

Murphy's masterclass



half or eleven inches wide it will still, when cut square, be ideal for breaking. Beware also of buying timber that has any cracks or knots.

In the past Parana Pine was extensively used, however, due to the high cost of this specific timber, ordinary White Deal or Red Deal is much more acceptable today. The most important thing to remember when breaking wood is to break with the grain. If you also look closely at the side view of the board you may notice it is either concave or convex, i.e. slightly curved. It is helpful if you align these boards, placed with the same curve together if attempting three or four boards.

Bricks

When using bricks it is advisable to understand the composition. In fact this is essential, as there are so many bricks on the market. On your first attempt try with a stamping kick (wearing shoes) to break a brick on the floor. This will give you a feel of the brick's PP strength, and will help your confidence.

Breaker Boards

These have now taken the place of

The strength of the white breaker boards will diminish after roughly one thousand breaks. It is ideal for beginners to sharpen the accuracy of technique. The black board, however, is manufactured and designed for more regular use, and holds its strength longer. It is wise not to break a black board when it is frozen. Taking a frozen board from the boot of your car and placing it straight into a holder to break is not advisable. Although it has a groove at the centre, it has to be a little pliable, you may break the joint and ruin the board. After a break, place one half on the ground and push the opposite half into it. CAUTION: Sometimes the attempt may only bend the board. DO NOT use your knee to finish the break. Break it safely, either by stamping it on the floor or on the side of the wooden holder.

When beginning to break breaker boards, it is best to practice with them on the ground first. Get three boards and place one in the middle and begin to snap it with a stamping kick. This will give an indication of the breaking strength of a whiteboard and a black board. It also gives confidence, and is very safe. Wear light training shoes before attempting this. Then increase the height of the board, so it is about six to eight inches from the floor.

Progress on to placing the board into the holder.

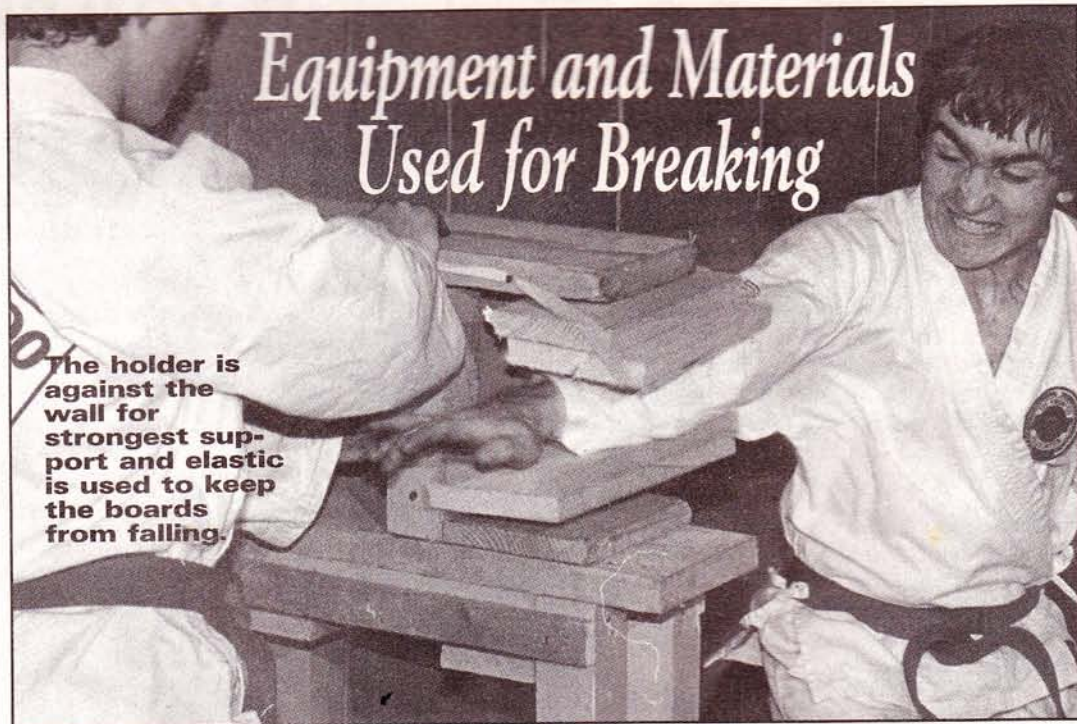


This month equipment and breaking materials are

covered. Thanks to all the readers who phoned up asking more on this complex art of breaking, keep reading M.A.I. as further articles will give an in-depth insight into breaking, regardless of what style you practise.

Wooden Boards

Wooden boards are normally one foot square by one inch thick. These dimensions are for wood that is unprepared or unplanned. When choosing board, you should choose one as wide as possible. Twelve inches is probably the widest available, which may only be possible to purchase through a large outlet. Even if the board is ten and a



The holder is against the wall for strongest support and elastic is used to keep the boards from falling.

wooden boards and come in two colours. Black, which is the hardest and white which is slightly weaker. The boards are held together with a tongue and groove joint running horizontally along its length.

When first purchased, the boards are at their hardest, even the white boards.

The Holder

The holder or wooden frame is used to hold boards or bricks for breaking. Traditionally these are wooden and



shaped like a pyramid, for greater stability at the base. The one in the photograph is rectangular shaped and is made to fit into a car.

Today these holders are also constructed from steel, and mounted at any desirable height.

If there is room in the holder to facilitate three or more boards it is advisable to cover the protruding jaws with some type of protective cover. This will not only have the advantage of protecting the hand or foot from injury. The top jaw of the holder should have an elasticated band to hold at least three or four boards. This will also prevent any injury to the finger.

Adjustable holders or frames are preferable, as the height will have a bearing on successful breaking.

Air Shields and Target Practice

Before any breaking is attempted it is advisable to practice on an 'Air Shield'. These are available in various shapes and sizes. For most martial art gradings, a holder is used for breaking so, try to design a board covered with soft material (e.g. foam) to use instead of a real board. A board constructed with plywood (or MDF board) twelve inches square covered with rubber foam is ideal to develop kicking skills for breaking. This is a great confidence

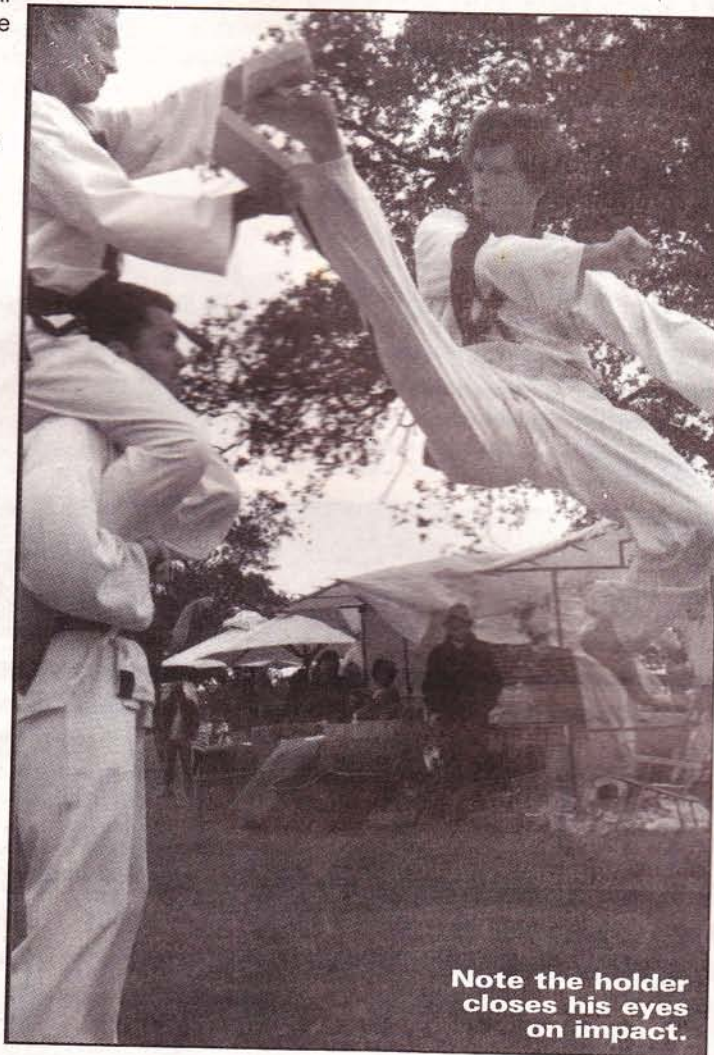
builder and will help you get the correct distance without fear of injury.

Successful breaking depends heavily on good timing and the correct use of distance.

The air shield is held for stepping in sidekick. This is a favourite technique for most students as the step in sidekick allows one to gain fantastic momentum while at the same time allowing a good vision of the target.

The final position of the foot should be the blade or foot sword placed in the centre of the shield. When performing the turning or roundhouse kick on the shield, it is important to practise continuously until the ball of the foot reaches the shield at exactly a right angle and the foot should travel towards the target parallel to the floor. A common mistake

is not standing at a forty-five degree angle to ensure the ball of the foot strikes correctly. Once the correct angle of the turning kick becomes easy on the air shield, try reducing the target and practice on the focus hard. This will increase your accuracy. The focus pad is also good for the back turning kick and the jumping front kick. Practice diligently as accuracy is important.



Note the holder closes his eyes on impact.

The Position of the Holder

In any successful break the more support the board has, the more likely it is to break. This is not only true of holders or frames but of human support as well.

With a conical shaped wooden holder the support is usually in the form of the two students standing behind it for support.

In the case of the straighter rectangular holder, a support wall is used, and this provides maximum support. It must, however, be firmly pressed against the wall. This must remain tightly pressed at the moment of the break. See main picture. I use a smaller rectangular holder, which not only can be pushed against a wall and does not need any person to support it, but is easy to store and takes up less space in the Do-jang. It has

another advantage in that it can fit into most cars for easy transportation. Notice in the photo as well that the elastic has held the top two broken pieces.

The board or boards are accommodated in the jaws of the holders. This is another area in which the four sides of the board must receive equal support.

In some holders, especially wooden ones, constant use may weaken and wear down the sides of the holding jaws and this results in the board becoming unsteady. As the four corners of the board do not have equal support, it will be a little more difficult to break the board that is held in such a holder.

More support to secure the position of the board can be achieved by using a piece of elasticated tape approximately one foot in length, which is pinned to the top jaw of the holder. This is pulled down over the board or boards to keep them in position.

The Human Factor

If you do not possess a holder, the next best thing is to have some experienced students hold the board or boards for you. A held board is slightly harder to break than a board placed in a wooden holder due to the strength or support.

For important exhibitions try to get experienced students to hold breaking materials. If the holders are not in tune with what you are trying to achieve, you not only miss the break, but it could also lead to an accident.

Try not to flinch when you hold the board. Lock your hands and elbows out prior to the strike.

Some students close their eyes on impact to prevent flinching when they are assisting. See picture.

A useful device on the market to help in maintaining position of the boards is a moulded glove made from hard plastic, which accommodates the fingers. This prevents the likelihood of any mishap should a target be missed.

Any one student should be enough to hold one board. However when it comes to two or three boards, two students are needed. These can be further supported at the back or at the sides. The best support at the sides is to hold the wrists of the two people holding the boards.

Both holders should adapt a long stance or low walking stance. Ensure that the front legs are on the outside, to allow room for the broken board to fall, and also to accommodate the performer.