



Brazilian Jiu Jitsu

Be your own Bodyguard

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When I started martial arts, my goal had never been to somehow end up as a bouncer or even as a bodyguard. But one thing brought me to another, and so I stood - in 1991, one night as a bouncer in front of one of the best-visited in-places. Shortly before that, I had been here myself as a guest and stood at the long queue to get in, as one of my friends regularly DJed in this disco. As the local owner just put together a new security team, I came to my first job at the door of that club.

By that time, I had spent a lot of time as a Wing Chun student and put a lot of emphasis on the practical and realistic use in training. As a boy I came after a short time in Judo sport to Kung-Fu. I started Judo relatively early, but in 1979, on my 10th birthday, I attended the first lessons in Wing Chun. I was rather scared as a boy, even if I was always assessed differently. Walking in the dark or being alone in a crowd was not my thing. That was probably one of the reasons why I wanted to feel strong and ultimately started Kung-Fu training.

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At the various clubs where I could work as bouncer and gain experience, there were plenty of good and less good situations that I can still remember well today. One that I learned quickly was, in any case, no matter who stood in front of me, always keep enough distance. This to avoid pre-emptive, dangerous and surprising attacks (such as "head-butts"), since such scenarios were quite common.

In the later 90s, there was the phase of knife attacks. As you can see, not only the fashion is repeated, but also some bad habits. This activity led me to engage with other martial arts and exercise forms. I got a lot of books from the USA and England on the topic of "Self-protection at the door" or "Practical Defense for Security Personnel / Police". I also took a shooting course to get to know more about the handling of firearms.

Through numerous contacts, from my then martial arts teachers in Los Angeles, I came also to some former (or still active) Navy Seals, Rangers and SWAT members, giving

sometimes self-defense courses. This was a very intense, but also interesting training phase in my life. Of course, this type of education not only influenced me and my brother Demetrio, but also our members at our Academy in Zurich.

During a stay in California, while training with a security team in Los Angeles, I could join a Russian casino owner. It turned out that the client, himself a passionate and high-level Hapkido expert, was leading his own HKD association in Moscow. Through this multi-week stay I did not only get to know some martial arts icons but also some actors in Hollywood, but we also become close friends. Soon I was not only responsible for his safety but trained more often together.

Short time after I found myself with a first-class ticket in a Swissair flight from Zurich to Moscow. Tmur Akhmerov, that was the name of the Russian HKD expert, wanted to introduce me to his students and friends at home. In flight to Moscow, next to me sat an entrepreneur who produced

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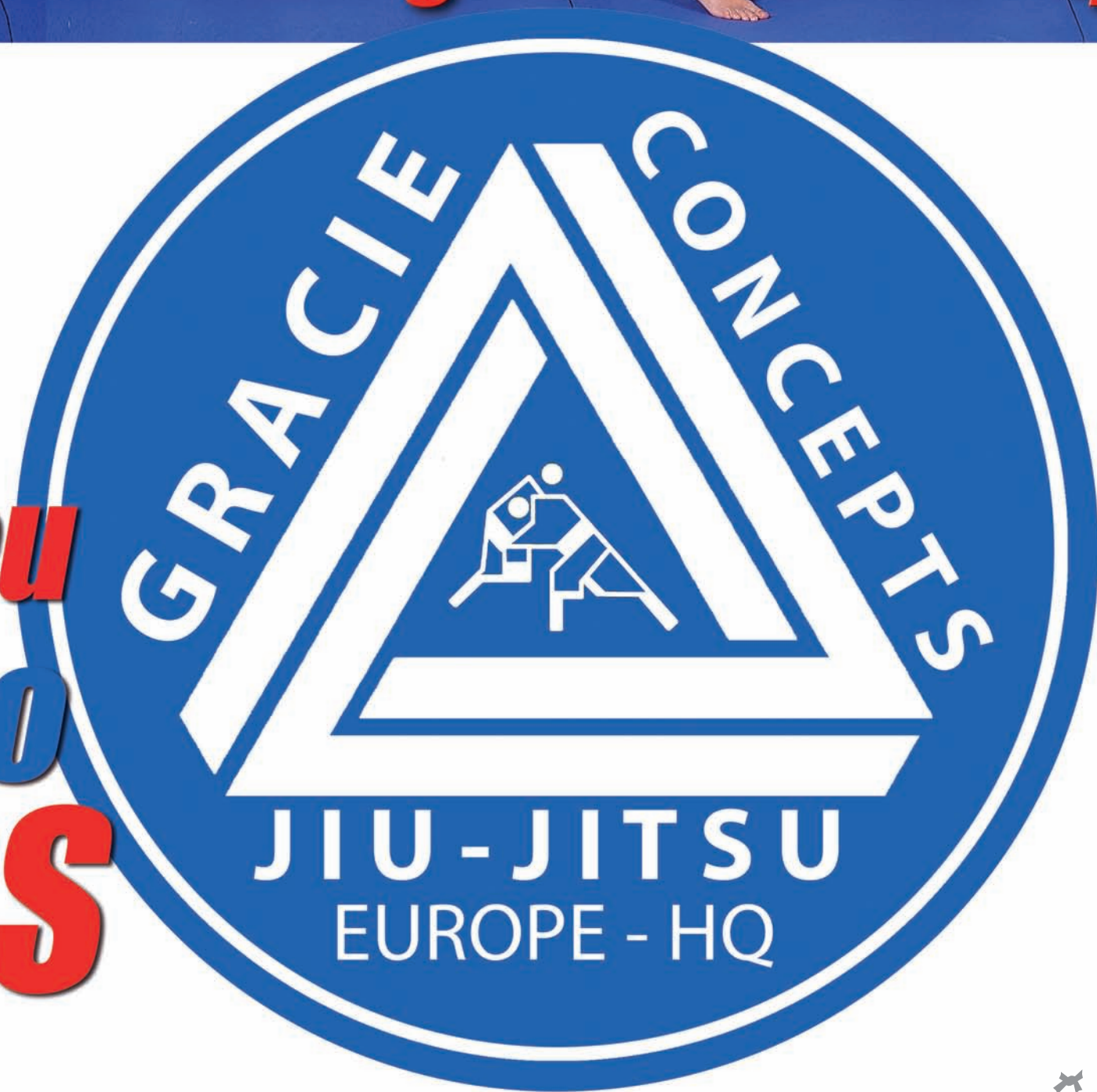
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shoes all over the world to sell them in Switzerland. Rather surprised, he asked me what I would do professionally, so I told him that I was teaching martial arts and had an invitation to give a seminar in Moscow. When he handed me his business card, I unfortunately could not provide him with mine yet, since I was not yet that professional organized, but that would have change soon.

By the end of the 80s, I had been mainly studying Jeet-Kune-Do, Muay Thai Boxing and Filipino Kali-Eskrima. Ground fighting (Gracie Jiu-Jitsu), which was then gradually integrated into our Academy, was still in its beginning. Therefore, I designed the seminar program teaching mainly from the Jeet-Kune-Do (Concepts).

Arrived in Moscow, I was received by all very polite, but in the air, you could feel a slight tension of the participants. I can't speak Russian, so my body had to speak more for me. Unfortunately, during demonstration of a technique at mid-distance (trapping range), my friend Timur got a hit and end up with a blue eye from me. In Zurich I might had to stop the seminar right away back then, but not in Moscow. From that moment on, I did not have to "explain" anything in-deep. It was practically enough that I had to show the technique once or twice to get all the participants back to practice.

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My friend Timur was the happiest among them, even though he made a grumpy face for a while and walked around the gym with the ice bag on his eye. Somehow, I had earned respect, so I was told hours later at dinner, after the first two sake bottles and kilos of sushi had already felt our stomach. As I always say: "...other cultures, different customs".

Working and training in the middle distance was one of my favorite distances. As a Bruce Lee fan, you might know it from the battle scenes as in the movie "Enter the Dragon" when Lee is forced to duel against various masters. The duels always start with the fact that both fighters face each other and touched with an extended arm.

The trapping range is not only important to a Jeet Kune-Do practitioner. No matter which fighting style you prefer here, this distance is universal and therefore also an important position in my (today's) lessons.

In the various situations at the club door, or in personal protection, I got to know this position well. The training of the arms / hands (sensitivity), and of course the legs / stand (balance, stability), in connection with the whole-body posture, is very important. Therefore, I think that forms of exercise (so-called drills), such as "Chisau" in Wing-Chun, as well as the "Hubad-Lubad" in Filipino Kali, or "Pushing-Hands" in Taichi, etc., can be useful for all (Gracie) Jiu-Jitsu-kas at this distance (to a reasonable extent).

This contribution by me should not be regarded as a guide, or even as a manual, for "self-defense for personal protection". I just want to convey to the reader, a part of my personal experience and thoughts that I was able to do in that area at that time:

1) I learned that I always had to be close to my client, so the distance between me and the client was never allowed to be more than an arm's length, which in turn





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led me into this trapping range, should an offender try to make an attack. I also learned to move and position myself in a small space. In my opinion, this is neglected in sports Jiu-Jitsu. In fact, this distance was conveyed in "classical" Gracie Jiu-Jitsu, by my teacher, Master Pedro Hemetério, and passed to him from his masters (Carlos and Hélio Gracie). The distance of an "arm's length" is the first distance where one will be when the opponent will stand in front of them surprisingly and without foreknowledge.

2) Should the offender try to attack my client, then I must, in fact, develop the ability and instinct to intercept an attack effectively, and to displace the attacker and, if possible, unbalance him. The attacker should be as fast as possible out of action and they as protectors should be able to bring the client as quickly as possible to safety.

3) In any case, as a bodyguard, as well as a civilian, I do not want to end up in an unnecessary and perilous "duel". As a person in a self-defense situation, I must also be aware that self-defense can also be "fighting" against several opponents. It is ultimately about survival!

4) If the attacker also has a life-threatening weapon, which of course would make the whole protector / self-defense situation (and your role) more complex. The disarming of a weapon, whether gun or knife – or any other weapon, must be specially trained and learned. Your defense in such a situation must be targeted, fast and efficient.

5) In personal protection you quickly learn that prevention can not only be learned from a written manual. The experience of professionals who must deal with such issues daily has life-saving knowledge, not only for their client but also for themselves. In self-defense, this is just as well... men (and woman) can and must also deal with it if you really want to protect efficiently. The physical and mental state of them is to be addressed in this area.

As a (or own) bodyguard, you must also realize that the attacker may not necessarily be a "killer", but it could be

one or more fans touching their client at the same time, or simply want to an autograph or take a selfie with him.

In another, very common situation, the attacker could be a drunk family member or (until recently) a very nice and attentive work colleague who misinterpreted a sign. But it could also be someone who spied on them in the last three weeks – day in, day out – to know their vulnerabilities and get the most out of them at the right moment.

That's why protective measures are so important as prevention. Just learning some cool techniques is not enough, it has always been that way. Prevention techniques and tactics start with them, where they park their car, or how to block off an unwanted hug, to the knowledge that you should always get along best with moderate (or even better, without any) alcohol, to maintain always control over oneself.

6) Another point is emergency preparation. Do you know all the necessary telephone numbers such as police (117), fire department (118) and rescue service (144)?

Of course, in the field of personal protection, emergency preparations also include the measures, should the client be seriously injured, and thus of course one would be forced to define the fastest possible route in order to be able to reach the nearest hospital if need. In general, the evacuation times are very important in an emergency, be it with vehicles or even by helicopter. Fast and efficient reaction is certainly very important here.

Finally, I would like to say that in my life at that time, not only my "fighting" knowledge was tested. I was able to learn from a wide variety of training sessions from a wide variety of field experts, which helped me a lot and I am very grateful to all of them.

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