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JONATHAN WANG

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JONATHAN WANG HAS TURNED AMERICA'S CHINESE COMPETITION CIRCUIT INTO HIS PERSONAL PLAYGROUND. DISCOVER HIS SECRET TO SUCCESS

KUNG-FU'S GOLD STANDARD

By Jonathan Wang, with Dave Cater

Photos by Wanelle Fitch

Inside Kung-Fu has asked me to share the secrets of my success—the reasons why I have been able to distance myself from the rest of the competition. After much thought, I believe that there are four reasons for my success: the depth and breadth of my study of numerous internal and external forms and applications with a host of uniquely talented masters; my intense dedication to training; my attention to strengthening and restoring my body through traditional Chinese medicine and a high protein diet; and my strong commitment to continued growth.

STUDYING WITH THE MASTERS

Since I began my kung-fu training at age eight, I have had the good fortune of training with numerous top masters. Without these honorable masters' guidance and care, I could not have accomplished as much as I have. I have learned 15 kung-fu systems and approximately 100 forms.

My primary teacher, grandmaster Jiang Hao Quan, is now 92 years old and one of the most highly esteemed kung-fu grandmasters in the world. Grandmaster Jiang graduated from the famous Nan King Guo Shu Institute in 1930s and has been teaching martial arts ever since. Grandmaster Jiang taught me step by step the entire guo shu (traditional kung-fu) system, including many kung-fu forms, weapons, fighting sets, boxing, san da, shuai jiao, qin na, push hands, duan bing (short weapon sparring) and chang bing (long weapon sparring). Because of this experience, I was able to compete in 10 or more divisions in various national-level Chinese martial arts tournaments. Grandmaster Jiang not only taught me his guo shu method, but also encouraged me to study other forms from other kung-fu masters. I still train as one of grandmaster Jiang's private students.

Over the past 28 years, I have also had the wonderful experience of training in internal kung-fu (xing yi, bagua, and tai chi) with my father, grandmaster Daniel Wang, who carries a rare breadth of knowledge and experience from his study with numerous revered

masters, as well as more than 40 years of devoted training, practice, investigation, teaching and judging.

My father is especially devoted to his life-long specialization in all styles of tai chi chuan (Yang, Wu, Sun, Hao and Chen); tai chi weapons (straight sword, broadsword, spear and staff); tai chi sanshou (tai chi fighting techniques); and tai chi neigong (tai chi qigong). My father has taught me many tai chi fighting techniques that I utilize when competing in both restricted and moving push-hands divisions, and I am grateful to him for his guidance and encouragement.

I have also trained in internal kung-fu with master Su Zi Fang (1990 Asian Game Female Tai Chi Champion); master Hu Hong Xing (Chen Style tai chi master); and master Cui Guo Gui (xing yi master in Beijing). I have systematically studied all styles of tai chi, shan xi style xing yi, and bagua. I am currently studying privately with master Su Zi Fang, who is a wonderful, precise teacher. She has fine-tuned my competition tai chi forms.

My internal training with these wonderful masters has both allowed me to compete in internal forms divisions and also helped me use internal kung-fu fighting principles in sparring.

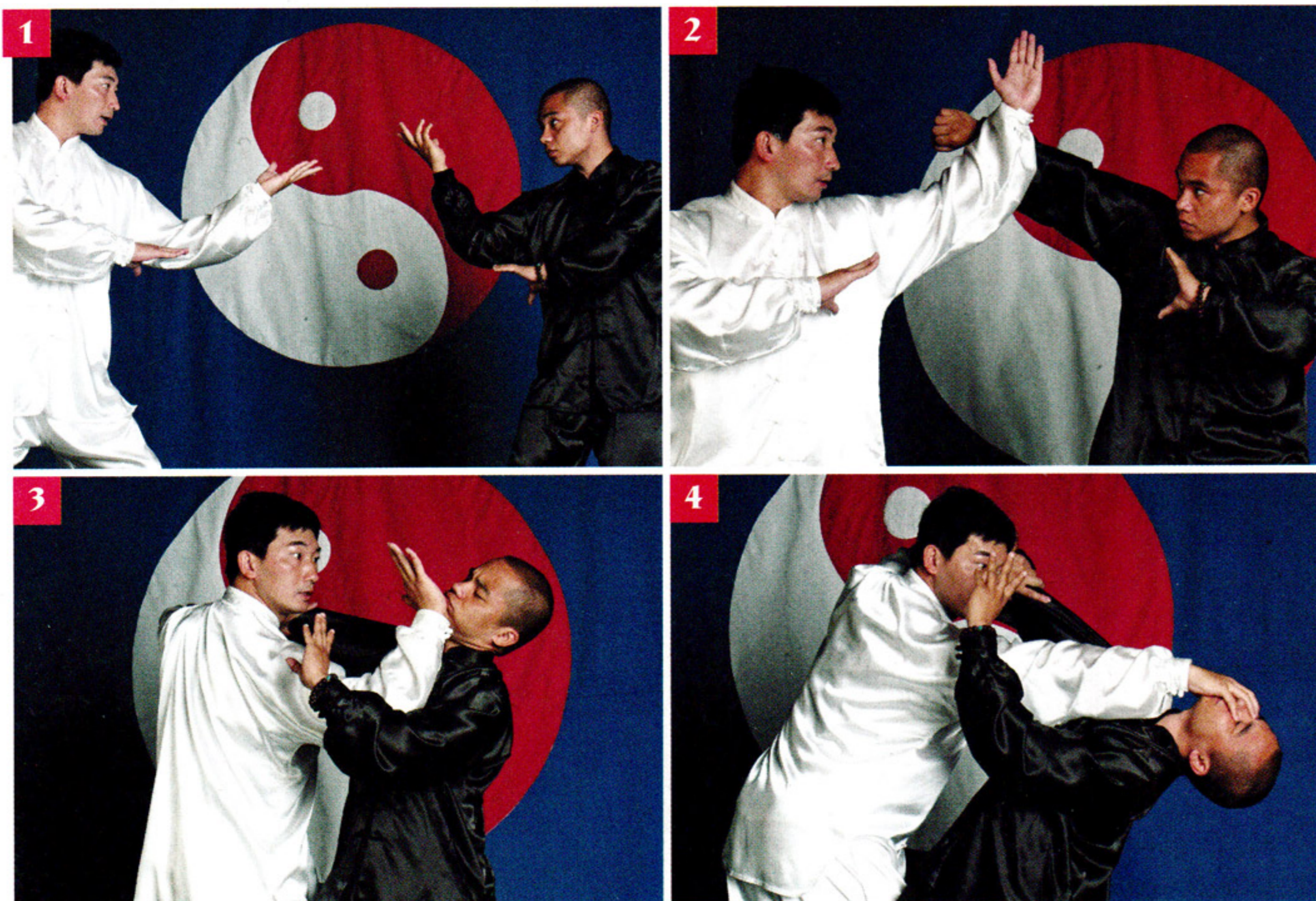
In the last 10 years, I have been concentrating on a few traditional external kung-fu systems. To learn the whole mantis system, I traveled to Beijing 10 times within a five-year period, learning the entire 6-harmony mantis and 6-plum flower mantis systems from master Ma Wei Ling of Beijing. Master Ma is one of the most well-known mantis kung-fu masters in Beijing. To improve my qin na skills, I studied the northern eagle claw fan system from master Guo Xian He of Beijing. Master Guo is the official successor of "eagle claw fan zi" system in China today. I also learned some chuo jiao forms from grandmaster Liu Xue Bo of Beijing. Grandmaster Liu is the current expert of chuo jiao kung fu in China, and his nickname is the "King of Chuo Jiao." He taught me many traditional kung-fu kicking techniques.

I have recently trained in the baji and piqua systems with master Jason Tsou in Los Angeles. Master Tsou is wise and extremely knowledgeable in the baji and piqua systems. I learned that baji can increase a person's strength and piqua can improve a person's flexibility. Baji is good for short-distance fighting and piqua is good for long distance fighting.

After studying all these kung-fu systems, I analyzed each form and technique, and incorporated them when sparring. Combat, in my opinion, is still the most important aspect of kung-fu. Because traditional kung-fu has been passed from one generation to the next since ancient times in China, some practical applications in the forms have been lost. To rediscover the techniques the old masters originally intended, a martial artist must spar with partners.

In the combative kung-fu systems, I trained in modern sanda with coach Guan Jian Min, chief coach for the National Chinese Sanda Team. His students have won many prestigious national and international fighting competitions. I trained in shuai jiao with coach Shen Zhi Kun. I also studied duan bing with master Wang Hua Feng. Currently, master Wang Hua Feng is working as the sanda and duan bing dean of the Beijing Physical Education University. His book on duan bing was recently published in China. These three combative systems form the main foundation for kung-fu fighting and every Chinese martial arts coach should master them.

The new competition event in China is the



Sifu Jonathan Wang uses a qin na technique against an opponent (1). Sifu Wang uses left hand to block a hook punch (2). Sifu Wang inserts his right foot behind opponent, places his right hand beneath opponent's chin (3). Sifu Wang pushes his opponent's chin backward and inserts his fingers into opponent's eye (4).

gong fa system. Recently, san da, tao lu (forms) and gong fa (kung-fu conditioning) have become the three pillars of traditional kung-fu. To glean more information about gong fa, I watched the 3rd Annual Gong Fa Tournament in Guang Zhou, China in 2006. I was fascinated by the competition and began training with Wang Weibao in the Guang Zhou Physical Education University. Wang Weibao is the current Chinese National Finger Hand Stance champion. I also learned basic iron palm with master Zhang Long Xiang. Zhang is the current Chinese National Iron Palm Champion. I hope that gong fa will become a part of the regular competition events in national-level kung-fu tournaments in the future.

In the modern wushu system, I studied from coach Joanna Yang and Eric Chen in Los Angeles for many years. Later, I went to Beijing and trained with the world-famous Beijing Wushu team. Coach Wu Bin gave me good advice and training tips. One of the great contributions of modern wushu is "jib en gong" or the basics. Through the strong foundation that I acquired from wushu, I increased my performance during competition.

To deepen my understanding of martial arts philosophy, I visited



Photo by Dave Cater

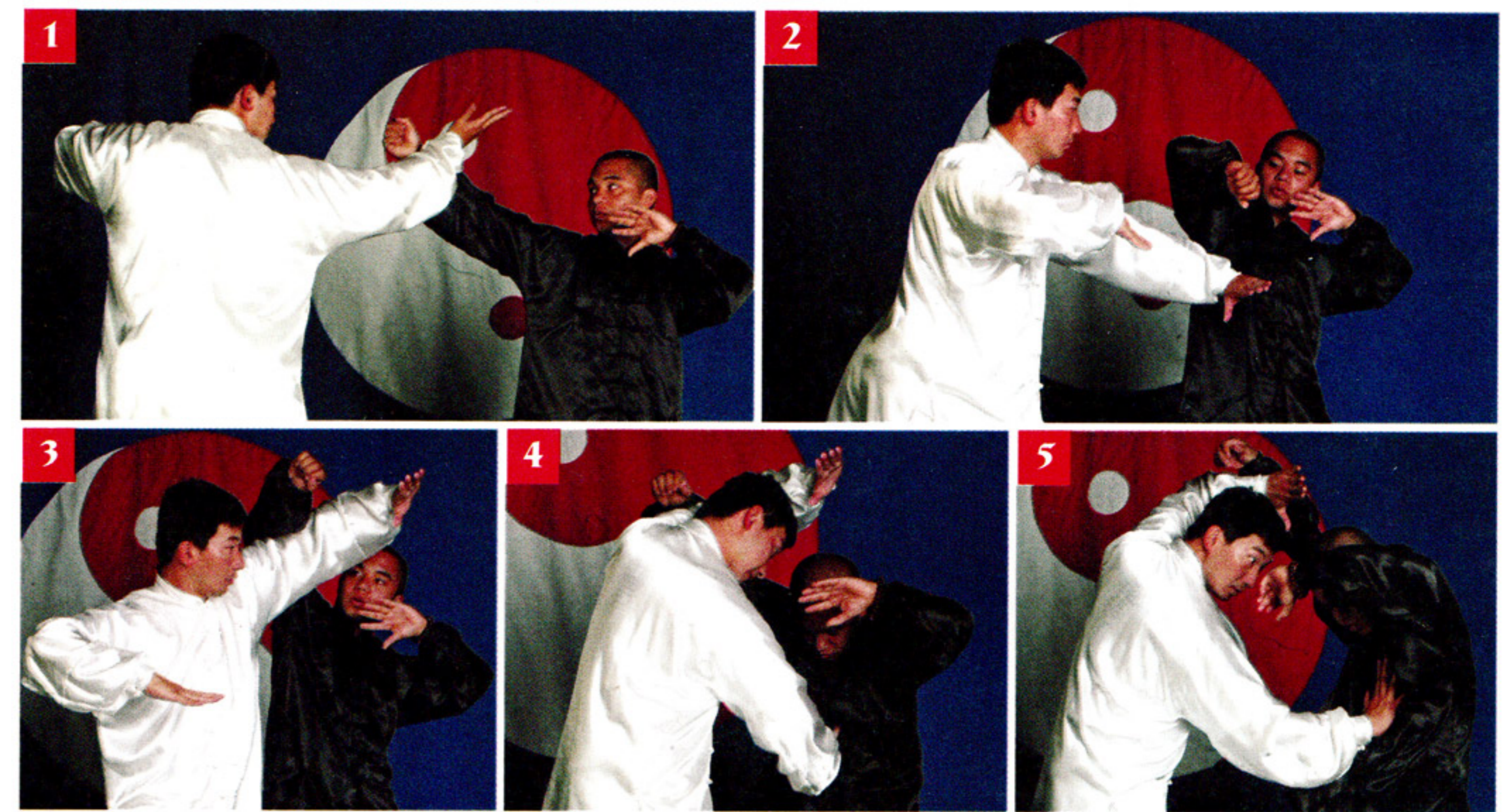
grandmaster Ma Ming Da in Guang Zhou in 2006. Grandmaster Ma is a pioneer for re-establishing the traditional Chinese Guo Shu system in China. Grandmaster Ma is also a historian and scholar. Under grandmaster Ma's guidance, I realized how vast and deep Chinese martial arts tradition really is. Not only do I love to compete, but I also enjoy sharing knowledge of this ancient and extremely well-rounded fighting art with other martial artists.

DEDICATION TO TRAINING

Besides an education from excellent instructors, a challenging, disciplined training schedule is indispensable! Along with coaching numerous private students and teaching group classes, I train on average four hours a day. I have arranged all the forms and techniques into three categories. It is essential

TALE OF THE TAPE

Name: Jonathan Wang
Birthdate: April 29, 1976
Birthplace: Beijing, China
Styles: Internal and external; fighting, wushu, weapons.
Accomplishments: Winner of 172 Gold Medals
Grand Championships: 9 Grand Championships in Chinese martial arts advance divisions.
School: Beijing Taichi & Kung Fu Academy, in Santa Monica, Calif.
School Accomplishments: 319 gold medals, 102 silver medals and 58 bronze medals
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Bagua against an opponent (1). Sifu Wang uses his right hand to block a hook punch (2). Wang draws a circle with his right arm counterclockwise and uses his left arm to block the opponent's right arm (3). Wang strikes his opponent's solar plexus with his right fist (4-5).

to practice all three—each cannot exist without the other.

- Category 1—For competition forms. Must be practiced on a daily basis.
- Category 2—For traditional forms. I practice them twice a week.
- Category 3—For the less important forms. I practice them once a week.

I also practice both san shou and gong fa. The most important pillar is gong fa, which I practice every day. Every kung-fu practitioner should thoroughly study iron palm, eagle claw, iron arm, iron leg, and iron shirt exercises. I also enjoy working with the classic baji spear. Spear is the highest level of kung-fu. It was not uncommon for kung-fu masters to also be great spear fighters.

"My most satisfying life accomplishment is overcoming my own fears."

TCM AND A HIGH-PROTEIN DIET

Along with my martial arts training, I have a strong Traditional Chinese Medicinal background. My mother, Siyi Zhang, is a well-respected doctor of Traditional Chinese Medicine and inspired me to obtain my Master's Degree in Traditional Medicine and my licensure in Acupuncture.

I have great respect for the wisdom and restorative powers of Traditional Chinese Medicine, and I like to use Acupressure to recuperate after training. I also use Moxa (Traditional Chi-



Photo by Dave Cater

Jonathan Wang is rarely challenged at American circuit events.

nese Herbs) to stimulate some of the meridians. Before and after competitions, I use Taoist Meditation Exercises to relax my body and mind. If I get injured during practice or competition, I use acupuncture to facilitate the healing process.

CONTINUED GROWTH

Besides constantly honing my current kung-fu skills, I am committed to continue learning new techniques to maintain a sharp mind and body. In my experience, when a person stops learning he stops growing. Learning makes a person humble. I realize that no matter how much one knows, there is always someone else who is more knowledgeable. One should always try to better himself; the key to success is continuously pursuing and attaining challenging goals.

Martial arts spiritual building plays an important role in my training. I believe that courage is the No. 1 element to have. My most satisfying life accomplishment is when I am able to overcome my own fears. ☯

Jonathan Wang was Inside Kung-Fu's 2009 "Competitor of the Year."