

Larry Hartsell's Jeet Kune Do Concepts

Today, it's the wise martial artist who is turning his or her sights on how to take the battle to the mat, and Larry Hartsell - as always - is there with an encouraging word and a divesting technique. Larry Hartsell, began many years ago when he first hit the mats in high school. His martial development includes high rankings in several recognized arts including a long-time and much-valued association with Kempo Karate's Ed Parker. "Bruce Lee showed me what was possible," and Ed Parker gave me my fighting spirit."

To many, Larry Hartsell represents the very best in American grappling. Anyone who spends any amount of quality time researching ground fighting knows who Larry Hartsell is. He holds direct lineage from Bruce Lee and remains one of the man's most ardent supporters.

As Larry introduced techniques during the seminar students practiced together. Larry ran through a move, explaining and demonstrating, then with a loud "It's your!" students were free to make his teachings their own. Larry explains his signature phrase, offering, "Bruce always added that if you didn't get it the second time around, whatever he was showing you remained his. He was an impatient instructor."

--Requiring the hitter to either bob and weave or should roll for evasion, and then reply according to the position the pads were held at.

CRASHING IN

As the students become fairly well versed in the punching techniques of Western boxing, Larry progressed in his teaching to cover the method of entering or crashing in on the jab. Hartsell believes that the straight lead jab is one of the most effective initial attacks of any system and therefore the ability to counter it is a major asset to any fighter. Once again the footwork patterns emphasized at the outset of the seminar were brought into play, this time with Kali's side lateral triangle bringing the defender in on the attacker while moving him to the side of the attack. Larry provided a number of variations on the hand position for this countering sequence, all of which had the common factor of delivering strike, either to the body, face or arm at the same time as performing the evasive movement. This part of the sequence is described by Larry as "Disturbing" the opponent and is the point where the trapping or locking sequence begins.

Larry immediately pointed out that the timing and speed of the counter attack was essential and defenders were advised to step back and catch a few of the attacker's jabs in order to judge the timing of the attack prior to moving in. Periodically Larry would perform a technique at full speed with the opponent's reaction convincing any cynic of the technique's effectiveness.

"If a boxer can keep a wrestler out of this range, he will have the advantage. However, if a wrestler can bridge the gap and maintain this range, he will have the advantage." Hartsell explained.

TRAPPING

Hartsell's trapping techniques are taken from Jun Fan Wing Chun (Bruce Lee's modified version of the art) and Kali. The hand positions resulting from the entering in on an opponents jab provide the reference points (positions of hand engagement) from which much of the Jun Fan method is taught, integrated with Kali's trapping phase. From these various reference points Hartsell moved forward with Pak-Sau or Lop-Sau attacks which were answered in a variety of ways incorporating the center line theory, he then provided a number of alternatives to counter these replies.

While performing these techniques, Hartsell's moves were quick and fluid with emphasis on good foot positioning being stressed. Many of the sequences would end with a strike to the opponent's leading shoulder to position him square on to enable the defender to complete his counter attack with a straight blast of Wing Chun punches, apparently a favorite technique of the Los Angeles Gung Fu Institute (Chinatown) where Hartsell was an original member in the Sixties.

Throughout the seminar, as each aspect was covered, Larry would constantly lock, choke or throw his opponent to demonstrate alternatives to particular technique being taught at that time. As previously mentioned, Hartsell is known to excel in this area and as he moved naturally into close range it became obvious to all attending that this was someone who felt at home at this range.

According to Hartsell grappling was the area in which Bruce was very involved prior to his death and he speaks very highly of Lee's ability in this area. Jeet Kune Do has continued to evolve since Lee's death as demonstrated by the techniques and theory taught by Larry, who, for close range work, incorporates techniques from Judo, Western Boxing, Wrestling, Kali and Penjak Silat.

Following his previously described initial attack; Hartsell would use his position to flow into an arm or wristlock, or alternatively a choke, all of which would be followed by a takedown. Hartsell will always give credit to those who have influenced him during his career with particular reference to Bruce Lee, Dan Inosanto and the American Wrestling Supreme Gene LeBell. The majority of arm and wrist locks taught by Larry are incorporated into the "lock flow", a method of teaching a student how to move from lock to lock and to know his way around his opponents' body "feeling" from whatever lock presents itself.

Larry explained that all the locks have a point of no return, however, in practice, to maintain the flow this is disregarded as it is in any of the drills where partners lock each other alternately. These drills include "lock to lock" in which a lock applied by one person is countered by another lock and "hit to lock" in which the lock is countered by

the nearest practical hit, with the deliverer then applying his or her own lock. For each lock or choke demonstrated, Larry would stress the importance of hitting or disturbing the opponent first. In the absence of a hit many of the locks could be unworkable unless within the confines of a set of rules an applied to wrestling.

TAKEDOWNS

Larry progressed from the locks into takedowns, which in many cases are the result of the person applying the lock dropping down and his opponent falling with him to avoid the obvious damage, which could result from his resistance. At the point of the takedown Larry emphasized the need to stay close to the opponent to provide full control on the ground. During the demonstrations, immediately his opponent hit the ground as the result of a takedown. Larry would be upon him with a variety of pins or locks. Unrestricted by rules, Larry continually demonstrated the use of techniques considered illegal in wrestling, as he had in relation to boxing earlier in the seminar.

The ground work taught at the seminar was drawn from many of the arts previously mentioned and included techniques where the person in command controls his opponent from a standing or kneeling position, or alternatively joins him on the ground to lock him up. In the case of the latter the drop onto the "downed" opponent would be an integral part of the technique, especially where the knee or elbow is the first part of the body to connect on the drop. Controlling his opponent on the ground from a kneeling positioning would once again find Larry utilizing his knees on the opponents body, thereby pinning him while Larry had both hands free to perform, for example, a figure four arm lock, straight arm bar going from pin to arm lock to choke or leg lock with ease, all the while throwing in hits to emphasize he was working without any restrictions.

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