



FOCUSED “SHORT CLASS” ENTRY & SPARRING

THE PROBLEM

Compared to their SCA companions, SSG combatants get relatively little “helmet time” or sparring, because the one practice per week focuses on training and skill development. An SCA person at practice might get 2-3 hours of sparring time and 20-30 minutes of instruction, by contrast.

But we know from kinesthetic research within the “expert performance” school that the kind of focused practice, and the random nature of sparring, helps to more rapidly integrate kinesiological learning. In 2013-14, we experimented with a short format, just 90 minutes, for our second weekly class. It was intended as an intermediate, fully geared up, intensive session. I noticed substantial and rapid improvement in core skills, integration and in sparring effectiveness as a result.

PURPOSE

Our objectives were to find an emphasis class structure that:

- 1) exercised the integration of core skills;
- 2) was compact enough to make a second weekly practice efficient and not too much of a drain on family or work commitments;
- 3) gave the opportunity and reinforced the value of focused sparring.

Few students can devote a second 3-hour block, so we wanted to find a way to get serious work done in just 60-90 minutes, like any other gym-style workout.

OVERVIEW

60-90 minutes of hard training to maximize “entries,” the first few blows of a fight that should resolve it in most cases. We wanted to give hundreds of opportunities to respond within that time block, and work on specific skills identified as on the weaker end of the spectrum for any given group of students.

The solution is “no hats off” workout, almost a Cross-fit like approach, fully geared up and intensive, then break, little chat, and off to home or back to work/study. No instruction, only minimal coaching. We used one or two core techniques per night: volte, finding the point, prese, etc. with LOTS of repetition in harness under quasi-random basis, then 20-30 minutes of sparring.

The key was to have VERY LITTLE chat, visiting, talking about politics, etc., JUST an hour or so of heavy kinesethic drills followed by 20-30 minutes of sparring. Very short breaks. Make it brutal!

It worked – the students had several hundred opportunities to respond and exercise a given set of technical skills within a short time block. Jesse, Bianca, Colin and Scot were primary beneficiaries, and the results shined in their improved sparring abilities. Highly recommended as a second “intermediate” or advanced mini-class. It can be easily done outside.

BRIAN R. PRICE
Co-Founder, SSG



SSG Honolulu is a branch of the Schola Saint George, an international “chivalric” school of martial arts, and a Federal 501(c).3 non-profit that teaches about chivalic culture and martial history through training, research, and sponsoring of medieval-style feats of arms. Meet us through Facebook or see our practice schedule on Meetup!