

To protect innocent bystanders, it is often prudent for a martial artist to take the initiative in a conflict. Here, hapkido instructor Han Woong Kim (left) uses a belt to restrain opponent Bill Darlas.



First-Moving Attacks with a Belt

Using Hapkido to Hog-Tie Hooligans

by Robert W. Young

One of the touchiest subjects in the martial arts is how to decide if you should make the first move on your opponent. Some practitioners insist that you should never strike first because the martial arts were designed for self-defense, not offense. Others, however, believe that in certain situations,

initiating the action is the best way to resolve the conflict while minimizing the potential for injury to bystanders.

The Korean art of *hapkido* is renowned as one of the most effective systems of self-defense because it works in virtually any type



of one-on-one encounter. Unbeknownst to many, however, is that the art also includes a set of techniques called "first-moving attacks." They require the practitioner to go on the offensive first to control his opponent, says Bill Darlas, an instructor at Kim's Hapkido in Alhambra, California.

"If your opponent is on drugs or intends to hurt somebody else, you may have no choice but to restrain him," says Darlas, who has trained in hapkido under Chong S. Kim for 18 years. "Since you are an experienced fighter, it is better for you to move in so nobody else has to get involved. One of the best ways for you to

control your opponent is with hapkido's first-moving attack belt techniques."

Although few people are likely to walk the streets with a martial arts belt in their hand, hapkido's belt techniques are useful because of their versatility. "Once you learn them, you can execute them with a leather belt, a jacket, a handker-





After snapping his belt into his opponent's groin (1-2), Han Woong Kim (left) wraps it around the back of the other man's knees (3-4). Kim then pulls the belt toward his chest, causing the opponent to fall (5). Once the opponent lands on his back (6), Kim starts to roll him onto his stomach (7). The hapkido stylist then locks his opponent's legs, wraps the belt around his neck and pulls (8).

Of course, such a lightweight object may not do much damage if you use it to strike your opponent's body, but it can easily inflict a temporary injury to a more vulnerable area such as the eyes.

As you stand in front of your opponent—who has yet to begin his attack—you thrust the belt against his eyes. If it touches one or both of them, they will start tearing up and he will be unable to see clearly. If the belt does not make contact, it may still cause him to blink or turn away, and that reflexive action is all the opening you need.

Once you have made contact with the face, you immediately continue the motion and wrap the belt around his head, making a conscious effort to obscure his vision. Although a wider implement such as a towel or jacket will accomplish this task more easily, even a thinner tool such as a rope will significantly interfere with his ability to see.

The next step is to move to the opponent's left so you can use your right foot to press downward on the back of his left knee. That will cause his leg to buckle and his body to drop. You can control his fall by maintaining your grip on his arm and on the belt that is still wrapped around his head. Once he is on his back, you roll him onto his stomach, lock his arm and pull his head backward. If the belt is long enough, you can use part of it to tie up his left arm. The placement of your left knee on his lower back keeps him down.

One of the most important parts of this first-moving attack, Darlas says, is covering the opponent's eyes. "Once you do that, he won't have any sense of balance, and his environment will be changing rapidly because he won't be able to keep track of where the walls and floor are. You will have a great deal of control over him just because of that."

Does the opponent become as docile as a hooded falcon after he is blindfolded? "No," Darlas says. "But when you have his eyes covered and get him off-balance, that's when he truly is helpless. And because you are using two pieces of his body—his head and his arm—to keep him from moving on the ground, he can't move. It's like tying up an animal."

chief, a towel—almost anything that is long and easy to wrap around your opponent's body part."

The following four techniques are taught at the higher black-belt levels of hapkido, Darlas says, and those are usually reached after eight years of training. With some diligent and guided practice, however, any experienced martial artist should be able to make them work.

Strike Across the Eyes

The first technique uses the belt as a striking and vision-obscuring implement.

When he detects an opening, Han Woong Kim (left) rushes in and presses his belt against his opponent's throat (1-2). Kim then wraps the belt around his opponent's neck (3-4), pivots and steps under his center of gravity (5), and throws him to the ground (6). Once the opponent lands, Kim can choke him into submission (7).



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1 Han Woong Kim (left) snaps his belt at Bill Darlas' eyes (1-2). After the opponent turns his head to avoid the impact, Kim closes the gap and places the belt over the opponent's shoulder (3). Next, Kim yanks downward on the belt, causing the other man to drop (4). Because the opponent's arm is locked and his neck is encircled by the belt, he cannot resist or escape (5).

Snap at the Eyes

The second technique uses the belt to snap at the opponent's eyes in much the same way you probably used a wet towel to snap at your buddies after high school gym class. Even if no contact is made, the opponent will likely turn his head to avoid the strike. That will allow you to slide forward and engage him.

How do you know when it's safe to shoot in? "Once you get him to move his head in reaction to your strike, he will be off-balance," Darlas says. "That's when you move."

Next, you reach under his left arm with your right arm and use your left hand to grasp the free end of the belt as it drapes over his shoulder. Then you move counter-clockwise around his body and yank downward on the belt to make him drop to his knees. Because his shoulder is pulled downward by the belt and your right arm is still under his left arm, that limb will be locked behind his back. You should then have a chance to wrap the loose end of the belt around his neck and secure it to the portion that encircles

his upper arm. "Putting it around his neck and his arm keeps him from moving much," Darlas says. "It also chokes him."

Snap to the Groin

The next first-moving attack belt technique employs the above-mentioned snapping motion to attack the opponent's groin. Once the tip of the belt makes contact and the other man thrusts his hips backward, you dart forward like a wrestler and wrap the belt around the back of his knees.

Next, you pull the belt toward your chest, and your opponent has no choice but to fall onto his back because there is nothing for him to grab for support. If he does not know how to fall properly—and most attackers probably do not—he may hit his head on the floor. That could end the confrontation immediately.

If the fall does not incapacitate him, however, you can roll him onto his stomach while maintaining the belt restraint on his legs. You then lock his legs with your right knee, encircle his neck with

the belt and pull his head backward. "Again, you are using two of his body parts to hold him," Darlas says. "Because he's flat on his stomach—which is the most vulnerable position a person can be in—there is no way he can escape. He's hog-tied."

Wrap Around the Neck

During the execution of the final technique, you wait until you sense a momentary opening in your opponent's defenses, which usually comes when he is distracted or deceived by a feint. As soon as the coast is clear, you rush forward and press the belt against the front of his neck, then move your right hand over his head so it maneuvers the belt around the back of his neck in one continuous motion, Darlas says.

Next, you reposition your body by pivoting counter-clockwise, stepping under his center of gravity and bending your legs. "The follow-up is a full-body throw over your shoulder or the side of your body," Darlas says. "When you get him down, you will find that his arms are out of the way, which allows you to cinch down and choke him with the belt. He will not be able to counterattack."

This particular first-moving attack works so well because it employs multiple distractions. The presence of the belt around the opponent's neck forces him to focus all his attention on it, so in most cases he will not even be aware of your

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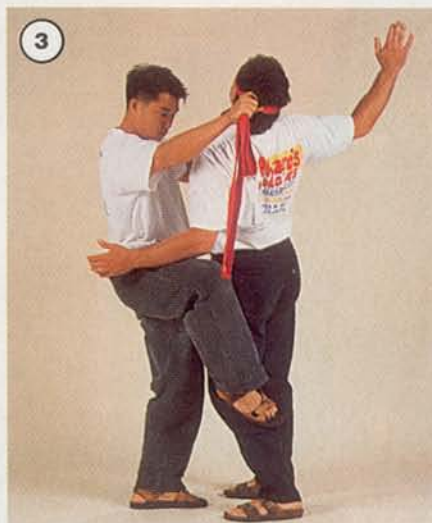
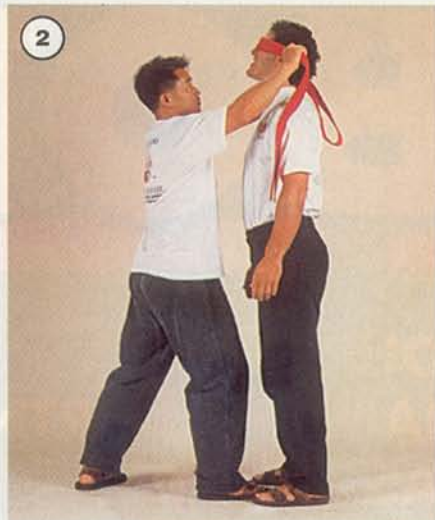
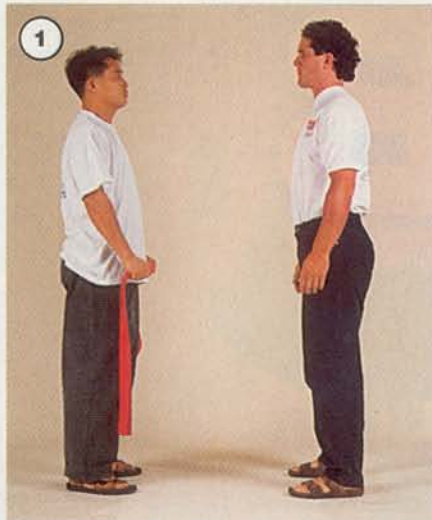
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Han Woong Kim (left) faces opponent Bill Darlas (1). Kim steps forward and presses his belt against the other man's eyes (2). Then he wraps the belt around his head, maneuvers to his side and collapses his leg (3). After the opponent falls (4), Kim turns him onto his stomach and restrains him by locking his arm and head (5).

efforts to position yourself for the throw. Once you throw him and he strikes the floor, the pain of the impact will be his main thought, and that will afford you the opportunity to tighten the belt around his neck and restrain him until help arrives.

From Theory to Practice

Obviously, practicing techniques that require strikes to the groin and eyes, as well as potentially dangerous chokes, is not easy. Although a certain degree of realism must always be sacrificed for safety's sake, a good hapkido instructor should be able to guide you through these practical self-defense techniques.

Once you have learned them, you can live your life a bit more comfortably



knowing that if you are ever accosted on the street, you have the ability to simply rip off your jacket or shirt and use it to defend yourself or a loved one. ✕

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