

WT's wing-arm



The *bong-sau* or 'wing-arm' technique of WingTsun (WT) is an incredibly versatile move used in both defence and attack. Here, Australian WT Chief Instructor Stefan Fischer reveals how it works.

Why should I use it?

The *bong-sau* is one of the most common reflexes used in WingTsun. Its main purpose is to redirect an incoming attack, which has superior force, from its target. The *bong-sau* enables someone physically weaker to effectively defend an attack from a much stronger adversary, without interrupting their flow of counter-attacks. When someone blocks your punch, the *bong-sau* enables you to continuously follow through aggressively, such as with chain-punches (also called roll-punches).

Another application for the *bong-sau* is against pressure from above. The *bong-sau* is like a log floating on water: if you place a heavy weight on one end of the log, that end will submerge, the weight will drop off and the log will return to its original position. In effect, the *bong-sau* absorbs an attacking force and robs a linear punch of its power.

When and how should I use it?

The *bong-sau* as a reflex rather than a technique, so it's not a question of when you should use it, but rather when will the reflex be

triggered by your opponent. Once the *bong-sau* reflex is implanted in the muscle-memory, it should be triggered automatically, given the following prerequisites:

- Contact area is outside of your arm;
 - Pressure is directed diagonally toward your body.
- Or
- Pressure is applied from the top and pushes your arm down.

Once the mental, body language and verbal phases of a conflict have been exhausted and combat takes place — what happens? There are only three situations that can occur and

Bong-sau for self-defence



1 Sifu Stefan assumes Blitz Defence stance as the attacker comes in.



2 Stefan moves in to hit with a wedged 'universal solution', but Jason blocks.



3 This triggers a *bong-sau*, as Stefan's left arm continues forward to strike...



4 ...followed by a *lap-sau* (grab) and *fak-sau* strike to the attacker's throat.



5 Stefan continues with a close-distance *biu-tze* hook...



6 ...and finishes off with a downward elbow and eye-gouge.

be described in terms of physics: The first one corresponds to the first fighting principle: 'If the way is clear, go forward!' The WingTsun fighter moves forward and his fists are given maximum acceleration by muscular strength as it impacts on the target.

The second situation is the result of attempting to apply the first fighting principle, but this time the opponent defends or attacks in the form of a block, guard or strike. This creates the situation covered by the second fighting principle: 'If the way is not clear ...'. However, the second fighting principle is not specifically formulated for all possible eventualities, as two situations can arise as our arms meet the arms of the opponent.

One is that our arm/fist has sufficient penetrating power to break through the counter-attack, block or guard of the opponent, which means that even with a reduced speed, our fist will still land on the target while protecting us through the wedge-like positioning of our arms while attacking (think of an axe-head and how it's used to split a log).

The second is when our arm/fist does not have sufficient penetrating power, and is deflected by the opponent's attack or block, or stopped by the opponent's guard. In this case the second part of the second fighting principle applies: '... stick to the opponent!' It is then, and only then, that the situation we practise for in *chi-sau* (sticky-hands drill) is created and a *bong-sau* would be triggered.

What are the targets?

In the WingTsun system, we hardly have any pure defensive moves, as these will not,

ultimately, prevent further attacks. So, in most cases the *bong-sau* will develop out of our attack, when superior forces gets in contact with the outside of our arms and the opponent's forward pressure is directed diagonally towards our body or head.

How do I execute it?

Important is that the *bong-sau* is not used as a block, in which case it becomes a technique rather than a reflex. Many Wing Chun styles use a *bong-sau* as a block-like movement, against Wing Chun principles. The disadvantages of this would be that you are susceptible to faints, as the trigger for the *bong-sau* would be visual, and therefore you could be easily fooled with a rhythm-change in the attack. It also means that you need sufficient strength to be able to block the attacker's punch, making it less effective against a stronger person.

The *bong-sau* (wing-arm) occurs when your opponent's arm contacts your arm on the outside and exerts pressure towards the vertical centreline or beyond it. A *bong-sau* also is triggered if your opponent exerts downward pressure on your forearm. We resist slightly and allow our lower arm to be pressed downwards. At the same time the opponent pressure causes our elbow to flip upwards (creating *bong-sau*). Our forearm now forms a defensive diagonal in front of our upper body.

How do I train it?

The training for the *bong-sau* — or for any of the WT reflexes — starts with the single-arm *chi-sau* exercise *dan-chi*. The next step is

poon-sau, which is basic two-armed *chi-sau*. This is followed by regular *chi-sau*, which comprises seven regular *chi-sau* sections, which are followed by five *biu-tze* sections and the wooden-dummy *chi-sau* sections.

Many people confuse *chi-sau* with fighting and think *chi-sau* itself makes you a good fighter. However *chi-sau* is merely a tool, although an important tool, to implant reflexes in to your subconscious and in your muscle memory. But you obviously do not stand in IRAS position with your attacker on the street and start clinging arms. So for *chi-sau* to be applicable in real life, the reflex training has to be implemented in all other WingTsun exercises like Blitz Defence, Lat Sau, Circle Training and Warrior Day.

Who else uses it?

Reflexes in the way we apply them is quite unique to the Leung Ting WingTsun system. However, all Wing Chun systems employ the *bong-sau* (also called *bon-sau*) in various ways.

How do you use it?

A *bong-sau* is sometimes triggered if a fight does not end within the first couple of seconds, hence the whole reflex does not take more than probably 0.2 seconds and is just one small movement in a barrage of attacking techniques like chain, punches, kicks, elbows or knees. It's usually not something you can remember as it goes far too quick. However, you can see the *bong-sau* and other reflexes applied when we film our Warrior Days for training and teaching purposes, and evaluate confrontations in slow motion. **BLITZ**

Training the bong-sau



1 'A' (left) gives sideways diagonal pressure to 'B' (right), which creates a *bong-sau* in B's right arm.



2 B traps with his left arm to create a line for his attack. A responds to this downward pressure by rotating through a *bong-sau* with his right arm.



3 The downward pressure on A's left arm finishes rolling into *bong-sau*, travelling up and forward to feel what's coming.



4 B continues his punch and releases his trapping pressure. Due to its upward and forward pressure, A's *bong-sau* fires up to meet the punch.



5 Due to the force of B's punch, A is turned, maintaining his *bong-sau*. This moves this body off-line while his *bong-sau* maintains its forward pressure.



5 This allows A to flow through into the first of a barrage of counter-attacks. (All movements shown here would be executed in under one second.)