

Combat Reality—Practice vs. Application

KARATE



INSIDE

SEPTEMBER 1995 • K48667  
U.S. \$2.95/£1.95 UK  
\$3.25 IN CANADA

# KARATE

*Kuk Sool Won Master  
Byung In Lee*

## Comparative Styles

Traditional vs.  
Modern Systems

## Ancient Truths

Modern Medicine  
Proves Founders'  
Wisdom

## Pure Power

Weight Training  
for the Serious  
Martial Artist



# Breaking Training!

## Internal and External Techniques

One of the most common expressions of power in martial arts is breaking hard, rigid objects. Some do it just to test their martial arts strength. Others want to confirm the power of the blows without injuring themselves or another person. Breaking an inanimate object allows them to check their power, focus, aim and internal strength without risking injury to someone else. Finally, some break to test the correctness of a particular technique.

The Korean martial art kuk sool won emphasizes breaking to test techniques for power, aim and focus. Breaking is never done to test sheer force or brute strength. For that reason, smaller kuk sool stylists can easily break objects that with other martial arts require great physical power. Also, unlike many martial arts, kuk sool won breaking techniques include breaking with kicks, again to check the correctness of the kicking technique.

Austin, Texas kuk sool master, Byung In Lee, is a specialist at breaking with intricate kicking techniques. He's impressed audiences throughout the world with his ability to break multiple boards with difficult kicking techniques.

According to Lee, advanced breaking techniques are not measured by the number of boards broken, but instead by the difficulty of the technique itself. Intricate aerial breaking, for instance, isn't possible without a full knowledge of

ken in the direction the grain runs. Other types of boards are two by two inch, or two by three inch pieces, four feet in length. Due to their length and the cut of the wood, these longer boards are broken against the grain.

Almost any rigid part of the body can be used as the breaking vehicle, including the head, elbow and knee. However, the hands and feet are most often used in Korean martial arts to test fighting techniques. Since kicking techniques play a large role in Korean martial arts, the foot is a popular breaking surface. The part of the foot that comes in contact with the target depends on the breaking material. When twelve by twelve by one inch boards are broken, the ball or side of the foot are the best striking surfaces. Also used is the bottom and the back of the heel.

The ball of the foot is the best striking surface for either a front kick or a round-house kick. Side kick power is tested by breaking boards with either the bottom of the heel or the side of the foot. The top of the foot is not a good breaking surface, because it is easy to break the small bones located along the top area.

There are several basic rules that apply to all breaking. First, always start light. Begin with less than standard strength wood until you develop confidence in your techniques. Second, do not try to break anything requiring a technique more advanced than your level of training.



# Breaking

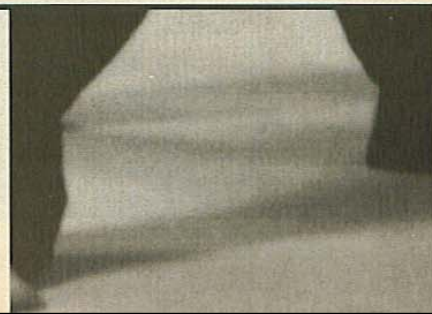
correct form, ki development and proper conditioning.

The most common material used for breaking is wood, since it can be broken with either hand or foot. Twelve by twelve by one inch boards are dimensions usually associated with wood breaking. These boards are always bro-

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Two basic requirements of good martial arts are also required for good breaking techniques — speed and relaxation. Speed generates power through momentum and the acceleration it produces.

"Without relaxation there is no speed, since you will be too tense and tight.





# With Kicks

More Than Just a Matter of Force

By Jane Hallander

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Breaking with a high front kick. Master Lee's assistant holds out the board (1). Lee twists his body (2), chambers his kick (3), and breaks with a whipping motion (4).

## “Actual training for breaking with kicks comes in two forms — external and internal.”

Breaking with a stepping- in sidekick. Master Lee's assistants hold the board (1), and he brings his rear foot up to his lead foot in a slide (2), chambers his kick (3), and fires the break (4).



Relaxation does not mean the loose relaxation of cooked spaghetti. It should be a calm relaxation that unites your concentration, focus and intention,” explains Lee.

Actual training for breaking with kicks comes in two forms — external and internal. External training is physically conditioning the parts of the body that strike the breaking material. For most basic breaking techniques the average person's hands and feet are already hard enough to penetrate a single board, providing the technique is correctly executed. Foot breaking techniques are usually prepared for externally by repeatedly kicking a hanging bag.

Internal breaking training is the development and use of ki (chi or internal energy). Internal training develops the martial artist's ability to increase and channel the natural flow of ki throughout the body in general and to specific parts of the body. Ki is separated into two types of energy — nei gung and wei gung. Nei gung is inside strength and energy. Wei gung is external, active force, such as muscle and tendon strength. All activities contain both nei gung and wei gung., which means that external actions, like kicks, still contain significant amounts of the internal energy — nei gung.

When martial artists execute a kick, correct external movements are critical to the amount of nei gung or internal energy put out through the kick. This is done through a process called jwa-sae. Jwa-sae means position and is a combination of correct stances, footwork, intention, focus and form that is necessary to let the internal power flow freely. Each body posture, footwork and mental focus must be correct to blend nei and wei gung into their most powerful forms. That's why it's important the martial artist's form be correct before he or she can do their best breaking techniques.

Lee explains that there are three basic types of breaking techniques in kuk sool won—strong support, semi-support and no support. Strong support usually applies to hand, elbow and head techniques directed at materials placed on solid, unyielding objects. This is the simplest type of breaking technique.

Semi-strong support breaking techniques are those where one or more people hold the breaking target for you. Most kicking techniques fall into this category. They are more difficult than strong support techniques, because

the martial artist has less control over the positioning and movement of the target.

There are right and wrong ways to hold boards for semi-strong support breaking with kicks. Here are a few common mistakes made when holding boards for breaking.

1 — Do not place your thumbs behind the board to be broken. If you do, when the board breaks the force of the break can force your thumbs back and away from the joint's natural bending angle, spraining, dislocating, or even breaking the joint. Instead, place the thumbs on top of the material that is being broken and brace the target with the heels of the palms. One hand holds the top of the target, while the other hand holds the target bottom.

2 — Do not hold the target too close to your body, with the elbows bent too much. Too much give in the elbows, with the board too close to the body, may allow the board or the breaker's foot to strike you when the break is executed. Your position should be a strong forward stance with the elbows bent only slightly and the breaking material held well away from your body and face. Your back will be angled slightly forward.

3 — Do not try to brace a board with your forearm. You can be easily injured by the person breaking the board or by the board itself. Keep your arms away from the back of the board, relying on a strong stance and body position to keep the board stable.

No support breaking techniques are among the hardest techniques to accomplish. Partly because one corner of the target is held by the assistant's fingers. The person kicking must use speed and accuracy, plus correct *jwa-sae* to break the target before it falls from its unsupported perch. Lack of speed will push the target out of the assistant's hands. Accuracy is also a critical factor in no-support breaking. The target must be struck directly in its center. If kicked off center, it's knocked out of the assistant's hands without breaking.

## BREAKING WITH A FRONT KICK

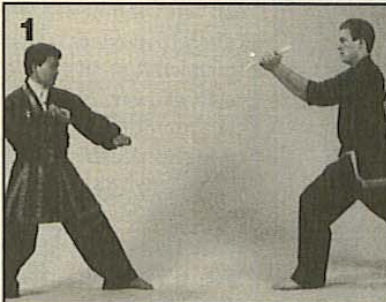
Front kicks are among the first breaking kicks developed in *kuk sool won*. The kicker starts his technique by opening his fingers to direct *ki* throughout the body. Then the palms of the hands are turned downward and the hands pulled back to the sides as fists. The *kuk sool* stylist takes a step forward and breaks the board held by an assistant. The ball



*Breaking with a back heel kick. Master Lee prestances as his assistant positions the board and holds it carefully (1). Lee steps behind his right foot with his left foot (2), launches his kick (3), and breaks with his back heel (4).*

**“Front kicks are among the first breaking kicks developed in *kuk sool won*.”**

*Breaking with a stepping-in front kick. Master Lee's assistant positions the board (1). Lee steps forward (2), launches his kick (3), and breaks (4).*



of the foot is the striking area for a front kick break.

Front lift kicks require the assistant hold the board at least at shoulder level, with the breaking surface parallel to the ground. Again, the ball of the foot makes contact with the board.

### **BREAKING WITH A SIDE KICK**

Internal jwa-sae starts with open hands that extend forward. The hands are then crossed with the palms turned downward. The hands are pulled back toward the body as fists, while the kuk sool practitioner takes a step forward to break the board with the side of the foot.

Spinning side kicks are the same as regular side kicks, with jwa-sae done first to move ki throughout the body. Instead of stepping forward for a regular side kick, the kicker turns into a 180 degree spin that gives him added momentum for the side kick, again breaking the board with the side of his foot.

### **BREAKING WITH ROUNDHOUSE AND HOOK KICKS**

Again the jwa-sae with open hands

**“Kicks require perfect joint alignment, combined with speed and mass, to make the best connection with any target.”**

is done prior to the kicks. The hands can be pulled back to the body in either an open or closed fist position. The kuk sool stylist takes a step forward and executes the roundhouse or hook kick, striking the target with the ball of the foot for a roundhouse kick and the heel of the foot for a hook kick. Spinning hook kicks are done the same, except the kicker rotates his body 180 degrees toward the target, rather than taking a forward step to make the break. Low spinning hook kicks are the same as regular spinning hook kicks, however

the kicker drops down to a kneeling position first, then starts the 180 degree turn.

### **BREAKING WITH AN AX KICK**

The jwa-sae positions are the same. However, the assistant must hold the target angled upward to present a good target for the kicker's heel as he or she strikes downward with an ax kick.

### **BREAKING WITH A SIDE KICK**

The same jwa-sae is used, with the kicker facing away from the assistant who holds the board. The kicker positions himself for the kick, looks over his shoulder to see the target, cocks his kicking leg and makes the break, striking with the bottom of his foot.

Kicks require perfect joint alignment, combined with speed and mass, to make the best connection with any target. They are also dangerous to practice at full power against a training partner. Board breaking with kicks allows martial artists to test their kicking techniques at full speed and power against a hard, rigid object-simulating actual combat.

