

**FIGHT BACK! 7 Self-Defense Tips for Women**

# BLACK BELT®

WORLD'S LEADING MAGAZINE OF SELF-DEFENSE

**Aikido's Best  
Throwing Technique**

## Dustin Nguyen

**V.I.P. Star Trains in  
TKD and JKD**

**Experience of a Lifetime  
Training in Thailand**

**Fumio Demura**

**6 Karate Hand Strikes for Beginners**



**Jennifer Lopez  
Learns Krav Maga**

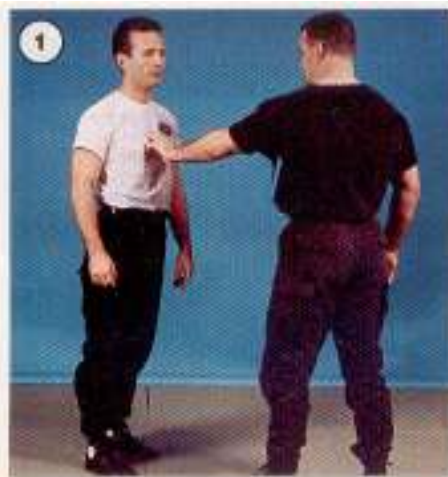
01043 JULY 2002

www.blackbeltmag.com

\$4.99US \$6.99CAN



ISSN 1525-2527 07



# UNCONDITIONAL

## 30 Tidbits of Lifesaving Wisdom Every Martial Artist Needs to Know

by Scott Sonnon

*When it comes to preparing yourself to deal with a violent attack, Scott Sonnon advocates the doctrine of unconditional survival. He devised it to fill what he perceived as a gap between the technique-oriented training most Americans undergo in the dojo and the reality of the street. None of Sonnon's advice should be interpreted as an admonition to abandon the style you know and love; on the contrary, it is designed to help you make what you already know more accessible and effective should you ever find yourself in a true survival situation. —Editor*

**1.** In any physical conflict, your goal is unconditional survival. It is not to kill an assailant, nor to maim, injure or hurt him, for those are merely byproducts of pursuing your objective.

**2.** If you do not need to employ your survival tools or if you need to temporarily refrain from using them, they should remain invisible. Only if you are attacked should you allow others to be aware of your ability.





PHOTOGRAPH BY NANA SUZUKI

The assailant (right) stops Scott Sonnon by placing his hand on his chest (1). (Often when a person is about to go ballistic, he will do this to "identify" his target.) Having observed the assailant's shoulder tension increase in preparation to his attack, Sonnon can respond as soon as he launches his haymaker (2). Sonnon allows the punching arm to "settle" in the guard of his right arm, then clasps his hands to trap it (3). Next, he changes his level and quickly rotates his right forearm close to his chest to force the other man down and off-balance (4). As the assailant falls, Sonnon disengages and escapes (5).

# UNCONDITIONAL SURVIVAL

**3.** By themselves, prearranged self-defense techniques are not sufficient for combat. Unconditional survival demands extensive skill and preparation ranging from non-verbal communication to lethal force.

**4.** "Symmetrical training" cannot be relied upon. Too many martial arts instructors teach you how to use your skills only against practitioners of the same style.

**5.** Training should not involve any preconceived ideas about saving face or fighting fair. Survival is not about style, but about reality.

**6.** The key to survival does not lie in memorizing a couple quotes from Eastern philosophy, slapping a few flashy kicks and submission holds together, and starting a new style.

**7.** You must be prepared, both

psychologically and physiologically, for the attack. Your awareness must be such that you have the ability to function under the intense strain of personal combat even though it will enable you to defuse or avoid 90 percent of all volatile situations.

**8.** If you understand only fighting skill, then when conflict arises you will fight, even if the situation could have been solved by other means.



Scott Sonnon (right) attempts to walk past a man who deliberately avoids making eye contact (1). Seeing the opponent shoot in for a tackle, Sonnon lifts his right forearm to block him at the neck and uses his left arm to underhook his right arm while keeping his hips out of reach (2). Next, Sonnon places his right arm on the back of the attacker's neck and presses downward as he lifts his arm (3). To complete the defense, Sonnon steps backward in response to the attacker's forward pressure and lifts his right arm higher, rotating the other man's body (4) until he falls to the ground (5).



When he comes face-to-face with a posturing attacker, Scott Sonnon (left) attempts to defuse the situation (1). He tries to walk away, but the attacker shoulder-checks him (2). The defender removes his shoulder from the man's body, lifts his right elbow under his chin and presses his left hand against his lower back (3). Next, Sonnon uses the inside of his elbow to strike the attacker's solar plexus, leaving him stunned and off-balance (4). He continues his forward motion while once again hooking his arm under the other man's chin (5). As soon as the defender confirms that the assailant is on his way down, he escapes (6).

**9.** If you fail to recognize the attack developing and are startled by it, you will not have access to your skills. If you allow your awareness to lapse and fade, you will become a victim of your own overconfidence.

**10.** Don't spend all your training time in the *dojo*. Miyamoto Musashi, one of humanity's greatest warrior-philosophers, stated in his *Book of Five Rings*: "... If you learn indoor techniques, you will think narrowly and forget the true way. Thus you will have difficulty in actual encounters."

**11.** Martial sports are about technical skill, steadfastness, endurance, doggedness, durability and resilience. They have nothing to do with personal

combat because they do not take place outdoors, in the dirt, in the rain, in the snow, on the concrete or in ambush simulations—what Tony Blauer refers to as "ballistic micro-fights."

**12.** Most people have never fallen on anything harder than a mat. They have never kicked with their shoes on or punched a real person. They have probably not tried to battle from inside a vehicle, from within a crowd of civilians or in the company of untrained loved ones. Don't fall victim to those pitfalls.

**13.** To prepare for an event, you must simulate it as closely as possible. Performance is in direct proportion to preparation. Moreover, the worst per-

formance you have in training is the best you can hope for in combat.

**14.** To increase your chance of survival, you must engage in overload practice. Your training simulations must be more difficult than the potential assault.

**15.** Merely because something is old does not mean it is valuable today. Ancient training methods are an excellent way of learning how people fought and trained in ancient times. Back then, people trained in unarmed fighting because oppressive rulers restricted weapons possession.

**16.** Some ancient fighting methods are no longer effective because the 21<sup>st</sup>





century has brought a new kind of threat. The assailant which confronts you is "a new breed of felon more terrorist than criminal." (*Crime in America: It's Going to Get Worse. Reader's Digest*, August 1995).

**17.** Because of the weapons and methods used by modern criminals, you can no longer permit yourself the luxury of training only with your empty hands. You must adopt an integrated system that spans the spectrum of defensive preparation, from non-verbal communication to interpersonal skill to less-than-lethal measures to lethal force.

**18.** You must always hold true to your goal: to survive unconditionally, without question, at any cost. That does not include fighting; it does include appropriate application of fighting skill at the decisive moment.

**19.** It's time to fight when the situation is no longer acceptable to you.

Rarely do you *have* to fight. Rarely do you encounter a situation that is truly unacceptable. The obstacle is not that you fail to choose to fight, for it is not a choice but a fact that when something is unacceptable to you, you will act upon it in some form.

**20.** The danger is that when you are surprised or not properly prepared with a flexible and comprehensive combatives doctrine, you are not given the opportunity to "enter the fight." If so, your actions may be inappropriate or insufficient. Anyone can successfully negotiate personal combat—as long as he is given the ability to act appropriately.

**21.** What gives you the ability to survive is training within a doctrine that permits you to identify and assess a threat prior to the fight, one that derails psychological and physiological factors that inhibit your entrance into the fight, one that affords you access to

your fighting skill should physical violence break out, and one that provides post-combat knowledge to address legal, medical and social concerns.

**22.** Your capacity for calmly recognizing an assailant's "probing" process will determine your ability to survive. There are certain characteristics that are common to all attacks and certain brands of behavior common to particular types of belligerents. The attacker's probing phase is one of these characteristics.

**23.** If the probe returns a positive response, the assailant will select you as his target. If you do not possess the calm repose and wherewithal to recognize that combat begins long before the fight, you will never have access to your fighting skill. If you fail to recognize the development of the attack, you may be able to muster the ability to do something about fighting, but effective retaliation will be beyond the scope of your faculties.

**24.** Self-protection is not about fighting; it is about awareness and commitment. Awareness of your options and the composition of confrontation increases your survivability. Non-verbal training, eye and facial calibration, body



*The opponent (right) adopts a posture intended to intimidate his victim (1). Scott Sonnon steps forward, places his right hand over the man's face to obscure his vision and positions his left hand behind his head (2). He then grasps the man's head (3) and twists it vertically and horizontally as he forces his chin downward (4). As soon as he feels the opponent lean on him to avoid losing his balance, he releases his head and lets him tumble over his left knee and onto the ground (5). Sonnon is then free to escape.*

carriage, postural and spatial constitution, gesticulation and verbal skill should be critical parts of your training.

**25.** Your preparation must encompass the full spectrum of conflict resolution. That can mean feigning submission and acquiescing to the demands of the assailant. Give up your wallet or purse; its contents do not equal your life or the life of a loved one.

**26.** Withdraw when you can. It may be your most successful tactic. Remember that withdrawal will save your life. In a fight, you will be lucky to leave unscathed, so if you can avoid the fight, do so at all costs. Combat avoided is a fight won.

**27.** During a physical confrontation that has obvious legal implications, the fight is over when the assailant is no longer a threat, even though the turmoil continues until the situation is resolved legally, socially, physically and emotionally.

**28.** You should endeavor to end physical confrontation as quickly as possible. Keep your response simple and expedient. You do not have the luxury of being complex, especially in multiple-assailant engagements. Most of the time, you can end the problem by simply unbalancing your adversary and withdrawing tactically.

**29.** The law never supercedes your right to self-preservation. The legal system was created to perpetuate your survival, not inhibit or endanger it.

**30.** Fighting is something you do *with* someone; combat is something you do *to* someone. Accept no less than unconditional survival. You must if you want to live. **X**

*About the author: Scott Sonnon is president of Force-Responsive Subject-Control Systems. For more information, call (360) 595-9169 or visit <http://www.SubjectControl.com>. For information about ROSS, the combat system whose U.S. branch he runs, write to American Annex to the International Federation of Russian Martial Art, P.O. Box 501388, Atlanta, Georgia 31150. Or call (770) 956-9765 or visit <http://www.amerross.com>.*