



KARATE PRESSURISED

Pressure-point combat expert Mark Kline

Seven years after taking up wrestling as a 12-year-old kid, Mark Kline began seeking something more; that thing to level the playing field for smaller guys like him. In search of self-defence skills, he took up Tang Soo Do but ultimately found that the sport karate he was learning did not give him all the answers. A chance discovery of the Japanese healing method of shiatsu later led Kline to kyusho-jitsu, the art of attacking pressure points on the body, and he also began training in jujitsu and arnis with America's top teachers of the time. Now an 8th Dan with Black-belts under some of the USA's renowned pioneers of martial arts, including the late Professor Wally Jay and Guro Remy Presas, Kline was recently in Australia teaching his PinPoint Method of kyusho-jitsu. He took time out to tell *Blitz* how it works.

INTERVIEW BY STEVEN TALEVSKI & BEN STONE



Mark, what were your driving goals in martial arts in your younger years?

I really wanted to learn self-defence because I was fascinated with how a smaller person can take out a larger person. This isn't a knock on Tang Soo Do, but there were some things I found missing in all martial arts until I separated my shoulder a couple of years later. This woman who owned a martial arts supply store asked me what happened to my arm. She asked if I wanted her to do shiatsu on it. I said, yeah, okay, why not? I was sort of thinking it wasn't going to work. I was in a lot of pain and I could barely move my arm — the doctor said I was going to be out of action for six to eight weeks. Within 20 minutes of her doing what she did to my shoulder, I was able to do full shoulder rotations and the swelling had gone down. My father was a doctor and the president of the local hospital. He said, "You can't do that (to your shoulder)." I said I couldn't do it earlier, but I can do it now. He asked what I did, and I told him. Back then, massage and alternative types of therapy were still considered

quackery by doctors. My father said, "Do you think she can fix my arm — I'm having this numbing feeling in my arm." I took him over and she fixed his arm too. He didn't know what to say.

She lent me four George Dillman videos that were released in the late 1980s. He didn't do a lot, but the stuff he did made sense. It resonated with me, because I had questions about the kata. I had questions about how I was going to defeat a larger attacker. That led me to where I am right now.

What has changed since then? Being that you're now an 8th Dan, are you still doing martial arts for the same reasons?

I'm not just doing it for myself; I do it to help other people because I see a lot of good martial arts out there. I think they can be better. One of my teachers was Wally Jay [Small Circle jujitsu founder]. Wally was all about increasing people's potential and helping people get better at what they do. I trained with Wally for a long time. I was actually the first person in the world to get individual Black-belts from George Dillman, Wally Jay and

Remy Presas [Modern Arnis founder].

You just mentioned three great martial arts masters. Who have been your primary direct teachers across your career?

Early on it was George Dillman, Wally Jay and Remy Presas. I trained directly with them and I travelled all over the country with seminars every weekend. They used to call me the ever-present Mark Kline. I was always there — they couldn't get away from me.

You are an expert in kyusho-jitsu. What made that element of the martial arts so attractive to you compared to the arts you'd practised before?

Kyusho-jitsu is like a bullet: you can have one, but when it just sits there it does absolutely nothing. You need a good delivery system, so the Tang Soo Do that I learned actually helped give a good delivery system. I worked with professional boxers and professional kickboxers while working with George Dillman, Wally Jay and Remy Presas. Remy actually did stick-fighting, so learning all of that

stuff and training with them gave me a very good delivery system; without it, I would have a bunch of knowledge to talk a good game but I couldn't do anything [in combat].

I feel a lot of people could tell you every acupuncture theory under the sun. But you ask them to demonstrate a technique and they may not be able to do it. To me, I don't care what you know — show me. Talk is cheap; I'd rather see people walk the walk. It doesn't mean they have to go out and beat people up, that's not what I'm talking about. If they say, this is how it works — great, show me, teach me, I'm more than willing to learn.

How important is it to understand the fundamentals of kata when practising kyusho-jitsu?

Some people call kata the essence of karate. I believe it shows the angle and direction of how to attack the points if you know what to look for. Every single move in kata was designed to be a real self-defence technique; there are no blocks in karate. All the movements in the kata aren't blocks. Look at sports such as rugby or baseball — every sport and every different

position has different footwork. No movement is wasted or else they wouldn't be able to play; it wouldn't work right. There is nothing wrong with the movements in the kata, it is just that the interpretation of it is incorrect, I believe. The way I break down kata is every single move is designed to hurt somebody — that's how I was taught.

Why do you believe pressure-point striking is more effective than using other striking methods in martial arts?

If you are big and strong, you can punch someone in the face; you don't need pressure points. If you are a big guy, you don't need pressure points; but if you're small, you need it. If someone who is 100 kg is coming after me — I'm 5'6", 80 kg and 48 years old — for whatever reason, I need something that is different, as I can't match them with speed and strength. One thing I've realised is that my strength is different to what it was, and my speed is different to when I was younger. But I think I am a hell of a lot smarter now at getting the job done faster. So the pressure points are an equaliser because the opponent is not going to expect it, especially from somebody small.

Have you got any extreme stories of using kyusho-jitsu when you have been knocked out, or knocked out an opponent yourself?

I was talking to someone today, one of my online students. He was asking me how to do this in competition and I told him it's not for competition. When you are fighting someone who is prepared for you, this is hard to do, [but] for someone to come after you and you do it immediately, that would hopefully end the fight.

The last fight I was in was



“THE LAST FIGHT I WAS IN WAS EIGHT YEARS AGO. I TRY TO AVOID FIGHTS WHENEVER POSSIBLE. IT’S NOT WORTH IT.”

eight years ago. I try to avoid fights whenever possible. It's not worth it. That doesn't mean I back down, but there are ways to talk your way out of it. The first line of defence is your brain. The guy started to move towards me, my left hand shot out and I hit him on a point called the mental nerve, on the chin, and he passed out. I did that with my left hand and I am right-handed. I was

like, wow! I wasn't surprised that it worked, I was surprised it was my left hand that was the one that shot out; but the way I train my students is that you are to attack the closest target with the closest weapon. I am right-handed but I didn't have time to move; that's not a luxury I had at that point. I had to do what I had to do with what I had available at that moment.

There is always much debate about the value of kyusho-jitsu in 'real' situations, and many corroborated instances of people even failing to be affected by certain kyusho strikes during demonstrations. What is your response to this, and can you relay any instances where this has happened to you, and explain how you handled it?

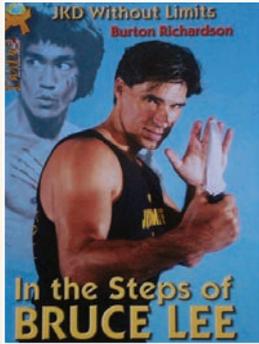
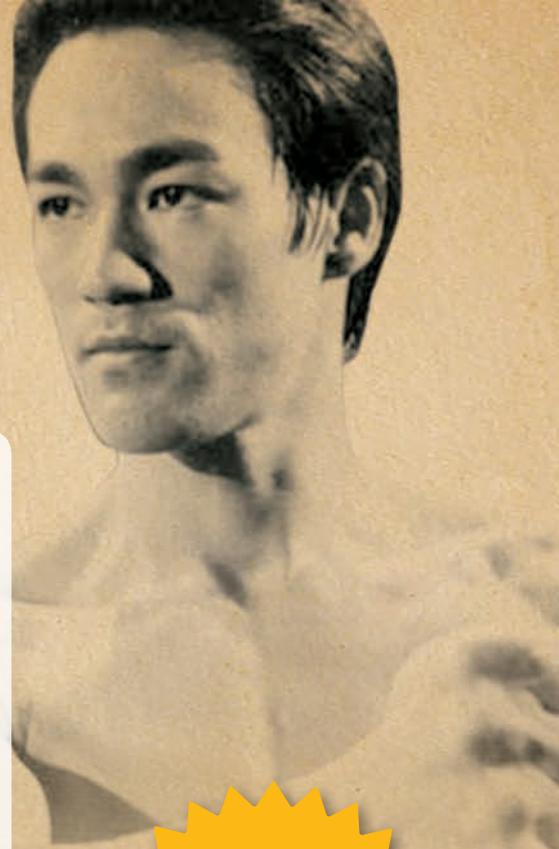
In real situations, the times I have used it, I've put the person down. The difference between a real situation and a demonstration is everybody at times fails during a demonstration, because you don't want to hurt the person. There is a different attitude and you're in a different state of mind. It's not survival in a demonstration; it's for show.

I've hit people before. I was in the Czech Republic a couple of weeks ago, teaching. A student said, "I want you to knock me out," and I asked, "Why? I'm here to teach and not just beat on you." He said all these guys knocked him out and he'd like to feel how I do it. I hit him once or twice, he goes "No, no," and finally I said, "Screw it," and I put him on his ass.

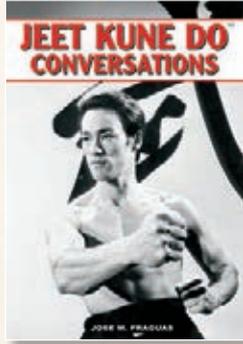
There are some people that you can just flick with your finger and they'll pass out, they're that easy; maybe because they believe wholeheartedly or it's just the way their system is set up. There are some people that you have to do it for real.

Once, a Chinese man, he was an acupuncturist, said pressure points are baby steps, they are the beginning. You need to be able to hurt or heal whatever you touch through intent and if you're going to hurt somebody, that intent has to be incredibly strong. That's what I did; I said I had no value for this [attacker's] life at this moment. You turn it on, you turn it off and then it's time for

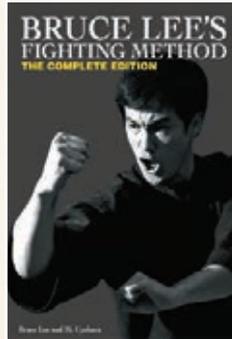
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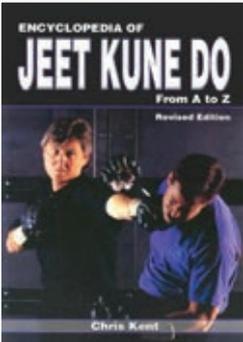
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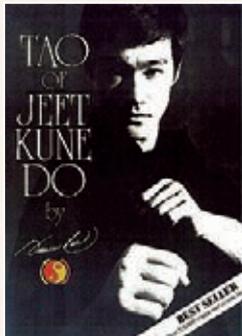
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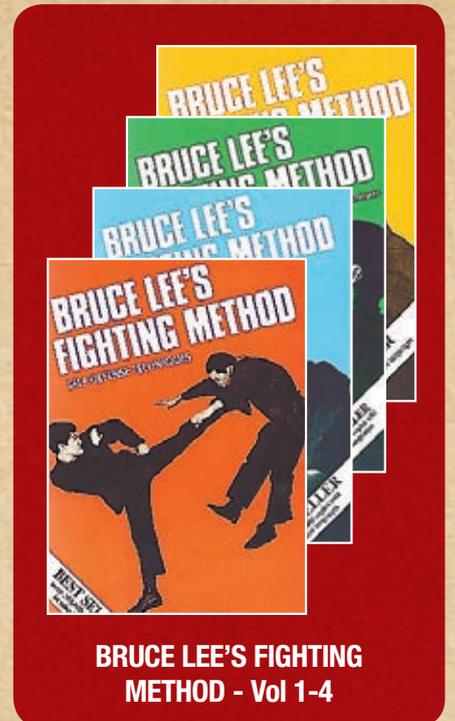
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a beer. I didn't want to do it, to tell you the truth; it takes a lot of out of me, too. In a real situation it's not fun, you have all this adrenaline going.

What do you think of those masters out there propagating the notion that you can manipulate opponents' 'chi' without even touching them, and staging demonstrations in which they knock over their willing 'followers' from metres away? Do these guys make it harder to win people over to kyusho concepts?

I was going out to teach in Oregon a couple of years ago. One guy said he used to train with Dillman; he said I was just going to knock people out [so he didn't come]. At the end of the seminar, on the way home, the seminar organiser called that guy. He said, "You missed a really great seminar." The guy asked how many people I knocked out. I didn't knock anybody out, [the organiser] said, but I taught them a ton of stuff. He gave me a really good testimonial. He goes, "I don't know what it was about when you came out here and taught this class, but I know my techniques are working better." Part of what we talked about was the intent; for example, you can't half try skydiving — you either jump out of the plane or you take a plane ride.

I've heard it said by other highly trained Kyusho International members that there are really only a handful of kyusho strikes or points that can be used with reliability in live combat (as opposed to, say, when you have a willing demonstration partner, or have already brought an

attacker into a controlled position). Is that your experience and, if so, which ones are your bread-and-butter strikes?

You can shoot somebody and they don't fall down. Even if you hit them in the centre and you miss the heart by a millimetre, they may not fall down depending on their height, weight, if they're on adrenaline, or on any drugs, etc. There is nothing that is 100 per cent. I have certain techniques that I like. I don't have one particular thing because each situation is different, but I have a certain concept or something that I follow. If a guy is taller than me, I am probably going to kick him on points on the leg to get him to bend because I understand how the body works and what reactions certain points will give me, then I'll go after the head and turn the lights off. If he puts his hands on me, I'll try small-joint manipulation [or] I'll go after his head. If it's a real situation, I am going to try to take his head out as quickly as possible. It doesn't mean I am going to kill him — I don't want to go to jail. But I am going to do what I have to do so I can walk away from that situation. I may have to deal with some of the consequences afterwards, unfortunately, but that's life.

Having practised eskrima/arnis, do you also apply kyusho within that, and, if so, what aspects of practising an art like kyusho-jitsu with weapons differ from practising without a weapon? Does it generally mean that if you use a martial art weapon, more damage or accuracy can be achieved than just with hands-on pressure-point attacks?

“IF YOU HAVE BAD TECHNIQUE TO BEGIN WITH, ADDING THE PRESSURE POINTS INTO IT IS NOT GOING TO HELP YOU.”

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