



S.P.E.A.R. SYSTEM™ Combative Philosophy **Applications & Implications for Personal Defense**

By Tony Blauer

In your fight, you're point.

Irrespective of your training or position on a team, if the opponent is in your face, it's now your fight. And while there may be professional rules of engagement, it's also now a very personal moment. If you can't subdue this threat, you likely will not accomplish your task within the professional mission and likely the confrontation will also have impact on your personal situation.

The answer: Totality in training.

While 'totality' may appear to be grandiose, the reference is merely philosophically based argument that suggests that 'we' must look carefully at the combative arena, the environment and specifically the opponent through a disciplined threat assessment filter. This will enable us to customize training to provide the greatest tactical advantage for the next engagement.

"The superior fighter has no emotional attachment to any particular range of combat."

-BTS maxim

Our methodology seeks to improve spontaneous effective modification or adaptability of the warrior's arsenal. This includes personal tools (body/mind) as well as tactical tools (all other weapons). My message has always been to be diverse, skilled in all ranges. If push comes to shove you must have no physical preference, no emotional attachment to a range, only then you can make a calm, calculated, strategic choice and force the confrontation to the range that suits the situation.

"Are you training for your next fight or are you training for your last fight?"

-BTS Maxim

The majority of training is out-of-date, sport-driven or knee-jerk based. Rarely do we think way outside the box about our vulnerabilities or creatively think about how our opponent will 'ambush' us. This is the secret to the SPEAR System method and its' focus on 'startle/flinch' conversion during the Murphy moment. Our system does not replace other tactics. It is merely a bridge to those tactics you already possess. Our training paradigm provides a formula to address a problem in training rather than in the

arena. Remember: **"Experience is something you get, shortly after you need it!"** We prefer to get our experience before someone else gives it to us. ☺

Our training directive is to provide greater tactical confidence by focusing on weakness (ours & theirs) rather than solely working on strength.

The mechanics toolbox metaphor

The usefulness of the toolbox is that it carries a variety of tools to address a 'mechanic's' dilemma: diagnose, treat & remedy a problem. Fighters are like mechanics. When they are confronted with a problem, they must fix it. (This applies to the street and both competitive and combative arenas.)

Like the mechanic, we must be able to diagnose and treat the problem before it becomes too serious. The key to appreciating this philosophy is in understanding that there are two phases of 'physical' training necessary for street confidence.

1. **ATTACK SPECIFIC TRAINING** (Type of attack: choke, hair grab, sucker punch, gun grab, etc.)
2. **SCENARIO SPECIFIC TRAINING** (The actual situation: location, time, friends or enemies present, weapons, escape routes, who the opponent is, etc.)

It is dangerous to look at a fight as purely a physical dilemma? We need to ask: "What is the specific situation?" "Do I need to be on my feet?" "Does my opponent have a group of friends with him?" And so on.

In the above examples, there was no mention of the 'attack' or the tactics. But each question created an image, scenario and perhaps ideal strategy. Before you head butt someone or break an elbow with an arm bar - read the situation.

Remember; don't necessarily use your favorite move in a fight, *use the move that's the worst for your opponent!* To do that takes versatility. There are times for the ground and times to stay on your feet. Most of the time, for the extreme close quarters, you want to be up and ready to move. But for real-life confidence you need to cross-train.

Should you train grappling? Yes, but with a focus on how to 'subdue' *not* 'submit' your opponent. Strike when you can, grapple when you have to. My friend Ron Donvito sums it up best: **"Grappling may be your thing, but blunt trauma is king!"** This philosophy helps create clarity in the moment. Remember; street confrontations generally start in close quarter range. If the confrontation is not taken care of verbally or physically at that range, or if the attack is so sudden, then it will probably go to the ground. Learning grappling skills is extremely important for total confidence. If you are forced to the ground you will not panic because you have the tools.

COHESION AND 'RELATIVE' TOTAL CONFIDENCE

There are three general groups that create confidence. They are:

1. Physical Conditioning
2. Physical Skills Development
3. Strategic & Tactical Conditioning

The simple message here is that your body must be able to support the activity. Your body/mind system must be able to perform movements to skillfully address the problems and your scenario training must be able to strategically and tactically solve that problem. If you leave out parts of this trinity, you weaken the synergy!

Being prepared in all ranges and situations cannot be addressed by a philosophy or a 'style'. Only a 'system' can attempt that, because systems evolve to address change.

A 'philosophy' is only validated if the tangible aspects of the philosophy are explored. That's the scientific (physical) connection. A philosophy is useless if YOU control the experiments and the condition so that it supports the philosophy.

Preparation and 'theoretical' totality requires complete integrity (you have to be willing to throw ideas away, even if you've invested time and money - referred to as 'the paradigm shift'). Here's an example of theoretical preparedness: Would you agree that most martial artists' arsenal are usually categorized by four ranges: kicking, boxing, trapping, and grappling? And that each range possesses a specific tool set. I.e. Kicking range=kicks, Boxing Range=strikes, etc.

In my 'system', we have 8 definite ranges, making our system "theoretically" more complete. Also, in BTS, we are concerned with close quarter effectiveness. Our ranges involve reality-based tools and our definitions are more "global" allowing for and inspiring greater versatility.

The Ranges of BTS

- #1. Cerebral {FEAR management, VERBAL defuses, etc.}
- #2. Weapons {Protective strategies against knife, gun, club}
- #3. Rage Attacks {sudden explosive attacks during the verbal stage: tackles, haymaker shoves, grabs, etc}
- #4. Leg Maneuvers {kicks, sweeps, shins, knees, etc.}
- #5. Fist techniques {punches, knuckle strikes, hammer fists, etc}
- #6. Close Quarter Skills {elbows, head butts, claws, nerves, bites, knees, controls, etc}
- #7. Groundfighting {ballistic grappling tools, close quarter skills that apply to the ground.}
- #8. Grounded (when your opponent is standing and you are down). {Tactical Get-up, spinning, attacks to legs, take downs, etc.}

Preparation for me is about survival. To evaluate the conditions I may face, I must look at real life attacks in cars, elevators, stairwells, water, a bed, and so on. Then I must think about the opponent, the personality of the attacker, the conditions, the repercussions, etc. Then I must analyze the scenario. If you can tell me when and where your next fight will take place, against whom, the number of opponents and if there'll be weapons (you get the point), then I would agree, you could completely plan for it. If you can't, then you either get paranoid or practical.

With this POV it may appear that my system would include hundreds of techniques and counters, etc. Not the case. In fact, we don't teach 'defense' in the conventional sense and there are virtually no techniques to learn. We embrace the three 'T's': Tools, Targets and Tactics. Know your personal tools. Know your opponents' targets. In a real fight, (one that cannot be avoided), when you *introduce a tool to a target, that is a tactic*. Let the scenario influence the level of force. Let your opponent 'tell' you through his actions how & where he needs to be stuck.

How can something as simple as 'The Three T's' work? Because scientifically speaking, at close quarters, most people attack in similar ways. We refer to this as the Primary Initiation Attack (PIA). This training model allows one to improve perception speed, decrease reaction time and in theory, if you can intercept & destroy the PIA, the fight is almost over. So which style has the best techniques? In truth, a technique never won a fight. It was always the warrior who did the work. **The 'style' in my opinion, is incidental to the victory.** When you really analyze the micro-moment of combat and contact, where the result was favorable, it was usually a combination of spontaneity, commitment and directness that won the moment, irrespective of the style, system or tactics.

Recognize that 'being attacked' is more dangerous than 'attacking'. Develop 'adversity-based training' where you create worst-case scenarios and work to safety from there. This philosophy will engender new drills all the time *so you're not training for your last fight*. Remember; don't mistake the trademark for the truth. All training is 'fake', even when it's dangerous (because it's still a drill). Our job, therefore, is *'to create the most realistic 'fake' training possible*. Embracing this, we keep ourselves humble because we don't mistake the drill for the fight.

Practical for me was creating a system that embraced one concept: the result. (*I recently received an email from an associate in Germany who asked me what I considered to be the most important aspect in a fight. My answer: the result.*) And how do you train for results? Simply by 'what-if-ing' attacks and scenarios and then doing your homework.

My system is a 'way' and I enjoy the 'laboratory' environment. We are always doing experiments and looking for feedback. I love the research and the training. I love the journey and exploration. I would get pretty bored if all I did were practice the two moves I used to win my last 4 fights. Who were my opponents? Was I ambusher or ambushee? Who cares, because 'they' do not represent every opponent. Learn. Move on. As a result of my philosophy, the 'map' of the system gets larger & larger. Because *'knowing what you don't know is more important than not knowing that you don't know'*.

Tony Blauer