

Size Doesn't Matter: Beating a Bigger Opponent

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\$3.99US \$4.99CAN

01043
MARCH
2000



San-Jitsu's Answer to Battling a Big Bruiser

by Frank E. Sanchez

As a martial artist, you learn certain defensive techniques designed to counter specific attacks. After your instructor demonstrates each one, most likely he pairs you off with a partner who is about the same size and sex as you are. Then you practice the technique on that person and maybe a few other classmates with the same build.

But what happens when you are forced to defend yourself against a really big attacker—one who is so humongous you would have to stand on a chair just to whack his face with your fist? Or one who could hold you at bay with one arm while you flail your limbs helplessly in the air like Jack battling the beanstalk giant?

If you are like most martial artists, you are probably wondering if your fighting strategies would work in such a situation. Truth is, the strategies of a lot of martial artists would be found lacking. But they need not worry: *San-jitsu*, a martial art from the Pacific island of Guam, teaches simple methodologies specifically designed to slay the giant, and they can easily be incorpo-



SLAYING

rated into any martial art.

Two Combat Principles

The first principle of san-jitsu that pertains to battling a bigger opponent is to be mentally flexible while you are fighting at a distance. If you cannot lunge forward to reach a specific target such as your attacker's nose, abandon it and shoot for a more accessible one. In other words, attack his extremities. Bruce Lee affirmed his belief in the very same principle when he advised students to use their closest weapon to strike their opponent's closest target.

When you are facing a bigger opponent, attacking the target that is closest to you—be it a hand, foot or leg—is best accomplished using a pressure-point strike or joint lock. When he punches or kicks, you can hit the striking appendage with your elbow. If he assumes a fighting stance, you can attack his lead leg to cramp or disable it. Once he is wounded, you can target his body or head to end the altercation.

The second san-jitsu principle that applies to combat with a larger attacker is to gain control with the clinch.

Once you decide to fight at close range, you can rush forward and wrap your arms around his torso so your chest is flat against his. That positions you so close to him that he cannot effectively strike you, and it affords you good control of his balance. To protect yourself, you must ensure that your groin and head are tucked to the side or back of him. Once you establish the clinch, you can follow up with a hand technique, foot technique or takedown.

Now that you know the two main san-jitsu principles for fighting a bigger man at a distance and up close, you are ready to apply them in common self-defense situations.

Collar-Grab Defense

When an attacker grasps your collar, he has three options: He can push you away, pull you closer or lift you in an attempt to intimidate you. No matter which game plan he has in mind, it makes little sense to try to attack his body because he need only straighten his arm to prevent your fists from making contact. You are better off concentrating on the hand he's using to grab

THE GIANT





your collar.

If the assailant is very large and strong, attacking a single target such as a pressure point may not suffice. Instead, you may have to attack bilaterally—for example, by using your thumb to activate the pressure point between his index finger and ring finger while you push his thumb inward with the palm of your other hand. Once he drops from the pain, you can continue to apply pressure on the hand as you step over his trapped arm and execute a dragon's tail kick to his upper body.

By continuing to spin and dropping onto your back, you will force the opponent onto his back, where his strength and reach are nullified. You can then finish him with a cross-body arm lock or a similar technique.



Collar-grab defense: The attacker (left) grabs Frank Sanchez's collar (1). Sanchez activates a pressure point with his left thumb and compresses the attacker's thumb with his right palm (2). The san-jitsu stylist applies pressure to bring the attacker to his knees (3), then steps over his trapped arm (4) and falls to the ground to execute a cross-body arm lock (5).

Front Stomp Throw

If a same-sized opponent tries to close the distance and punch you, you might counter with a strike to the face or a throwing technique. But against a giant, you may have to adopt a different strategy. As he steps forward, you can occupy his hands with your hands and simultaneously stomp on his lead foot. If he drops his hands, you can attack his face; if he keeps them in a defensive position, you can shift your weight to your lead foot, which is pinning his lead foot, and use your shoulder to shove him to the ground.

Attack the extremities: When a san-jitsu stylist cannot reach the body or head of a bigger opponent, he strikes or locks the limbs. To demonstrate, Frank Sanchez (left) blocks a punch with a pressure-point blow (1), delivers an upward forearm strike to the wrist (2) and executes a shin strike to the elbow (3).



If you execute the movement with sufficient force, his ankle may break as he falls. At the very least, you will have swept him off his feet and thus neutralized his height and reach advantage.

Using the inertia of his backward-falling body and your forward-moving body, you can somersault over his body using what *jujutsu* stylists call the side-fall *ukemi*. His

body will cushion your fall, and he may sacrifice a couple ribs in the process. Once the air is knocked out of him, you can scamper to your feet and follow up accordingly.

Snake Coiling Around Leg

The next method for defeating a larger assailant who tries to punch you uses *san-jitsu*'s snake-coiling-around-

“When you are facing a bigger opponent, attacking the target that is closest to you—be it a hand, foot or leg—is best accomplished using a pressure-point strike or joint lock.”



Front stomp throw: Frank Sanchez (right) ducks under the attacker's punch (1). Sanchez then stomps on the other man's lead foot and pins it there (2). Next, he advances and pushes the attacker backward (3). The san-jitsu stylist then somersaults over the attacker's body (4) and lands on top of him (5). To finish, he can execute a strike while on the ground, or stand and attack.

the-leg movement, which resembles a child hugging the leg of an adult to keep him from getting away. If you have ever had a kid cling to you in this manner, you know that it encumbers your walking by throwing you off-balance and it is not easy to escape once the youngster has secured his grasp on your leg.

Before the attacker can connect with a punch, you duck low so he cannot easily reach you without sacrific-

ing his balance. You then shoot in under his defenses and wrap your arms around his lead leg. Next, you sink your teeth into his leg; that should cause him to lower his hands and prevent him from anticipating your next movement. While he is reeling from the pain of your bite, you scoot behind him, grab his knees and insert your head between his legs. To take him down, you push backward with your head while you lift his body off the ground. If

the fall does not incapacitate him, you will be able to stand and strike before he can defend himself.

Bear-Hug Defense

If a large man bear-hugs you from behind, he will probably hoist you into the air with the intention of slamming you to the ground like a rag doll. To prevent that from happening, once your legs leave the

ground you should brace your foot on his thigh and kick backward with your other heel until he sets you down.

When you are back on the ground, you can stomp on his instep until his grip loosens. Then you can finish him by dropping forward onto your hands and kicking backward into his groin. As he falls backward, the placement of your foot on his instep may break his ankle.

Snake coiling around leg: Frank Sanchez (right) faces the bigger attacker (1). Before the attacker can punch, Sanchez rushes forward, wraps his arms around his lead leg and bites (2). The san-jitsu expert then maneuvers behind the attacker, grabs his knees and puts his head between his legs (3). To topple him, Sanchez pushes backward with his head while lifting the other man off the ground (4).





Bear-hug defense: As the attacker bear-hugs Frank Sanchez and lifts, Sanchez braces his left foot against the attacker's thigh and prepares to kick (1). He then delivers a series of heel kicks to the knee and shin (2). When the attacker sets the san-jitsu stylist down, Sanchez stomps on his foot and activates a pressure point on his hand (3). To finish, he drops forward onto his hands and kicks backward into the attacker's groin (4).

Rear Cradle Takedown

If a big man approaches you from the front with the intent to choke you, you can employ san-jitsu's rear cradle takedown. You rush forward and duck under his arms, then clinch tightly around his waist. To avoid being struck or choked, you must keep your head low and your body positioned to his side.

From this position, you can circle toward his back and fire an upward forearm strike into his testicles. Once he is sufficiently weakened from repeated blows of this type,

you should position your body so you can hold his crotch and shoulder as you drop and roll. That will cause him to fall backward over your outstretched body. Once he is on the ground, you can strike his groin again or finish him with a leg lock.

Tip of the Iceberg

San-jitsu includes many more defensive techniques for use against a larger attacker. The five sequences listed above are just a few examples of what you can do on the



Rear cradle takedown: Frank Sanchez (right) ducks under his attacker's hands (1), then shoots in and establishes a clinch (2). Next, the san-jitsu stylist circles to the attacker's back, executes a forearm strike into his crotch, and grabs his shoulder and groin to prepare to roll him backward (3). Once the attacker goes down (4), Sanchez scrambles to his knees and punches his groin (5). Afterward, he can execute a leg lock if necessary.

street. With some practice, you should be able to put them to good use if you ever come face to face with a big bruiser. **X**

About the author: Frank E. Sanchez is the founder of san-jitsu, Guam's first internationally recognized martial art. He is based in Jacksonville, Florida.