avoided, sometimes they are unavoidable. If someone has found themselves in a life threatening street fight situation, then it is essential that their Taekwon-Do training is effective for the street and not just in the Dojang or in a competition.

When attacked on the street, it is vital that the defender has the mental and physical training to be able to control, shut down, counter, neutralise and or disarm the attacker. Considering this situation could be life-threatening, the only focus is to avoid or overcome the attacker so to protect oneself from potential harm.



Taekwon-Do's street practicality has been doubted by some due to the exaggerated claims and flashy techniques shown in the movies, demonstrations and competitions. It would be near impossible to effectively execute many of the flashy and complex Taekwon-Do techniques such as flying spinning kicks in a real street situation.

MMA has publicly revealed, what martial arts techniques really work and what does not including Taekwon-Do. The most effective martial art techniques that do work in MMA, include the correct execution of the more basic, direct and simpler offensive and defensive techniques at the right distance, timing and precision.



Taekwon-Do was designed as a very comprehensive martial art that emphasises powerful fighting techniques to stop an opponent. Even though Taekwon-Do is widely renowned for its impressive kicks and a lesser extent its punches, its repertoire of fighting techniques far exceed just fancy kicks and punches and also include ground fighting, grappling, throws, wrist locks, arm bars and self-defence technique against unarmed and armed attackers as according to the Encyclopaedia of Taekwon-Do.

If Taekwon-Do is taught comprehensively, it will train and condition participants in the three components that decide the outcome of a street fight, being...

1. Physical Conditioning
2. Technical Expertise
3. Mental Toughness



1. Physical Conditioning

Taekwon-Do is a very physically demanding martial art requiring the conditioning of cardiovascular fitness, strength, coordination, agility, speed, power and flexibility. The training and development of these physical qualities to adequately meet the level of skill required to execute the vast array of Taekwon-Do techniques effectively, from simple powerful punches to break boards to flying spinning kicks to hit targets, requires the exponent to build their physical fitness and conditioning over a long period of time to perform Taekwon-Do at a high level.



Being fitter, stronger and faster with more agility and flexibility will serve a defender well in a physical confrontation such as a street fight. Considering most acts of aggression are not planned, but an emotional spontaneous reaction to a situation, the attackers are less likely to be as physically conditioned as compared to the Taekwon-Do defender.

Being fitter, stronger with more agility, speed, power and flexibility will provide the defender a physical advantage over their less conditioned attacker in a street fight.

2. Technical Expertise

Taekwon-Do participants drill offensive and defensive fighting techniques repetitively in training to promote muscle memory, precision, timing and consistency in technical executive. Considering that all techniques in Taekwon-Do have a practical application in fighting and self-defence, the participant will be well armed to fight and defend themselves against any attacker.



Taekwon-Do has been scientifically designed using the principles of physics to maximise its impact in the generation of power and lethal force. Each strike or block when executed correctly will have a devastating effect on any attacker.

Even though the sport of competitive Taekwon-Do only uses a limited range of fighting techniques such as padded punches and kicks targeted above the waist and to the head, the fighting art of Taekwon-Do also includes a greater arsenal of fighting techniques including take downs, throws, joint locks, low kicks, elbow strikes and various strikes to lethal body target areas such as the eyes, knee, groin and temple.

Being technically competent in the execution of all of these Taekwon-Do fighting techniques will provide the defender a technical advantage over their less skilled attacker in the street.



3. Mental Toughness

Mental strength is consistently developed during Taekwon-Do conditioning in the form of pushing your body and mind through the physical training, competition, power breaking, special technique, self-defence drills and sparring.



The repetition of performing conditioning exercises and drilling Taekwon-Do techniques not only builds physical strength but also mental strength and resilience.



Free sparring trains the participant to execute fighting techniques in a controlled high-pressured fight situation in the presence of the fear of being hit and possibly hurt. This conditions the participant to overcome the fear of confrontation while in a simulated fight situation to develop mental courage and fearlessness while fighting. Courage is not performing in the absence of fear, but performing in the presence of fear. Constant exposure to a controlled pressure fighting environment will develop mental fortitude in a real fight and a self-defence situation.

Power breaking is a perfect example of training the participant to develop mind over matter so to overcome the fear of injury and danger to break physical obstacles such as boards, tiles and bricks etc. The saying of “Feel the Fear and Do It Anyway” is a perfect example of releasing the limitations of your mind to enable your body to perform to it’s potential to break through physical barriers and objects. The body will only go where the mind will allow it.



Competition is an invaluable way to test your fighting skills under pressure. Competitive sparring tests the application of your fighting skills in a controlled pressured free style fighting environment which has consequences in terms of physical injury and not meeting one’s own expectations. Competitive patterns, power breaking, special technique and team events also place a pressure test on the participant’s performance and mindset in a competitive stressful environment.

Developing the mental toughness to overcome these physical obstacles and mental performance expectations in a high-pressured environment will provide the defender an advantage in defeating a less mentally prepared attacker.



Conclusion

Like many traditional Martial Arts, Taekwon-Do has come under question by more modern and commercial combat sports such as MMA regarding to its effectiveness in the street.

If Taekwon-Do is trained according to it's raw and traditional methods, it is a very effective fighting style and form of self-defence in the street and could save your life.

