

**"What do you
punch with?"
I ask my students.
"My fist, sir,"
is the usual answer.**

Hit Harder!

By Michael G. White

What appears to be a simple question with a simple answer actually is very complex. As Tae Kwon Do practitioners, we often hear the generic description that we are "kickers" that do not punch well and for many practitioners, that may be true.

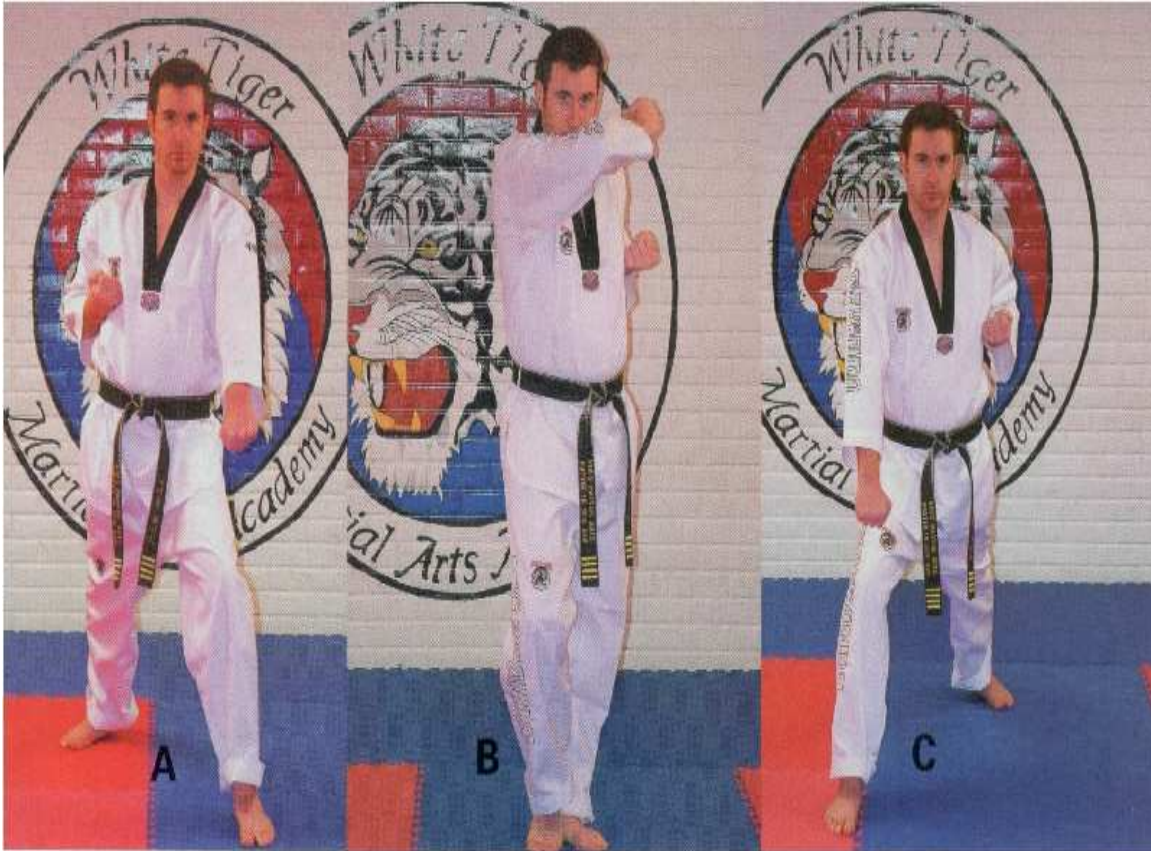
The founder of the Chung Do Kwan (Master Lee Won Kuk) and the founder of Song Moo Kwan (Master Ro Byung Jik) both had very extensive training in Shotokan Karate. Both of these kwans or schools contributed much of the framework of our modern Tae Kwon Do. Even as a purist we cannot deny the Japanese influence in our beautiful Korean martial art. In the past 22 years I have done both Korean and Japanese martial arts; primarily Tae Kwon Do, some Shotokan Karate and some Shito Ryu. I am very much a traditionalist and do not mix martial arts although I am not afraid to borrow a little from the Japanese arts' strong hitting methods.

Since my youth, I have been privileged to study Tae Kwon Do with Grandmaster In Shik Kim (a graduate of Yong-In Martial Arts University). Grandmaster Kim taught me most of the elements of hitting power discussed in this article. Basically, power comes from proper step movements when executing hand technique. We use a slang term, "snaking the step," to describe the serpent-like sliding of the feet. In many forms of Karate, this identical stepping method is combined with hip rotation to create a more powerful punching technique.

When studying Karate, refinement of the proper movement and placement of the legs and feet, combined with proper hip rotation, is a core part of developing hitting power. I am not asking you to change the method of practicing your martial art; your instructor is always the best guide to follow to reach your martial arts goals. Use this information as a reference or alternative method. This method will add beauty, technical integrity and, most of all, power to your individual style.

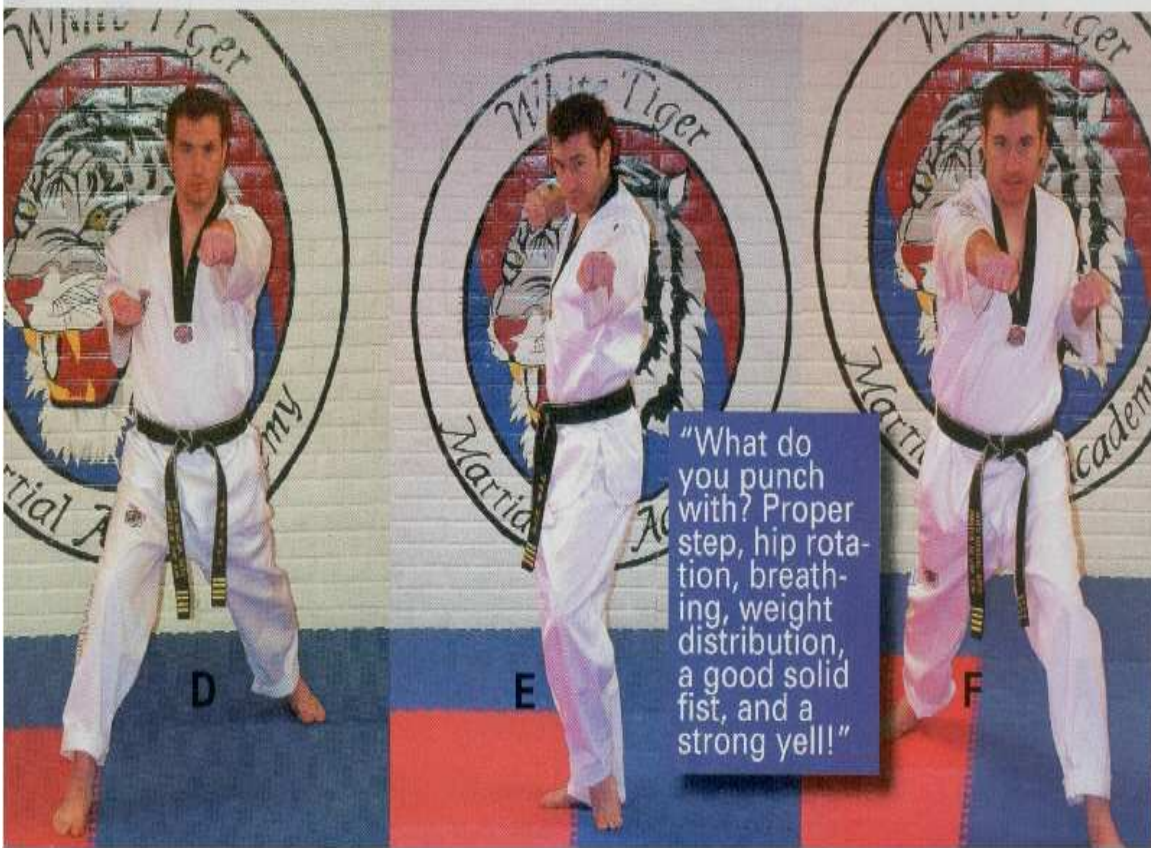
The best way to learn this method is to start with a basic reverse punch and practice with repetition.

About the Author: Junior Master Michael White is owner and operator of White Tiger Martial Arts Academies in Sioux City, Iowa, and has an extensive background in both Korean and Japanese martial arts. He is completing study toward his fifth-degree black belt with Grandmaster In Shik Kim in Tae Kwon Do. Mr. White is the first non-Asian Vice-President of the US World TaekwonDo Union.



1. Learn to "snake" your step. I teach this method with the down block. Start in front-stance (a) and when stepping forward, bring your back leg to your front leg (b), then to the front position (c). Do not stand-up straight. Keep both legs slightly bent as to not bob your head up and down as you step. (This is a very old method that many schools still teach. I have seen it less and less through the years as it oftentimes has been replaced by a step that looks like the flopping of duck flippers on wet pavement.)

2. After perfecting the "snaking" step, integrate hip rotation in to the strike. Start in a front-stance (d). Step forward and bring the back leg to your front leg. This time, do not square your shoulders forward; leave the shoulder of the punching arm in the same placement as if you were in a back stance. At this point most of your body weight has shifted to one side, the same side with which you are punching (e). As you execute the punch, roll your hips and feel the natural "popping" into place that the hip rotation brings to the technique. Also shift your body weight to the front leg (f). Note: Keep it simple and do not forget the basics. Always kiap when you strike. Breathe correctly, in through your nose and then exhale as you execute the striking technique.



"What do you punch with? Proper step, hip rotation, breathing, weight distribution, a good solid fist, and a strong yell!"