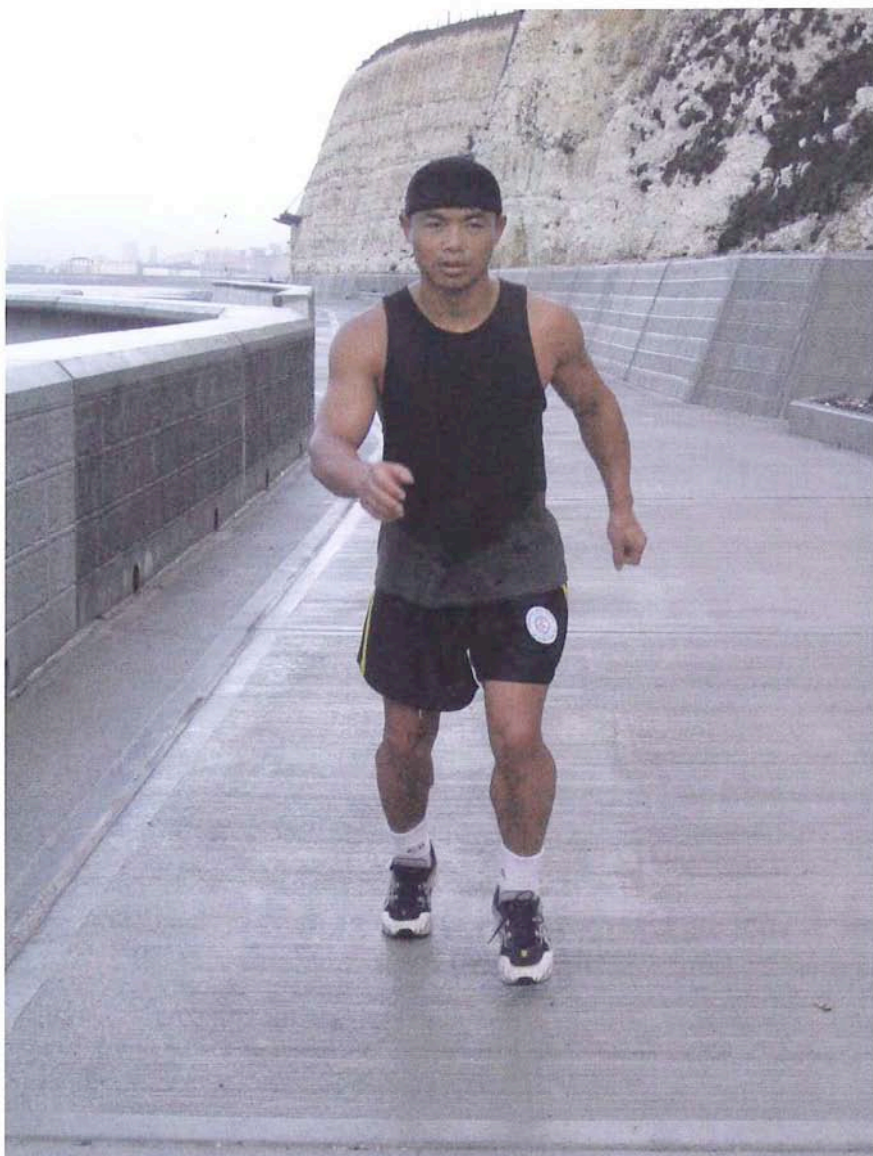


SHAOLIN TEMPLE FIGHTING SKILLS

by Shifu Yan Lei



SHAOLIN STAMINA TRAINING

When you are training for a fight, it is vitally important that you build up your stamina. A marathon runner has very good stamina but they would never have the stamina to fight in the ring because a fighter's stamina is totally different. In this article I will concentrate on the first part of a fighter's stamina training; running. In future articles I will concentrate on bag work, pad work, sparring and body conditioning so that whatever fighting art you practice you can be totally confident that your stamina will really work for you when you go to fight in the ring.

RUNNING WITH YOUR OPPONENT

As a fighter you need to vary the way that you run, some days do a short thirty minute aerobic road run, other days do some hill running. Sprint running is also very important, do ten repetitions of 100 or 200 metres twice a week. Other times you should start with a five minutes slow run then one minute slightly faster then four minutes slightly faster again then back to one minute slow again. Continue this three or four times, but start to change the way you run, use footwork, bigger steps, run backwards and then forwards, pretend that you are dodging an opponent, but keep an eye

on your stopwatch - 5 - 1 - 4 - 1. Control your breathing. When you want to give up, keep reminding yourself that this strong stamina training is excellent training for the ring, imagine your opponent is here, don't let him or her beat you, you have to make yourself as strong as you can be.

A journey of a thousand miles

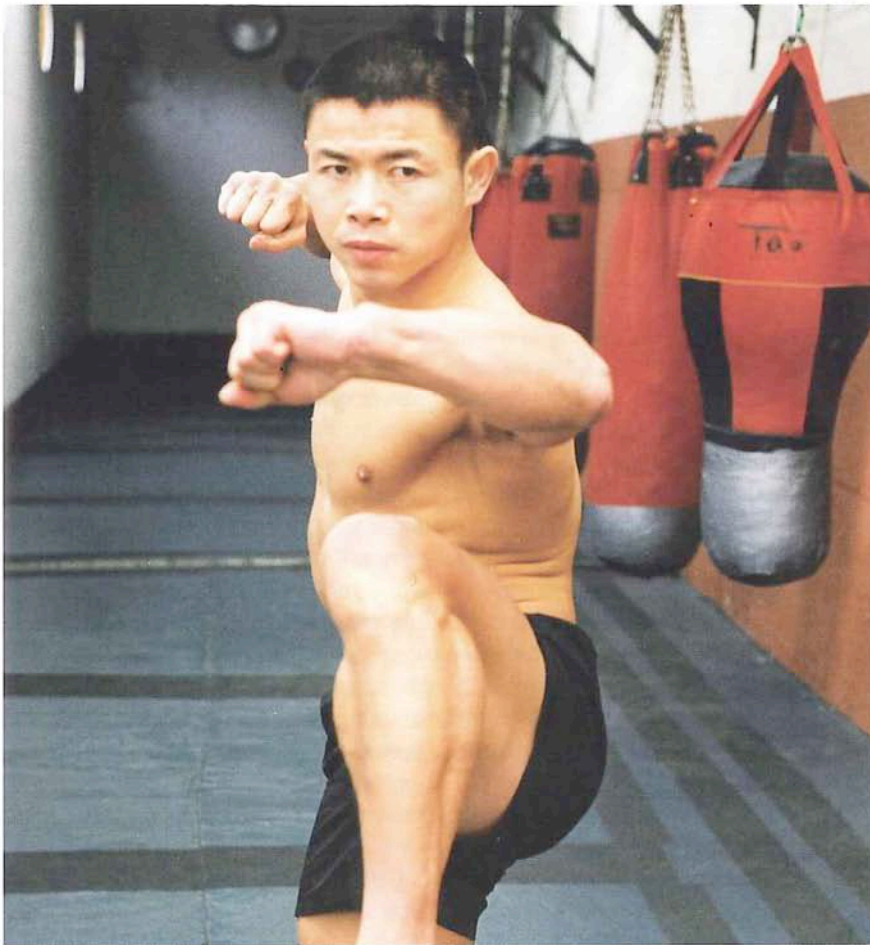
Keep reinvigorating your mind with positive thoughts. Don't think about the pain or tiredness you are feeling and don't think about the whole training that lies ahead of you, just focus on this one single step, concentrate on your pacing, your technique, and on doing this one step the best you can.

Remember the famous Tao saying - "A journey of a thousand miles begins with a footstep." This rings just as true with training as it does with life. And focusing on that one footstep makes a huge difference when you are training. We are so used to our mind going everywhere and being very busy, it is a bad habit that we have got into it, but be strict with your mind, train it to keep coming back, keep coming back to this one step, this one step, and before you know it you have completed your run.

Making friends with the enemy

An important factor to remember when you are doing this training is to keep relaxing your body and letting go of the fatigue. If your muscles start to tense up, find a way to use your mind to relax them, you could use a visualisation technique, for example imagining your muscles are like ice and they are being melted by the sun or another way of dealing with the fatigue is by detaching yourself from yourself, and checking yourself from outside; how are you doing? What do you look like? Find the technique that works for you. Tiredness is something you will have to conquer on a daily basis, so instead of it being an enemy, you may as well make it your friend.

Kung Fu Journey



In my DVD 'Kung Fu Journey', my director Marek Budzinski, insisted on showing what the training was really like on a typical day for a Shaolin disciple. Many people have dreams of being good at fighting or kung fu, but he wanted this DVD not to be like an advert but to show the real grit and hard slog of my training. One morning I went for my usual run at 5.30 am, and there he was with his film crew, filming me running up Parliament Hill in London. While I ran back to the temple, they raced back in their car and were waiting for me in the training hall. Marek wanted to show real exertion and sweat so the viewer could get a feel for the training. And since watching this DVD, a lot of people have emailed and asked me why I use this weighted jacket when I run and how much it weighs.

Kung Fu Flying

It is 20 kg, and, as you can imagine, it makes running very difficult. When I take it off my body feels so light I feel like I can fly. I then start to do kicks or punches and they are much faster because I have been weighed down

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with this jacket. It is similar to runners training in higher altitudes, when they come back to a normal altitude it is much easier for them.

The reason they do this is to make the training physically harder than the competition. You need to make your training hard, as hard as you can. But find a coach or teacher so that you are pacing yourself properly. You must only use a weighted jacket when your stamina is at a certain level. This level of training is certainly not for beginners; if your body is not strong enough it can put too much strain on your muscles and potentially

damage your joints.

THE IMPORTANCE OF RUNNING

I do this training five days a week and have done since I was fourteen years old. This kind of stamina training is very simple, hard, and boring but I can't emphasise enough how important it is. Can you imagine if your kicking was like your sprint running? No one would be able to block your kicks. I've seen fighters do a lot of pad work and bag work but they never run and when they are kicked their legs can't take it. As well as building your stamina, it also makes your legs very strong.

Never press the snooze button

This kind of training is the so-called 'secret' behind the Shaolin martial arts, but I think it is the 'secret' of success. Hard work and perseverance, training through boredom, injury, and tiredness, put your clock on the other side of the bedroom so you can't reach the snooze button and as soon as you hear the bell, don't think, and get up immediately. Remind yourself why you are doing this training; re-affirm your belief in yourself.

Those who lack belief in themselves will not in turn be believed

I will give you another quote from the Tao; 'Those who lack belief in themselves will not in turn be believed.' Believe in yourself. Don't put limits on yourself. You can achieve much more than you think. And each day do a little bit more and a little bit more, remember don't think of the journey, just take the steps, and take the steps, and before you know it you will be there.

Shifu Yan Lei is a 34th generation fighting disciple from the Shaolin Temple in China. He specialises in Shaolin Steel Jacket, Bone Marrow Cleansing Qi Gong, Sanshou Fighting, and other forms of Shaolin Gong Fu. He teaches private lessons in the London and Brighton area. He has produced a series of teaching DVD's, one of which 'Shaolin Warrior: Kung Fu Journey' was a top twenty martial arts bestseller on Amazon.

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