



National Association of Professional Martial Artists

# NATIONAL BLACK BELT CLUB

## NEWSLETTER

### Sports Mastery through Martial Arts

Have you ever listened to a coach discuss a sports player's recent playing performance? It doesn't matter if the results are good or bad; the coach most often attributes the performance to that player's current confidence level. Great coaches know that players play up to their potential when they are feeling good about themselves. Isn't this true in anything we do?

To achieve success in any sport, task or activity, we must maintain a high level of personal self-confidence. The martial arts is emerging as a leading activity for developing strong self-confidence. After athletes perform poorly, they practice a little more and hope their problems go away, but most problems, or slumps, can be resolved quickly with mental therapy. Martial arts training teaches mental strength and better focus skills, giving the athlete a better attitude. When athletes become frustrated they often dig an even deeper hole for themselves until finally something positive happens on which they can build. How many times have you seen a quality baseball player go hitless in 20 to 30 at bats, then hit a single that starts a hitting streak?



Look, for example, at Luc Robitaille, a superstar hockey player. He was always among the league leaders in goals until a few years ago when he scored only 23. He admits that he was upset because he wasn't helping his team. The frustration only made him play more poorly. During the off season, he began a martial arts program. "I've spent many hours in the gym and meditating.

It was good for me. Sometimes you can accomplish things you never thought of," said Robitaille. When asked how many goals he would score the following year, he replied with a renewed sense of confidence, "I don't have a number, but I know I'm going to score goals." In the last three seasons, he has regained his scoring touch and has been successful.

As you train towards your martial arts goals, ask yourself what areas of your life have benefited most from your martial arts experience. What skills have you learned that have enabled you to be more successful in other activities? Do you feel more confident when trying new things?

It is important to remember that we all go through ups and downs in life. Our goal is for all students to climb up from the valleys more quickly, utilizing the inner strength and confidence the martial arts provides, and reaching the peak in everything they do!

# Training Tip:

## Increasing Agility by Strengthening Your Core

All Black Belts have exceptional flexibility, technique and accuracy skills, which is why they should be able to respond quicker than their peers during competitive sparring. Black Belts who do not use those skills correctly are more likely to be hit by their opponents. Training your agility outside of the dojo can give you a competitive advantage over other Black Belts, classmates and competitors.

Start with a look at your “core.” The core refers to the center of your body. Your core is essentially the key area you must control to be agile. The core of your body is its balance point, and if the rest of your body is not centered at your core, then you will lose your balance and agility.

**Perform these preparation drills to strengthen your core:**

**Crunches:** Your abdominal muscles help stabilize your core. Start to strengthen your abs with 10 crunches to the middle, 10 to the left and then 10 to the right. Do at least three sets of these crunches per day. As your abdominal muscles become stronger, add more reps and sets to your daily routine.

**Reverse sit-ups:** Your back muscles are also key components of a stable core. Start to strengthen your back muscles by lying on your stomach as if you were doing push-ups. Place your hands behind your head and lift your upper body from the ground and extend as high as you are able without straining your neck or back. Do at least three sets of 10 reps per day. As your back muscles feel stronger, increase your reps and sets.

Improving abdominal and back muscle strength will dramatically increase your agility. After a few months of these preparation drills, you’ll notice that you’re able to maneuver faster with greater control. These simple training exercises will most definitely give you an edge when performing the martial arts and participating in competitions.

## FELLOW MARTIAL ARTIST:

### Gene LeBell:

Gene LeBell, martial arts legend, was born October 9th, 1932, in Los Angeles, California. Aileen Eaton, his mother, was a remarkable woman who controlled the Los Angeles boxing and wrestling scene as the owner of the landmark Olympic Auditorium. Gene grew throughout his childhood in the company of Muhammad Ali, Joe Frazier, Sonny Liston, Sugar Ray Robinson and Archie Moore, all legends of boxing history. At age seven, while hanging around the Olympic Auditorium, Gene approached Ed “Strangler” Lewis, a well-known wrestler, and informed him that he wanted to be “tough” like him.

“Strangler” took the young Gene under his wing and started him on the fast track to becoming the “Toughest Man Alive.”

Gene’s legendary strength and extraordinary dedication led him to back-to-back National Judo Heavyweight Championships during 1954 and 1955. Gene became a professional wrestler and was known as the infamous “Hangman,” winning fans and championship belts throughout the world. Gene even took on a bear—and won!

During 1963, Gene participated in the first “martial artist versus boxer” event when he fought and defeated boxer Milo Savage. Savage was greased from head to toe and wearing brass knuckles, but after four rounds Gene finally grabbed Savage and applied one of his famous chokeholds. A few years later, Gene was the third man in the ring of the most famous “martial artist versus boxer” battle when he refereed Muhammad Ali’s fight with Antonio Inoki.

Gene has appeared in more than 1,000 movies and television shows. Whether it was fighting with Bruce Lee on the *Green Hornet* TV series or playing Rodney Dangerfield’s stunt double in the comedy film, *The 4th Tenor*, Gene has always made a lasting impression.

With former star students, such as Elvis Presley, Chuck Norris and Bob Wall, Gene LeBell’s primary love remains teaching. His popular seminars are always packed as well as the regular 7:30 p.m. Monday night grappling class that he teaches in Los Angeles, California.

