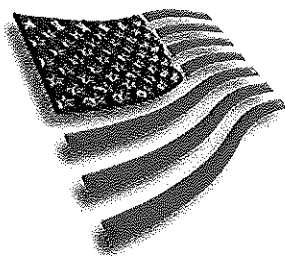
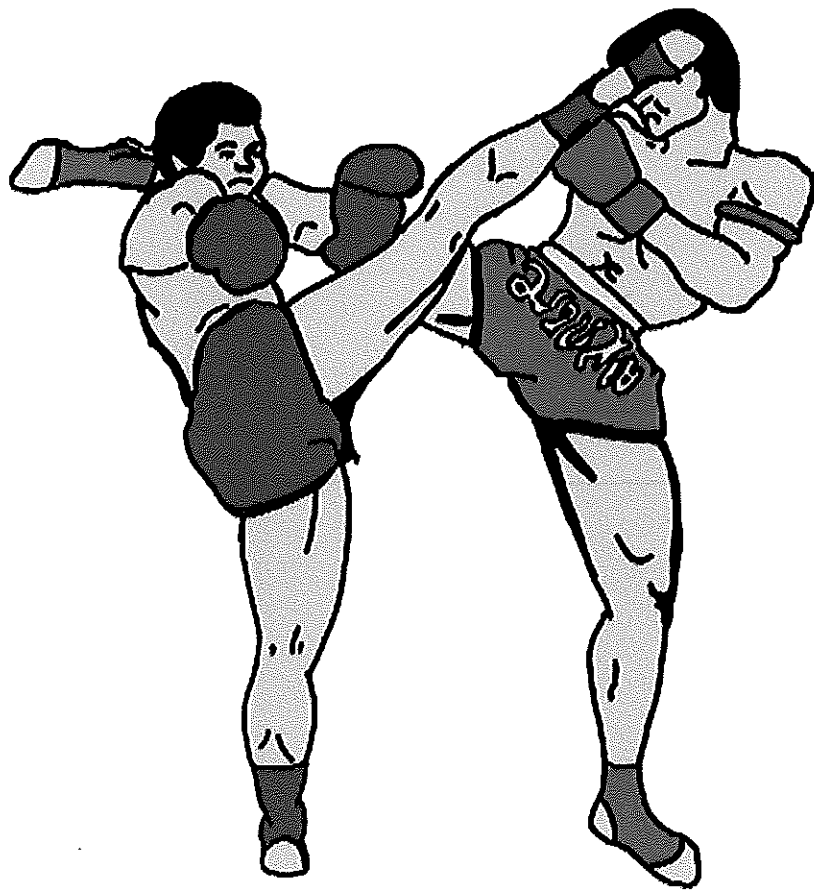
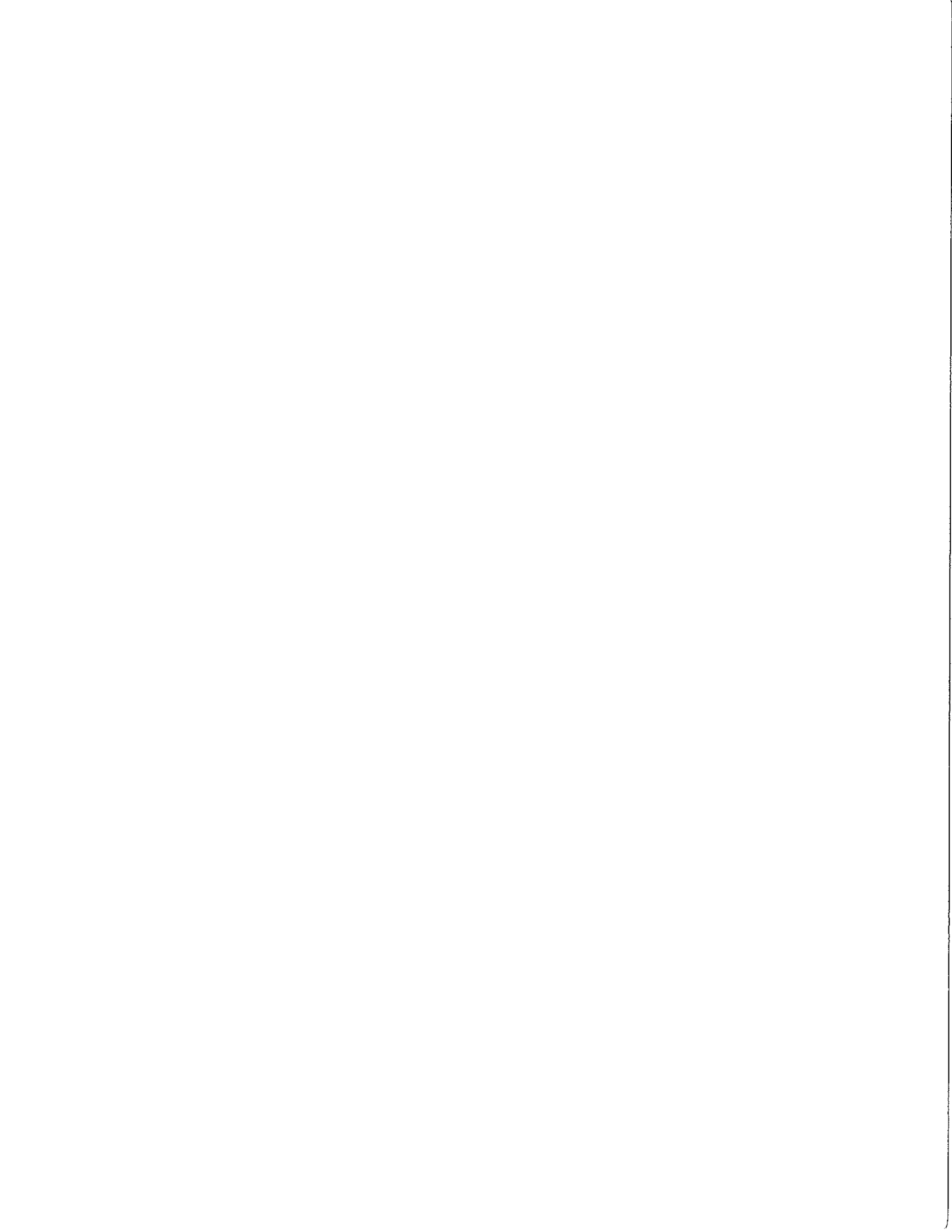


THE USMTA TRAINING COMPANION BOOKLET



*“ Tips, Methods and
Suggestions to Help You
With Your Training...”*





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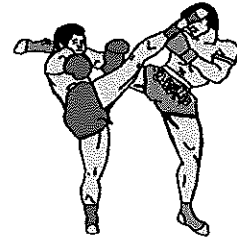
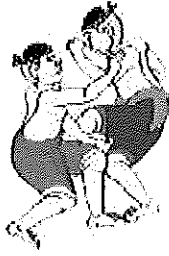
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BRIEFING ON MUAY THAI



Muay Thai, or Thai Boxing, is a martial art from Thailand. It is renowned for its overall simplicity and practicality: powerful roundhouse kicks, elbow strikes, knee thrusts and basic boxing style punches. Although Muay Thai is primarily practiced as a ring sport—mostly by teenage boys in Thailand, it has numerous self-defense applications. The sport version has been popular in Thailand for centuries and over the past several decades has spread to Japan, Europe and the United States

Lerd Rit (military Muay Thai), which is the combative art form of Muay Thai, different from "Thai Boxing". Lerd Rit does not incorporate western boxing techniques (closed-hand fighting) in its art; a soldier does not want to risk having his hands broken in the middle of a battle. Instead, open-hand techniques, such as palm strikes, finger tip strikes (i.e. for eye gouging), or partially closed hand for grabbing throats, groin, or other soft tissue vital areas. The objective of Military style is obtain a quick kill or a disablement.

Thai Boxing or "Muay Thai" as referred to by locals, is an art of self defence that comes naturally to Thai boys, unlike other martial arts in which training is essential. Thai boys know the arts of kicking and boxing in Muay Thai style even they are very little, usually urged on by their elders. Muay Thai is an ancient art of self defense, and it is believed that many of the more deadlier forms of this arts have been lost over the centuries, as each teacher has been said to have kept the highest forms to himself to prevent his students from disobedience.

Unlike other martial arts, Muay Thai and Thai Boxing has musical accompaniment which consists of a drum or "*Klong*" small brass cymbals called "*Ching Chup*" and a Thai clarinet commonly called "*Pee*." At the beginning of each fight the contenders dance to the rhythm of the music around the ring to pay homage to their respective teacher, usually for three to seven minutes. If you want to know more about Muay Thai or find a school in the U.S., visit the website <http://www.usmta.com>

What is Muay Thai?

First a bit about Thai Boxers, all these people who do it are heroes. Most of them come from abject poverty, the sort of poverty we can't even imagine. They start training at a young age around 10 or 11. By twelve they begin to fight and they fight every three weeks or so for the next ten years of their lives that is why Thai boxers have easily 150-200 fights in a pro career.

They leave everything behind to be a boxer, family, friends, and school. They are giving up any chance of advancement in any other field to pursue this dream. The Thai champions are national heroes, Thai boxing is shown on TV almost everyday and everyone knows the names of the champions. Many of these kids have even been abandoned by their parents at the camp.

Thai boxers train hard everyday they put in 5-6 hours of training up at 5am to run 10kms and then bag work skipping and a light breakfast. They run again in the afternoon and do yet more bag work and more skipping and work the pads and spar. It is in the very simple existence that the fighters are polished by sheer repetition. Training is crude by our standards, jab-elbow-kick, push kick-round house kick. As well as the countless hours spent working the clinch. This is where the differences really become apparent in the use of the clinch in Muay Thai in Thailand.

Very seldom do we see the same amount and degree of clinch work that we see there, of course most Americans learn the clinch and the knee but the don't learn the tricks and techniques of the elbow, throws and the little tricks that are passed down over the years from coach to coach. Of course one reason for this is because of the lack of elbows allowed in western Muay Thai. Understandably so westerners are weary of the elbow, the elbow is the cause of most of the cuts and scars seen around the eyes and foreheads on Thai boxers. This is a starting point of where the two styles Western and Thai Muay Thai begin to differ.

We start to see actually philosophical differences in the two styles. The ways they are actually approached are different. We see it as a hobby something we do to make ourselves feel better, more secure, more relaxed. They see it as WHAT they do, it is how they are they are defined as people. When we add in the spiritual side, which was usually missing in western events, however, it has now begun to emerge thanks to constant badgering of promoters to allow the rituals in the events.

Many schools in America teach the Wai Kru and Ram muay but how many of them believe in the power behind the dances and the Wai? For westerners it is simply a custom, for the deeply Buddhist Thais it is part of their identity. When you fight in Thailand there is a moment where you perform the wai (palms together, head bowed, and tips of your thumbs touching the nose) with your coach, he says a prayer for you to give you luck and protection. For the Thais this is real, this is not some quaint custom this is an integral part of the fight without it they will not fight this is how strongly they believe in these things, not to mention magic spells, blessed charms, etc.

The spirituality is a part of Muay Thai that cannot be stripped away if you view an event and you do not see the performance of the Ram Muay it is not a Muay Thai fight it is a Thai rules kick boxing match. Muay Thai is combination of various factors, social, religious, cultural, etc. Without these in place there is no Muay Thai. What we are left with is an art stripped of the elements that make it Muay THAI.

No disrespect is intended to any American or European fighters nor do I question their skill in the ring or ability to teach. There are many excellent westerners teaching out there but what they are teaching is "Thai rules kickboxing", very few are teaching TRUE MUAY THAI.

Training in Thailand:

A professional Thai boxer will begin his training at an early age, as young as eight, or nine. At that point the child will train after school at a local "camp". The training is free but the child is expected to perform other duties. Normally it is at this point that the coach at the camp begins to try and single out the young boys who show promise, they receive special attention, and instruction. Over time there will be one or two young boys who stand out from the rest, at this point their training will become more intense, and they may even be asked to leave school, and come live and train at the camp full time.

The camp becomes a second family for the children, they eat together, train together, and fight together. Many will make their professional debut at eleven or twelve, although this seems strange to us, this is simply accepted as the age to begin competition. They will compete regularly for the rest of their career. Some will compete a hundred times by the time they reach twenty.

Here is the typical training structure in Thailand.

6:30 am: Start a five to ten kilometre run, you run early so the heat isn't too bad.

7:30 am: get back from the run, begin with light shadow boxing, work the bags, nothing too heavy just to keep limber

and warm

8:30 am: Stretch and cool down

3:00 pm: Start the "real" training..at least 30 minutes of skipping,

10X3 mins. working on the bags, 5X3 mins. working with the coach and pads more bagwork. Practise clinching with

a partner for 20 mins. Finish with sparring for 5 3min. rounds or a kick-off you and a partner take turns kicking the bag as

often as you can 100 times minimum

7:00 pm: Go home, and sleep...

It costs around \$100 a month to train and about another \$400 to live.

Notes on the basic middle level Thai round kick

1. Relax.
2. Keep weight on the ball of the supporting foot.
3. Your hands set up the body torque. Lead then rear like climbing a ladder. The rear hand slaps down at 45 degrees with the kick.
4. Relax
5. Your knee comes up at 2 o'clock (right kick) then straightens (not fully) as it reaches the target.
6. Twist in and whip through with a heavy feeling.
7. The line drawn through your shoulders must pass through the target.
8. Relax some more.
9. The line drawn through your hips must pass through the target.
10. Your bodyweight follows your head. If your head is leaning back then your power will go back. Lean through and into the kick.

The Long Knee

The long front knee without grabbing is useful in both attack & defence as it usually utilises the power of an opponent coming forward and can deceive him by being hit with a knee strike when he thinks he is out of range for one.

Points to remember when delivering the long knee are :

1. When using the long knee, the hands go out first, then knee, arching the back & keeping the supporting leg straight with your weight raised onto your toes for balance and forward reach of the knee.
2. Bring the opposite arm back to your face to protect against punches.
3. Keep your chin low so that you are just seeing over your forearms.
4. The knee must drive in, not up.

Exercise for developing the Long Knee

1. Trainer stands at distance and you knee into palm & come out again
2. As above but trainer hits down or delivers a straight punch to ensure that you are at the correct distance.
3. Long knee into pads and then holder hits with pads to ensure that you are at the correct distance and have a high guard, then carry on using the long knee. When you hear the call, move in and grab knee until you hear the call again and then move out to resume long knees.

Thai Pad Drills For Developing The Long Knee

1. Jab - cross - right knee.
2. Jab - cross - left knee.
3. Right knee - right round kick.
4. Right round kick - right knee.
5. Right knee - left knee.
6. Left knee - right knee.
7. Left kick - left knee.
8. Right knee - left kick.
9. Right kick - left knee.
10. Double up with any right knee from above drills.
11. Double up with any left knee from above drills.
12. Double up with all knees from above drills.
13. Left hook - right knee. (*Side step on left hooks in following drills*).
14. Left hook - right knee - right kick.
15. Left hook - right kick - right knee.
16. Right cross - left knee.
17. Left hook - right knee - left hook.
18. Left hook - left knee.
19. Left hook - right knee - left knee - right cross.
20. Right cross - left hook - right knee - left knee.

Eight Count Thai Pad Series

*Note - Although these drills use Thai pads and are mainly Muay Thai related, there are some other techniques in there also.

These drills are worked in three basic formats: -

1. As non-pad drills with a partner
2. As 8 count Thai pad drills
3. As a 3 x 3 min pad drill (hits 1-4 ; hits 5-8; hits 1-8)

8 COUNT No.1 (Working hits off alternate sides)

1. Lead teep
2. Rear round kick

3. Lead elbow
4. Rear long knee
5. Lead Hook
6. Rear cross
7. Lead hook
8. Rear round kick

8 COUNT No.2 (Working hits off alternate sides & teep defense)

1. Lead scoop from lead teep – move a quarter turn
2. Rear kick up into descending calf
3. Lead round kick
4. Rear cross
5. Lead uppercut / hook
6. Rear round kick * (join here to No.2 in first combo to form 12 count)
7. Lead elbow
8. Rear long knee

8 COUNT No.3 (Low kick defense)

1. Block a rear low round kick
2. Stepping lead cut kick
3. Rear round kick
4. Lead hook
5. Rear cross
6. Lead round kick
7. Rear cross
8. Rear elbow

8 COUNT No.4 (Low kick defense & double hits off same side)

1. Block a rear low round kick
2. Skipping lead round kick off the block
3. Rear long knee
4. Rear round kick
5. Lead elbow

6. Rear elbow
7. Lead elbow
8. Rear round kick

8 COUNT No.5 (*Working lead changing against retreating opponent. Drill also by substituting the round kick for long knee*)

1. Lead snap kick to groin
2. Rear round kick & step fwd into right lead
3. Rear cross
4. Lead hook
5. Rear round kick & step fwd into left lead
6. Rear cross
7. Lead hook
8. Rear round kick

8 COUNT No.6 (*Working hits off your rear side from a jab*)

1. Parry the jab & rear oblique kick to knee, stepping back to guard.
2. Rear cross
3. Lead hook
4. Rear long knee
5. Rear middle round kick
6. Grab & control the head - rear knee
7. Lead knee
8. Rear knee

8 COUNT No.7 (*Working hits off the lead side from a jab*)

1. Rear parry & lead inward gunting (sliding eye jab on 1/2 beat)
2. Hinge into lead hammerfist through the target
3. Come back with lead horizontal elbow
4. Skipping lead knee
5. Lead middle round kick
6. Rear cross
7. Lead hook
8. Rear low kick

8 COUNT No.8 (*Working hits of alternate sides from a jab*)

1. Destroy the jab with a lead rising elbow (with rear parry)
2. Rear diagonal elbow
3. Lead horizontal elbow
4. Rear long knee & step down to right lead

5. Rear middle round kick
6. Lead hook on the way out
7. Rear cross
8. Lead hook

8 COUNT No.9 (*Working defense from rear round kicks*)

1. Zone in and diagonally forward with lead wrap (*step fwd into right lead*)
2. Left knee into pad - release the leg and step forward to left lead with...
3. Rear diagonal elbow
4. Lead horizontal elbow
5. Shin block from rear low kick
6. Zone in and diagonally forward with left cut kick (*lightly on his inner thigh*)
7. Rear middle round kick
8. Rear low kick

8 COUNT No.10 (*Working defenses from teep*)

1. Scoop with lead hand clockwise and zone right from lead teep
2. Rear (right) rising shin into descending calf (lightly!)
3. Lead middle round kick (*then padman moves through 90 degree to face you*)
4. Scoop with lead hand clockwise and zone right from rear teep and catch the ankle.
5. Step in and cut kick with left (lightly!) - then padman moves through 90 degree to face you.
6. Rear cross
7. Lead hook
8. Rear low or middle round kick.

8 COUNT No.11 (*Working defenses from rear cross*)

1. Lead parry and rear knee
2. Lead elbow on the way out
3. Rear cross (he moves out)
4. Rear middle round kick
5. Lead parry and rear horizontal elbow to fist
6. Step down with right hammerfist into right lead
7. Rear cross
8. Lead hook

8 COUNT No.12 (*Working same side multiple hits*)

1. Lead parry and rear knee off a cross
2. Rear middle round kick
3. Rear knee
4. Rear teep
5. Lead snap kick to groin
6. Lead knee
7. Lead middle round kick
8. Lead teep

Advanced Muay Thai

Students should be more experienced by the time they get to this stage.

A - Jab/Cross

B - Parry the jab & double outside parry the cross into rear long knee, lead palm check to the shoulder & rear middle shin kick

A - Double palm check to the long knee then leg shield to the middle shin kick, return skip kick off the leg shield & rear middle shin kick

B - Cover the lead shin kick & direct zone & cut kick to the supporting leg (lightly!)

3. Rear diagonal elbow
4. Lead horizontal elbow
5. Shin block from rear low kick
6. Zone in and diagonally forward with left cut kick (*lightly on his inner thigh*)
7. Rear middle round kick
8. Rear low kick

8 COUNT No.10 (*Working defenses from teep*)

1. Scoop with lead hand clockwise and zone right from lead teep
2. Rear (right) rising shin into descending calf (lightly!)
3. Lead middle round kick (*then padman moves through 90 degree to face you*)
4. Scoop with lead hand clockwise and zone right from rear teep and catch the ankle.
5. Step in and cut kick with left (lightly!) - then padman moves through 90 degree to face you.
6. Rear cross
7. Lead hook
8. Rear low or middle round kick.

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1. Lead parry and rear knee
2. Lead elbow on the way out
3. Rear cross (he moves out)
4. Rear middle round kick
5. Lead parry and rear horizontal elbow to fist
6. Step down with right hammerfist into right lead
7. Rear cross
8. Lead hook
3. Rear diagonal elbow
4. Lead horizontal elbow
5. Shin block from rear low kick
6. Zone in and diagonally forward with left cut kick (*lightly on his inner thigh*)
7. Rear middle round kick
8. Rear low kick

8 COUNT No.10 (*Working defenses from teep*)

1. Scoop with lead hand clockwise and zone right from lead teep
2. Rear (right) rising shin into descending calf (lightly!)
3. Lead middle round kick (*then padman moves through 90 degree to face you*)
4. Scoop with lead hand clockwise and zone right from rear teep and catch the ankle.
5. Step in and cut kick with left (lightly!) - then padman moves through 90 degree to face you.

6. Rear cross
7. Lead hook
8. Rear low or middle round kick.

8 COUNT No.11 (*Working defenses from rear cross*)

1. Lead parry and rear knee
2. Lead elbow on the way out
3. Rear cross (he moves out)
4. Rear middle round kick
5. Lead parry and rear horizontal elbow to fist
6. Step down with right hammerfist into right lead
7. Rear cross
8. Lead hook

From the rear kick, return jab/cross to start the cycle in reversed roles.

Suggestions on Boxing Combos?

One of the most basic, and effective, combinations is the Jab-Cross- Hook. Bread and Butter combo in most peoples opinion. After the Hook, remember to move out of the way. Bob and Weave out of the way.

Another very effective combo is Hook-Cross-Hook. This combo works during sparring/competition. **Jab-Cross-Jab-Cross:**

Hook-Uppercut-Hook: Very much like the Hook-Cross-Hook. Try intermixing the two combo's.

"Overhand" Straight Punch-Uppercut: The overhand punch is often neglected (in many boxing gyms). This combo works amazingly well if you can get the first punch in. The overhand punch knocks your opponent right into the uppercut.

Jab-Hook: Another combo to not underestimate. Practice makes perfect. You have to really drill with this one for it to work. Jab and Hook of the same hand.

Jab-Uppercut-Hook-Cross: This can be used effectively against a southpaw fighter . After the jab, slip his return jab, then step in with the uppercut. The Hook is awkward, as his lead arm can smother it easily, but the Cross at the end is effective.

After you get some basic combinations down, start doubling up the jabs, or stringing the different combinations together. You will start to find what work and in what situations, and will be able to modify them to work for you.

REMEMBER!!! (*This is probably the most important advice I can give you!!!*) *When you have completed any combination, MOVE!!!! Do not stand in place to admire your work. Trust me! You WILL get hit! The moment you have thrown your last punch, change positions and move your head.*

More Combinations

#1- Jab-Cross-Lead Horizontal Elbow

#2- Jab-Cross-Roundhouse Kick (The kick can be performed with either leg)

#3- Jab-Cross-Clinching Straight Knee (either Knee)

#4- Roundhouse Kick-Straight Punch (though I prefer a Lead side kick and a Cross, you can throw either kick with either punch. You can also substitute a hook from either side)

#5- Clinching Straight Knee-Hook (right after landing the knee, release your grip on your opponents head and immediately hook when your kneeling foot sets back to the floor. This should catch him before he gets his guard back up)

#6- Clinching Straight Knee-(push opponent away)-Round Kick (the idea here is to push your opponent away into kicking range, and while he's trying to regain his stance and guard up, you can kick him in the head or wherever is open)

#7- Push Kick-Round Kick (like above, use the Push Kick to get your opponent at Round Kick range and unload!)

#8- Roundhouse Kick-Clinching Straight Knee (after landing the Round Kick, set foot down in front of you and step in, grab, and knee. Don't retract your leg after kicking)

#9- Roundhouse Kick-Elbow (essentially, use the same footwork as above, but strike with the elbow instead of the knee. OR! If your opponent moves out of the way of the Roundhouse Kick, allow your leg to partially spin you around into a Spinning Elbow Strike. When you miss with a kick, your opponent will often try to step in on you, right into the Elbow Strike!!!)

#10- Roundhouse Kick-(skip back)-Push Kick (as mentioned before, make sure you skip back with both feet at the same time, then skip in at once with the push kick.

DO NOT STUTTER STEP! This needs to be FAST! Try to make it happen in three steps, or beats. Round Kick, skip back, Push Kick. There should only be those three steps and none in between!)

The Low Roundhouse Kick of Muay Thai *How to? The Low Roundhouse Kick of Muay Thai*

With the Low Roundhouse kick of Muay Thai, the target area ranges from your opponents ankle up to his upper thigh, and when the kick is actually executed, all the steps flow together into one motion. When performing this kick, you must first be at the correct distance from your opponent. Unlike straight kicks and snap kicks the body momentum is generated by stepping sideways at an angle, rather than towards your opponent (or target).

The correct distance for this kick is when your opponent is JUST BEYOND punching range. During practice, extend your lead hand to your opponent or target. You should be able to touch the opponent or target by simply leaning forward a little bit.

#1-STEP AND LEAN: Step sideways at a 45 degree angle to the intended target. As you step, your stepping foot should start to rotate. Make sure you are stepping on your tip toes, not on a flat foot. As you step, you should lean your body in the direction that you step. This helps get your body momentum going, which is a key ingredient to this kick.

#2-ROTATE (and lean): Your entire body must rotate on the ball of your foot. Your leg should be straight (or very close to straight) during the entire kick. As you rotate and kick, your body should stay leaned away from the kicking leg. This acts as a counter-balance of sorts, and gets the weight of your upper body behind the kick.

#3-IMPACT: When the leg strikes the intended target, it should strike with the lower portion of the shinbone and/or the very upper part of the instep. The momentum of the kick should follow through the target. The kick does not stop at impact! The follow through is probably the most important facet of this kick. Think of your leg as a baseball bat. Swing it all the way through the target, attempting to break through everything in its path.

The above instructions are very simplified, and without the benefit of photo's or demonstration, may not make complete sense. I have left out of the steps the instructions on how to hold your guard as you kick as that has been addressed in another post. I will finish this up with some bullet points.

*again, do not kick if you are standing too far away from the opponent. This forces you to step INTO the opponent when covering the distance, and gets your body's momentum traveling in the wrong direction

*when you lean away from the kick, lean far enough away so that your head is out of reach of your opponents punches. ESPECIALLY during low kicks, as you have to stand closer to your opponent while executing them.

*swing your leg in a "dead legged" style using your hip. Very similar to kicking a soccer ball or football. DO NOT "SNAP" THE LEG! Follow all the way through the intended target. If you were to miss, the kick would literally spin you around!

*When the kick impacts with the target, the heel of your support foot should be pointing at your target. Or, you think of it as having your knee facing completely away from the target.

*Remember to keep the foot extended! Many people forget to do this, they are kicking with the shin and therefore forget to pay mind to what they do with their foot. Kicking with a "lazy ankle" leads to injuries.

*The impact with the intended target (when the kick is thrown correctly) creates a "rebound" effect. Learn to use this to get yourself back into your basic stance rather than "retracting" your leg.

*The most common target is the outside of your opponents lead leg on the thigh. However, do not forget that the rest of the leg, both inside and out is a legal target.

*The support leg bends when kicking low. The lower your kick, the lower you bend your support leg. Remember to still stay on your tip toes.

(*with the higher rdhouse kicks, some boxers straighten the support leg when kicking, some don't. I recommend trying both ways to see which feels more comfortable, gives you more power, and allows you to keep your balance)

*When kicking (or performing any Muay Thai technique) it is important to remember that the feet, hips and shoulders all move as ONE UNIT! There should never be any twist to your body. If the feet rotate to the left, your hips and shoulders rotate to the left with them. By moving the body as one unit, the boxer is able to get his or her full weight into his or her techniques.

Muay Thai, dropping lead hand when kicking

Thai boxers do typically drop one of their hands when executing a roundhouse kick. The reason, as you surmised is for both leverage and added power. Though you were referring only to the lead side roundhouse kick, and the dropping of the lead hand, the same is true for the rear legged roundhouse kick. For one, roundhouse kicks from the lead leg are naturally weaker b/c they do not benefit anywhere near as much from the body's rotation during the kick. When the lead hand "drops" it does not actually just drop, but is swung.

The swing is to:

#1-generate additional power while pivoting and

#2-help the boxer maintain his/her balance.

A third and not well known reason (unless you study Muay Thai) is that the swing arm can be used to interfere with your opponent. You are sticking it in his face and brushing either his punches or guard aside as you kick.

Further, the arm may drop, but the shoulder does NOT! When a Thai boxer kicks, he is leaning away from the kicking leg. Doing this adds more of the body's weight to the force of the kick AND gets the boxers head OUT OF THE WAY of a counterstrike.

Also, ONLY ONE arm drops! The other should come up in front of the face in a high guard position that places the elbow near jaw level and the hand practically above the head. This creates a more solid barrier. The shoulder of the arm that is dropped protects the jaw on the other side. The above hold true for roundhouse kicking techniques from both sides. Let me know if what I wrote above does not make complete sense, and I will try to clarify it better.

Using the Muay Thai Low Roundhouse Kick

In a previous post, I discussed how to execute the Muay Thai Low Roundhouse Kick. In this post, I'd like to discuss when to use it and some of the subtle varieties to this kick. To start off, the kick is designed to destroy your opponents base. Thai boxers often refer to kicking their opponents legs as "chopping down the tree". The low kicks are often used most during the beginning of the match to deaden the opponents leg.

After the leg has been beaten on a bit to slow them down, the kicks start being aimed at the midsection. This is the legs are going to now be slower to lift to block the incoming kick, and also to beat on your opponents ribs and breadbasket to knock the wind out of him. Towards the later stages of the fight, when your opponent is tired, the kicks go upstairs to the neck and jaw for the knockout!

With all leg kicks, the hand that is on the same side as the kicking leg should be extended into your opponents face! This blocks his/her line of sight, and also puts a barrier between you two, making counterattacks harder to execute!

As mentioned, there are many variations to leg kicks. The most common leg kick is a roundhouse kick to the outside of the thigh of your opponent's lead leg. When this kick is executed, it commonly is thrown so that the kick is traveling on a horizontal plane with the ground.

One slight variation to this kick is changing the angle of your initial step so that instead of kicking the outside of the thigh, you kick directly across the front of the thigh. To do this, step more sideways than at an angle as you kick.

If your opponent is standing with the same side lead stance as you (both of you in left side leads, for example) You can throw a lead-legged roundhouse kick to the inside of their lead ankle or calf. No step is required, just lean back and rotate in place. The kick should travel upwards as though you are kicking a ball, not sideways. This kick is commonly used with the inside of the instep as the striking surface.

This kick is amazingly painful to your opponent as the inside of the ankle and calf is not very protected by the body's muscle structure. You do not have to kick very hard to break your opponents stance, making it easy to follow with a few quick straight punches.

The cut kick: The proper way to block a low roundhouse kick is to raise your leg and block with the knee/shin. The idea is to sucker your opponent into raising the leg block, then bringing the kick underneath the raised leg to strike the support leg. To set this up, you can throw 1 or 2 roundkicks to the outside of your opponents thigh so that they will automatically raise the leg to defend when they see you bringing the next kick.

Step more deeply and get down low so that your kicking leg passes under their block (or strikes near their blocking foot and pushes through) to their support leg. You should try to use your leg to "scoop" them off of their feet. You can also use your swing arm to help them by pushing them across your kicking leg. If done correctly, your opponent will end up on the canvas.

The Chop Kick: Kicking at the outside of your opponents knee in a downward, chopping motion. The idea is to buckle their knee so that their stance is broken, giving you the opportunity to counter while they regain their feet. To perform the downward motion, when the kick reaches its apex, you rotate your hip all the way over so that your kick is now aiming back at the floor, and you "chop" it through. This kick has considerable power with practice. (This is also an excellent kicking angle to use when kicking at an opponents head. The added power of rolling the hip over and kicking back into the floor can often break through an opponents strong guard to land on their neck or jaw, often producing a knockout)

Muay Thai's Elbow Basics

Probably the most feared of all techniques in Muay Thai are the Elbow Strikes. One well placed elbow can (and often does!) end a fight during any round. There are a number of different strikes from numerous angles. Here are some of the most commonly used elbow strikes.

*When you strike with the elbow, you ideally want to hit with the sharp pointy bone. If you were to hold your arm in front of you as if you were throwing a hook punch, the part of the elbow that you want to strike with is the sharp pointy bone on the bottom. To make sure that you are striking with this part of the elbow rather than flush or with the top part of the bone, you should hold your open palm towards the target.

*it is of **UTMOST** importance that you keep your guard high and tight when executing elbows. If you throw an elbow, rest assured you will be given one (or more) in turn. Keep your guard high so that your wrists are at eyebrow level.

***DO NOT REACH** for the elbow strike. With very few exceptions, the elbows should be thrown at "CLINCH RANGE". They are designed to be subtle, yet quick and powerful. If you extend to far from your body, they lose power and are easily avoided.

*Because you are standing very close to your opponent, you must widen your stance to maintain balance. Face it, when that close, your opponent will grab you and try to throw you off balance. Learn to use the elbows **WHILE** clinching... find your opening and strike quickly!

*Keep your elbow glued to the side of your body for as long as possible when you are executing an elbow strike. This makes the elbow harder to see coming. Also, the closer the elbow is to your body (center mass) the harder the strike will be.

KEEP YOUR CHIN DOWN AND YOUR SHOULDERS UP!!!

HORIZONTAL ELBOW STRIKE: Thrown the same exact way as a hook punch in boxing. Make sure that **BOTH** feet rotate.

UPPERCUT ELBOW STRIKE: This elbow is best used to defend against a punch. Step inside the punch, bending you legs a bit (just like Mike Tyson does when he's loading an uppercut). Bring the elbow straight up as you straighten your legs **ALL THE WAY OVER YOUR HEAD!** Keep the arm bent. Your hand should reach back and practically be touching your shoulder. As you straighten up and execute this elbow, you should rotate your body sideways to get the extra torque into the strike.

VERTICAL or DIAGONAL ELBOW STRIKE: This strike is one of the hardest to learn, yet the most effective. Most people are aware that a Thai boxer uses the Peek-a-Boo guard. If you throw a horizontal elbow, you only hit his guard. What you want to do in this case is throw your elbow so that it comes straight down the middle, in between his guarding hands. In many ways, this elbow is similar to the horizontal elbow, except that you lean over your opposite knee as you throw.

For example, you are in an orthodox stance (left-side forward) You wish to throw the right handed **DIAGONAL** elbow strike. Step with your left foot sideways as you lean your upper body over your left knee. Throw the elbow as you are leaning so that the otherwise **HORIZONTAL** elbow is now striking **VERTICALLY** in between his guard hands. These are the three most basic elbow strikes. There are a few others, of course, but we can get into those later. Again, I'll wait a day or two for comments before getting into "when" to use the elbow strikes, and also how to use some of the elbow strikes not covered in this posting.

More Muay Thai Elbow Stikes

AXE or SPIKE ELBOW STRIKE: This strike is the basic overhand elbow strike. Raise your hand straight above your hand and **SPIKE** the elbow down onto your target. (Usually your opponents head of collar bone) As you drop the elbow, also drop your weight with it by bending your knees to get your body weight into the blow.

Remember to keep your back straight! **DO NOT LEAN OVER INTO THE STRIKE!** Additionally, when striking, keep the elbow close to your body. Do not attempt to extend outwards with the elbow. When you practice/execute this elbow strike, you should strike downwards with the elbow as close to your body as possible. You should try to strike with your elbow so that it hits the opponent in between your body and his head and pries between the two of you. You can create a wicked cut this way. Or, you can bring the elbow right down on his head.

BACKWARDS ELBOW STRIKE: This is an elbow strike that most people are probably familiar with in their own martial arts studies. If the opponent gets behind you (for instance, your round kick missed and the opponent steps in) you strike backwards with the elbow. You can aim into the opponents rib cage, solar plexus, or aim it upwards under his chin.

An unorthodox variation of this technique is to turn slightly more sideways than the normal boxing stance and strike with the lead elbow in this manner, as though you were striking an opponent behind you. The elbow is aimed right under the opponents chin. It is a very tricky maneuver, but has its inherent risks, as you are leaving your lead guard down. The shoulder to the chin only offers so much protection.

SPINNING ELBOW STRIKE: Probably one of the most exciting techniques in Muay Thai, a real crowd pleaser! In Thailand, boxers who score a knockout with this technique receive a bonus with their fight purse. The footwork is similar to the throwing of many spin techniques, just make sure that you do not cross your legs when performing this, keep a good boxing stance. As you spin, you should be stepping into the opponent because again, you want to be at very close range when executing an elbow strike. The elbow is thrown overhead, so that it chops down into the opponents face or onto their head, NOT sideways like a backfist!

The most opportune time to use this elbow is either right after you have missed a round kick, or when you have blocked a high roundhouse kick from your opponent, you can spin in on him while his leg is still up. (actually, trap his leg and spin in at the same time for the best effect) There is another subtle way to use the spin elbow. A Thai boxer I used to watch was a master of this one. I believe the boxers name was Buelong (yes, from Thailand). He would slip his opponents straight punch and throw the spinning elbow in mid-slip so that his elbow would come straight in from his rear side.

This is a hard variation to put into words, but as you slip the straight punch, you throw a spinning elbow from the same side that you slipped to. If your opponent throws a right cross, you slip to your left. As you slip, you roll your body so that your left elbow comes over the top of your back straight into his jaw. Your feet rotate, but you do not need to step. Try this technique SLOWLY with a partner to see how it works.

Muay Thai's Forgotten Elbow Strike

Perhaps not forgotten, but neglected. This next elbow strike is actually a series of strikes, each one is the counterpart for one of the basic elbow strikes. These strikes are the RETURN ELBOW STRIKES. The basic elbow strikes in Muay Thai are the HORIZONTAL, DIAGONAL/VERTICAL, UPPERCUT, and AXE elbow strikes. Only the AXE ELBOW has not return strike, as it is a return strike. In each case, after you have thrown a basic elbow strike, most boxers simply return to their basic position, or follow with another basic strike. However after you have thrown the elbow in one direction, hit with the elbow again as you bring it back to basic guard position.

Seeing that you have to bring your arm back anyway, it seems a shame to waste an opportunity? Simply strike with the flush part of your elbow as you bring it back into position. Remember, you have to follow through on the strike. *Example:* The HORIZONTAL ELBOW STRIKE. When you bring the elbow back, you should bring it back as though you are trying to throw a wide sweeping elbow to hit someone behind you. Very similar to slapping someone with a lot of follow through, or even throwing a frisbee. Make sure your entire body pivots with the strike, just as the other basic strikes.

The elbows strikes that have return strikes are the HORIZONTAL ELBOW, the DIAGONAL/VERTICAL ELBOW, and the UPPERCUT ELBOW. In the case of the DIAGONAL ELBOW, you can use the BACKWARDS ELBOW STRIKE as the return strike, or you can bring the elbow back overhead to strike downwards between your opponents guard as you bring the arm back to its basic position.

With the UPPERCUT ELBOW, merely bring it back to position using the AXE ELBOW STRIKE. By practicing a return strike with each of your basic elbows, you can make sure that you don't miss an opportunity to strike your opponent.

Targets for the Elbow Strikes

As promised, I'll try to keep this short and to the point. Most elbows are aimed at your opponents head, of course. Specifically, you should target the opponents scalp, forehead, and eyebrows area. The reason is this. These areas of the skull are protected by a thin layer of skin and muscle over solid bone. An elbow hitting on this surface will break or cut the skin open. As we all are aware, scalp/head wounds bleed extremely badly. The idea is to cut your opponent so that the blood flows into his or her eyes, blinding them. If they can't see, they can't fight.

Another target of course is the jaw. Obviously, the intent is a KO. When using elbow strikes, use your basic strike (horizontal, diagonal, or uppercut) to make you opponent bleed, bring the return elbow strike with intent to knock them out.

In the case of the UPPERCUT elbow and BACKWARDS elbow strikes, you should aim for just under your opponents jaw.

The SPINNING ELBOW STRIKE should be aimed right at the forehead area. Another variation is to use the AXE ELBOW while clinched with your opponent to strike his or her hipbone. This is obviously very painful for the opponent.

The elbow strikes can also be used to strike the opponents chest to knock the wind out of them.

Though it is considered "dirty pool", when you scoop catch an opponents round kick, you can then SPIKE the elbow into their leg. Translated from Thai to English it means "Breaking the Elephants Tusk". As a final note, those of us with boxing experience know that you can use the elbows to block rather than your arms and hands.

One training drill is called 10-20-10's. Full speed and full power. Partner holds Thai Pads and you kick 10 Roundhouse kicks on one side, then 20 Clinching Straight Knees, then another 10 Roundhouse kicks on the other side.

The Elbow Train is just doing Horizontal or Vertical Elbow strikes on the focus mitts as fast as you can (alternate sides each strike). If you do it fast enough, it starts to sound like like a train chugging along...

Neck Wrestling or Clinching is a big drill. With your opponent, each of you trying to gain the "control" position, with your opponents head trapped to your chest and they are bent over. If you get caught, you have to perform an escape.

Medicine Ball: Everyone at some time in training has used the medicine ball. You pass the ball around for a few rounds like you are playing basketball. OR, have them stand close and actually thrust the ball into each others stomachs or ribs.

Both put on bag/sparring gloves. One holds the medicine ball while the other uses it as a punching bag. The holder is responsible for changing the target area around. The puncher just must punch full power constantly. You do this drill for about 3 rounds. alternating punching/holding every round.

Progressive combo's. The idea is to work a combo from it's first strike and build it into at least 6 separate strikes, preferably 8 or more. Start with one strike. Repeat 10 times. Then add another strike. Repeat 10 times, add another, repeat 10 times, etc. For example: 10 jabs, 10 double jabs, 10 double jabs and a cross, 10 jab- jab-cross-hook-bob n'weave, 10 jab-jab-cross-hook-bob n'weave-cross, etc, etc, etc. (don't forget to add kicks, knees, elbows, etc. I just used boxing as an example)

Those are some of the more creative ones. Most of the drills are pretty standard. Kick or punch the pads, shadow boxing, pushups, situps, skip rope, etc.

More Training Drills

#1-RUN. If you want to be able to fight, you have to run, run, run. You should have a mix between jogging for distance and wind sprints

#2-SEE #1! Yes! Running is THAT important! Besides running, there are a number of drills that we incorporate into our training to help build strength and stamina.

DUCKWALKING or SQUATS: How do you think that Thai boxers are able to withstand those leg kicks?

FOOTWORK DRILLS: A circle drill that is good to incorporate from the boxing gym to the martial art school. The students get in a circle as though they are in the ring and they skip sideways as though they are dancing around their opponent. The students are to stay on their toes! When the coach (me!) says "SWITCH" they change directions and go the other way. This should get them used to always circling around their opponents, and how to change directions quickly

JUMP ROPE: helps with stamina, and teaches boxers to be light on their feet. (if they do it right)

PUSHUPS and SITUPS: Needs no introduction...

NECK ROLLS: This is very similar to the wrestling exercise. Do a three point stance with your feet on the ground and your head too. Arms behind your back. Slowly roll your neck around to work the neck muscles. Be careful on this one until you are used to it...

WEIGHTS: There are a number of very specific weight drills for punching power. Most of them concentrate on the shoulders and triceps. One drill is to take a non-weighted bar with both hands and pump it in and out from your chest (straight out while standing) as fast as you can for one round.

Setting Up the Low Roundhouse Kick

The Low Roundhouse Kick of Muay Thai, there are also several variations when it comes to setting the kick up. Ultimately, once you learn the kick proficiently, you will find your own way. View these as guidelines, or basics...

Start with the Low Roundhouse Kick to the outside of your opponents lead leg. For our purposes, both fighters will be considered to be in left-side lead. You wish to kick with your right leg to the outside thigh of your opponents left leg. A preferred method to set up a kick to the leg is to start with a punching combination first. By getting your hand in your opponents face, you are distracting his attention upstairs and away from your intended target. The combination: JAB-CROSS-REAR RDHOUSE KICK is not only one of the most basic combo's, but arguably the most effective.

CONTINUOUS FLOW:

In this version of the combo, each strike follows a steady flow, striking one after the other. To do this, the JAB is thrown as a real punch, but the CROSS is only thrust into your opponents face and left there to block his line of sight. The KICK then comes right behind the "CROSS" into the leg. The reason for throwing a fake cross is so that you CAN throw the kick in the same rhythm. If you throw a real cross, you are forced to plant you feet for a split second, preventing you from flowing into a kick. Therefore, only thrust the hand forward into their eyes as though you are punching and leave it there as you kick.

BROKEN RHYTHM: This combo is thrown with each technique being a genuine strike. Simply throw the jab-cross combination, return to your basic stance, then execute a low roundhouse kick. Done properly, the jab-cross combo should momentarily stun the opponent giving you opportunity to get the kick in. With this combo, you have the option to kick with either leg if you so choose.

IMPORTANT NOTE- after executing the jab-cross, take half a shuffle backwards to give yourself room to throw a really good kick. If you kick from where you are after completing the jab-cross combo, you will be too close to get a really effective kick off. In the CONTINUOUS MOTION version of the combo, you don't have to adjust because of it's flow. The punches are more diversionary to allow you to get the kick in unexpectedly.

FAKING, THEN KICKING: A favorite way to land the Low Kick "low roundhouse to opponents support leg when opponent attempts to leg block with lead", is to sucker your opponent into lifting a leg block high for you to go underneath. First, set a pattern by kicking at the thigh, making your opponent used to blocking it high. Do a hip thrust as though you are starting to kick, the second the opponent begins to lift the leg, come underneath with the Low kick to his support leg.

PUSH KICK: Another set up for the low kick is to push kick first. If the push kick lands effectively, your opponent will either be staggered, or at least have forward momentum halted, as the push kick is being placed back to the ground, set it down into the step that leads to the roundhouse kick. In other words, you throw a lead-leg push kick, instead of retracting it, set it down into the ground into a step sideways (at a 45 degree angle) directly into roundkicking.

KICK to INSIDE OF OPPONENTS LEAD LEG: you can use this rdhouse kick with a similar objective to the push kick. When your opponent tries to move fwd's to strike, throw the short, rising rdkick to the inside of the lead ankle or knee. This will stagger him and nullify his attack.

LEG BLOCK: After using a leg block to stop a kick, place the blocking leg down while stepping (as the offensive push kick set up) directly into a low roundhouse kick. You can either attack the opponents leg that he just kicked with (as he is still trying to set it down) or the support leg (he is still on one leg).

AFTER SWEEPING KICK ASIDE: If you opponent throws a push kick, and you sweep it to your outside correctly, you will expose the back of your opponent, leaving the backs of his legs open targets for a low kick. Kick at the leg you swept aside, as that should be the easiest target.

LEANING AWAY FROM HIGH KICK: If your opponent throws a high roundhouse kick, one defense is to simply lean back so that the kick misses. When your opponent misses, the missed kick will continue to spin him exposing his back. Again, attack the kicking leg as he brings it down to the floor.

Countering the Clinch Knee

Using the Low Roundhouse Kick, HEADRUSH asked about counters to the knee while clinching.

SIDESTEPPING, is a very good technique, however when you are in a clinch, you aren't going to be sidestepping a technique. Your opponent HAS HOLD OF YOU! It is a combination of manipulating your opponent while utilizing footwork to throw him off balance, thereby nullifying a possible knee attack.

When in the clinch, you and your opponent are fighting for control of each others head. Ideally, you want to have your opponents head in a pincher grip, with your forearms on his collarbone, and your heads behind the back/top portion of his head. Using your forearms as a fulcrum, you pull his head down into your chest, bending him over in front of you. From this position, you are able to throw straight knees at will into his abdomen, chest, and face. However, one of the first things any Thai boxing instructor who's worth studying under will teach you is how NOT to get caught like that, and if you DO get caught, how to get out of it. Most serious injuries in Muay Thai are due to a fighter insufficiently dealing with being at the business end of the clinch. Now, since most fighters are well enough versed in the clinch to NOT get bent over in front of you, you therefore have to knee while fighting for the advantage. When you find yourself with sufficient balance and enough room to snap one in there.

When you are holding onto an opponent in the clinching manner, you don't have to see what they are doing. You can actually feel it. When you feel your opponent shift their weight to knee, you twist their upper body by pulling with one hand, pushing with the other. While doing this, you are sidestepping. To clarify this technique, let's say while you are clinched, the opponent is trying to knee you with his right knee. You should pull downwards and to the side on his neck with your right hand, while pushing him up and forwards with your left. You are essentially trying to turn him like a steering wheel. As you turn him, step at an angle backwards (the "sidestep" previously mentioned) with your right foot. As you twist your opponent around 180 degrees, your right foot becomes the lead foot, and the left foot becomes the rear foot.

Since your opponent is being pulled over to his left and off balance, his right ribs are exposed to your left knee. You know what to do. The other technique is to scoop the leg. However, this technique has its drawbacks. Here are a few reasons:

#1-it leaves your scooping arm tied up with his weight on it. Both of his hand are free to punch, elbow, whatever.

#2-it is no longer legal in Muay Thai (in Thailand, therefore everywhere) to scoop/trap an opponents leg and perform an offensive technique.

#3-to scoop an opponents leg in this fashion, you are taking a big risk of eating the knee in the process.

First, when clinching with someone and preparing for the knee, keep in mind that your opponent will be trying to knee you also. You should therefore keep your hips GLUED to your opponent. The best defense against knees is to be too close for your opponent to knee. Remember to keep your stance wide to keep your balance.

Another thing to keep in mind is that normally when boxing, Thai boxing, or whatever, you should keep your chin down to your chest to prevent KO's. However, while clinched, if you keep your head bowed down, you are doing half of your opponents work for him. So in this case, keep your chin up. Practice keeping the shoulders up high and almost arching the back of the neck so that your opponent cannot pull your head down.

If you are in a clinch with someone that has superior clinch skills to yours, then you can wrap a leg around him to make sure he cannot create the room to knee you. While doing this, kick him with your heel in the back of his legs to frog them. (yes, this is a legal technique!)

You can also wrap one arm around the back of his head so that the back of his head is in the crook of your arm. The opposite arm grabs in the crook of his arm and pulls down. Turn sideways and raise your lead side knee into his body sideways, so that your instep is extended on one side of his hips, the knee on the other (the shinbone should be parallel to the ground).

Push forward with your knee into his hips while pulling on his head and arm with your upper body. You will get him "stretched out" and unable to do anything. From this position, you can either release and get back to the clinch so that you have an advantage, or wait for the referee to break the two of you up.

Another escape from the clinch is to do a double hand push on your opponents hips while ducking out. THIS TECHNIQUE IS VERY RISKY, AND SHOULD ONLY BE USED AS A LAST RESORT!!! Many people make the mistake of simply trying to duck under the persons clinch to get out. If you find yourself forced to escape this way, push HARD on both of your opponents hips while doing your best to keep your head safely tucked between them.

The Wai Kru and the Ram Muay

One: the pre-fight ceremony performed by Thai boxers when they enter the ring. When two Thai boxers enter a ring to fight, they first enter by going over the top rope. This ties into the Thai culture that a person's head is viewed as "holy ground" so to speak. The head is the most sacred part of the anatomy. By entering the ring over the top rope, you are not allowing anything to pass over your head.

Second: upon entering the ring, both boxers, beginning in their own corner, circle the ring with a hand placed on the top rope. This act is called "sealing the ring". This symbolically tells your opponent that no one else is present (crowd, coaches, trainers, judges etc..) and that it is now just between the two of you.

Third: the Wai Kru. The boxer, in the center of the ring, kneels facing the direction of his hometown or home gym, and bows three times. The first bow is to pay respect to your coach, gym, fellow boxers, and to Muay Thai as a sport. Bow number two pays respect to your parents, family, and your ancestors. Bow number three is to pay homage to whatever your religious or spiritual beliefs are.

Finally, the Ram Muay. The Ram Muay is a dance-like ritual during which the boxers go through motions which imitate various animals, or professions. As an example. We begin by imitating a swallow bird, then imitate a soldier with a spear. Next imitate a soldier with a bow, then finally, an executioner. Most of the symbolism behind the various moves is depicted in the Ramakien, (*the Thai version of the Indian story of Rama, check www.usmta.com, History section*) There is a practicality behind how it developed and how it is still used today.

A short briefing: Before opponents would fight, they would warm up by stretching, doing some light shadowboxing, and testing the ground all over the determined fighting area.

This eventually evolved into a routine that was taught to the boxers to perform before each fight. Each gym developed its own unique Ram Muay. This served as an identifier, letting your opponent know from what gym, or camp, you came from. The various moves are performed so that they imitate many of the basic positions within the fight, and are stretching the major muscle groups. This also gives the boxers an extra minute or so to collect themselves so that they may focus on the fight at hand.

It is Thai tradition that members of the same gym do not compete against one another. Also, many fights would be called off by one boxer when he saw how his opponent performed the Ram Muay. For one, if he saw that his opponent was very graceful with good balance, and performed with confidence, he would often realize that he was in over his head, and back out of the match. He may also recognize the Ram Muay as a gym that had especially good, skilled fighters, and back out for that reason.

Basic Combinations:

Let's use boxing as an example. After throwing a left hook, there are a couple of very specific actions one could take, depending on the situation. Two most common follow ups are:

- 1- Bob and Weave out to the left
- 2- Right Cross

He will follow each of those techniques up with some very specific actions. For example, if you were to Bob and Weave to the left, your opponent would probably do one of the following:

- 1- Left Hook to the body
 - 2- Clinch (as you straighten yourself back up) and Straight Knee to the body
- OR, if you threw the Right Cross, your opponent would most likely follow with:

- 1- another Left Hook
- 2- Right-legged Roundhouse Kick to the body
- 3- Clinching Straight Knee to the body

As you can see, each technique you perform has a follow up, and each follow up technique has a follow up, and so on. This is how techniques get linked together into combinations.

So, in essence, simple combinations, such as Jab-Cross-Roundhouse Kick, or Jab-Cross-Clinching Straight Knee, and then let them build upon the technique to make their own "advanced combinations".

Basic Combinations. The two basic combos are the ones already mentioned above:

1. Jab-Cross-Roundhouse Kick
2. Jab-Cross-Clinching Straight Knee

#1- The Jab-Cross-Roundhouse Kick is especially what most people I have trained with consider to be the "bread and butter" combination of Muay Thai. In truth, it is the "bread and butter" combo of all the striking arts, except perhaps Western Boxing.

Continuous Rhythm and Broken Rhythm: For the Continuous Rhythm, the three techniques are thrown rapidly in succession with no pause. Also, the roundhouse kick is thrown from the rear side (the same side you threw the cross from) If you were to practice this using Muay Thai technique, you will notice that throwing a strong right cross makes your roundhouse kick weak. To compensate, use the cross as a feint so that the Roundhouse Kick can be thrown with full power. The "cross" is thrown directly into your opponent's face.

Keep the hand in his eyes so that they cannot see the kick. With the opponent's vision obscured, you can then choose which target seems most open. Thigh, hip, ribs, or even the head. When first starting to practice this technique, keep the kicks waist and below until you get the timing. You can then start practicing higher kicks.

For the Broken Rhythm Combo, the Jab and the Cross are both thrown with full power, then you come back to position, usually shuffling back a step into optimal kicking range. From here, you can throw a Roundhouse Kick with either leg, depending on your opponents reaction to your punching combo. Again, practice it with a low kick at first, then when comfortable, try kicking higher targets.

#2- Jab-Cross-Clinching Straight Knee. This combo is pretty self explanatory. Important note: A common thing that most people studying Muay Thai are so conditioned to clinch an opponent by the neck, that they never take advantage of another clinching option. **CLINCH THE OPPONENTS GUARD!** Instead of always trying to "swim" through his guard to get hold of his neck (and taking an elbow strike on the way in) grab his arms so that you "hook" them where the elbow is bent and pull him across your knee.

If you succeed in clinching with your opponents guard and delivering a straight knee, you can then move in closer and clinch the neck. These are two very simple, yet very effective combo's. Another simple combo is: Push Kick-Roundhouse Kick: In this case, you are simply using the Push Kick as a gauging tool, so to speak. You use the Push Kick to kick your opponent right into your roundhouse kick range.

Or... Roundhouse Kick-(Skip back)-Push Kick: This one is a little more specialized, but not too hard. You execute a roundhouse kick first, skip backwards to create the room you need, then skip back in with a Push Kick as your opponent tries to follow you.

In practice, you should try to make it a three beat rhythm, meaning the Kick is one, skipping back with both feet is two, and the push kick is three. Your feet should only touch the floor on those beats. To explain further, after landing the roundkick, you should SKIP back with one hop. Do not shuffle your feet going back because you need to be QUICK (your opponent will be stepping into you!). When you hop back, you should make sure you hop back enough to allow you the room to push kick an approaching target. After hopping back, you hop back in and Push Kick at the same time.

DO NOT SHUFFLE IN AS YOU PUSH KICK! Many people, when they push kick, step forward with their rear leg, then push kick. That would kill your forward momentum. The push kick should be practiced so that when executed, you are getting double impact! In other words, the push kick is mostly used to stop an encroaching opponent. Double the impact by hopping into him at the same time as the kick. To get the double impact, hop in and kick **AT THE SAME TIME!**

Thai Pad Drills

A few notes about using the pads first:

1-Grasp the pads so that your palm is towards your opponent, not towards your face.

2-When you are the pad holder, stand in your normal stance, facing your opponent. **DO NOT STAND SIDEWAYS TO PRESENT THE TARGET!** The Thai pads are designed so that the boxer can train realistically against a human opponent. Stand in your normal boxing stance, and then adjust to the attack as it is thrown. This way, the pad holder also gets experience reacting to attacks.

3-When holding for kicks, hold the pads parallel and rotate to face the kick as it is coming so that the kick can impact both pads flush.

4-When holding for knees, many people hold the pads parallel in front of them, as if they are crossing their arms. Hold the pads in an "X" or crossed. It is a more stable way to hold them.

5-When holding the pads for ANY technique, you must create a SOLID target for your opponent to hit. Do not hold the pads lazily so that there is no impact. It will do nothing for your training partner, and besides, if you hold them weakly, the pads can be kicked into your own face. When the strike comes, press the pads into the hit to create a solid impact. A good Pad Holder will push their opponent to exhaustion. After a session of pad drills.

KICKING DRILLS: For one, you can have the kicker alternate kicks for an entire round. Left-right-left-right... The kicker needs to keep up a good solid pace. Do not rest in between unless necessary! Don't be lazy! Most of the time, when holding pads for round kicks, you hold them at mid body level. Even if you use Thai-style kicks mainly to attack the legs, you will benefit from practicing them higher, as it requires you to work harder.

Multiple kicks on one side can be practiced also. The kicker should kick repeatedly from one side. In between kicks, the kicking foot should only lightly touch to the floor before kicking again. The kicker should stay leaned away to facilitate the multiple kicks.

Low kicks can be practiced by holding the Thai pad against your thigh. Dangle it over your thigh while standing in your normal boxing stance. Make sure to push away the top part of the pad into the kick to help absorb the kick. Do not hold it flush, or you will not be able to take more than 3 or 4 kicks. It is advised not to use buckled Thai pads for this drill as the buckles will gouge your flesh.

KNEE DRILLS: As mentioned, crossing the pads in an "X" while holding for knee strikes for better, more solid impact. Have the boxer practice free standing straight knees, or clinch knees. The boxer should do a skipping footwork to alternate knees. For instance, if I just kneeed with my right, as my right foot drops to the floor, the left skips backwards to load up the left knee. Again, you can also drill multiple knees on the same side. Instead of dropping the knee to the front, bring it all the way back, continually loading for the next knee.

PUSH KICK DRILLS: Thai pads are NOT conducive to Push Kick Drills. Either allow the attacker to push kick you, or invest in a belly protector. If you invest in a belly protector, stick to the above brands and try to find velcro straps. The drills mentioned above are just very basic guidelines.

A good Thai Pad holder, is worth a hundred champions!

The pad holder has a great deal of responsibility to the person attacking, as the pad holder dictates the pace of the workout. You should push the attacker. If your attacker is slacking, hit them with the pad, or throw a kick and demand that they get to work. Constantly push them and shout out directions for them. Also, constantly move around and change the range. Force the boxer to adjust and use footwork. **DO NOT BECOME A STATIC TARGET!!!**

For example, the drills already mentioned are only working one given technique at a time. Change directions and the range so that the boxer is forced to constantly adjust to get the technique right. If they are slacking, tell them to strike harder or faster. **TAUNT THEM!** Tell them that they are weak! Tell them that you expect to feel the pain in the morning! Keeping in mind all of the above advice for the pad holder, let's move on to combination drills...

When directing combination drills, the pad holder should vary between having the attacker execute the techniques/combo's for power, or for speed. Do not change in the middle of the round. The round is either a power or speed round. In most cases, the pad holder dictates what combo's are to be used. When holding the pads for combo's, use your imagination. Try to add variety, but not too much that the boxer does not get a good dose of the basics. If you have an attacker who is very good, you can just hold the targets for the boxer to hit, as the boxer should learn over time what strike you want based on what position you are holding the pads in.

With fighters, or fight hopefuls, a drill for the padman and fighter is to "suit up" wearing belly protector, shin pads, elbow pads, thai pads, and headgear. (cup and mouthpiece, too) Again, I call the combo's for full power. With all the gear on, the attacker can perform low kicks, and, as the padman can also attack if the fighter starts to slack. Typically, stick to jabs, push kicks, and round kicks at your attacker to make sure that they stay busy and sharp.

Finally, where the fighter simply attacks in combo as he feels, it is the padmans job to adjust to his attack. He can low kick, punch, clinch knee, elbow, whatever. Since being completely covered in protective gear, you are minimizing the chance of an accident. This drill should be reserved for the most experienced students, who will be able to do this without injuring each other **AND** taking the drill seriously.

I hope that it is useful info for those of you who using Thai pads in your training.

Training to Fight!

OK, so you've been going to your Muay Thai classes for 2 or 3 nights a week for the last 6 months. You understand all your basics pretty well, and are confident with your combinations and with your sparring. You decide to take this to the next level...

The first thing is that a fighter should have a **MINIMUM** of 6 weeks notice (meaning 6 weeks of training) before any bout. If you plan to fight, or are considering it, you must be ready to devote every day of your life for 6 full weeks to training, actually six days each week. First, from day 1 until a few days before the fight, you should run **EVERY SINGLE DAY!** Even on your one day off, you should run.

For the first 2 weeks, you should be jogging for distance. Devote at least 40 min's each day to roadwork. After the first two weeks, then start alternating between jogging for distance and running wind sprints. When I used to run my sprints, I'd run approx 30-40 yds sprinting, then I would turn around and run back slowly to cool down, then turn around and sprint again.

I would repeat this about 5 times my first time out, then gradually increase the repetitions until I was between 15-20. Lay off the sprints, and cut the distance on the jogging the last week, as you want your body to recuperate before you enter the ring. Spend about 20 min's a day jumping rope.

For the first week or so, the workouts should steadily pick up pace. You should workout by rounds, and your workouts should be at the minimum of 2 hours. For the first two weeks, increase the rounds of shadowboxing, padwork, and heavybag work from your normal workout.

For example (3 hour allotted time frame)

10 min's rope
stretching (takes about 5-10 minutes)
footwork and medicine ball drills (approx 2-5 rounds, varying)
pushups
situps/crunches
3 rounds shadowboxing
10+ rounds of partner drills with Thai pads and Heavy bag work
30 minutes (approx.) of instruction in new techniques
neck wrestling

(the last hour of class is reserved for students to work on what they feel they need extra practice on)

Depending on the day, many of the drills are shortened, or dropped, based on the "group" need.

If I were to adjust this for fighters, it would be:

20 min's rope
stretch
footwork and medicine ball drills (3-5 rounds varying)
pushups
situps/crunches
5 rounds shadowboxing
10+ rounds of Thai pad, heavy bag, speed bag, and double-end ball drills
20 minutes of neck wrestling

sparring would take place at least twice a week

Important note on sparring. It is of utmost importance that you train to prevent injury. Sparring should NOT be done full contact or full competition rules. Separate sparring into elements such as boxing, kicking, or clinching.

You can mix the three in different combinations of sparring as long as you maintain control of the fighters, making sure that they are striking lightly. Sparring partners should wear full protective gear: Headgear, mouthpiece, 16 oz. gloves, elbow pads, chest protector, shinpads, and groin protection. As training goes on, the first two weeks as mentioned are a build up to what I listed above, gradually increasing intensity so that from 3-5 weeks the fighter is training as hard as possible. The last week of training should really taper off to a few rounds shadowboxing, pad drills, NO SPARRING and light jogging.

The last 2-3 days of training should consist of really light jogging and a couple of rounds of shadowboxing. Nothing else. You must spend the last week letting the body recuperate, hence why the big drop off in training. However, you must "keep the motor running", which is why you at least do something each day.

REMEMBER: running, weight training, and such are the fighters responsibility to do outside of class time. I do not recommend cross training with another martial art while training to fight. By contrast, when Thais train to fight, they do all of the above TWICE a day. They get up in the AM to run as a group then train. They gather again and do it all over again in the evening.

"Dirty" Tricks

Thai boxers are known for being extremely respectful outside of the ring. You will never see a Thai boxer bad-mouth-ing his opponent(s) like you see in the Western Boxing world. Thai's believe in doing all their "talking" in the ring, letting their fighting speak for them. Below, are listed a number of techniques that are considered "dirty", but are still ring legal.

#1- When a mid-body level kick comes, you can trap and spike it with your elbow. In Thai, this is "breaking the elephants tusks".

#2- When clinching your opponent, get your glove into his face and cover his nose and mouth so that he has difficulty breathing.

#3- Also, while clinching, use your chin to dig into your opponents face, especially the eyes. Thai boxers like to enter the ring with a few days razor stubble for two reasons. One, the stubble helps punches, elbows, etc slip off the face, and two, to dig it into their opponents face.

#4- Again, during the clinch, when fighting for control of an opponents neck/head, or defending from having your head pulled down, you can reach across his face and jam your elbow into it. Use your elbow/arm as a stiff barrier, keeping it in his face. Dig it into his nose or eyes or mouth...

#5- Again, while clinched, you can wrap your leg around your opponent and heel kick him in the back of the leg or buttocks.

#6- Throw a haymaker-like punch, but hit him with the bony part of the wrist rather than the fist. This is a good knockout technique because the wrist or forearm area is not protected with boxing gloves.

#7- Like boxing, it is illegal to hit an opponent who is down. However, if the opponent has not hit the floor yet... I have seen many fights ended when an opponent gets that extra kick or even a knee in before their opponent hits the floor after they have thrown or dumped them.

#8- Push Kicking opponent in the face. This is the most insulting thing you can do in the ring. You would not make a Thai as angry if you said very explicitly derogatory remarks about his parents. In Thai culture (and many Asian cultures) the head is considered the most important part of the body (practically holy!), the feet the lowliest. To push kick them in the face is to say that you are beneath the dirt under my feet. When a Thai push kicks to someone's face, he does not strike with it, rather he brushes his opponents face with it, heightening the insult factor.

Thai's like to play for keeps. However, they keep it in the ring. The above techniques are all legal in the ring, but considered to be "dirty!". Most fighters refrain from using them, as they can expect like treatment if they do. As an interesting note along the same idea, this is why many, many Thai fighters rarely ever use elbows in the ring. There is sort of a "gentleman's agreement" amongst boxers that if you do not use elbows, neither will I. If you do, however, expect like in return.

Neck Wrestling Drill(s)

For 3 rounds, with a partner. When the round starts, you begin Clinching/Neck Wrestling with your partner. set your timer to go off every 15 sec's. When the interval timer sounded, the fighters were to break, step back, then jump right back in and Clinch/Neck Wrestle again. Due to the size differences in many classes, have every one stay with the same partner for the entire 3 rounds.

While clinching, the boxers are to be trying to get the Control Position that I have mentioned previously, where you have your opponents head trapped in a pincher-like grip to your chest. You can place your chin on top of their head as an extra measure of control. The boxers, should they get caught in the Control Position, perform and escape. Then they should get right back at it.

Remember, if you try this drill, as soon as the fighters separate, they should immediately get right back at it. No pausing. The fighters should train as though the break is from the Ref separating them, then telling them to fight again. They should jump right back into it...

More Medicine Ball Drills...

This is not a very complete list, as the drills are endless. here are a few effective, simple drills...

#1- Everyone stands in a circle, close together. Hand the medicine ball around in a circle, changing directions occasionally. When you hand the ball around, do not simply "hand" it to the person next to you, but thrust it into their abdomen.

Aim for the abs or obliques. The person being handed to should allow the ball to impact with their abdomen, then take the ball. **DO NOT CATCH THE BALL BEFORE IT HITS YOU!**

#2- Again, The circle is more spread out this time, and the boxers should be getting some "air" under the ball. They should be throwing it up in the air, not straight into their partners chests. In this drill, if the medicine ball is dropped, the whole group does 10 pushups for each time the ball is dropped.

#3- Situps, with a partner. Boxer number 1 does a situp, and is then handed a Medicine ball while in the "up" position. He hold medicine ball outstretched above head and then does another situp, handing the medicine ball back to his partner. He then does another situp, at the end of which he gets the ball again. Essentially, he is doing every other situp with the medicine ball.

#4- With a partner, standing back to back. Stand far enough apart so that there is enough room to hand the ball between you two. Boxer number 1 twists to right (keeping feet planted) and hands ball to Boxer number 2, who is also twisted around to the right. Boxer number 2 takes medicine ball and then twists around to left and hands ball to Boxer number 1, who should now also be twisted around to the left. Repeat...

#5- Drop the medicine ball on boxers stomach in the midst of situps. Boxer should do a situp, and while in the down position, partner drops ball onto his stomach. Be careful not to drop in on boxers lap or sternum.

#6- Have boxer perform a V-Sit or Leg Raise. While holding that position, hit boxer in abs and obliques with medicine ball. Be careful doing this with your beginners. Start off softly, then build up power to find your boxers "threshold".

#7- Partner up the students. Both boxers wear gloves/bag gloves (I recommend thick bag gloves, not thin ones. Like Ringside's Super Bag Gloves. Just make sure they are thick gloves). This drill should be done for 3 rounds apiece, meaning a total of 6 rounds. Boxer number 1 hold the medicine ball around chest height, Boxer number 2 boxes with the ball as though it were a heavy bag.

Boxer number 1 (the ball holder) should change positions of the ball to create different angles and punch levels, and should use footwork to do the same. Force Boxer number 2 (the puncher) to move around alot. Switch the ball between each round. If any boxer drops the ball, that boxer (not his partner) must do 10-20 pushups for each time the ball is dropped. 10 pushups for beginners, 20 for advanced boxers and fighters.

#8- With the medicine ball on the ground in front of you. Set the round clock with 30 second intervals. Start with the round clock by jumping over the medicine ball front and back.

Get the knees up high towards your chest! Keep this up until the interval timer sounds, then switch by jumping side to side. Again, jump with the knees up high to your chest. At next interval, back to front and back. Keep switching from front/back to side/side.

Clinching Basics

First, clinching techniques are hard to adequately explain without visual aids. For those with grappling experience, you will find this similar to "swimming". That is where you practice getting a control position by "swimming" one arm in at a time under your opponents arms to get the underneath control position for a throw or the like.

The difference is, rather than gaining the control position under the arms for a throw, you are trying to gain the inside position on your opponent's head/neck area.

There are variations on the control position. The position you want is to have both of your hands/arms to the inside, grasping your opponents head/neck in a pincher-like grip, and his head trapped to your chest. You can also rest your chin on the top of his head to KEEP his head down.

When clinching, the hand position should be on the back/top portion of your opponents head, not the back of his neck. Keep the elbows locked in TIGHT to pinch the carotid arteries, and to prevent your opponent from snaking his hands back in to gain the inside position on you. (the pincher grip on the carotids is not enough to make someone pass out, but it is enough to make them feel a little faint or light-headed, and any advantage is a good advantage)

The hands themselves can be held in two recommended ways. You can either cross them at the wrist (both palms towards you), or you can cross them with the palms towards each other. Remember, do not interlace your fingers! You will have boxing gloves on! With your arms in the correct position, your elbows should be pressing into your opponents collar bone. Use this to your advantage, as a fulcrum to pull their head down into your chest.

When you begin to clinch with someone, you should try to "gain the high ground." Try to get over top of your opponent first so that you have the high position. This way you can rest your weight on your opponent, forcing them to work harder. Let your students to use their lead hand to reach high and deep to get the upper position, and their rear hand to deflect the opponents hands so that they cannot get a good grip on you.

Let your students grab with the lead hand and apply the clinch with just that hand. To do this, after you grab behind the opponents neck/head, you push the elbow across to the center of their chest and use the upper arm as a wedge between you and him. This leaves one hand free to punch, elbow, or deal with whatever he's trying to do with his hands. You can use the lead hand clinch to throw your opponent off balance, and then knee as he's vulnerable.

While it is recommended to actually keep your chin up! Any other time, you would keep your chin down, but while clinching, if you have your head tucked, it's easier for your opponent to trap your head. When clinching, get up on your tip toes to help get you over top your opponent so you can get the upper position. Once you achieve the upper position, rest your weight on them. Make him hold you up!

While clinching, only bring one arm in at a time. Never bring both hands in at once. This would leave you with both hands off of the opponent, and allowing them to have the inside and get your head down. Also, while clinching, keep your hips glued as tightly to your opponents hips as possible!!! Do not leave room for a knee to get in. When you "feel" that you are in position to knee, break your hips to the back and fire one (or more) in there, then get your hips back against his!

MOVE AROUND!!! Do not stand in place and clinch, rather, CONSTANTLY be on the move! Use your arms to toss your opponent around. Push on your opponents shoulders/arms while pulling on his neck to throw him off balance, leaving him open for your knee strikes. Try to throw the opponent to the ground if you can! (and KICK him as he falls!)

If you are having trouble with getting the upper control position on your opponent, grab around his body and hug him close. From this position, you can break your hips to the back and throw clinching curve knees. If your opponent has grabbed you around the body and pulled you too tight to break your hips back to knee, grab each of his arms in a guillotine-like hold, trapping them, then push forward hard with your shoulders (dig your chin into his face, neck, collar bone) and push your hips back hard also, then attack his legs and hips with clinching curve knees.

If your arms are trapped in this manner, push forward with one, pull back with the other HARD. Once you have one arm free, grab him by the neck and start pulling down and try to get in your own knee strikes.



