

Karate Master and Golf Master

I read an amazing book by the golf master Ben Hogan, and I was struck by the similarities of his discoveries to what my teacher discovered in his years of search for perfection through karate.

Below I compare between what these two amazing men taught. It is beautiful to me to see that at the top it is all the same, different pathways to discover the same principles. Seeing the same principles applied in different areas is also enriching, I believe that it can make our understanding more complete.

They never knew each other, they spend most of their lives seeking for perfection, and by trial and error, without sophisticated hi tech, they both achieve similar conclusions, almost same wording.

The truth is the same and the principles don't change, they are just being applied and adapted in accord with the changing necessities.

Ben Hogan about the grip:

"Undeniable beauty", "Delicate and at the same time powerful"

"There is no need for overdoing the strength of your grip."

"A secure, alive and comfortable grip is what you want."

Sensei Nishiyama about grip:

The contact area should be strong but not muscularly strong; it should be strong by intention and ki energy. It should be firm yet alive.

Ben Hogan:

In the golf swing, the power is originated and generated by the movements of the body. As this power builds up, it is transferred from the body to the arms, which in turn transfer it to the club head. It multiplies itself enormously with every transfer, like a chain reaction in physics.

Sensei Nishiyama:

The technique initiates from inside the body, the spine and muscles around the spine, and energy increases in ripple effect, to the bigger muscles of the torso and then through the upper back, shoulders, elbow to contact area. Each joint serves as action center for the next segment so energy increases many folds. Karate technique is not arm exercise but total body action. When the body center moves all parts of the body naturally cooperate.

Ben Hogan:

The muscles of the right forefinger and thumb connect with a very powerful set of muscles that runs along the outside of the right arm and elbow to the right shoulder. If you work the tips of the thumb and forefinger together and apply any considerable amount of pressure, you automatically activate those muscles of the right arm and shoulder-and those are not the muscles you want to use in the golf swing. Using them is what breeds so many golfers who never swing with both hands working together, who lurch back and then lurch into the ball, all right arm and right shoulder-and all wrong.

Once you have mastered a correct grip, assuming your stance and posture are also correct- you can practically forget what the hands will be doing, or what they have to do, during the swing. They will take care of themselves. The reason for this is that a correct grip brings into play the correct muscles of your arms and body.

Sensei Nishiyama:

The muscles of the thumb are connected to the outer shoulder and if overused the arm will be suspended by the shoulder rather than back and inner muscles, the little finger is connected to the inside muscles through the armpit and back, the grip has to be from the little finger so the arm will be suspended by the back and inner muscles, when the grip is correct we can transfer energy from the body center to the elbow to contact area, and the technique will just happen as result of the body action, no conscious in the arm.

A good grip allows us to keep the elbow soft, it allows us to connect the body to the elbow and to make snap or whip action of the whole body through the elbow and contact area.

Sensei Nishiyama always emphasizes posture and stance first, Ben Hogan first lesson is grip, second is stance and posture.

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