



The importance of good technique

By Jon Hegan

In traditional combat sports some people have always enjoyed watching the heavyweight divisions for the big knock out or throw.

However, if your preference is the more technical and arguably more exciting matches then you will probably favour the lighter divisions. This is because the smaller guys often don't have the same, 'one big bomb' capability of the heavyweights, instead they have to rely on accuracy, speed, technical ability and not power. In *'the street'* you can assume that your opponent is going to be bigger and stronger than you, (think of someone who resembles Larry Holmes and not Larry Grayson), so it's useful to have an edge over them. Whatever style you practice, if you constantly pick on the smaller guys and rely on your size and strength then you will always use more energy and have inferior technical proficiency. Confidence comes by experience and having a sound knowledge in the execution of your technique, so even when the pressures on, you **know** its going to work.

Over the past couple of thousand years, us homosapians haven't really altered that much in terms of our physical makeup. We still have the same internal organs, two arms, two legs and a head. That's why when a *'new'* martial art surfaces, don't get too excited, it's still going to consist of techniques that basically every other system uses as there are only so many things that the human body can do. The only exception here though is if someone has a unique ability to perform a technique outside

the normal range of the average person or have a very high pain threshold, excluding these exceptional but rare people, in '*real street fight*', a number of things **are** assured.

1. If you strike someone hard on the jaw they can be **instantly knocked out**.
2. If you obstruct someone's air supply they **will go unconscious**.
3. If you break or dislocate someone's joint, even if they don't feel the pain they will be **unable to use it effectively again**.

So why do things sometimes not work when we think they should?

Predominantly the main reasons are simply down to what we in Krav-Maga would call '*bad mechanics*'. If we assume a learned technique is sound, for example; a certain type of defence, a right hook, a kick to the groin, choke or a joint lock then we need to practice it until competency has been achieved. Only after this can you add speed, power and throw in some resistance. It is all too common to see people run through a technique a couple of times and then attempt it full force and subsequently wonder why it's not working. Western boxing, Thai boxing, Judo and wrestling are all contest sports that have stood the test of time and their effectiveness is really beyond reproach, this is why Krav-Maga borrows many techniques from these well established systems.

So let us look at how some of the major finishing techniques work and what we can do to ensure that they won't let us down when it really matters.

So how do I knock someone out?

A knock out or K.O is usually caused when you've struck someone accurately and hard enough on the head in order to shake their brain violently inside the skull. This causes the central nervous system to temporarily shut down and leads to unconsciousness, just how accurate and hard the blow was will determine how long they will be unconscious for. In order to get a K.O a number of factors have to be in place. Most importantly is accuracy, aim for the tip of the jaw, not just anywhere above their shoulders. Secondly, you must be able to generate sufficient power behind the strike and thirdly, if possible, making impact when your opponents neck muscles are relaxed, for example; when they are not expecting the attack or still stunned from a previous strike.

Do you really want to K.O someone though?

It's really a separate article (self-defence and the law) and the source of much debate, but in brief; you may well knock someone unconscious, escape and hear no more about it. Then again, you could cause them permanent brain damage for which you would certainly land yourself in court, you can argue that you were fighting for your life and so your course of action would be justified, but sometimes this is difficult to prove. A frequent occurrence in these complex circumstances is when someone is K.O'd on their feet and they collapse onto a concrete surface. Their back hits the ground hard first, quickly followed in a whiplash action by the back of their head, many people have tragically died as a result of these types of events. This is not meant to put you off using force, far from it **you do what you think is necessary** at the time, but simply to make you aware of the risks involved.

I'm putting on a joint lock, but they can't feel the pain?

To be honest if I can't get a submission/locking technique to work it's generally down to bad mechanics on my part. I have also seen many other people busting a gut trying to get someone to '*tap out*', but due to their poor technical skill this is unlikely to happen. If you grapple with someone who is more experienced, you can normally sense that the technique will work even before they apply the finishing pressure, because they have such tight control over you and your limb. However there can be factors other than poor mechanics why a joint lock may appear to be ineffective:

Exceptional range of movement-double jointedness

Although rare, I have sparred with people with this unusual ability, however try changing the angle of your lock or attack another limb as it is unusual to have abnormal flexibility in all joints.

Abnormally high pain tolerance

Many people claim to have this, although it's usually because they have never had the excruciating pain of an arm lock applied correctly. To a novice, it can simply be a combination of their pain numbing adrenalin pumping through their veins, a refusal to quit and unfamiliarity with what's actually happening. When they do tap or shout '*aaarrggh*', it's normally too late and ligament damage has already been done. In training, if your opponent is not tapping or does not seem overly concerned by your attack, i.e. they're not begging for mercy, then adjust

your position, tighten up and keep the pressure on. If they are willing to receive then you must be willing to give!

Under the influence of alcohol/drugs and/or mentally unstable

Normally in a street situation, someone so described will probably not feel anything, however if this is for real more extreme measures may be needed, (if you can justify them!) Use the same principles as in training but be prepared to break or dislocate the limb, even if they can't feel it you will have at least rendered that limb ineffective allowing you to escape or free to launch another attack.

Chokes

A personal favorite, a good strangle, choke or crush is a sure fire winner in any situation. If you can't breathe you can't function, let alone fight-period. Anyone who says they can resist a choke needs to spend more time on the mats at their nearest Judo or BJJ club. I remember my first taste of near '*sleepsville*', when I was strangled on the verge of unconsciousness at my new found local Judo club. The sensation of thinking I could resist what seemed to be initially a very non-threatening attack soon turned to panic, quickly followed by seeing stars and gurgling.

To achieve unconsciousness we need to block the oxygen supply to the brain, we can do this by attacking three major areas; the neck via strangles and chokes, the diaphragm via crushing and the face via smothering. Other than basic chokes and strangles you will find most of these techniques not taught as they are extremely dangerous and banned in most competitions. Obviously Krav-Maga has no such restrictions!

Chokes and strangles are not one and the same, a choke compresses the windpipe directly cutting off the oxygen supply whilst the strangle compresses the jugular and carotid veins which restricts the blood and oxygen supply to the brain. Compared to the K.O a strangle is relatively harmless and offers no long term complications. Since Judo was founded in 1882 and having had thousands of strangles being applied all over the world in training and competition there has been not one reported fatality. As long as the air/blood supply is not restricted for too long most people can make a full recovery in a matter of seconds. The choke however is slightly more dangerous but only because of the damage that can be done to the windpipe, the skill factor is lower but also the time it takes to be effective is far greater than the strangle and that's what causes the damage. Bar chokes were taught to American police but

there have been many fatalities as they were often applied with their nightsticks or torches. With this in mind I would always opt for a strangle, even if it takes a couple of extra seconds to apply.

They seem to be resisting the strangle?

Depends on what particular technique your trying to get. If your choke/strangle is not working then you are not restricting the blood/oxygen supply enough, this may be due to the following factors; they have a hand defence in and can relieve the pressure, you just haven't got the angle of the wrists pressing hard enough on the veins, they have a good resistance or a combination of all three. Use the same principles as for joint locks, sometimes people can resist for a while if the strangle is not properly on (sometimes an adjustment can be only a matter of millimeters). Even if poorly applied to a novice, they often start to panic and try to escape, this can use up valuable energy and increase their need for precious oxygen, this actually speeds the strangling process up. A good indicator if your strangle is coming on is listening to your opponents breathing. It will generally start to get heavier and eventually you will hear a loud snoring sound, after this they will certainly be out for the count. It is important that you now release the strangle, they could be faking it but I have found the snoring sound is so distinctive it's almost impossible to feign.

In summery then it's all about, good techniques, practice and lots of it!