



On the mat

The Power Pole

Try this kung fu exercise to develop strength and power for blocks and strikes.

THE TRAINER

Danilo (Danny) Hajdukovic has been practising martial arts since 1978. Over the years, he has trained with some of Australia's most influential martial artists and considers himself fortunate to have been inspired and mentored by experts in various martial disciplines such as Wing Chun, taekwondo, karate, Choy Lay Fut, Hung Gar, Western boxing and grappling, to name a few.

Danny now runs an Australian branch of Practical Wing Chun

Kung Fu in Canberra and is accredited to the level of sifu (teacher) directly under Grandmaster Wan Kam Leung in Hong Kong.

THE DRILL

This conditioning drill utilises the Wing Chun long pole and is easily adapted by anyone who seeks to develop real-world power and chi kung (internal energy). There's particular emphasis on shoulder development, which leads to immense power in your punches.

If you don't have a Wing Chun pole, simply buy a wooden pole from a hardware store. Standard dimensions are 3m long and 50mm thick, but you should select one of a length and weight suitable to your current level of fitness and strength.

To begin the drill, stand with your feet shoulder-width apart, knees slightly bent and shoulders square-on. Relax and allow just enough muscular tension to keep your body in position.

Touch the tip of your tongue against the roof of your mouth, just behind, but not touching your upper teeth, and breathe through your nose. Keep your back and neck aligned and as straight as possible.

SEQUENCE #1:

Begin with your body squared on, with the pole going out to either your left or right. Place your hands on the pole at shoulder-width apart (see photo, far left), with the hand that supports the base of the pole in an overhand grip and your hand at the long end in an underhand grip. Using a dumbbell-curl motion, lift the pole so that your hands are in close and level with your shoulders (do not lift the elbows). Keep your hands and the pole parallel to the floor throughout the drill.

- 1) Thrust the pole forward, keeping your hands parallel and rotating the wrists to accommodate, exhaling as you go. (Note: exhale with all forward/downward thrusts and inhale with all retractions and upwards thrusts.)
- 2) Retract the pole in the same manner to the starting position, this time inhaling.
- 3) Thrust the pole directly downward in the same manner and retract again to the starting position. Keep repeating this sequence and make sure to drill both left and right sides.

THE DRILL: LONG-POLE DRILL



Sequence #1: Space your hands correctly like so before lifting the pole to your centre.



The start position: take overhand/underhand grips and keep the pole parallel to the ground.



Forward thrust (exhale) then retract back to start position (inhale)...



...then downward thrust (exhale) then retract back to start position (inhale).



Sequence #2: start position. Take your grips as shown and assume a deep horse-stance.



Downward thrust (exhale) then retract back to the start position (inhale).



Single-arm technique, done while exercising your breathing

SEQUENCE #2:

Place the pole on the ground and stand astride it square-on at one end, facing the length.

- 1) With your heels at shoulder-width apart, sit in a deep horse-stance ideally with your upper thigh area parallel to the ground and your back/neck aligned and straight.
- 2) Grip the pole at the end with both your hands and lift to the starting position (shoulder level). Your hands should be placed apart at a distance similar to your standard fighting guard (see photo, top left).
- 3) Thrust the pole directly downward and upward, using your shoulders. Your hands maintain the same distance from your body; rotate your wrists to accommodate and inhale and exhale accordingly. Keep repeating this sequence and make sure you swap the lead hand between left and right, performing equal sets of each.

For the experienced, try this second drill using one hand, but

merely keeping the pole level in the upward position for lengths of time.

Ideally, this drill should be done for at least 20 minutes per day, three days per week, but obviously the more you practise, the quicker the results.

THE RESULT

Regular repetition of this drill will increase your striking power and improve your balance, co-ordination and breathing.

The drill is designed to shock the muscles so that you develop a density of muscle tissue that is seldom achieved with comfortable, repetitious weight-pulling movements. Even just sitting in the horse-stance at length greatly strengthens your base and core.

I have a student who is built like a silverback gorilla and even though he does regular bench-press sets with 100kg, after only five minutes of this drill he said he felt more fatigued than he would after a full hour working out at the gym.