

IRON DUMMY TRAINING

by

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IRON DUMMY TRAINING...WHY?

At many “Eighteen Bronzeman” training seminars I have noticed that the concept or reasoning for using this type of training apparatus is not entirely clear to many people. Iron Dummy training will aid you in developing the following skills.

power generation, control, awareness, arm conditioning and technique application.

The first thing you notice when striking the dummy is OUCH! This thing hurts. What usually follows is that the student will have a little fear about hitting the dummy. At this point many people take the “drive” out of their techniques, don’t use their hips and start focusing on the surface of the target instead of through the target. When this happens your arms will just get bruised and there is not much training value. If you stay focused, strike with the right part of your arm and use your hips you will get a different result.

HOW HARD DO YOU HIT THE DUMMY?

One major misconception that many people have is in striking the dummy. How hard do you hit the dummy? This will vary depending on a lot of different things. You don’t have to hit the dummy as hard as you can every time you strike. For instance if you are attempting to block and counterstrike, you would not block as hard as you can and then strike as hard as you can. It is unrealistic and unnatural to do this most of the time. It is more important that you block in such a way that your structure is correct and your body does the work. This way you can efficiently control how much power you use. The counterstrike should also be done in the same manner. However, since learning structure and alignment requires clear feedback and since a block is “a strike striking a strike” and can be used as an actual attacking technique, the “blocking” techniques will often be executed with more “obvious power” on the dummy than would be used in a form in air or with an injurable live partner

STRIKING

When striking the air, we tend to focus on the beginning and end of a technique. Which is what we do when we practice form or basics incorrectly. When executed correctly, techniques should have good structure from beginning to end. Strikes make contact somewhere between the beginning and end of a technique. This is why we have to have proper structure from the beginning to the end. This structure includes weight shifting, torso manipulation, weapon alignment and intent. (stance, technique, focus) As my teacher, David L. Smith says, “techniques do not happen in a stance ; they happen during the transition from one stance to the next.”



David L. Smith 白靜林
Training in Taiwan, 1983

LEARNING FROM THE “DUMMY”

When striking the dummy we don’t usually get to the end or full extension of a technique in the same manner as we would when doing a technique in the air. Contact is made at a very close distance. Because the iron dummy is dense and heavy you will get immediate feedback on how your structure is. You will find that once contact is made the energy of the strike has to go some where. If your structure is bad it will leak out at the weakest point (usually a joint such as the wrist, elbow or shoulder during hand or forearm techniques). The results will be even worse if you are not able to transfer the energy from your lower body to your upper body. If your structure is correct you will feel the energy go into the dummy and you will get enough feedback from the dummy to know when to initiate the next technique. These skills are not quickly learned. One of the best things about the iron dummy is that you can hit it as often and as hard as you like. It will never quit or complain and (with the exception of a few people) you can’t hurt it.

Another great attribute of dummy training is that you can work precise skills because, unlike a live training partner, you will always know what it is going to do. Only after you can do these techniques well on the dummy should you spend a lot of time trying to apply them on a live partner. Once you start trying to apply these skills on a person you will then have to deal with the variables of distancing (on a moving opponent), timing, technique variation and the way a body reacts when being struck. These skills will be easier to attain if you already have some level of skill training techniques in a “controlled” atmosphere.