

BLACK BELT[®]

World's Leading Magazine of Martial Arts

ONE ART TO RULE THEM ALL



***WHY JUDO MIGHT JUST BE THE MOST VERSATILE
COMBAT SYSTEM ON THE PLANET!***

by Gary Goltz & Tony Cortina
(Photos by Peter Luedurs)

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Perhaps the earliest exposure the American masses had to judo occurred in 1920, when Jigoro Kano and a fifth-degree black belt demonstrated at the New York Athletic Club and the art was subsequently written up in *The New York Times*. In the decades that followed, judo has been on a veritable roller-coaster ride in the United States.

In the early 1960s, when *Black Belt* was in its infancy, judo was probably the most frequently written-about martial art—one that was often portrayed in movies as an unbeatable form of self-defense. The pendulum then swung toward competition, fueled in large part by the adoption of judo as an Olympic sport in 1964.

That coup proved to be a double-edged sword, however, because as competitive judo took off, the martial arts community began to regard the art as a sport. Self-defense practitioners focused their energies on karate, *taekwondo* and other striking styles that seemed better suited for the street.

Then MMA burst on the scene in the 1990s, and Brazilian *jiu-jitsu* immediately proved its ability to dominate. Savvy martial artists were quick to announce that Brazilian *jiu-jitsu* and judo had more similarities than differences, which brought judo back into the limelight as a valuable piece of the MMA pie. Judo was now a combat sport.

Judoka just smile when anyone attempts to pigeonhole their art because they know that in addition to being an exciting spectator sport and an effective combat sport, it's a no-nonsense method of self-defense. After all, it's derived from several styles of *jujitsu*, arts that were designed from the bottom up to function in fights.

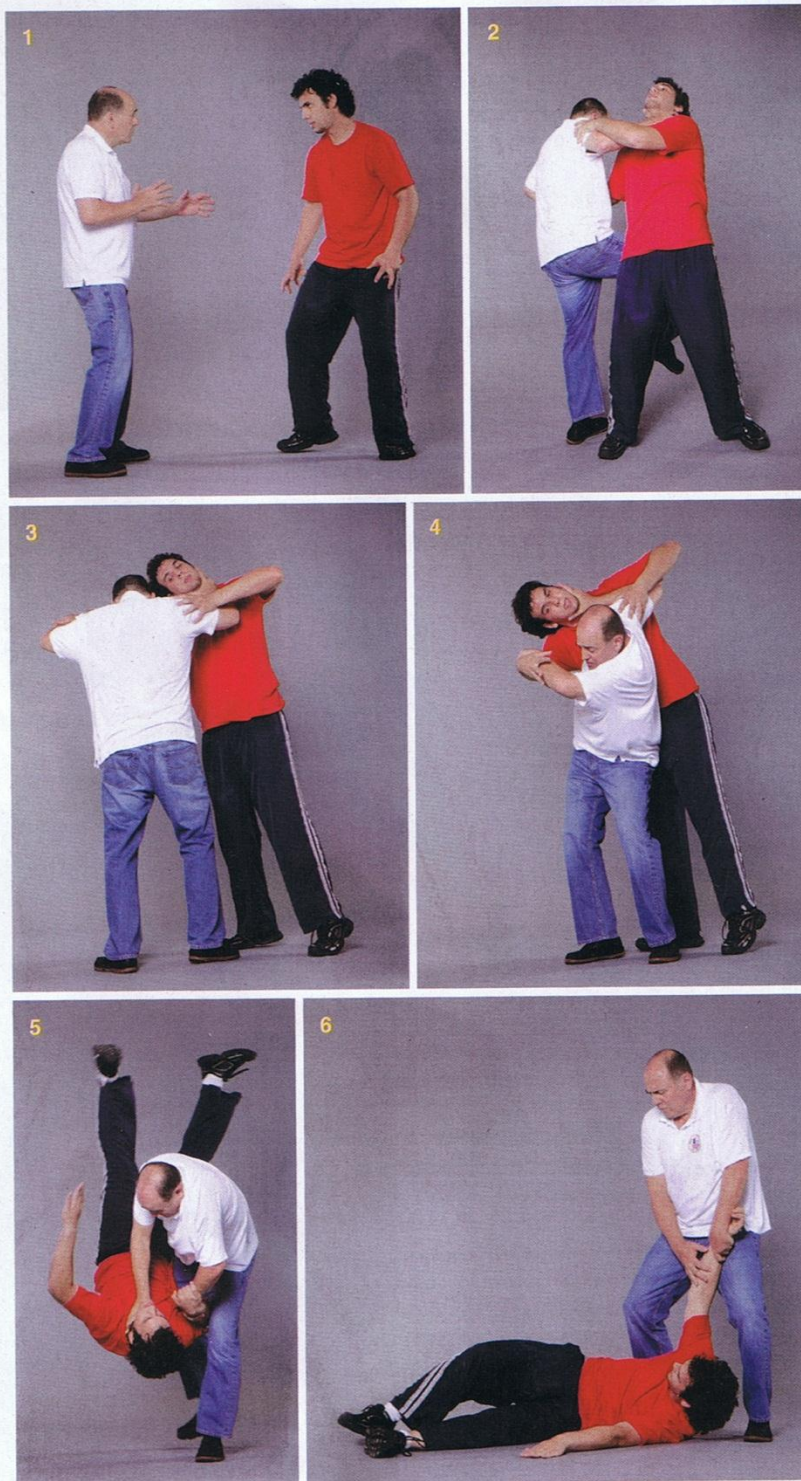
Even better, judo offers a spiritual component that complements its physical facet. "By training you in attacks and defenses, it refines your body and your soul, and helps you make the spiritual essence of judo a part of your very being," Kano once said. "In this way, you are able to strive toward self-perfection and contribute something of value back to society."

Because the efficacy of judo in competition has been well-documented and the spiritual benefits are best learned through long-term training, this article will focus on judo's self-defense side.

FULL POWER

Judo is renowned for its throws, sweeps, armbars and strangles, but the art also includes an arsenal of strikes that are taught in its *kata*. Also useful for self-defense are the skills you develop for controlling your opponent's movements through the use of

MAJOR OUTER REAP INTO LIFT-AND-PULL HIP THROW:



Gary Goltz (left) steps in on his opponent and attempts to execute an *osoto gari* (major outer reap), but the man resists (1-2). Goltz switches tactics and does a 180-degree *tai sabaki* pivot in the direction of the resistance (3). That sets up the opponent for a *tsurikomi goshi*, or lift-and-pull hip throw (4-5). The *judoka* controls the man all the way to the ground by gripping his right arm (6). If need be, Goltz can transition into an armbar or other finishing technique once his attacker is down.

U.S. JUDO ASSOCIATION UPDATE

After I was elected president of the U.S. Judo Association and a new board of directors was installed, our first goal was to restore the status of the organization and get it in the black. I'm happy to report both goals have been accomplished.

The USJA has a new database and coaches portal that permit club leaders to access records, interact with members and update their rosters using a computer or smart phone. Furthermore, we're enjoying increased cooperation with the U.S. Judo Federation and USA Judo. We, along with the leaders of these organizations, have committed to expanding judo as a brand with the ultimate goal of getting more feet on the mat across the United States.

—Gary Goltz

clinches and clothing holds. Furthermore, the fact that judo leaves out the most dangerous throws and holds of jujitsu means you quickly learn how to handle a fully resisting opponent—which can't be said for most arts.

The unsung self-defense benefit of judo training revolves around breakfalls. You're thrown dozens of times in every training session, which renders you skilled at landing without injury. In law enforcement, back sprains, shoulder dislocations and torn ligaments often result from physical confrontations that involve a fall. Police officers who've studied judo, however, frequently find themselves less susceptible because they don't stiffen up when being thrown or taken down. Why else would Japanese cops be required to study judo?

FREE PRACTICE

For purposes of self-defense, judo *randori* offers untold benefits. If you've ever taken a judo class, you know how physically taxing this "free practice" is. It's a full-body workout that requires you to look for vulnerability in your opponent's defenses and attempt to take him off-balance so you can execute a sweep, throw or takedown before he can react. It helps you develop lightning-fast reflexes, explosive power, core strength, balance and endurance—attributes that are essential in a fight.

Unlike competition, in which your goal is to be victorious under a specific set of rules, there's no victory in *randori* other than the expansion of your knowledge. Your focus is on acting according to the art's principles: *seiryoku zenyo* (to make the best use of your power) and *jita kyoei* (to go forward together with your opponent).

Randori also ingrains the concept of *kuzushi*, or off-balancing. It entails breaking your opponent's balance in such a way that your attack is facilitated. *Kuzushi* is the key to efficient execution of virtually all judo throws and submission holds. Essentially, it teaches you how to react while controlling a person who's resisting—a scenario faced by police officers who must arrest an uncooperative subject and private citizens who must restrain an assailant until the police arrive.

WARRIOR MINDSET

Judo fosters the development of a warrior mindset that can aid you in any type of combat. Training and competition demand extreme mental toughness, which is beneficial in a violent encounter. Consider it a fringe benefit of being hurled to the mat with full power day in and day out.

Another attribute that's developed is the ability to work through pain. During *randori*, the least-serious injury you'll suffer is mat burn. More serious are the bruises, sprains and occasional broken bones. Persevering long enough to earn a black belt in judo means you possess a never-quit-fighting attitude that's invaluable on the street.

Because judo includes both stand-up and ground fighting, training instills confidence in any combat environment. Of course, you won't always want to throw an opponent to the ground and grapple with him in a street fight, but you'll appreciate knowing what to do if you wind up there.

STREAMLINED TECHNIQUES

Judo, of course, is renowned for its throws. One of the best ways to apply them involves getting into the habit of forming a contingency plan: If my first throw doesn't work, I'll try this one. In no way does that mean you lack confidence in your skill; it simply acknowledges that your opponent will be resisting your moves and that it makes sense to be ready to transition to a secondary throw that will catch him by surprise while he's trying to stop your first one. Example: You plan to toss him using *osoto gari* (major outer reap). The move requires you to take him off-balance to the rear. If you don't do that right, he can lurch forward to regain his balance. That's when you transition to a throw that takes him forward and off-balance—such as a *harai goshi* (sweeping hip throw) or *ippon seoi nage* (one-point back-carry throw).

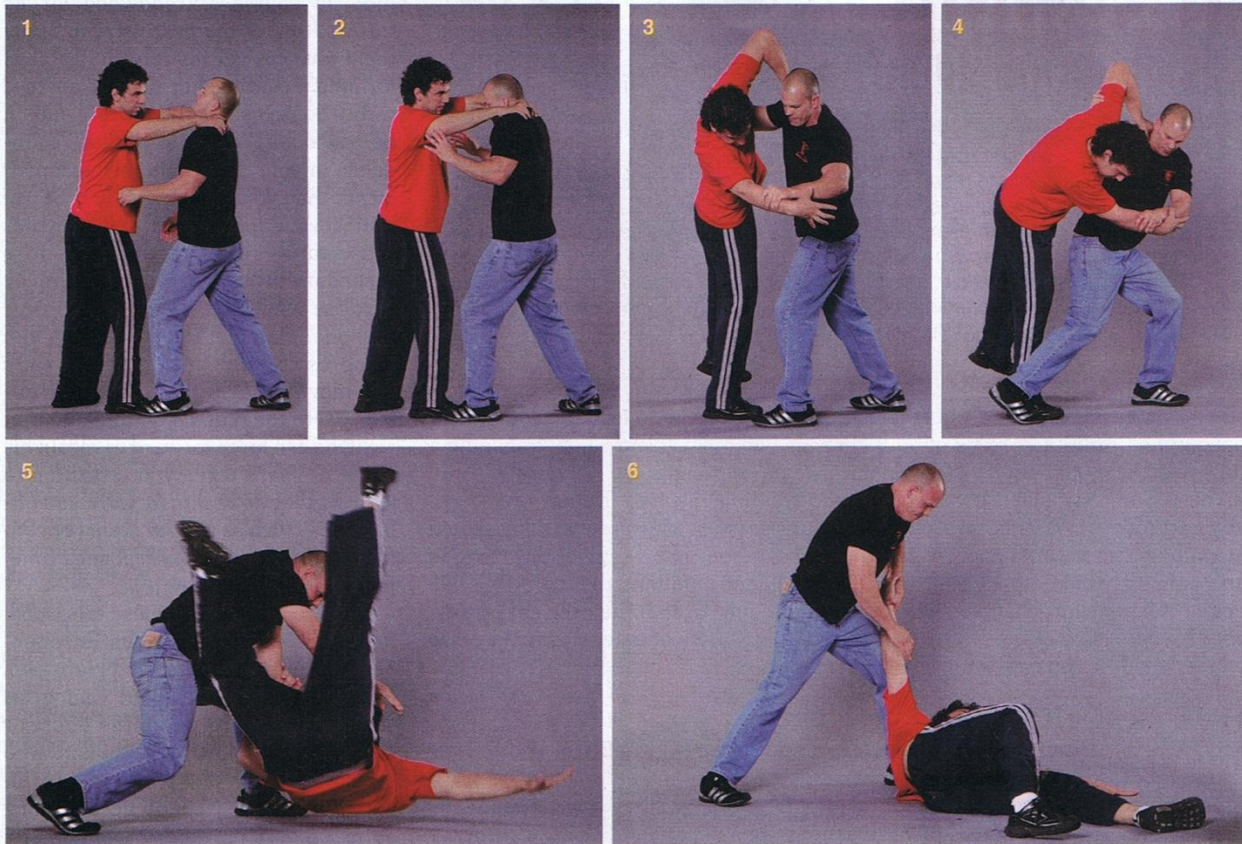
Judo's foot sweeps are also functional in a fight—especially when an opponent closes the distance and grabs you. Foot sweeps are all about timing; as such, they require very little effort or strength. Examples: An assailant who grabs your collar and pulls can be redirected and then swept off his feet using *de ashi barai* (advanced foot sweep). If he charges, you can use *kosoto gari* (small outside reap), sweeping him as he takes his step. Considered low commitment, these techniques are easy to recover from and transition out of should things not go according to plan.

Concomitant with practicing all those throws and sweeps is the development of the ability to fall. Judo gives you the skill you need to sustain a full-speed, full-power drop onto a wood or concrete surface without harm. Obviously, honing that skill until it's second nature requires that many hours be devoted to the mechanics of landing, rolling and energy dissipation. This means that on the street, where most fights start standing and end on the ground, you'll be prepared for the inevitable transition.

GROUND DEFENSE

In addition to the aforementioned techniques, the judo arsenal encompasses all the submissions you see in MMA. How well they work on the street depends, of course, on the situation. Even if you decide not to use them, knowledge of how they work will better prepare you for what your opponent might

FRONT STRANGLE INTO BODY DROP:



Using both hands, the assailant (left) grabs Tony Cortina's neck and begins strangling him (1). Cortina places his right hand in the man's left armpit and uses his left hand to grab the man's right arm (2-3). The action off-balances the attacker, opening the door for Cortina to step forward, turn his body and extend his right leg so his foot blocks the man's ankle (4). Note how Cortina's right foot points in the same direction as the attacker's foot. Next, the judoka pulls the attacker over his extended leg, using the tai otoshi technique to throw him to the ground (5). Cortina maintains control of the opponent's wrist in case follow-up action is required (6).

do and the predicaments he might muscle you into.

The portion of judo's ground repertoire that will serve you well in a fight is its *shime waza*, or strangulation techniques. Most law-enforcement officers are familiar with *hadaka jime*, aka the carotid-control hold or lateral vascular neck restraint. It's favored because it can render a person unconscious in seconds. The compression of the carotid arteries and/or the jugular veins causes cerebral ischemia, a condition in which the brain doesn't receive enough blood to maintain normal neurological function.

Although law-enforcement officers typically learn to apply this technique from the rear, judo arms you with the knowledge to perform *hadaka jime* and other *shime waza* from a variety of positions. Example: You can use a strangle on a subject who's shooting in for a

double-leg takedown simply by sprawling and reaching down around his neck.

REALITY-BASED TRAINING

It goes without saying that training for a judo match is different from training for self-defense. In competition, your goal is to score points, pin your opponent or submit him. On the street, your goal is quick and efficient neutralization. If you lean toward the latter, you must ensure your training is based on realistic street scenarios.

What works in a judo tournament might fail on the street for several reasons: You might not be able to apply a technique because you're on slippery terrain, on a flight of stairs or in a narrow hallway. Perhaps your attacker isn't wearing a shirt that's substantial enough to grab. To prevail, you must adapt, and to do that, you need to train

right. Practice your techniques without restricting yourself to holding your partner's clothing. It's not that difficult: In the early days of judo, uniforms were cut short and, therefore, were difficult to grab. That didn't stop judoka from executing some of the best moves ever witnessed in competition.

Finally, make sure you incorporate striking into your self-defense training. It isn't allowed in competition, but it can be a fight-ender on the street. At the very least, practice defending against strikes while you execute your preferred moves. Expect your attacker to punch, kick and even bite you, and make sure you don't leave yourself open long enough for him to take action. ✕

About the authors:

Gary Goltz, seventh degree, is president of the U.S. Judo Association (usja-judo.org). Tony Cortina is a Southern California-based combatives instructor ([facebook.com/uplandcombatives](https://www.facebook.com/uplandcombatives)) and law-enforcement officer with 15 years of experience, 11 of which have been with his unit's SWAT team.

Better fitness means better martial arts!



Over the past decade, I've dedicated most of my free time to serving the needs of *judoka*. Unfortunately, that caused me to neglect my health. I was reminded of that every time I climbed on a scale and saw the readout, which got as high as 252 pounds, and every time I met with my *sensei*, Kyu Ha Kim of Pittsburgh. Despite being 75 years old and having had a heart transplant, the former Korean judo champ still got on the mat to practice every day—something I no longer did.

Vowing to remedy things, I enlisted the help of Tony Allen, owner of Combined Martial Science in Chino, California. When I began, I was measured at 30.2 percent body fat with a body mass

index of 34. Those stats put me well into the obese category for someone my height (6 feet tall) and age (56). I had my work cut out for me.

Allen ordered me to ride an exercise bike. At first, I could barely stay on the saddle for 15 minutes while maintaining a

slow pace, but that changed quickly. He then outlined an expanded routine that included light weightlifting, striking drills, circuit training and calisthenics. His aim was to keep me moving for at least an hour, four to six times a week.

After just six weeks, I began noticing an improvement. My energy level increased, and I'd dropped a few pounds. That's when Allen explained that diet is the real key to fitness. Did he put me on the latest fad diet? No. He merely imparted a few words of wisdom, which I took to heart: "Go to bed hungry, wake up starving." Following his advice enabled me to sleep better and wake up feeling energized, not to mention shed even more pounds.

Within three months, I was down to 240, a weight I hadn't seen in two years. My size-7 *gi* was looking baggy, and people were noticing the difference in my appearance. That positive reinforcement only increased my desire to stick with the workout and diet.

Being a lifelong judoka, I responded quickly to the new demands being placed on my body. I no longer sat on the sidelines and taught; I got out on the mat and trained. I used the discipline I'd gained during years of competition to purposefully develop new workout habits and a smarter eating plan that focused on salad, chicken, fish, fruit and the occasional energy bar.

Fast-forward to the end of 2011: I now wear a size-5 *gi* and weigh 215 pounds. My body fat is 25.5 percent, and my BMI is 26.3. In addition to enabling me to reduce or eliminate the medications I needed for my blood-pressure, cholesterol, thyroid and digestion problems, the transformation has made me a better role model for my students. I'm no longer embarrassed to get on the mat.

The best part is, all these changes have occurred in a scant nine months. My advice to all martial artists who have been neglecting their health is this: Try it with the same dedication you used to put into your martial arts training. It's less difficult than you think, and the changes will become apparent more quickly than you can imagine.

—Gary Goltz

