



The Roundhouse: Headlines from Around the Do-jang.

We've received so much positive response to our first edition of **The Roundhouse** that we couldn't wait to send out another one. The Bruce Lee anecdote below is particularly relevant to our current goal at Duvall TKD: improving student sparring. We recommend you use the information as a means for further discussion with our instructors, so you can apply the concepts to your own training in Traditional Taekwon-Do.

Raising the bar.

We're always trying to encourage students to push themselves. If you tell Mr. Bailey that you can't do something, his reply will be "yet." A "can do" attitude is essential to bettering your Taekwon-Do skills. So ask yourself: If you are talking during your sparring matches, how focused are you? How is this conversation you are putting in place of your sparring helping to improve you as a student of Taekwon-Do? Is there more danger for someone to get hurt by your diminished focus? While you're contemplating the answers, take a few minutes to read the following true story taken from *Zen in the Martial Arts* by Joe Hyams. It provides Bruce Lee's perspective on the importance of being completely focused during sparring matches. We hope you will take this message to heart and try to bring a new commitment and focused energy to your own sparring.

Tighten Your Mind.

The author Joe Hyams describes a sparring match where he was trying to put into practice some of the Jeet-Kune-Do techniques Bruce Lee had taught him. Joe says, "I was so concerned with demonstrating to Bruce how much I had learned that my focus was scattered. I had been trying to anticipate my opponent's moves rather than respond to them; I was concerned with my footwork instead of letting my training lead me naturally to the right position. I was concerned with everything but the immediate objective – to get in and score."

Sure, if you're competing at a tournament, you should be thinking about how you're going to score points on your opponent. However, in class, we'd like you to tackle your own personal sparring goals. Personal goals can be both artistic and physical. Maybe something as broad as scoring with a jumping kick during any one match for that evening. Other times, it might be a particular goal when you spar certain individuals. Mr. Crouch describes how Mr. Bailey often scores on him with an "out of nowhere" roundhouse kick to the small of the back. Mr. Crouch then set a goal for many months to try and not let that happen. Mr. Crouch humbly admits he was not always successful, but he made improvements in what he was doing. So can you.

Joe goes on to describe Bruce Lee's reaction to his scattered sparring attempts. "All right, that's enough!" shouted Bruce. "You move like elephants, kick like draft-horses, and telegraph your punches like Samuel Morse." Bruce then turned his attention to Joe and said, "You are thinking about blocking the punch rather than intercepting his fist and landing one yourself. I don't know where your mind is, but it's not where it belongs. You should be concerned with keeping so much pressure on your opponent that you mess up his footwork, balance, and ability to move. And look at how exhausted you are; yet you accomplished nothing. How many times have I told you to concentrate all the energy of the body and mind on one specific target or goal at a time?"

The other problem with being unfocused during sparring matches is that it increases the chances of someone getting hurt. If you are distracted while you are sparring, you can't control your techniques as well, which puts your partner at risk. You also can't react as quickly to your partner's moves, which puts you at risk. Either way, it is unsafe. That's why one of the rules outlined in our Student Handbook states: "There should be no unnecessary talking during the workout."

The story continues with Bruce taking Joe aside for a private chat. "A good martial artist puts his mind on one thing at a time." explains Bruce. "Because his mind is tight, he is calm and able to maintain strength in reserve. And then there will be room for only one thought, which will fill his entire being as water fills a pitcher. You wasted an enormous amount of energy because you did not localize and focus your mind." In conclusion, Bruce adds this final thought: "Always remember: in life as well as on the mat an unfocused or 'loose' mind wastes energy."

As instructors, we often hear students say that they do not like "competing" against other students because it makes them uncomfortable. Our answer is simple: use the opportunity to compete against yourself. Set personal goals. Stay mentally focused. Just like a hyung, make adjustments, incorporate new ideas or techniques that you learn during drills, and utilize any feedback you get from others to raise your own bar.