

INTO BATTLE

An interview with Kapap instructor Albert Timen

PART 2

What individuals have had the most influence on you as a martial artist?

I don't quite look at myself as a 'martial artist' since my life experience took me on a different path of practicality, where you are tested for performance on other standards than belts or ranks. So it's kind of funny [to answer this], but some of the most influential figures that influenced me were military

CT school instructors, as well as others in the police and different units I had cross-trained with.

It is well recorded that you have conducted specialised training for police and military units throughout the world. Which units or agencies have you conducted training for?

I had trained many police units in Israel as a part of my work as an instructor there, and outside Israel I had trained various police and military units in the USA, as well as teams of Special Operations and Homeland Security. In Europe, I had trained members of police and SWAT

officers, as well as instructors for DT [defensive tactics] and firearms who were in charge of training their departments, so I've been fortunate enough to be able to share some of my experience to help others succeed in their complex missions.

Over the past 10 years there has been an explosion in the various types of 'reality-based' self-defence and defensive-tactics systems that have flooded the market. What are your views on these systems?

This 'explosion' of RBSD systems has to do with the popularity of the internet and

the ease of today's marketing over this media – which wasn't that cheap or accessible a while back – both by the customers and by the promoters themselves. This phenomenon has also contributed to the notion that everyone can claim today to be a 'grandmaster' without really walking the miles to achieve the above title.

I've always said that 'reality' is a relative term that people like to use for their marketing purposes and students should really check very carefully who [their instructors are] before they



Albert instructs a class in Brisbane, Qld

A former soldier in one of Israel's elite counter-terrorism units, Albert Timen now spends his days travelling the world teaching the Israeli hand-to-hand combat system Kapap, mostly to military units, police and security professionals. The man who once took out a suicide bomber at close quarters is head of Israel's Kapap Academy combat system, which he and other instructors have modified and upgraded to suit the legal requirements of civilian self-defence, and to be applicable for law-enforcement, military and security teams worldwide. Australian-based Kapap Academy representative Paul Johnstone interviewed Timen for *Blitz* when the Israeli instructor recently visited Queensland to teach Kapap.

spend a fortune to buy classes in another well-marketed system with big mistakes and holes which, in turn, can jeopardise their safety when it really counts.

I can see that where there is a valid system, no matter the name or style, it will remain as solid as the credentials of its instructors; and where there are wave-riders, we will see these systems disappear as fast as they appeared.

You've been teaching realistic and no-nonsense defensive tactics for over 20 years, and you are regarded around the world as one of the founders of reality-based training. Yet there have been several instructors who have entered the market in the US over the past several years saying they were the 'first' reality-based instructor. What are your thoughts about these types of claims, and has it affected your own system?

Well, we need to make a distinction on the term itself and the actual practice as I see it. I believe that 'reality-based' was introduced much earlier than any of us, with pioneers like William Fairbairn, Eric Sykes and Rex Applegate. Of course there were others, but these three are world-renowned for their efforts in training commandos, members of the OSS and the British SOE for true battle and not to be 'dojo warriors' as we see today. They

kept simple principles and stripped the non-essentials from their system, which was the most effective for their time and realities. Believe it or not, we are still practising similar moves today, but people are not honest enough to give credit where credit is due and they claim to invent things or 'renew' realities to match their own made-up stories.

I have seen up-close a few of these systems and instructors, and I can only say I am not a part of the 'hype' that goes around these names. Most of our school's expansion is made at a pace where we have control over the quality and validity of our instructors and programs. I give respect to anyone who respects himself first and knows exactly who and what he is.

What's your opinion on the debate over the value of sport-based or combat-oriented training systems?

They are both great to learn from and take the tools that are necessary to win in any given conflict, but let's remember that self-defence, in my perspective, should have only one rule – no rules. So everything goes in order to survive a situation, with the assumption we are using all of it to stop or overcome an attack... use of force is respective to the user, by definition of the 'use of force continuum'.

What is your opinion on the grappling craze that has seized



Albert teaching gun defence

the martial arts community in recent years and what type of grappling is taught in Kapap?

This craze is due to the growing popularity of the UFC, which emerged on worldwide TV. Viewers and martial artists alike had done a complete revision and took the extreme approach, and revised their systems to be

based on groundfighting and grappling only. Don't forget that this is a martial art that has a purpose of defeating an opponent on the ground, with heavy emphasis on submissions and tap-outs. The reality, in my opinion, is to have ground as an integral part of your DT or SD system is important, but don't leave one



Kapap students training on Albert's recent Australian course

aspect of training to determine your tactics. It's analogous to carrying a handgun for self-defence, with one bullet only.

What is your opinion regarding the various Israeli defensive tactics systems that have spread throughout the world, and why are there differences and so much conjecture between many of them over their authenticity?

This question has to do with the lineage to the creator of Krav Maga, Imi Lichtenfeld, who coined the term 'Krav Maga' as being the 'Israeli martial art' more than anyone else. Imi had a few students that had split their organisations after he passed away and they all claimed to be his true followers. Each organisation has its own structure and ranks, as well as authentic instructors. Today there are too many organisations and offshoots that are riding the wave and I can only count a few instructors that are indeed true to their cause in the market today. The big dispute and

market publicity had caused these systems to be popular, as well as scrutinised for their level of performance.

In your experience, what qualities do you need to see in a person before you know they are ready to be qualified as an instructor in the Kapap Academy?

High levels of integrity, leadership skills, confidence, patience, passion to instruct and teach, respect to others and, of course, the physical skills to carry out the mission.

What are your current and future plans for Kapap and the Kapap Academy?

Kapap Academy has plans to expand its instructors cadre and to be established as a respectable and trustworthy system that is leading others by the example of its instructors.

How many times have you visited Australia?

I first visited Australia in 2007 twice and once in 2008 — and I have to say all visits were great experiences for me personally.

evident that all students were hardworking in our seminars and gained new experience, with very positive feedback. I must say that Australia impressed me with the level of dedication for training.

Compared to the other parts of the world that you have travelled to and conducted training, how would you compare the level of skill and knowledge of students and instructors here in Australia?

From what I have seen so far, the picture is very promising. There is a good mixture of personalities with a balanced approach to the material taught — no big egos, and some proved to be true professionals. I am sure we can further introduce the system in the region with great results.

During your recent visit to Australia how did you find the level of skills and knowledge of the participants?

I think people in Australia are open to learn and be exposed to new material they [haven't seen before]. It was

*This interview was conducted by Paul Johnstone on behalf of Blitz. Johnstone runs the Street Edge Defensive Tactics school in Brisbane, Queensland, and recently hosted Albert Timen for a series of Kapap training seminars. **BLITZ***



Groundfighting, Kapap style