



By Pendekar Paul Bennett

Much has been written in martial arts publications about the need to be combat competent across the ranges. More recently a greater emphasis has been placed around our ability to survive once the fight has gone to the floor. This has been polarized by the popularity of 'no holds barred' and associated competitions that seem to confirm the striker's worst nightmare.

But what of those art's that fairly encourage the ground fight? One such art is Indonesia's Harimau (tiger) system of pencak silat. Born of the Minangkabau from west central Sumatra and practiced in the U.K as part of the Palero system, its technical fundamentals can be found to a greater or lesser degree, in every other major orthodox pencak silat style. Important reasons for differences arise from the fact that uneven and slippery ground surfaces are common in Sumatra. Under these conditions, the Harimau fighter considers an upright combative posture detrimental to effective fighting since it offers him only two bases of support. He prefers to hug the ground, sometimes actually getting down on it, thus making effective use of five supports – his two legs, his two arms his back side or belly.

To assume that down is out, could be a grave error, as from the low posture the fighter can deliver sickening blows cutting his enemy down in their tracks. Mobility whether on or just above the ground is key, as without it, dropping away from any incoming blows into a potentially prone position can only delay the inevitable. To counter this the Harimau fighter undergoes a number of arduous training drills, via Kuda Kuda (stance/posture), Langkah (footwork), Tankiss (deflection) and Pukul (striking), to develop the strength of body and will, to be at home on this unfamiliar territory.

The head of the system for the U.K is Guru Besar Richard Crabbe de-Bordes, whose crusade to test his art, has positioned him at the forefront of conflict management. Those who have benefited from his experience include the Special Forces and Elite Police groups and SWAT and Navy Tactical to name few. It may also be worth mentioning that he has just finished a

contract as a presidential aid. This of course is reflected in his teachings, and in turn the teachings of his instructors, giving a firm 21st century edge to the arts combative element, yet still maintaining the deep spiritual and ethical values of this centuries old art.

SO BE AWARE next time someone disappears towards the floor under a hail of blows, you might just be joining them!

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