Mastering the Nunchakue

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Introduction

I began my training in the martial arts over fourteen years ago in the little town of Alexandria, Louisiana. From the first I was interested in weapons, but I had great difficulty in finding any but a handful of people who knew anything about weapons. For many years I was only able to acquire little bits of weapons training from various teachers here and there. I tried to learn all that I could from books, but found that the number of books on weapons is almost as short in supply as the number of instructors with a knowledge of weapons. I also found that most of the books about weapons were written by the same man and were incomplete in their depth, for no books were available on the tonfa or the yawara, and only a few were available on the staff, the bo, and the knife. There seemed to be numerous books on the nunchaku, most poorly done, and a few books on the sai; but all in all the books available for the martial art student who was interested in weapons were few and far between.

So I decided to write my own books. I spent the last four years doing research and training with weapons, learning their use and applications. I was able to achieve a fourth degree black belt in weapons (kubojitsu), I had already written four other books and a movie script, "The Leopard," so I was familiar with what was necessary to write a good book. I wanted my book to have techniques that a beginner could learn, but that a teacher could also benefit from. I wanted to make the book easy to follow by avoiding any overuse of photos or confusing text. I wanted to include a basic practice Kata for each weapon, as well as techniques for the weapon's offensive and defensive use. Finally, I wanted to write a book that would serve as a manual on weapons for years to come-a book that a student or a teacher would be proud to own and would refer to whenever they had a question on weapons or wanted a new technique.

I feel that I have accomplished all of these goals in this book, The Complete Book of Karate Weapons. It is a book that I am proud of and one that you can be proud to have in your library. If you will read this book with an open mind and follow the techniques and exercises described herein, you can make yourself one of the few experts with weapons in the worldtoday.

I could never have written this book without the help of many friends and fellow martial artists who appear with me in the instructional photos, both as technique partners and technical advisers. These men, some of the most outstanding black belts in the South, include:
Keith Yates: fourth degree black belt. Winner of many kata championships and weapons kata championships at the top tournaments of the South. A master artist who also designed the cover of the book.
James Toney: fifth degree black belt. Teacher extraordinaire and tournament champion for many years. One of the most respected teachers in Texas.

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Barry Guimbellot: third degree black belt. Probably the most successful teacher in Dallas, an outstanding example of character and leadership in karate.
Steve Weiss: second degree black belt. A modern jiu-jitsu expert who is also an expert in karate.
Ross Comerski: first degree black belt. A giant of a man and a giant of a teacher.

Finally, I must thank all of my teachers through my years of training for their help and knowledge, such great men as: Soke R. Sacharnoski, Soke A. Church, Soke K. Marx, Master HeYoung Kimm, Shihan B. Pearson, Dr. J. Marler, and Sensi B. Hathorn. These great men and excellent teachers gave the knowledge and training that enabled me to get to where I am today. I am forever grateful to them and their arts.

Last, let me take a moment to thank the most important force in my life, my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, Who gives me the strength and ability necessary to write this book and to share my knowledge with my fellow martial artists.

Dedication To Keith Yates, Jim Toney, Barry Guimbellot, Steve Weiss, Russ Comerski, and Steve Rich, without whom this book would never have been written.

Photos by Steve Rich

The Nunchakue

Perhaps the most popular, purely martial arts weapon today are the nunchaku, and the reasons are numerous. Extremely effective and powerful, the nunchaku do not require great strength or skill to master. They are lightning fast and beautiful to watch, and so powerful that they allow the user to devastate several unarmed men at once. Therefore, they are illegal in many states, and will be in many more as they fall into the hands of unscrupulous users who employ them to hurt and kill other men instead of using them to practice the martial arts.

The sticks are really very simple but can be made quite complex. They consist of two pieces of hardwood, usually between ten and twelve inches long, held together by a piece of string, leather, or a chain. Because the nunchaku are illegal to carry in many states, I suggest that you check with your local law enforcement agency before carrying them even to and from class.

Holding the Nunchakue

Although many people prefer to hold the nunchaku down near the end of the sticks, I have found the area that gives you the most control and speed is to hold the nunchaku where they are balanced in your hand.

To find the balance point lie the sticks across the finger until they are balancing on the finger. I have marked my sticks with a piece of tape at this point for future reference.

Now close your hand around the sticks like you were holding a tennis racquet, extending the thumb and forefinger up the grip a little for control.

This is the grip from which most of your moves will be made, but there are other ways to hold the sticks and other strikes, so let's look at a few.

Holding the Nunchakue

The front spread: for an eye strike. Hold the sticks in one hand with the sticks side by side in your hand.

Now roll your hand across the stick, pushing your thumb and fingers apart. This will open the front of the sticks for an eye strike.

You can also open the sticks using two hands and this posisiton can be used for blocks and strikes to the eyes, throat and leg.

Holding the Nunchakue

The backward spread: hold the sticks in your hand with the string end facing your body and both sticks side-by-side.

Now, roll your hand so the thumb and fingers spread apart. This will open the sticks to the back. This can be used for striking or blocking.

Holding the Sticks on Your Body

Since the nunchaku are illegal to carry, I will not discuss carrying them concealed, but you should know how to carry them in class when you practice with them.

The front carry: place the sticks into your belt with the string end pointed down. This allows you easy access to the sticks.

The back carry: place the sticks with the String up top and under your belt across your back. This allows you to be able to reach around behind and grab the sticks.

Moving the Sticks

There are many different movement patterns you can practice with the sticks, and some of them are not functional, such as the swing and catch around the neck. Let's look at some of the better ones.

The figure 8: this is the most common movement and most versatile. It is used in most strikes and defenses. Stand with the feet shoulder-width apart and hold the sticks in either hand; keep the other hand up for blocking. Now begin to make a large figure 8 in front of your body.

As you get better, make the figure 8 smaller and faster.

Practice with both hands.

Take care to keep the swing wide enough not to hit the elbow, and far enough away from the body that you don't hit your face.

Behind the Back Swing and Catch

Practice with both hands. Try to drop the sticks straight over the head. This rnakes the drop uniform and the catch easier. Keep the catching hand wide open until you feel the sticks hit it. This prevents broken fingers.

Start out by making several figure 8s in front of the body, then take the sticks up over the head and drop and catch them behind the back.

Behind the Arm Catch and Hold

This is most commonly used for defense, and almost all your defense positions come from this position, so practice it well.

Start out by holding the sticks in front of the body.

Now take the right arm and bend it up, while pulling the left arm across the front of the chest and toward the back.

Now you have the sticks being held behind the arm, with the right arm up and wrist back to hold the sticks, and the left arm down low across the chest.

Behind the Arm Catch and Hold

You must now practice this so you can do it while swinging the sticks.

Do a loop up in front of the arm and catch the stick behind it.

As you get better you can make figure Ss in front, then flip the stick up and behind the arm to catch it.

Swinging the Sticks

Across the Body: for Strikes and Blocks

You have to learn to do this so that you do not hit yourself with the sticks and so that you can get power.

Start by holding the sticks behind your back and over your shoulder.

Now bring them across your body (very slowly while you learn). Make sure to snap the wrists directly in front of the body, and not near the end, or the sticks will hit you in the back.

Swinging the Sticks

Practice with both hands, and as you get better increase your speed and power.

The other arm should be kept in front for balance and blocking…

…and the shoulders slightly turn to move the sticks faster and keep them under more control as they cross the body.

Swinging the Sticks Straight Down

This is a great strike, but you must practice slowly and easily so you do not hit yourself in the shin or groin.

Start with the sticks behind your back. Practice with both hands. Only go faster when you can do it blindfolded and not hit yourself. In fact, all of the moves you practice you should be able to do blindfolded.

Now, slowly swing the sticks down in front of you until they go between your legs. Snap the sticks in front of the body, not near the legs or you will hit your back, shin or groin.

Make sure to point the wrist down and be sure to always airn the wrist between the legs so the sticks may pass there smoothly.

Catching the Sticks Between the Legs

Needless to say, you had better start out slowly and keep going very slow, if you want to have babies.

Start to learn by just dropping the sticks down between the legs and grabbing it through the legs with your other hand.

Then practice by taking short swings in front of the groin and catching the sticks with the hand.

As you get better, you may take a slow and easy swing to the back and down between the legs catching it in front.

Be sure not to snap the sticks between the legs, and keep the catching hand open wide till you feel the sticks contact it.

Practice with both hands, and practice catching them from the front and from the back.

Blocks

The high or rising block: snap up the sticks together and do a standard rising block.

The two-handed down or groin block: snap down with both hands holding the nunchaku.

The square or body block: used to catch the wrist.

Blocks

The two-handed downward block demonstrated.

The leg block with the sticks spread in front.

The two-handed eye thrust.

The rising block demonstrated.

Striking Areas

Strike the back of the neck and shoulders.

Strike the collarbone.

Strike the ribs.

Smash the knee.

Thrust sticks into the abdomen.

Smash sticks across face.

Wrist Lock with the Nunchaku

As he punches, flip the sticks up and over the top of the wrist.

Now reach under and grab the end of the stick and pull them close to the wrist.

Wrap the sticks around the wrist very tightly.

Now squeeze and turn the ropes and grind them against the wrist, causing pain and controlling him.

Chokes

The two-handed straight choke behind the neck: lean his head back and hold the sticks on the ends and pull them against the throat.

The X choke: this is the most powerful. Hold the sticks in the right hand and place them across the neck, now reach up with the left hand crossing your arms behind and grab the end of the sticks.

The string choke: wrap the sticks around the neck and squeeze them together choking him…

…now lean back and squeeze while pulling down; this will choke him well and is very hard to get free from.

Chokes

The eye and face smash from behind: You simply grasp the sticks in both hands and press them very hard against the bridge of the nose or mouth area.

The face choke: wrap the sticks across the mouth and squeeze.

Techniques

A man attempts to strike at you. Ready the sticks in the behind-the-arm position.

Block his punch with your left hand, and smash the end of the sticks into his abdomen.

Come back with a flip smash to his collar bones.

Then draw back your sticks for another strike as he begins to fall over.

Smash the back of his head as he falls, and when he hits the ground smash the sticks into his back.

Techniques

A man prepares to kick at you. You swing the sticks down onto his shin, breaking it.

Draw the sticks back up as he falls down from his broken shin.

Smash the back of his head.

Finish him with a string choke on the ground.

Techniques

A man attempts to punch at you. You ready the stick behind the arm.

As he punches, smash the sticks into his ribs.

then move to your left and wrap the sticks around his neck and give a quick hard jerk.

Throw him to the ground by pulling the sticks around his neck.

Finish him with a string choke.

Techniques

Step under his arm while tightening the sticks around his wrist.

This will enable you to lock up his wrist and throw him to the ground.

Finish him with a smash to the face.

Techniques

A man attempts to kick you.

Block down with a double groin block and stop his leg.

Now drop your right stick very fast and wrap it around his foot, catching his foot in the string part of your sticks. This will lock his oot up, and by turning very hard in a circle, you can throw him down to the ground.

On the ground, finish him by smashing the back of his head.

Techniques

A man attempts to punch at you. Block up with a rising block with the sticks.

Now take both sticks and thrust the ends into his eyes.

While poking his eyes, snap a kick into his groin.

Finish him with a smash to his groin after he is on the ground.

Defense Against the Nunchakue

Wrap the gi top, or your coat, around your forearm and prepare to block using this as a target.

As he swings block up with a rising block with the gi top.

Now quickly, before he can move, smash a kick to his groin and a palm heel to his throat. This should knock him down.

Finish him with a shuto to the throat.

Defense Against the Nunchakue

Take off your belt and hold it extended between your arms, ready to block.

As he begins to move the stick, flip the end of the belt into his eyes, blinding him.

Now before he can recover, smash a groin kick out.

Finish him with an elbow smash to the side of the head.

Defense Against the Nunchakue

Blocking the kick empty handed: prepare yourself to move very fast and with power.

As he starts his swing at you, jump out and hit his arm with a block with both your right arm and left hand.

Now quickly step back and smash a kick to his groin.

Finish him with a hard shuto to the back of his neck.

Defense Against the Nunchakue

Note:The following move requires intense concentration and speed.

As he swings the sticks at you, stay clear and watch the sticks intently, especially the string area.

Now flash out your hand between the swinging sticks and grab the string, stopping the sticks.

Continue to hold his arm and turn to your right and smash an elbow into his ribs.

Throw him to the ground and finish him with a stomp to his ribs, crushing them.

Then take his sticks and smash his head.

Blocking the Sticks with the Jo

Hold the baton ready in your right hand as he comes at you with the sticks.

Now take the baton and thrust it between the sticks, catching them by the strings and in- tangling them, pull back sharply, and you will pull the sticks from his hands.

Counter with a smash into his ribs with the staff.

Finish him by smashing the back of his head and neck.

Kata

Kata

Kata

Kata