

TAE KWON DO

throws

Which Are Better?

The thought of takedown techniques usually brings to mind judo or *jujitsu*, martial arts which feature a sophisticated array of throws and sweeps. One might assume, then, that any other system which includes throwing techniques is probably using an adaptation of judo or *jujitsu* principles.

Not necessarily. The Korean art *tae kwon do*, noted for its kicking techniques, also includes principles which can lead to applications for sweeps and throws. The concepts of focus, a balanced stance, and power are fundamental to the effectiveness of *tae kwon do* kicks, punches and blocks. When these and other *tae kwon do* principles are applied to throws, they create safe, strong and effective techniques that are a natural extension of the Korean style. Judo and *jujitsu* throws, while similar to *tae kwon do* throwing techniques in some ways, address the opponent from another orientation.

Throwing Principles

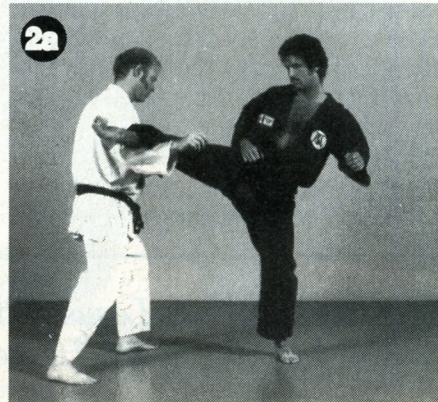
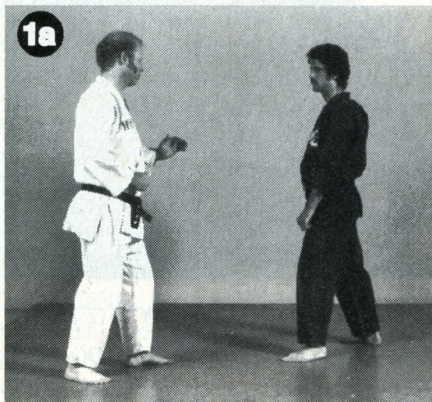
Tae kwon do throws incorporate the use of striking power to unbalance an opponent. A sharp, quick strike to the back of the opponent's leg can disrupt his stance. A well-timed, focused block to the opponent's kick can also cause him to lose his balance. Hard strikes to the chest, legs and arms are also typical opening techniques for a *tae kwon do* takedown. These takedown methods are natural expressions of *tae kwon do*.

Jujitsu practitioners, conversely, tend to approach a takedown differently. The initial contact is intended to "loosen up" the opponent. According to Los Angeles-based *jujitsu* instructor George Kirby, an elbow strike, nerve attack, or a punch can all be used to distract an opponent for a takedown. Unlike *tae kwon do*, in which kicks and punches are usually the primary techniques, *jujitsu* and judo generally employ kicks and punches as secondary actions. They are a means to accomplish the objective: throwing and grappling.

Judo stylists prefer to evade and yield with the opponent's attacking force, reduce the power of his attack, and break his balance to allow him the opportunity to fall. Judo founder Jigoro Kano called this principle "winning by losing." Judo and *jujitsu* practitioners seek the most efficient use of energy. To expend too



Photo by Jim Coleman



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by Alex Simpkins, Ph.D. and Annellen Simpkins, Ph.D.

much force is to waste energy; better to borrow it from the opponent.

Tae kwon do stylists believe strongly in the value of their stances, which allow them to deliver powerful, focused techniques. The TKD practitioner is instinctively aware of his center of gravity after years of training, and controls its careful placement and use in techniques. The front, back, and horse stances place the practitioner's weight differently to mobilize force and defend openings. The stylist's weight is rarely evenly distributed on both feet. Stances and correct posture are designed to ensure that the TKD exponent's center of gravity is properly maintained. The practitioner can push, pull or strike to unbalance his opponent, yet retain a carefully balanced position himself.

Like tae kwon do stylists, jujitsu practitioners attempt to maintain a central balance in a stance so that, if necessary, combinations of throws can be performed with a quick pivot or shift. However, the stance is natural: either a modified back stance with the weight evenly distributed on both feet, or a ready stance

with the feet shoulder-width apart and the toes turned outward.

Tae kwon do throws utilize the principles of leverage and body angling. A takedown sweep might be delivered at a 45-degree angle, even though the practitioner advances straight in. The opponent is caught in the center of intersecting forces, causing him to lose his balance. Hip and waist muscles—a common source of force in many TKD techniques—generate power for the movements. This extension of force is balanced by a reaction from the other side: the hips are twisted and the opposite hand is pulled back to exert a counterforce from punches and blocks. Tae kwon do's kicks also display this characteristic balancing of force.

Jujitsu stylists use a different principle in throwing motions: that of the circle. This permits a graceful follow-through that utilizes gravity to lend force to the throw. Angular body positioning impedes smooth technique in jujitsu. Force is only applied once the opponent's balance is disrupted, ideally through yielding, flexibility and speed. As the "art of

gentleness," jujitsu's power and strength are de-emphasized in favor of graceful flow and circularity. This gives a different character to the encounter. Even in *randori*, judo's equivalent of sparring, the opponent's attacking force is subtracted as his balance is disrupted.

Foot Sweeps

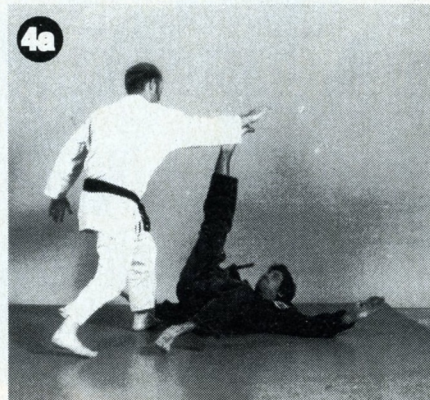
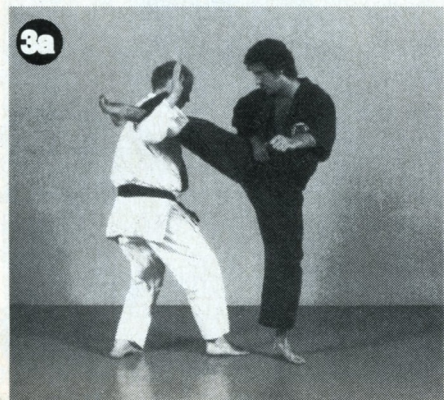
A basic technique used in tae kwon do forms and sparring is the leg sweep. In this technique, the bottom of the foot is used to strike the opponent's leg in conjunction with a double-hand strike. The opponent's balance is broken through an explosion of power and speed, focused against pressure points. The sweep can be performed against the back of the opponent's knee, the calf, or at the back of his foot, sending him a sudden jab of pain as he loses his balance. The TKD stylist quickly follows with an elbow or double-handed strike which pushes the opponent backward and sends him helplessly down.

Another way in which tae kwon do stylists apply a foot sweep is to step forward and hook a leg behind the opponent's knee, then pull back while both hands push forward, breaking his balance. The foot is not used to strike in this instance, as it is in the first application. Instead, the opponent's leg is trapped and scooped. Both sweeps are applied quickly and with focus. The fulcrum is the point of contact at the leg.

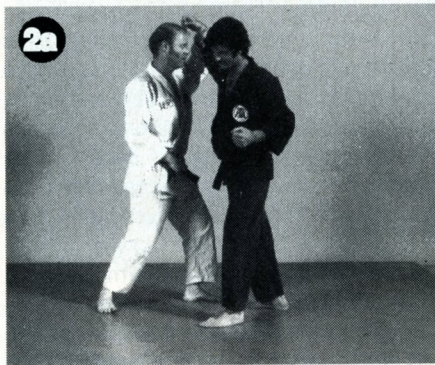
Jujitsu's outer rear sweeping throw begins with the defender blocking an incoming punch with an upward block. The jujitsu stylist then moves closer on the outside, sweeping the attacker from behind while grabbing the opponent's lapels and pulling. The jujitsu styl-

When defending against an opponent's kick and setting up for a throw, the tae kwon do stylist remains in one stance and first deflects (1) the kick, then employs (2) a strong, upward scoop to unbalance the opponent. Jujitsu stylists, conversely, use soft force and stepping motions when hooking a kick. The jujitsu practitioner faces (1a) his foe, then sidesteps and scoops (2a) the kick. The jujitsu stylist steps forward and raises (3a) his opponent's leg and forces the attacker over (4a) with simple body dynamics.

Photos courtesy of Dr. Annellen Simpkins



When faced with a punching attack, the tae kwon do stylist can initiate a sweep by first blocking (1) the blow and then delivering (2) a sudden scooping crescent kick to the back of the opponent's leg, upsetting his balance. The TKD fighter follows up with a double high/low punching technique (3) combined with a leg attack (4) that sends the assailant to the ground. In the jujitsu version of this takedown, the jujitsu stylist blocks (1a) the punch and steps forward (2a), moving past the opponent and grabbing (3a) his collar. The jujitsu man places a leg behind his foe and pushes him backward, sweeping (4a) the leg and finishing (5a) with a knee smash.



ist leans forward as the opponent falls to protect his own balance. The tae kwon do practitioner, conversely, would use hip force to drop the opponent. The TKD stylist would deepen his stance, but rarely leans forward.

Although the preceding takedown is very similar in both styles, the execution and philosophy differ, producing a distinctly different kind of fall for the opponent. The TKD throw is angular, focused, and explosive; the jujitsu throw is rounded, softer, and carefully timed to take advantage of the opponent's shifts in balance. In both cases, gravity does the work.

outside. The jujitsu stylist initiates the sweep by grabbing his opponent's clothing.

Jujitsu also uses the hands for takedowns. The opponent's leg is held firmly at the back of his ankle with the left hand. The jujitsu stylist's right forearm pushes simultaneously against the opponent's kneecap from the front to straighten his knee. The front of the jujitsu's practitioner's chest is at right angles to the direction the opponent faces to add pressure to the hold. The fulcrum for the takedown is the opponent's extended foot.

The jujitsu practitioner moves in close to

his opponent during the hand throw in order to alter his adversary's balance. Pressure from the jujitsu stylist's weight and leverage brings down the opponent. The tae kwon do practitioner, by contrast, maintains some distance from his opponent. He sweeps his adversary's leg with a blow to the back of the knee, upsetting his foe's stance. As with any good TKD technique, hip twist and focus are applied in the throw.

The tae kwon do stylist has many opportunities to unbalance an opponent who kicks. Intermediate forms *pyong-an* two and *won-*

Hand Sweeps

The hands play a key role in tae kwon do throws. When an opponent throws a high punch, the TKD stylist steps back to block. He drops to one knee and delivers simultaneous knife-hand strikes to the opponent's chest and back of the leg. Once his opponent is on the ground, the TKD practitioner will usually throw a single, strong punch or kick to end the encounter. Grappling on the ground is not emphasized in tae kwon do, although the potential is there in TKD forms and techniques. However, kicks, punches and blocks from a safe fighting distance are preferred in tae kwon do whenever possible.

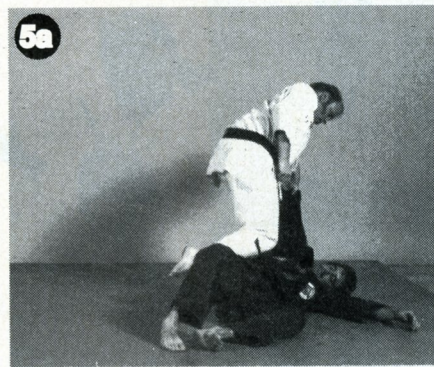
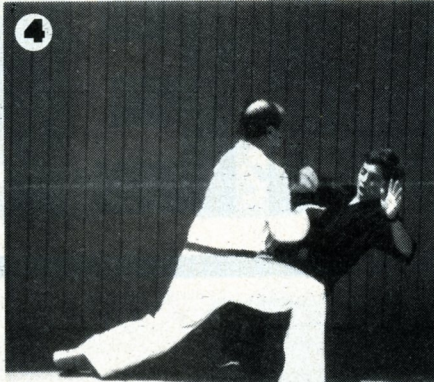
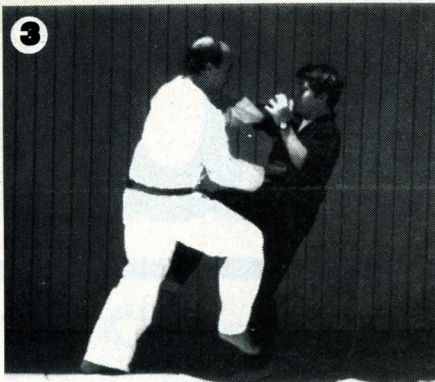
A comparable hand throw is used in jujitsu, but is performed differently. *Kibisu-gaeshi* uses the hand to sweep the opponent's leg from inside and behind, whereas TKD practitioner usually attempts to come in from the

A padded stick (right) makes a great training aid when practicing sweeping techniques. For added difficulty, a partner can move the stick in different directions, and also raise and lower it.



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hyo include a circular block performed in front stance off the back leg. This motion can be applied against an opponent's leg as his kick comes in. A lower scooping block pushes the kick aside, then the TKD practitioner scoops upward with his block, catching the opponent's kicking leg as he pulls up sharply. This maneuver will unceremoniously dump the opponent on the ground. Jujitsu has a similar move in the leg lift throw. The practitioner steps forward and uses his body motion for the throw, unlike the focused upward scoop maneuver of tae kwon do.

Lesser-Known Tae Kwon Do Throws

Tae kwon do's black belt-level forms *yun-bee* and *sam-il* contain a hidden throw which can be very effective against a charging opponent. The move looks like a double palm strike followed by a spinning jump. However, these moves can also train the practitioner for a specialized throw. As the opponent moves forward with a lunging punch, the TKD practitioner assumes a right front stance and performs a pole block with the left hand below the right. The lower hand slides under the opponent, through his legs and behind him, while the upper hand grabs him around the neck. He is lifted and turned counterclockwise as the TKD stylist pivots 180 degrees and throws the opponent onto his back. Hip twist and the leg spring powers the pivot. This technique can be a surprising and dynamic defense against a wild attacker.

A jujitsu equivalent to this throw is *kata-guruma*, which requires the jujitsu stylist to first break the opponent's balance with a grab. As the opponent falls forward, the jujitsu practitioner's right hand moves under

the opponent's thigh and places him on the defender's shoulder before dropping him to the other side. Unlike the tae kwon do throw, a pivot is not used in the jujitsu technique. Instead, the jujitsu stylist shifts his balance from one side to the other, but does not move his feet.

The tae kwon do forms *ul-ji* and *jion* contain another hidden throw. As the opponent punches from the side, the TKD stylist steps behind his adversary's front leg and places his own leg against the back of the opponent's knee, pushing his punching arm across the opponent's neck and pulling the lapels of the attacker's jacket or shirt. This maneuver sets up three points of contact and good leverage for the takedown. Jujitsu, on the other hand, has an arm lever and backward trip similar to the TKD takedown, but the arm thrusts across the opponent's chest to create leverage in two places: the leg and chest.

Falling and Partner Practice

Practice is paramount to successful throwing techniques, but before training, be sure that both you and your partner are skilled at the four main falls: forward, backward, and to the sides. Some throws do not need to be practiced with the fall every time. Twists and turns of the joints must be done with care and gentleness. Just a small amount of misplaced force can cause a sudden injury.

Stance Unbalancing

Sweeps and throws require that the practitioner unbalance his opponent. In jujitsu, there is usually a preliminary tug or pull to break the opponent's balance. But in tae kwon do, a kick or punch often precedes the

throw to upset the opponent's stance. The following exercise helps TKD practitioners learn this skill.

Face a partner who stands in a front stance and push him at the shoulders. If he is in a good front stance, you cannot easily unbalance him. Now pull him forward and he will lose his balance more easily. If you push the shoulder from the side, the stance has some strength, but less than when pushing from front to back. Now pull and see how he reacts. A third possibility is to rotate his shoulders, causing him to twist. At a certain point, he will lose his balance.

Because tae kwon do often uses the legs to unbalance an opponent, this exercise should be repeated using your foot to push and pull at the opponent's front and back leg. Feel which foot is easier to unbalance when the opponent is in a front stance, back stance, horse stance, or cat stance. Note the effects of force applied in the various directions. Experiment with all the stances until you can feel your partner's balance. You will begin to develop an instinctive sense for when he is losing his balance and when he is not, as well as when and how to best initiate your throw.

Training Stick

Sweeps can be practiced against a padded blocking stick to develop accuracy and speed without stress to your partner. As your partner extends the stick low, you move in and sweep it aside with your leg. Experiment with different angles and use different parts of your leg to hook or sweep.

For a more advanced drill, have your partner move the stick in and out, back and forth, as you attempt to sweep or hook. Your partner can also hold the stick at higher levels, allowing you to experiment with twists, grabs and pulls. Try to strike the stick in one direction, then follow with a quick grab and pull. Once you can perform these exercises easily, your partner can move the stick in varied patterns and rhythms for added difficulty.

Throwing techniques utilize principles of physics and mechanics, regardless of whether the throws come from judo, jujitsu or tae kwon do. However, each art uses different applications of force and leverage, giving each its own unique character even in seemingly similar types of throws. By comparing his style's throwing techniques with those of other arts, the serious martial artist can make new and meaningful discoveries which will add to the evolution of his own capabilities. The past need not be a boundary to limit potential, but can instead serve as a springboard to the frontiers of the future. ✕

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