

REALITY FIGHTING'S CARDINAL RULE: TRAIN YOUR BRAIN!

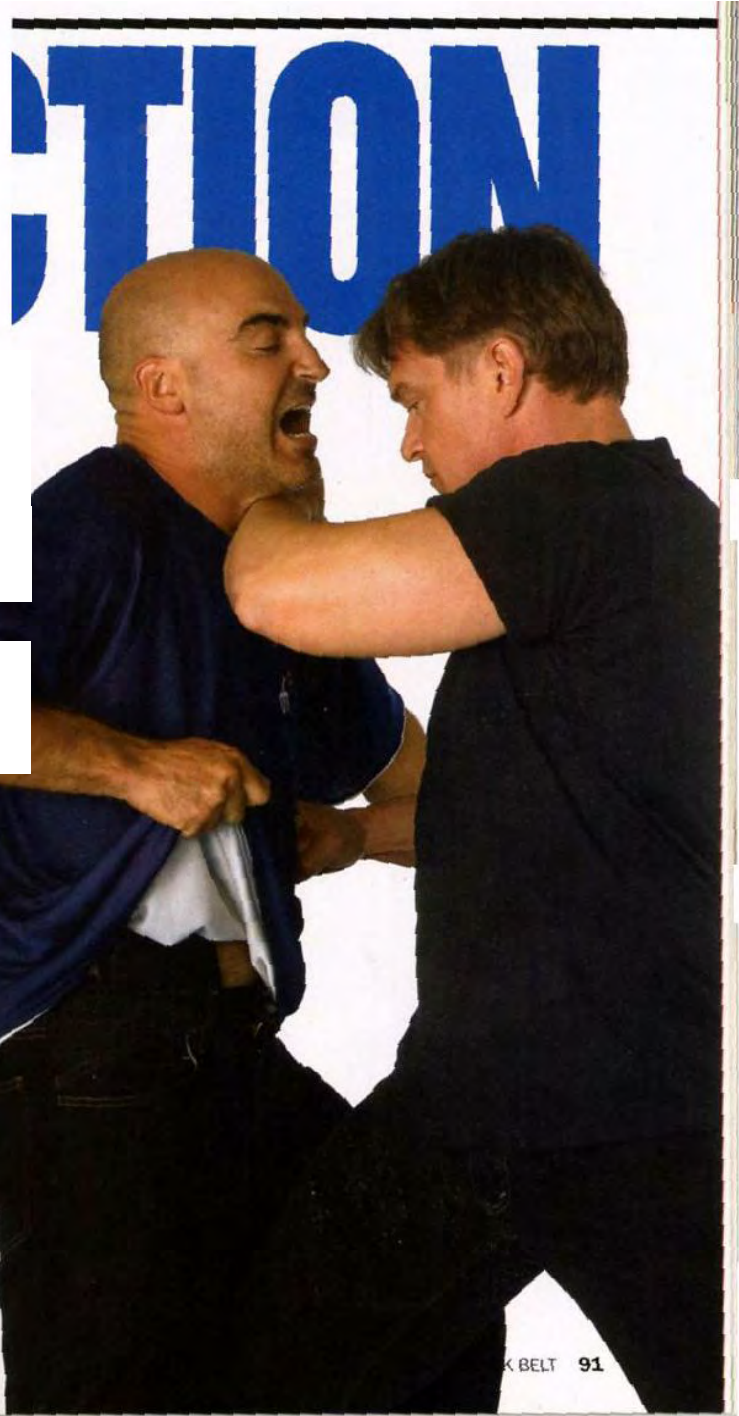
by Tim Larkin
and Chris Ranck-Buhr

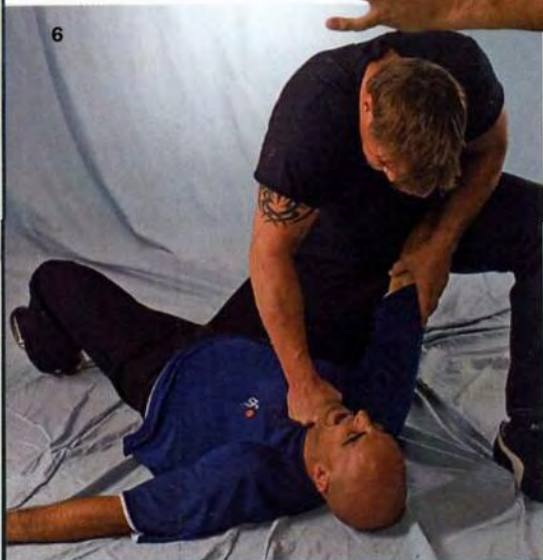
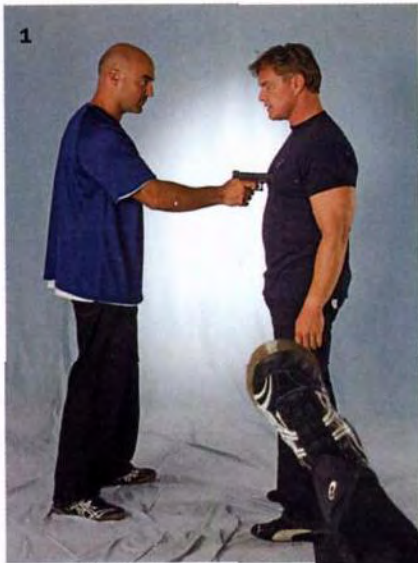
Two lilies ambush a well-known *JHjixii* competitor in a casino parking lot. Wiihom a sl'concl thought, he lunges and deftly executes a double-leg takedown on the lirsi yuy. The man is knocked unconscious when his head strikes a car door on the way down.

The second assailant comes nt the jujulsu competitor with a knife. He parries ihe blade and immortalies [lie limb with an arnibar. The man shrieks in agony and begins slappim: his (high with his tree hand to signal his submission. The jujuisu practitioner lets him go, and without missing a beal. (he thug recovers and drives his blade hilt-deep into the martial artist's

NO MERCY: As soon as he detects a threat—fn this case, a concealed weapon about to *tie* deployed—Tim Larkin (right) closes the gap, slams his left forearm into the assailant's neck and punches him in the ribs.

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| GUN: The as-¹ sailant points

tils weapon at Tim Larklin's chest (1). Larklin steps forward with his right foot to remove his body from the line of fire (2) and shoulder-butts the man's chest as he controls his right arm (3). The martial artist then leverages the opponent to the ground (4), strikes him in the groin (5) and punches him in the throat (6).

lorso again and again.

The jujusu expert survives the attack, hill he's not unscathed. His injuries force him to retire from competition, and to this day, he still suffers from digestive problems.

What went wrong? Was the competitor simply outclassed? Is there any truth to the conventional wisdom that street thugs are simply better lighters? Hardly. The difference is more subtle than that. It's not about technique or training; it's about ihe ultimate goal each man had

in mind.

The jujusu competitor was performing the way he'd practiced, but then so was the thug. While their two methods of handling the situation can be seen as similar—the armour and the stab are, in essence, martial arts technitjues—their goals were not. One man was pitting skill against strength, while the other was simply wrecking human tissue.

One was thinking competition while the other was bent on destruction.



REAR CHOKE: As soon as the man initiates his attack (1), H& Tim Larkin effects a groin grab with JF his left hand (2). He turns his torso to the left to relieve pressure on his neck until the pain of the groin lift breaks the choke hold (3). Larkin then pivots, drops to one knee and forces the opponent down (4). After accosting him with a "back breaker," Larkin shoves the man to the ground (5) and hammer-fists his body and head (6).

What Are You Training For?

We'd all like to believe that our martial arts training prepares us for every possible situation in and out of the ring, but often that's not the case. Numerous true stories with unfortunate outcomes could be told about competitors who faced raw violence on the street. To save yourself from having a sad story of your own, you have to be honest: What are you training for? Is it to best a martial artist in the ring, to score points, to win a trophy? Or is it to break people, to render them harmless as soon as they threaten your well-being? Do you understand the difference?

Competition is about seeing who's best among relative equals, while vio-

lence is about shutting off a human brain. In the first endeavor, the goal is to determine who can apply his tools in his bag of tricks in the most cunning way, while in the other, it's to find the unfair advantage and exploit it.

Competition entails using your body and mind to play chess at 90 miles per hour. It involves pitting your strength, speed, stamina, drive and skill against your opponent's attributes to decide who will be the victor and who will be the vanquished.

Violence is about one human being destroying another. It's a baseball bat to the back of the head. It's three gunning up on one. It's kicking an attacker when he's down. Especially when he's down. While there can be such a thing as a fair fight, there's no such thing as an equitable murder,

Competitor vs. Killer

The difference between a sparring match and a murder is as simple to understand as the difference between wrestling and shooting people. In wrestling, trained practitioners in the same weight class have a roughly equal chance; in a shooting, a bullet destroys regardless of the victim's physical prowess or skill.

In a wrestling match, even with the most vicious and painful joint lock, you're not going to ruin body parts. You're not going to break your opponent's elbow; you're going to make him feel like it's breaking to make him submit.

The killer is much more interested in duplicating, by any means available, the work of the bullet. He simply wants to destroy parts of you until you don't function anymore. He knows that outside the ring, the only rules are the laws of physics.

He's not interested in a fair fight to make you submit; he's going to start in on you when you're not looking and when you least expect it. He wants to injure you, grievously and permanently, and he won't stop until he's succeeded. In his mind, the best way to get that done is to make sure you never get a say in what he's going to do—no countering, no blocking, in short, no competition. He wants to keep it as one-sided as possible.

In competition, both parties step into the ring and know what to expect. They

have a good grasp of what their opponent is capable of and probably have worked out strategies to best him. They know that if things go badly, they have friends—the referee or a cornerman with a towel—who will call it off. They know that no matter what, they have to worry about only one guy. They know no one's going to dig their eyeballs out of their skull or break their neck or pull a snub-nose .38 out of their pocket.

Dennis Rader, the notorious BTK Killer, reveled in uiking on multiple people at once—whole families, single-handedly—and succeeded with no training and no special skill. He wasn't interested in fighting or competing with his victims on a physical level. He simply wanted to kill [hem.

How could he do that? Because he's not a fighter; he's a killer. Fighters do their best to out-compete their foes; killers do their best to avoid competition. They find or manufacture the unfair advantage and exploit it mercilessly.

The defining difference between the competitor and the killer comes down to injury. The desire to inflict a serious injury that requires immediate medical attention for the most part isn't a goal in competition. When it does occur, it ends the match instantly. The ref jumps in, the cornerman throws in the towel and everyone piles into the ring to administer first aid.

In violence, the goal is injury. That's because, on the street as in the ring, injury ends all competition.

Dying to Compete With Violence

The real danger arises when you try to push competition into the realm of violence. Competing with a killer, trying to "play by the rules" while he knows there aren't any, will get you killed. Put him in an armbar, and he'll tap out; as soon as you let up, he'll stab you.

Martial artists need to learn to keep competition out of violence, to maintain a clear delineation between what happens in the ring and what happens on the street. In the ring, the best man wins; on the street, the one who relentlessly destroys the other prevails.

The secret to success on the street is

simple—and at times gruesome. Break the arm, rupture the testicles, stomp the throat. Do all the things that are expressly forbidden in competition, and do them first. The fancier the technique you're monkeying around with and the longer the setup, the more danger you expose yourself to.

Everything changes in your favor when you jam your thumb in your



STICK CHOKE: Tim Larkin lies on his back while his enemy chokes him with a baton (1). Larkin traps the man's left leg, then bridges and rolls to his right (2) to escape from the mount (3). The martial artist immediately moves to an offensive position, from which he initiates a groin strike (4), a face punch (5) and a knee thrust to the tailbone (6-7).



attacker's eye. It's not nice and it's not fair, but it will prevent him from having the chance to do the same to you.

One or the Other?

While it would be nice to say that you can train for the ring and the street, you can't. It's a simple fact that you'll do what you train to do—as the jujutsu competitor in the aforementioned Las Vegas assault did. Keeping two kinds of training, with their vastly different goals, separated in your head just doesn't work.

Many of the skills and techniques you can amass by competing in martial arts tournaments can translate to the street—a choke is a choke, after all—but the methodologies under which they're practiced and executed differ. In the ring, you can wrap him up without worrying that he'll pull a blade. On the street, you're better off injuring him before you go for the choke.

Figure out what your goal is. If you want to be a hard target and know how to shut people off on the street, make sure



your training reflects that. If you want to compete, keep it in the ring and enjoy the physical and mental challenges that the sport provides.

Training for Longevity

For most people, however, competition is but a short phase of their total athletic career. Sooner or later your "war wounds" will stack up, the mutant healing powers of youth will abandon you and you'll have achieved all your

competitive goals. That's the time to switch over to destruction training. Your body's ability to handle the rigors of competition has a built-in fuse; the harder you drive yourself, the more ends you're burning it from. Destruction, on the other hand, is a life skill that will see you through to the end of your days—by making sure you get as many days as you can. X

About the authors: Tim Larkin is a close-combat instructor with more than 20 years of experience. His Target-Focus Training System is taught to thousands of military, law-enforcement and civilian clients around the world. Chris Ranck-Buhr is a TFT instructor with 20 years of experience. For the past 10 years, he's specialized in designing instructor-training programs. For more information, visit www.blackbeltmag.com.