

About nine months ago I wrote an article in MAI entitled "Whatever He Hits He Destroys" featuring undefeated ex pro boxer and Walisongo Silat student, Stan 'The Man' Prescott. Earlier this month over a cup of hot chocolate and a Danish, Stan and I discussed his traditional values on the art and philosophy of boxing. His vision is to bring these talents and experiences from years of boxing in the ring and street-fighting to his new boxing class, which he will begin teaching in January 2006 at EastWest Studios.

Silat Column THE SILAT BOXER

By Johnny Silmon

Johnny Silmon: Great to have you here, Stan. Getting right into it, I'm really curious to know what you hope to be doing in your new boxing class this January?

Stan Prescott: One of my main goals with the class is to make sure when I teach I'm putting the art back into boxing. Looking at the game as of late all the old skills that made boxing are not here. It seems to me that all fighters want to do now is crash, bang and wallop.

JS: When you say the old skills, what are you referring to?

SP: The main skills I'm talking about relate to the art of footwork in boxing.

JS: How do they differ now from how you feel they should be?

SP: I don't mean to sound cheeky but a lot of the fighters today lack the class. In the old days you would see guys who had great footwork literally dance and glide around a ring, and yet now I see so many fighters who are flat footed looking just to hit hard, but if they had effective footwork - gliding across the ring, circling around opponents, stepping back at last minute to ride the punches, countering using the feet, upping the pace and shutting down using the feet, then they would look so much better.

JS: Why do you feel it's been lost when by the way you describe it, it is such an important part of a fighter's all round game?

SP: I feel it isn't trained as much nowadays because everyone wants to hit hard, only trying to knock people out and footwork trained properly is hard and takes time to master, so people want shortcuts.

JS: But surely, you being an explosive knockout fighter having great footwork, would prove that by training this all important aspect would equate to greater knockout power anyway?

SP: Correct footwork creates stronger punching and faster hand speed with the feet coming first and the hands last. It's a shame that many of these skills

Above
Getting ready to rumble

Below
Stan and MAI columnist
Steve Benitez

Opposite page
1. Slipping the jab...
2. ...into uppercut



have been lost because there are a lot of trainers who have never been in the ring and boxed. They have just picked up a textbook and got their licences. This is one reason why the art of footwork has been lost as it is something that can only truly be passed down from fighter to fighter.

JS: With the Silat you have been training here at EastWest Studios the last few years, do you see any similarities in footwork, any parallels?

SP: To tell you the truth some of the old school boxing and Silat footwork is almost identical.

JS: Can you elaborate on that?

SP: In Silat if opponent attacks, you might counter by pulling your leg back, that's the same in boxing. Silat would pull the front leg back and counter with the back half, and in boxing the back leg would be pulled back and counter with the front half. Also in boxing there is a skill called the dip and that dip, although not as low, is very similar to the harimau (tiger) style in the Walisongo. There are other similarities too, after all the human body can only move in a certain number of ways.

JS: Interesting! Talk to me about explosive training, Stan.

SP: Ok, so once the footwork is there, to put it all together you learn explosive hand techniques and combinations that come from the footwork. I teach these by a 3 minute time frame broken down into slots of attack whereby you can keep on an opponent without burning out - actually in a real street fight you won't need it, but what it will do is that every time you throw a cluster of punches you will recover quickly.

JS: Why does it work like that as opposed to other ways, what are the principles working?

SP: In a boxing match each round last 3 minutes and so we are always on our man, so this way we are training our energy systems to adapt to the overload, plus this rhythm helps us get into a greater state of concentration.

JS: Reminds me a bit like when we spar in

Silat using the kembangan. Do you see any similarities?

SP: I think it works very well with Silat because with Silat you start slow then see an opening and explode with multiple strikes. Now in boxing terms that opening would be created with the jab, and once open, you explode with a few clusters of punches. My aim is to keep a fighter doing this for 3 minutes and keeping the pressure on without burning himself out. Now this can only happen if it's trained this way.

JS: Will training this way do anything to improve speed?

SP: It will improve speed and speed endurance, and power because it is speed that delivers power.

JS: Do you feel that what you will be teaching in your upcoming class could be beneficial to any martial artist regardless of style? Could they draw any principles from it?

SP: I feel the benefit of this style is that it could even benefit a housewife. I'm not being funny when I say this but there are a lot of guys in the martial arts who can't hit. Sure, they can make something look pretty but that's all. I'm teaching to get the feet into the right position to deliver the knockout blow, not just one but three or four devastating shots. Some people concentrate on a single punch, but that can miss, however with three or four punches at least one should connect. The main emphasis is to get my fighter to unleash a fury of devastating shots.

JS: When you talk of punches in bunches it seems offence is your best defence!

SP: In real situations it's much easier to go all out on

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the offence, than expect to defend a barrage of shots then somehow manage to get your own shots off. There are ways of throwing shots that do have this offence/defence working together. Going back to similarities with Silat, there is a circular step in boxing that is pretty much identical to the half moon step and it is ideal for slipping and hooking then throwing an overhand cross behind it.

JS: It's amazing the way you talk about it because this circular movement is rarely seen in boxing, it all tends to be very angular or linear.

SP: Proper boxing is based on circular movement. People like Jersey Joe Walcott, Willy Pep, Ray Robinson, Roberto Duran, and Ray Leonard used to circle a lot before going in for the kill. Many of today's fighters have got this mixed up with running away. I either see a lot of guys hitting hard with no footwork or good technique, or a guy who thinks he is a good boxer but all he is doing is running away.



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JS: Hmm, good point! Tell me, will your class benefit individuals who want street defence? We often hear of even seasoned martial arts practitioners being beaten up by a street fighter. Why do you feel this happens?

SP: Ok first, what I will be teaching in this class will definitely work for street defence. What I will be sharing in the classes is stuff I have used many, many times in real life situations to great effect. Second, I feel the reason so many martial arts won't work is because they aren't pressure tested, and by that I mean there is no real sparring. Sparring is very dynamic and therefore helps ensure your techniques work in a pressured environment. Also receiving a level of blows does break mindsets about pain and fear, which will toughen you up.

JS: So you're saying good boxing can be an effective street self-defence?

SP: Definitely, depending on situations of course. I hear many teachers say this or that is the way to beat a boxer, but they have never boxed in their life so how can they really say that. All aspects of full contact will be taught in my class and once you apply all you have been taught you will be ready to fight anyone one on one. I could guarantee you that if you gave me a guy who has never had any martial experience, let me have three months with him, he will surely be ready to defend himself. People seem to always forget it's not how many techniques you know but what techniques you know well, what you have mastered. I just need to show a guy how to slip a punch and counter, and if he can master that, then he can defend himself against the majority of guys he will meet on the street.

JS: Seems so much emphasis in fighting is based on styles!

SP: The whole thing about fighting shouldn't be so much about what style is better or who is better, but most of the time who can get there first. It is often the pre-emptive strike, the person who gets the first shot in is often the victor. This is what many teachers fail to get across because they give so many set formulas like "if he throws that you can do this", but trust me when I say in reality you have no idea where someone is going to attack you. I have training methods where I train people to block a punch, but I would make sure a guy throws a variety of different strikes so that the person defending won't know where they are coming from.

JS: You've got so many valid points here, Stan, it will be interesting to see how it all unfolds. Any closing thoughts or comments?

SP: Yeah. I want to say a few words of respect about those who have helped me. I want to thank Pendekar Steve (Benitez). Talking of teachers who can use what they know, in my opinion he is one of the only guys I know who I would consider an all round fighter. Steve is very open-minded and he has the ability to adapt to any range and any fighting environment, which is rare nowadays. People may look at his Silat and think it looks flowery but believe me he can have the row. What stands out for me more though is his character and he always has so much time to offer words of advice, he is a great role model. I would like to also say a big thanks to my Thai Boxing teacher, Gary Derrick, who has trained me late into the night after a long working day and before a further long trip home to the Midlands, his old ways of Muay Thai have opened my eyes so much. I can't wait to apply all these new skills in the ring come March.

JS: Anyone else?

SP: Gary Innes, my boxing coach transformed my boxing skills, and so much of what I will be teaching in the new class is down to him. Finally I'd like to say a big thanks to you, Johnny.

JS: Ah, cheers, mate, no need to thank me it's a pleasure.

SP: No, respect where it's due: Your happy to stay in the

background, the shadows, but what a lot of people don't see I see, and not only that of course I'm looking forward to you transforming me into tip top shape for my upcoming fights.

JS: Haha, you won't be thanking me after I'm through with you! But yes your right, I will turn you into a fighting machine for sure.

SP: Bring it on!

Stan Prescott will be teaching a new boxing class at EastWest Studios starting Tue 10th Jan 2006. Call studio on 020 8203 8100 for more info. He is also available for old school boxing training, contact him on 07944 873813 for further information.



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3. Big right cross...
4. ..circular step into left hook