

Attacking Ju-Jitsu (Pre-emptive Techniques)

Article by Kevin O'Hagan, 6th Dan

"The Best Defence is a good offence."

"Action is faster than reaction."

"Your opponent should feel the strike, before he can see it."

All these statements are true when we address them to the reality of fighting or combat. If the martial art or fighting system you train in only concentrates on defensive action it is missing a vital element of the overall picture of effective self protection.

We can't always be ready to command the situation no matter how good a fighter we are or what belt grade we may be. If you suddenly woke from your sleep and had an intruder leaning over the bed choking you, you would have to know defensive technique.

Time to react

But some arts practice these principals to the exclusion of anything else. In fact some students believe the only time to react is when you are grabbed, choked or punched. Really, in reality this is too late. Normally the person to get the first telling blow in will win the encounter.

Any art with a little imagination and modification can bring pre-emptive and offensive technique into their practice.

Within the Ju-Jitsu system I teach I have used offensive technique for many years. The Ju-Jitsu instructors I learnt my art off stressed this element a lot. In recent years my association with the BCA under two of today's leading pioneers of modern self protection has endorsed what I have been doing.

Most Ju-Jitsu systems teach a lot of counter technique, very few teach pre-emptive Ju-Jitsu technique, it is basically an art of defence.

I believe, though, the original systems of Ju-Jitsu had a lot of pre-emptive moves. I don't think a fearsome warrior clan like the Samurai who used the art, would be waiting around on the battlefield for someone to attack them. Their sword and knife work was offensive, so I believe their un-armed combat was as well.

Too many martial arts are pigeon-holed into certain categories, Ju-Jitsu being 'grappling'. But there are many systems of Ju-Jitsu emphasising different elements of combat. Some will do predominantly floor grappling (like the Gracies), others will do a lot of throwing and locks, others concentrate on Atemi (striking) others blend it all, some styles soft, some hard.

It's like saying Karate is just punching and kicking, that's too limited. Karate translates as 'empty hand' that can mean anything, it could describe 'Western boxing'. Ju-Jitsu is a myriad of armed and un-armed close quarter combat with Chinese, Okwinan and Japanese influences. The art will be practised the way the individual instructor sees it.

I believe in pre-emptive Ju-Jitsu technique as being an essential part of my art.

For most people, who are used to dropping into fighting stances and raising their fists, it is hard to adapt to hardly any stance, relaxed posture, verbal disarmament and non-aggressive hand gesturing.

All these elements prepare you for a sudden, explosive and aggressive offensive technique that will take an opponent down and out before they realise what's hit them. You have to train this concept constantly with a partner and by yourself in a mirror.

Check you don't give anything away in your face or body posture. Make sure your opponent can not detect any sudden movement or element of body language which will give the game away and let them know you are about to attack.

When you do "blitz" them with rapid and aggressive technique, a noted USA based self protection instructor calls it 'Pearl Harboring' the attacker. So how can you adapt Ju-Jitsu into the offensive arena?

Here are a few ideas, they are by no means exhaustive and they are flexible enough to swap and change to the individual's needs.

Sample 1: Defend your personal space by talking. I might choose to spread my hands in an open gesture and say "I don't want any trouble with you pal, look at the size of you"! This feeds his ego and makes him feel superior, now he'll never see the move coming until it hits him! Suddenly slap your open palms over his eardrums in a cupped fashion, close in, grab the ears, pull him into a head butt in the face and a rapid fire knee to the groin, twist his head by the ears into a combat takedown. When down, kneel on him and smash back of his head into the floor, finish with a stomp or knee drop if needed.

Guard your space

Sample 2: This time guard your personal space with your lead hand lightly and non-aggressively, verbally set up then explode with a fore-knuckle blow into opponent's windpipe. While gagging for breath, push/pull their shoulders to spin them around and clamp on a headlock and strangle to finish.

Sample 3: Follow previous instruction but this time step in slightly and fire a head butt into the assailant's face, drop low and take a double leg tackle throw to drop them on their back. Kneedrop to the groin and finish with a hand strike to the face, or alternatively apply one of the many Ju-Jitsu leg locks to finish.

Sample 4: If you have distance, look into their eyes as you talk to them, then shoot a front kick into the shin bone. Rapidly close the gap, drive a hard claw hand into the windpipe, grab it tight and step up for an outer hock throw (leg reap, o-soto-gari).

These are just a few ideas. With knowledge, experimentation and will to learn, you can adapt, and execute some very powerful Ju-Jitsu techniques in an offensive manner.

Because a lot of the early Ju-Jitsu I learnt was more military and combat based, offensive technique was of prime importance in neutralising an enemy. A lot of these moves can still be applied in civilian self defence on the streets.

The stick and knife fighting of the Ju-Jitsu I teach can also be applied pre-emptively in a devastating manner. It's only limited by the imagination.

I feel it is every instructor's duty to continually research and experiment to improve and seek new ways and move their art with the times. Using pre-emptive and offensive technique is essential for today and the future. My thanks to the people who introduced it to me. For those yet to experience it, start right away.