



National Association of Professional Martial Artists

NATIONAL BLACK BELT CLUB

NEWSLETTER

Black Belt Performance

Our bodies move all day long and yet we seldom think about how we do it.

Most movement is routine; lift a box, push open a door, squat down to retrieve a fallen item; we rarely even notice that our muscles are creating the movement. Most of the time we don't need to notice, as these kinds of actions are performed without a lot of concentration or mental focus.

But in the case of training and growing in the martial arts, focusing on our movement and muscles can make a huge difference in our performance and growth. When training in martial arts, it is important that we sometimes go beyond routine movement.

For maximum growth when practicing skills, concentration on the specific muscles used in the motions can make a quantum leap in the quality of the movements. Thoughtlessly rushing through your forms or kicks just to fill time or get your number of repetitions done only results in sloppy technique, fatigue and minimal personal development.



To reach a black belt level of excellence and performance you need to be mentally involved in your movements. First you must target the muscles you want to use.

Then "put your mind into the muscles" and see and feel the muscles contract throughout the full range of their movements.

You must will your muscles to explode when explosion is needed and to relax them when relaxation is required. Having this kind of muscle awareness when training can turn an average workout into a super growth session.

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 your 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.

