

# HSFA Insider

Houston's Martial Arts News Source

### Every Issue is Filled With

- Martial Arts Insights
- Editorials & Personal Perspectives
- Training Tips
- Instructor Spotlight
- School Spotlight
- Events



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### The Power of Positivity

A kind smile, an honest "How are you?", and a simple wave to a passing neighbor are just a few of the small ways we as humans can share our special powers. It doesn't take a superhero to brighten someone's day. All it takes is an interest in someone else's well-being. So many of us go through our daily routines without pausing for a moment to think about how our actions or words influence those around us.

My chosen career path is fitness coach. I stumbled upon this path after many years of trial and error with jobs that gave me no real satisfaction. I met characters. I learned from every company that I was lucky enough to be employed by. However, what I didn't receive in all of my stumbling was complete and utter joy.

As a fitness coach, the joy I was seeking comes easily and naturally every day. I get to play with toddlers and watch them take that first hop on one foot. I get to experience their firsts and observe their parents as they joyfully clap their hands in approval and admiration of one of the many

accomplishments they will celebrate in their little one's lives. On the other end of the spectrum, I am able to encourage and share in a great adventure with adults that had given up on themselves and are ready to embark on the ship that is fitness. Adults come into my program hesitant and unsure of their fitness capacity. Through positive words and actions, I am able to assist them along their fitness path. In many cases, they far exceed what they ever thought was possible for themselves. I don't know how many times that I have heard, "I haven't jumped rope in 20 years," or "There is no way I can sit all the way down on that ball and then stand back up on my own." Yet, in usually just a few weeks' time, those same questioners are achieving those goals plus ones they had never imagined they would have when they first walked in my door.

Without sincerity and kindness, my coaching would be for naught. I am in no way trying to create Olympic athletes or the next NBA star. What I hope to accomplish in my years left on this

earth are goals that cannot be measured by statistics or figures. I have seen the effect that my words have on my clients, young and old. I know that through positive coaching, my students will take away from my classes more than just proper technique and form. The power of a high-five has so much strength for a struggling 4 year old that just can't get that simple skill "everyone" else in the class can do. A hug, a laugh, a smile, or a few kind words of encouragement help those dragging through their rough days. The power of positivity radiates strength to those giving and receiving!

— Meghan Carr, Owner/Head Coach, Athletics In Motion

[www.aimfitbaytown.com](http://www.aimfitbaytown.com)

### School Spotlight — TX 3rd Coast MMA

Located in Sugar Land, TX, TX 3rd Coast MMA offers classes in Brazilian jiu-jitsu, JKD–Kali, western boxing, submission grappling, kickboxing and MMA. Additionally there are youth classes in BJJ and MMA (age 5+). There are also several opportunities each week for open mat.

Professor Joe Soliz and Professor Jason Soliz lead a team of coaches with more than 50 years of combined experience teaching,

coaching, judging and competing. Students at TX 3rd Coast MMA can train to meet a variety of goals, including weight loss, fitness and mobility, self-defense and more. Some even test their skills in Golden Gloves boxing, grappling tournaments, MMA competition, kickboxing and stick fighting bouts against other schools.

Classes are offered Mon/Wed 5:00-8:30pm, Tue/Thu 5:00-9:00pm, Sat. 11:00-1:00pm, and

competition training on Sundays. Private lessons with advanced grapplers (including black belts), certified boxing coaches and JKD-Kali instructors are available for an additional fee.

For additional info call 281-302-6183 or visit [tx3rdcoastmma.com](http://tx3rdcoastmma.com)



### The “Advant-Edge” of Simulated Knife Sparring

Knife sparring, or simulated blade sparring is probably one of the most valued methods of training. It involves the building of attributes from the gain of quicker reflexes, speed, timing, distance control and spatial awareness. that are universal with any martial art, from Muay Thai, Savate, to boxing. Here fighting for real in the streets is concerned. I'm not just talking about knife training for the knife's sake. I'm also talking about the use of the knife as a tool to train with the purpose to enhance one's armed and unarmed fighting skills that count in practical fashion. Beginning with maintaining respect for the blade, on common sense alone, when you don't respect the blade, you'll probably cut yourself with it.

With a blade in hand in a real fight, one becomes pretty aware of their own mortal possibility, which results in an increased sense of awareness that is most commonly driven through emotional impulses based in fear.

Fear is an energy that is worth being aware of before it rides the ego and takes control. Because when fear takes control of one's physiological integrity, a person's worst fears may truly manifest. Being aware of fear is also being many steps ahead of preventing it from taking full control. A person's true skills come out according to the conditioning of their upbringing in martial arts. This is the moment of exposure where its not all about the technique. It's all about intent, follow-through and survival. This also includes keeping your eyes open and ears listening as your feet on the ground feel for the timing needed when it mattered. Behind all of that is the attitude that drives the body safely and successfully, according to the output and level of one's confidence and practice. This is the moment when everything has been forgotten about consciously and whatever the subconscious has been trained to do, it does.

Sparring with a fake knife is

very honest because being cut (tagged) by one in practice is meant to remind us to remain humble and to own up to the mistake and acknowledge it. Building character and confidence while giving the ego in its minimized station a small job to do on the side counts a great deal so that none of that will ever have to happen in a mortal confrontation out in the streets or wherever else that close-quarters violence may occur. Basically!

— Daniel Arola, Owner/  
Instructor, DAMAG INC

***“...when you don't respect the blade, you'll probably cut yourself with it.”***

**“...such practices allow the body’s “fascia suit” to rehydrate, break down tissue and then remodel itself into a more efficient structure.**

**Properties of Fascia**

Fascia is the fibrous connective tissue of the body, which is made up of a ground substance that is a clear, colorless, viscous fluid that fills the space between cells and fibers. It surrounds all of our muscles, bones, ligaments, tendons and organs, and provides the tensile structure of the body, providing the medium that transfers the elastic pull of our muscles. It creates elastic recoil in the body, allows the spine to remain erect in a neutral position and allows different parts of the body to move around by creating distinct layers of tissue with surfaces that can slide and glide over each other. One might say that fascia serves as the glue behind everything, supporting us as we move through space. When a person is young and/or healthy, the layers of tissue are well organized. As a person ages and the health of the body deteriorates, the tissues can become weak and harden together. Instead of supporting movement, in such cases, fascia can create limitations and problems. Rehabilitating fascia, once it has reached that stage, is certainly

possible however takes a strong commitment: massage, rolfing, or mindfulness exercises that Yoga, and Tai Chi can provide.

Foundations of fascial development systems, such as Tai Chi and Yoga, may include the utilization of elastic recoil, twisting of the tissue, PNF stretching, slow and dynamic movements, proper rehydration practices and proprioceptive refinement. With slow, intentional movements along with deep breathing exercises, such practices allow the body’s “fascia suit” to rehydrate, break down tissue and then remodel itself into a more efficient structure. A large amount of water is taken from the fascia tissue when twisting and is replaced by water reserves in the body, allowing for proper rehydration and overall resilience of the connective tissue. The elastic properties of fascia may be likened to that of stringing a bow. Before any actual movement is done, there is a slight tensioning in the opposite direction, allowing the opposing

forces to support each other in a unified structure. The spiraling of the body in one direction and allowing it to twist back to a neutral position is another example of this property at work. By focusing on the joints, tendons, ligaments and fascia, these systems may result in a more elastic, spring quality in the practitioner in addition to a more vital body. This process of breaking down the quantity of tissue and rehydration allows the quality of the tissue to be strengthened in organized fascial trains.

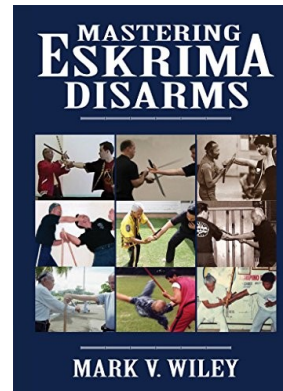
- Kai Lewis, Instructor, Houston Martial Arts Academy

[houstonmartialartsacademy.com](http://houstonmartialartsacademy.com)

**Recommended Reading — Mastering Eskrima Disarms, Mark V. Wiley**

In *Mastering Eskrima Disarms*, Mark Wiley draws on his 20 years of research and 35 years training in the United States and the Philippines under the world’s most legendary figures in Eskrima. He presents in clear language and detailed photos the essential components of Filipino disarming techniques. In this comprehensive book you will learn the disarming techniques of over three dozen styles of Eskrima, Kali, Arnis, and Kataraoan, including their 22 Sup-

porting Structures and 9 Essential Principles, 3 Ranges and 4 Modes of Engagement, 2 Positional Gates, 3 Joint Control Concepts, 5 Footwork Methods, and 5 Grip Release Concepts essential to mastering Eskrima Disarms.



## Cross Training and Creating Your Hybrid Art

Nearly all martial arts are hybrid arts if you go back far enough and look past the legends and mysticism that surround their origins. Don't fret too much about committing blasphemy and instead concentrate on choosing what's going to be best for you. It may be that you finally got your black belt and want to branch out or have just started training and want to start cross training right away. There are many benefits to be had for the hybrid artist but there are also a few pitfalls to watch out for.

The first question you have to ask yourself is, "What do I want to get out of my training?" Self-defense and competition are the two most common goals that practitioners of the arts train for, but there are other traits that you may consider, such as cultural and spiritual aspects. It's important that you be honest with yourself about what it is you want and go from there. If you want to be a competitor in either amateur or professional martial arts competitions, then you need to recognize what your weaknesses are and find an art that specializes in that aspect of your

game. If all you're looking for is self-defense, then you need to be honest about your current skill set. If someone were to attack you as soon as you walk out the door, would you be ready for a life and death struggle? Anyone thinking on self-defense should do their research on what violent attacks really look like, recognize where you might be vulnerable, and work from there. If you're self-defense has all been traditional so far, maybe it's time to think of modern systems that deal with firearms, mass attacks, and possible terrorism.

Another good question to ask yourself is, "Has it already been done?" Since the 1970's, hybrid arts have really started to explode and the chances are that someone has already done the work for you. Systems such as Krav Maga, Jeet Kune Do, and Kajukenbo are all good examples of hybrid arts. There is merit though in the idea of walking that path yourself and seeing if you reach a different conclusion, but that will also require a lot of research on your part. If it's MMA competition that you want, then you're in luck because there

are already plenty of schools that have all the classes you'll need. If what you want is self-defense, don't write off all competition based arts. Not all of their techniques may be realistic, but the ones that are can be very effective due to the high pressure of competition. If you're the type that's just starting out, then you want to avoid any styles that are too similar. The problem often encountered with training in similar systems is that it gets too easy for many people to confuse the two while practicing techniques or forms. Worse yet, you may end up hurting your fellow students by using techniques barred in one system but allowed in another. It's best to think of different systems in broad terms such as grappling, striking, weapons, etc. and choose the arts that will make the best fit for you.

— Billy Atwood, Instructor,  
Davis Martial Arts

[www.davismaa.com](http://www.davismaa.com)

***“Another good question to ask yourself is “Has it already been done?”***

## Four Massages for Martial Arts

1. Deep Tissue Massage for Flexibility: A good deep tissue therapist can help release stubborn muscles restricting flexibility, to achieve better mobility in the joints. Especially useful for releasing the hamstrings and adductors to increase kicking height. Progress can come much faster than by stretching alone.

2. Neurosomatic Massage for Balance: Practitioners of this advanced massage modality assess posture and carefully chart any imbalance in the left/right sides of the body. Is the

problem a limb-length discrepancy, or just the position of your computer at work? These therapists are known as excellent trouble-shooters and problem solvers.

3. Sports Massage for Events: Bring a sports massage therapist with you to give your team an edge on tournament day. Vigorous warming techniques increase blood flow to the muscles and awaken the nervous system pre-event. Slow, deliberate techniques soothe the nervous system and promote recovery post-event.

4. Swedish Massage for Stress Relief: Martial Arts can relax the mind and body, but often those in high stress occupations are left with lingering unease after class bows out. One hour of capable Swedish massage as needed can relax the body, reducing stress hormones in the bloodstream and promoting tranquility of the mind.

— Nick Carbone, 3rd Dan,  
North American Tae Kwon Do



**Instructor Spotlight — Kai Lewis, Houston Martial Arts Academy**

**How did you get started in martial arts (what drew you to it)?**

I grew up playing golf and tennis in Puerto Rico and my step mom at that time was a black belt in Goju Ryu Karate and they incorporated Remy Presas Arnis into their system. When I started to get bored with sports she suggested that I try out Goju in 8th grade. The 1st class I attended, the teacher took off the lights, put on a strobe light and chased the students around individually swinging his heavy karate gi at us and taught us to keep moving under stress, I was hooked.

**How long have you been training in martial arts?**

I started off in Goju Ryu in 8th grade, Capoeira and Wushu in college. I have consistently trained since 2009 in Escrima and Silat. Most recently immersed myself in Tai Chi Chuan since 2011. In addition to all of this I have a daily morning Ashtanga Yoga practice.

**How many arts do you train in & have rankings in and what are they?**

I am a Sifu in Tai Chi Chuan, Bagua, Xing Yi and Yiquan; a set of traditional Chinese Internal Martial Arts. Guro in SEAMOK, a modern hybrid system of several Southeast Asian Combative styles with Goju and Wing Chun mixed in. Kang (means big brother in Sundanese), in Panglipur Pencak Silat; a traditional Indonesian martial art system that consists primarily of 5 major styles from the Java/Sumatra area.

**Why do you enjoy sharing and teaching martial arts?**

I like sharing the breakthroughs of movement and physical conditioning and how it helps to reset the nervous system by learning new patterns and releasing old habits. The moment of clarity that dawns on the practitioner, after putting in hard work and seeing the dots connect is priceless.

**What is it you hope students get out of training with you?**

I hope they realize that flow is the main principle to unite any art you do but structure is needed as a guideline. Focus on the feeling of the concepts and don't chase techniques. All the skills you do gain in training in martial arts are transferable to the rest of your life. Don't just turn them on and off when you walk into the dojo. The knowledge gained through daily practice supersedes any acquired by books, dvd or mimicking off the internet. "99% practice, 1% theory..." - Pattabi Jois.

**What motivates you to continue sharing the arts?**

To share the healthy lifestyle aspects of the arts and the practical nature of being prepared to defend yourself and those around you if the need arise.

**What do you feel is the key to being successful in martial arts & teaching martial arts?**

Skill, hard work and clear communication. Being able to demonstrate, execute and explain what you are teaching is a must. Knowing your strengths and weaknesses and working towards balancing them out. Patience is crucial, some things take a few years to develop fully even if you get a taste right away and don't let is discourage you from persevering. I am continually training and learning from my teachers to elevate myself and the arts I practice.

**Anything else you want to let people know about you as a martial artist and instructor?**

I am also a Meditation and Yoga instructor and Chinese Bodywork Therapist. All of these were practiced by ancient warriors as part of their daily regiment to develop balance of oneself. You can see martial arts as a holistic practice that does not just involve hitting and striking but that contains the path of the human being. "There is nothing outside of yourself that can ever enable you to get better..." - Musashi Minamoto.

**Past Events**



HSFA held their 10th anniversary gathering at Hermann Park on November 26th. 16 Participants had over 20 matches. It was a great day of celebration for the Houston martial arts community!



Houston Tai Chi Push Hands held their first quarterly gathering on December 4th at Discovery Green. Participants from all over Texas came to share their knowledge and play with fellow Tai Chi practitioners.



Houston Martial Arts Academy held a Tai Chi Push Hands workshop featuring Sifu Kai and Sifu Jeff on December 3rd.



Houston Martial Arts Academy held a two day Shuai Jiao workshop featuring Sifu Steve Soos on November 19-20.



Houston Martial Arts Academy held an Introduction to Panglipur Silat workshop featuring Kang Kai Lewis on September 25.

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[JasonREvans](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCJasonREvans)

*The Houston Stick Fighting Association ("HSFA") founded in 2006 is an association for like-minded martial artists that engage in simulated combat to test and improve their skills in the blade-based and stick-based fighting arts. Membership in HSFA is open to martial artists of all styles, all systems, of all ages, from beginner to advanced levels. Members of the HSFA are striving to develop and improve their skills through simulated combat to see what works and what does not with a resisting opponent. Along the way, we build friendships and camaraderie with our sparring partners and share our respective arts with each other.*

#### Schools - Associated with Houston Stick Fighting Association

Houston Martial Arts Academy

Ground Dwellers BJJ

DAMAG-INC Kali Combatives

Combat Nation

Texas Jeet Kun Do

Southeast Texas Escrimadors

Westchase Warriors GB Westchase

TX 3rd Coast MMA

North American Self Defense Institute

SwordtoSword



Graphic by Daniel Arola