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QIN YUNQUAN – NATIONAL WRESTLER & MARTIAL ART INSTRUCTOR

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DECEMBER 2, 2013

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1. At what age did you get involved in martial arts? Did you struggle when you first started?

My road as a martial artist started when I was in Junior College or around 17 years old when I trained in Wushu. However, wushu is really more of performance martial arts unlike what I am doing now. Today I am trained in both Combative Sports (e.g. Mixed Martial Arts, Wrestling and Brazilian Jiu Jitsu), and realistic self-defence skills (e.g. Kapap, Catch Wrestling). Yes, it was not easy for me when I decided to make the transition as there are clear differences between performing martial arts and combative sports as well as realistic self-defence skills. For example, in performing martial arts, the focus is on precision and form, while combative sports are about aggression, power and speed to beat your opponent. Realistic self-defence skills focus more on the use of deception, simple gross motor skills and how to create the opportunity to get out of danger. Another issue I struggled with was having the mind-set that engaging in combat would hurt my opponent. In performance martial arts, I do not have to hurt anyone but in combative sports and realistic self-defence, I often have to think of how I can best beat my opponent – be it to strike, kick, choke, armbar, leg lock or ankle lock my opponent.

2. What do you like about it? Is there someone or something that inspires you to get involved in martial arts?

I like the values and the way of life of a martial artist. The martial arts' values are principally about honour, respect, discipline and selfless courage. As a way of life, the martial artist lives a simple and even spartan way of life that is relatively free of many modern day complexities. I do not concern myself with corporate politics and mindless lust for money. Instead, my focus is on being a better fighter or athlete and to be faster, stronger and a smarter fighter. I also like the meaningful existence of my life –

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what I wanted in life. He inspired me to be who I am today.

as a martial artist, my social mission is to help keep as many ladies safe. I am lucky to be given the opportunity to be a Social Activist in Kapap Academy Singapore doing what I love best – learning and teaching martial arts. The one person that inspired me to get involved in martial arts is my Teacher/Mentor Master Teo Yew Chye. Not long after I started learning Kapap, Master Teo posed me a personal challenge to chase my dream to be a martial artist, as well as help other ladies and children keep themselves safe. His story of how he dedicates his life to helping others to keep themselves safe after the demise of his brother from a senseless killing in Johor Bahru made me re-think



3. Is there any training regime and/or diet that you have to abide by?

The life of a martial artist and athlete is hard but yet mentally and spiritually rewarding. I have a difficult training regime – three times a week each for Wrestling and Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu (BJJ). In addition, I would train for Catch Wrestling, Mixed Martial Arts, and Kapap in between Wrestling and BJJ. There is not a single day that I am not training. Most of the days I am physically drained and from time to time, I am nursing some injuries or strained joints. However, I accept that this is what it takes for me to excel in my art, and I do want to be good in what I do. I do not abide by any special diet except when I need to lose some weight for competition. Otherwise, I prefer to eat a well-balanced diet with some protein supplements.

4. Do you have a favourite or signature technique or move?

I do not have a single signature technique or move but I do have a few techniques I can introduce. For example, in combative sports, I prefer to use either a choke or an armbar. Chokes are excellent high percentage moves, and as stated by the late Grandmaster/Founder of Gracie Jiu-Jitsu, "For the choke, there are no tough guys". In more self-defence situations, I would include the use of neck cranks. Neck Cranks are scary and from experience, most people will not continue to fight when they are experiencing excruciating pain from a neck crank. I think most people intuitively appreciate the dangers of a neck crank and will stop struggling or fighting when placed in that situation.



5. Are there disadvantages for women to be involved in martial arts?

The most fundamental challenge or disadvantage for women in martial arts in my opinion is the social and familial pressures that one will face. Singapore is a country where sports is not a priority in life, and it is generally worse if you are a martial artist. There are all kinds of prejudices a female martial artist will face – from objection by your parents to friends who don't understand why any girl would want to fight for a living. It breaks all the gender roles that both family and friends expect you to conform to – for example, women should be more feminine or women should be weaker than men. I am lucky that I have a full-time job and a partner in my own martial arts school, Kapap Academy Singapore. If you think that finding a job is hard as a male martial artist, it is ten times worse for a female martial artist due to social prejudices. Finally, when women in martial arts competitions have male opponents, they are more likely to be at a disadvantage as they are generally smaller and not as physically strong as a man.

6. Tell us more about the classes that you have conducted.

In terms of combative sports, I teach weekly classes at Gracie Combative / Jiu Jitsu as the first and only certified female instructor in Asia. Each week, I also teach and train in Mixed Martial Arts (MMA), and train in Wrestling. In terms of realistic self-defence, I train our students in Kapap (Israeli unarmed combat), and Catch Wrestling on a regular/ weekly basis. Apart from the classes we run at our two training centres (Chinatown and Aljunied), in the evenings and weekends, we typically conduct both regular and intensive Executive Safety Seminars at organizations during the day. On other days, we will conduct Resilience-cum-Personal Protection for Youth programmes in schools, or Ladies Personal Protection programmes for female groups. From time to time, we will run specialist programmes in the use of Tactical Pen for Personal Protection programmes, Knife/Machete/Stick Defence seminars, and Control and Restraint programmes for security staff. I feel a sense of satisfaction when I see the grateful looks on the faces of our students, especially ladies, both young and old. 70% of our students are

ladies, and it is amazing how easy many of them are able to pick up the intuitive moves. Many of our students have become friends and I am grateful for their friendships.



7. What do you think will attract women to participate in martial arts?

I am not sure that I can speak for all ladies who pick up martial arts, but certainly I think some ladies are drawn to the sense of empowerment that realistic self-defence skills can give its female practitioners. Being a relatively small lady, I have never liked the feeling that I can be easily overpowered by any man unless I know how to defend myself. Learning realistic self-defence skills like Kapap and Catch Wrestling helped me to do just that. For ladies who are drawn to combative sports, I guess the sense of achievement that they get from defeating their opponents is a major draw. A third possible reason is

perhaps the attraction of the glamour and 'sexiness', as portrayed by the femme fatale characters played by actresses like Angelina Jolie, Sigourney Weaver and many others. The fourth reason could be the rising popularity of MMA as a combative sport and the glamour that this modern day martial arts sport exudes as portrayed by the media today.

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