

TAEKWONDO FOOT TECHNIQUES FOUND IN TAE BO PROGRAMS

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Abstract: *Taekwondo is the art of hitting with your hands and feet. Tae Bo is a sport that combines Taekwondo shots with boxing shots, performed on a musical background. Starting from this premises, the purpose of this research is to highlight the most important and used kicks in Taekwondo, also used in most Tae Bo programs. The focus of the research is on foot techniques, as in Taekwondo, 95% of the shots are performed by using the lower limbs and only 5% by using the upper limbs. On the other hand, the research also wants to underline the benefits of practicing Taekwondo.*

Key words: *Taekwondo, Tae Bo, foot technique.*

1. Introduction

“Being over 2,000 years old, Tae-kwon-do, or the Art of Hitting with the Hands and Feet, originated in Korea, drawing its sap from its deep-seated roots in the primitive fighting techniques” [10].

Thanks to its spectacular nature, Taekwondo is enjoying an increasing popularity among children and young people in our country. Like all recent Martial Arts, Taekwondo aims to make a perfect connection between body, spirit and nature. “Its fighting techniques make a lot of use of jump kicks and include, in addition to training, competitions and tests for breaking boards, as well as hitting vital points” [3].

Tae Bo “is a program of exercises that combines the best of several disciplines,

bringing together self-awareness and martial arts discipline, the rhythm and grace of dance, the focus and power of boxing” [8].

Legs technique is used in sports wrestling or self-defense. In leg techniques, the effect of the stroke is much stronger than the effect found in the arm technique. It also has the great advantage of hitting the opponent at greater distances. Stronger muscle groups are engage in the kicking technique, making the force of the impact much stronger.

2. Taekwondo leg techniques, found in Tae Bo programs

“The most important techniques include kicks at the level of the abdomen or head,

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in various variations, such as rotations or jumps, sometimes even double or triple” [11].

Kicks are the most used and the most spectacular both in Taekwondo, as well as in Tae Bo. Not only they are mostly used in these disciplines, but they are also the most demanding, working our entire lower body.

There are certain rules that all practitioners must follow in order to provide them with both safety during the execution of the exercises or techniques, as well as the correctness in their execution.

- ✔ The gaze must always be directed towards the point we are about to strike, fixing the point at which we wish to strike.
- ✔ Exhalation occurs when we reach the point of impact, and expiration at the arm reinforcement.
- ✔ An extremely important tip in the execution of foot techniques is not to perform the maximum extension with the foot we hit.
- ✔ The support leg must always be flexed. The knees will never be perfectly stretched either.
- ✔ When we kick, we tense the abdominal muscles, as this point of support provides strength to the strikes and keeps the body stable.

Taekwondo techniques used in Tae Bo program are as they follow: Ap chagi (kick forward); Yeop chagi (side kick); Dwi chaghi (kick back);

3. The illustrated presentation of foot techniques:

Ap chagi (forward kick)

“This is a direct crushing strike. Its force and its power of penetration are very high” [9].

The ap chagi is a fundamental technique in Taekwondo and is also known as the “front kick”. This technique can be used both defensively too keep opponents at a distance and offensively to strike an opponent in front. To execute the ap chagi, the practitioner must position their front foot forward and maintain balance on their back foot. He will then lift his back leg and bring it forward so that it lines up with the front leg. At the same time, the practitioner will extend the front foot towards the target. The kick is executed with the tip of the foot. It is important for the practitioner to maintain balance and coordinate arm and leg movements to generate more power and speed during the kick. After impact, the practitioner will return the foot to its position to be prepared for other techniques or to return to a defensive stance. The ap chagi can be used alone or in combination with other techniques, such as the roundhouse kick or the sidekick, to create complex and effective attacks.



Fig. 1. *Ap chagi (forward kick)*

Yop chagi (side kick)

„To execute the blow, the leg is armed by bending the knee and pivoting on the supporting leg. The foot is pushed to the side” [2]. Yop chagi is a Taekwondo kick,

also known as a „side kick”. This is an advanced and powerful technique that is often used in Taekwondo competitions.

To perform Yop chagi, the practitioner must start from the guard position, with the body weight balanced on the back leg. The practitioner will lift the front leg and rotate it 90 degrees so that it is in line with the shoulders. At the same time, the practitioner will rotate the trunk and extend the side leg towards the target.

The kick will be executed with the side of the foot or the soles of the feet, depending on the practitioner's preference. The Yop chagi kick is generally meant to hit the torso area or the face area.

To increase the force and speed of the kick, Taekwondo practitioners can also use their arms to aid their movement and balance. The kick can be performed in various ways, including bottom up or top down.

As it is a powerful and advanced kick, it takes good technique and a lot of practice to execute correctly and effectively.



Fig. 2. Yop chagi (side kick)

Dwit chaghi (kick back)

The dwit chagi, also known as "back kick", is a powerful and useful technique

in Taekwondo. To perform this kick, the practitioner must arm his leg by bending his knee and bringing the heel towards the seat, while keeping his leg stretched down, at a distance of two palms from the other knee.

When the practitioner wants to execute the kick, he will push his leg back from the hip, in the direction of the opponent. The kick will be executed with the heel.

After the impact, the leg must be withdrawn as quickly as possible to the initial position, in order to prepare for the execution of other techniques or to return to the guard position.

The correct execution of the dwit chagi kick requires a combination of strength, speed and control. The practitioner must have good coordination and maintain balance during the execution of the kick, so that it is as precise and powerful as possible.

The dwit chagi kick can be used both defensively, to prevent the opponent from getting too close, and offensively, to hit the opponent who is behind.



Fig. 3. Dwit chaghi (kick back)

4. Common mistakes in foot techniques

“The foot is the most powerful natural weapon a human being may have when he/she has to defend his/her life” [4]. The best way to face challenges is to learn from the mistakes of others. Here are

some of the most common mistakes made in leg techniques:

- ✦ One-leg training. Many athletes adopt this method of training - striking their opponent with the same foot. However, what they do not know is that fighting from the same position, with the same foot, makes them extremely predictable in whatever they are going to do next. Frequent change of execution can help maintaining concentration and a clear technique.
- ✦ Use of excessive force. Beginner practitioners tend to kick very hard, without controlling their strength. By doing so, they lose control of the body and are prone to injury. We need to focus on the correct placement of the body from the beginning until the end of the movement, then perform the leg techniques in force.
- ✦ Execution of the movement much too fast. Performing leg techniques at the beginner level, in a very fast speed can lead to improper use of the technique and increasing the risk of being hit. As the execution of the leg technique becomes natural, we can add more speed to the execution.
- ✦ Practice advanced techniques before mastering basic techniques. The result of it is the acquisition of an incorrect practice of the technique, which can be hardly corrected after it has become a habit. Basic techniques are the foundation elements of the advanced techniques. It is advisable to master the basics before studying or even more, practicing the advanced techniques.

“The foot technique is used in sportive wrestling or self-defense” [1], therefore

we must perform all foot techniques, with maximum seriousness and concentration.

5. The benefits of practicing Taekwondo

“Taekwondo is not only a sport, but a practice that requires self-discipline; it is a wrestling sport with an opposing partner, in which the hands and feet are used to defeat the opponent; it is a lifestyle” [6].

“Taekwondo, which is the most preferred sport among the martial arts, is known to improve individuals physically, spiritually and mentally” [12].

Like any sport, Taekwondo has a multitude of benefits when practiced regularly and in an organized setting. Being a complex sport, it develops coordination, physical skills and abilities, agility, neuromuscular elasticity, balance, spatio-temporal orientation and increases the effort tolerance.

Being a fighting sport, it improves reflexes, cardiovascular endurance and body awareness. Taekwondo is not just a fighting sport, as most characterize it, it is a lifestyle that also requires a certain mental attitude. "All techniques train the whole body to work, in a balanced and coordinated manner, the result being a natural position and economic movements at all levels" [5]. Taekwondo, like other sports, increases the production of serotonin in the brain. This benefit causes positive changes in the attention span of practitioners.

6. The benefits of practicing Tae Bo programs

“When we train, especially when practicing Tae Bo, we challenge not only the physical body but also the spirit, which can reveal certain parts of us that we did

not know they existed" [7].

Tae Bo is a suitable option for those who want to start a healthy routine, due to the intensity of which cardio exercises are practiced in Tae Bo programs.

Because Tae Bo programs include a number of movements found in Taekwondo and Boxing, the muscles are constantly being worked on. The muscles of the lower body are worked by the kicking movements, while the shoulders, arms and chest are trained by the punches.

In conclusion, Tae Bo can harmoniously develop muscle mass.

Tae Bo, uses movements with both the arms and the legs, meaning that it trains the body's mobility too. Tae Bo borrows movements used by fighters. By performing these movements correctly, it helps practitioners to develop useful reflexes and techniques in self-defense.

7. The connections between Taekwondo and Tae-Bo

Although Taekwondo and Tae-Bo are different disciplines, they have some common links. Both emphasize the development of strength, flexibility, coordination, and balance. They also involve intense cardiovascular exercises that can help improve heart and circulatory system health. Combined practice of Taekwondo and Tae-Bo can bring multiple benefits. Firstly, it can help in the development of muscle and strength through the striking techniques of Taekwondo and the strength and endurance exercises of Tae-Bo. Secondly, it can aid in improving coordination and balance through the complex and rapid movements in both disciplines. Additionally, the development of discipline and focus can be enhanced

through the combined practice of Taekwondo and Tae-Bo. The combined practice of both disciplines can also help reduce stress levels through intense physical exercises and relaxation and breathing techniques. Moreover, it can contribute to improving self-esteem and self-confidence through the development of physical and mental abilities and capabilities. In conclusion, the combined practice of Taekwondo and Tae-Bo can bring multiple benefits to a person's physical and mental health. It can help in the development of strength, flexibility, coordination, and balance, as well as reducing stress levels and improving self-esteem and self-confidence.

7. Conclusions

Legs kicks are more powerful and efficient than arm techniques. This is because the muscles in the leg area are stronger than those in the arm area, which allows for a greater force to be generated at the moment of impact.

The advantage of using leg techniques is that you can hit your opponent from greater distances. This additional distance provides additional opportunities to identify and avoid the opponent's strikes, thereby creating an opportunity to counter with a powerful kick.

The legs are made up of large and powerful muscles, and using them during a strike allows for efficient utilization of these muscles to generate greater striking power. Additionally, during a kick, the fighter can also use gravity to add force to the strike, increasing its power.

In conclusion, the use of leg techniques can offer significant advantages in combat due to their power and efficiency.

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