



Breaking Bricks

by Grainne Matthews, 6th Gup, Houston, Texas

“With the right technique and focus, even a little white belt girl can break a brick. Without the right technique and focus, even a big black belt man cannot.”

Grand Master Kim Soo often says this when he is teaching us how to break. Last night he described a young white belt girl who successfully broke a brick – not by using her muscle power or her body size but by concentrating and by using natural movements and ki.

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Mary Jo Ruffino, a white belt, proves that anyone can break a brick if she uses the correct natural technique and has confidence.

Her fellow students, Jimmy Watts and Carlos Cruz, seated in the background, attempted to break but did not succeed.

He also described a black belt transfer student who had deliberately built up calluses on his hand so he could break bricks. But as GMKS said, “Calluses don’t break bricks; technique and concentration break bricks.” When this student tried to break a brick in a demonstration, he could not, because he did not use the correct natural movements.

Good breaking technique when breaking using a downward knife hand strike include:

1. Stance: A low climbing stance helps balance and focus.

2. Eye Contact: Put both hands on the breaking surface – brick or board – and look at the point through which you will strike. Maintain this eye contact throughout the movement.

3. Natural Movements:

- Raise your striking hand backwards over your head in a natural circular movement keeping the other hand on the brick.
- Turn your hips so that you can use the torque energy of your hips when breaking – body shifting.
- Strike by continuing the natural circular motion to bring your arm and hand through the surface of the brick.
- Twist your hips and bend your knee to put all of your force into the strike – body shifting.
- At the same time, swing the other hand backwards in the circular movement – balancing the body just like when we walk and swing our arms naturally.

4. Ki: Relax your body until you drop your body into the strike when you tighten the striking hand. Kihop as you strike through the brick.

GMKS says, “If you believe you will break the brick, you will break the brick. If you don’t believe you will break the brick, you will not break it.” Don’t attempt to break until you are confident you have learned the technique well and doing it right will come naturally.

On the other hand, even after you have successfully broken a brick, remember what Grand Master Kim Soo also says, “Breaking

a brick is not something you can do anytime, anywhere. Breaking a brick takes concentration and focus. It's not a party trick."