



## **WING CHUN SHOOT CHI SAO: The Evolution Revolution**

***In this article, Sibak Alfredo Del Brocco of The Combat Centre discusses the revolutionary yet practical decision to incorporate 'shooting' into the Hung Suen Wing Chun curriculum and the importance of evolution and adaptation in all systems of martial arts.***

My – and by extension the Combat Centre's - view on martial arts is simple: if it works, train it and teach it; if it doesn't, discard it. Consequently, the search for truth in a system has recently seen one of the oldest and most traditional drills in Wing Chun – Chi Sao ('sticking hands') – develop into a more modern, more up-to-date and more combat realistic drill. By adding the dimension of shooting – essentially incorporated from Brazilian Ju Jitsu – one of Wing Chun's most beneficial training drills has become better than it was ever originally intended to be.

Wing Chun has always been a hybrid system – right from the very outset, in fact. At its core, Wing Chun contains elements of Hung Gar, Chow Gar, Tong Long, Bak Mei, Snake, and Crane styles to name but a few. The founders of the Wing Chun system combined their diverse knowledge of these gung-fu styles and trimmed the fat off superfluous, flowery training drills and impractical training methodology. The result was a no-nonsense, combat effective system that could be learned and employed rapidly (students of martial arts history will know why this was so important for the times – if not, please see my article on the true history of the origins of Wing Chun on The Combat Centre website: [www.wckfo.com.au](http://www.wckfo.com.au)). The late, great Bruce Lee realised the system's potential for adaptability and diversity over 30 years ago – hence his development of Jeet Kune Do. To date, Wing Chun's evolutionary potential has enabled the system to readily adapt and incorporate elements of other styles including BJJ, close quarter stick and knife, boxing, kickboxing and muay thai.

Of course, there are still those who doggedly stick to the hard traditions of the original system and continue to practice the art for 'art's sake.' Reverence, tradition and nostalgia has its place certainly but that place is not on the 21<sup>st</sup> century's battlefield – the street.

As a hybrid system, Wing Chun must continue to evolve if it is to address conflict resolution against today's enemy – the human animal - who is now better educated in the vicious tactics of gang attack and street violence than ever. As a result, multiple opponents, weapons, groundfighting and – yes - shooting and grappling must be taken into consideration.

While the purists would argue that Chi Sao does not need shooting or any other element of BJJ, one must objectively assess the benefits of adding this extra dimension to an already multi-dimensional system.

### **Clash of the Titans: When two systems meet**

Firstly, let's examine the individual benefits of the separate drills and their styles of origin.

## **Benefits of Wing Chun's Chi Sao Drills**

- Improved sensitivity which results in improved reaction response time
- Better control of opponent, enabling detection and control of opponent's body movements
- Improved muscle memory e.g. keeping one's hands up and in front of the body (thus protecting the head and torso) during a conflict situation
- Better exploitation of openings or gaps in an opponent's defence/offence

## **Benefits of Brazilian Ju Jitsu's Shooting**

- enables the attacking of an opponent's balance and going to the floor where an adversary can be quickly taken through a variety of chokes, locks, strikes and submissions
- strikes on ground either with feet, hands, head etc are more powerful as the opponent has to absorb full impact of the blow – that is, there is no free space, leeway or buffer between them and the ground.

Now when you combine both these skills and therefore the benefits they provide, you don't need to be a rocket scientist to see how devastating these skills can be and what new dimensions they add to a martial artist's existing repertoire.

Firstly, by adding grappling and shooting to the Chi Sao drill, a practitioner has the benefit of improving total body awareness and full body motion sensitivity as opposed to that gained from merely locking arms with an opponent. Shoot Chi Sao also allows for the 'high grapple' or 'clinch' and not just the standard shoot around the waist or legs, thereby increasing a Wing Chun exponent's weapons and attack arsenal. For example, headbutting, striking, biting, gouging, knee riding and stomping are all used in the street-grapple with the objective of getting back up on one's feet – to either high-tail it out of the area or to readily deal with multiple opponents – and prevent half-a-dozen pairs of shoes from colliding with the back of your head.

Also, the Chi Sao methodology of looking for and attaining positional advantage and exploiting an opponent's lack of mobility and low centre of gravity are perfect for execution in a ground situation.

And, because Wing Chun's Chi Gerk (sticky feet) is also trained, the combination of sweeps, stomps, throws and takedowns involved often means that a confrontation will end 'on the floor'. This, of course, is where BJJ comes in very handy.

## **In conclusion**

Being prepared to look 'outside the box' and continue the evolution of a system that wholeheartedly embraces the whole range of human movements and correct body mechanics – regardless of the origin of those movements and mechanics – is the goal of the Combat Centre's approach to Wing Chun and martial arts in general. To seek the truth in all things and refuse to be stymied or brainwashed by tradition is the goal of the true martial artist.

Learning a martial art for art's sake is all well and good but expect to get your butt – not to mention your head – kicked out on the street. Learning how to fight standing up, on the ground, on your knees and all the angles and planes around and in-between is a necessity for any serious practitioner of the pugilistic arts. Shoot Chi Sao might be just the training supplement you need.