

# WINNING TOURNAMENT FIGHTING

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In past articles, I've written about the importance of developing a strategy (plan of attack) before entering the ring in a tournament. I've only known one fighter who was successful at fighting on basic instinct alone and that was Bobby Tucker from Greenville, South Carolina. Because of Bobby's speed, he could adjust at the right moment to an attack and then counter with incredible accuracy using a variety of techniques. Most of us including myself, find it difficult to fight this way and need to rely on a conscious game plan to defeat our opponents.

Your game plan for a fight should depend on two factors. One: your fighting skills and two, your oppo-

nent's skills. In other words, it's very difficult to recommend, for example, attacking first when you might be up against someone who towers over you or is basically a superior technician. For you to just attack could be a major mistake, especially if you are fighting someone who is categorized as a defensive fighter. They're counting on your attack, in order to score their defensive techniques. So how do you develop a game plan especially if you have never seen your opponent fight before?

First, developing a strong defense will enable you to pick and choose your plan of attack. I'm not saying become a defensive fighter, but make sure your defensive skills are as good as they can be. Joe Lewis influenced my style of fighting after I attended his seminars in the early 70's. Before working with Joe, I had

good technical skills, but really no clue in the world on how to set up my opponents. I simply relied on attempting to beat my opponent to the punch or kick. The first thing I learned from Lewis was movement. No longer did I have to stand in the path of my opponent's charge, but instead, I could use a variety of different evasive directions to avoid an attack. I knew I could avoid being scored on because of my lateral and circular movements. I could pick and choose my time of attack.

The second lesson I picked up from Lewis was how to break up the rhythm of a fighter by not letting him/her relax and get in their "set" mode. A fighter basically sets, by establishing a planted position where he/she is poised for attack. Fakes and movement will effectively keep your opponent from getting comfortable and confident in the set position.

With this knowledge, you should be at an advantage over your opponent before the first punch or kick has been thrown. You can move smoothly to avoid attacks and you can break the rhythm of your opponent with effective fakes. Now, you begin to analyze your opponent's response off your faking attacks. When you faked your attack, did he respond with his front leg or did he react with his hands. Subconsciously, a fighter will react with their strongest weapon. For example, if when I'm fighting someone and after faking an attack, he reacts with a defensive side kick, then basically I know I'm fighting a kicker and can use this knowledge. If you fake effectively and your opponent reacts with a backfist or a reverse punch, then most of the time you're up against a puncher.

Once in a while, you will run up on someone who is equally proficient with hands and feet. I've seen many a versatile fighter, but most of the time they will lean one way or the other regardless of what they say or think. I especially love to fight a puncher who doesn't think he's in actuality a puncher. A fighter reacts best when the move is an instinctive reaction versus a con-

scious one. So if a natural hands technician attempts to stop my back fist with a kick, he is at a disadvantage most of the time because he is having to consciously tell his brain to pick up his leg in order to defend the move. I believe all of us at one time or another have thrown a technique without even thinking. That's because after years of practice, that particular technique becomes instinctive and reflexive. So, do your best to attack your opponents weakness, not their strengths.

Now, your defense is strong because of movement, you're breaking the rhythm of our opponent with fakes and you have determined if he is a kicker or puncher. You're starting to see how to establish a strategy.

Next month, I will go over strategies on how to handle punchers and kickers. **KI**

# STRATEGIES

