

3 Loyalty Spear & 2nd Route of Plum Blossom Leg | Lessons with Sifu John Cheng [February 18, 2022]

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[00:00] - Introduction/Preview

JOHN CHENG: You practice on it, you're like, "Okay, I got it. I got 10 out of 10 today." And then the next day you're like, "I only got 6 out of 10? What's going on?"
Fake high, attack low.

[00:31] - Plum Flower Leg 2nd Route (二路梅花腿)

JOHN CHENG: Alright, so we'll warm up with Plum Flower Leg, Second Road.

[01:41] - Applications of 2nd Route Plum Blossom Leg

JOHN CHENG: So we've traditionally, we teach like this as a temple strike, but I think that's at the outer perimeter, but really if you do like this, that's really gonna hurt and knock a person out at the base of the skull. If I go boom, boom, low, then high, fake high, attack low... The simultaneous defend and attack isn't necessarily just the upper body, but it's the legs too, right? The Mantis' characteristics is attacking with different parts.

[02:14] - Article by Brendan Lai - Developing Power

JOHN CHENG: I saw this one article, it was written by Brendan Lai many years ago. He would practice this to improve his speed and power. Whenever you take a shower, once you turn off the water and you're getting the water off of you, it's like how do you pop it to where the water just comes off and then you're learning that whipping motion, the arms relax and just pop it.

[02:42] - Iron Body Conditioning

JOHN CHENG: The iron body conditioning, the iron palm, when you get hit with something like that, you're like, "Oh." That gives you the impression already as soon as that single slight smack in, you're like, "Oh." "Oh, wow, that was a real hit."

[03:00] - DA (打)

JOHN CHENG: When you do get the hit in, you got to make sure it counts. So that's part of the 12 keyword is the "DA" is to attack. But it doesn't mean just to attack, like attack. It means to attack bravely, to attack confidently, to attack ferociously.

So you're in that, the kicking position, and I'm coming in confidently.

[03:24] - Many People Come to Martial Arts Due to Ego

JOHN CHENG: My philosophy is that a lot of us come into martial arts because we were bullied or we want to get stronger. We want to improve our self-esteem, our confidence. So deep inside, we're all a little kid, and we've had our feelings hurt. And then now you get older, and now that's why I think you see so many of these egos flying around whenever you go to all the different banquets or tournaments and stuff. And it's because it's the ego. It's the egos that are at play, and people want-- they want to be the man. They want to be the guy, the person, the one in charge.

Maybe part of it too is, if you've always been that prima donna and you haven't been humbled before, then you're always like looking good, looking good, and you haven't really been humbled. But the way that Kung Fu is designed, if you're playing hands, there's always someone better than you that's gonna humble, that's gonna best you. You're like, this sucks. (laughs) How come I can't get any better?

[04:16] - Creating a Healthy Environment for Growth

JOHN CHENG: If it's done in the healthy environment of someone can humble you, but then they yet, they can instruct you to get better, if I help you, you're gonna get better, that's gonna make me better. As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another, right? If we go along that lines, we're both gonna get better. And there's gonna be times you're gonna be like this, but then I can get picked up.

And that's the summary of Sifu Jones and our kung fu relationship. You know, it was like, "oh, he's getting better, I gotta get better. Ah." But we're friends. You know, and we never let that be "I'm better than you." It was like, "Hey, come on, you can do this, come on, come on." And then I would show him something and he would get better at it. and then it's like, "Oh man."

So in that healthy environment, it was, you know, you're helping each other. I think that's the essence. But if it's an environment where it's unhealthy and it becomes this taunting, you know, it's like dominate, dominate, dominate. And I think that's where you as an instructor, you have to keep your eyes out. How do you grow the individual into a healthy person and they learn that they help another person and they grow as well?

[05:22] - Commercialization of Kung Fu Eroding the Family Bond

JOHN CHENG: Maybe that's why the Kung Fu bond may seem closer. Maybe it's not built in, or because of the commercialization, it's been removed from the culture of Kung Fu, but we keep the Kung Fu family, then I'm a part of something special. I think that's been the magic, right? It's the gang, a part of a healthy gang.

All right, let's do one more round, then we'll do spear.

[06:54] - Explaining Skill Acquisition Paradox

JOHN CHENG: Shawn, you've been working on the [spear]?

SHAWN: Working on it.

JOHN CHENG: Sometimes it'll come and then it goes. That's a lot of things that'll happen in Kung Fu. Is if you're trying to work on a difficult technique, there's times you'll get it and then it just, it goes away. You thought you had it, but somehow your body's not retaining it and it goes away.

And it's the craziest thing, you put things on the shelf, and you kind of just put it away for a little bit and you go on practice something else and then you go and pick it back up and then, you get it again. It's the strangest phenomenon in Kung Fu. You practice a skill and you're trying to get it, you don't quite get it, and then you're like, I'm gonna put it on the shelf, just let it set.

And something must happen with our subconscious memory or muscle memory. You go to bed and you're dreaming and something almost is like solidifying in your brain and body developing some type of neural connection. And then you go back to it and you pick it back up and then you kind of like, "Boom! I got it!" It's the strangest phenomenon.

A good example would be the catch behind the back. You practice on it and you're like, "Okay, I got it. I got 10 out of 10 today!" And then the next day you're like, "I only got 6 out of 10? What's going on?" And then you keep practicing and then you eventually get it 10 out of 10. And it just stays consistent as long as you practice.

That's the definition of mastery, right? Like a concert pianist. If they skip a day of practice, then teacher notices, but then if they skip two days, then they notice, and if you skip three days, then the audience notices.

[08:22] - Benefits of Training Kung Fu Weapons

JOHN CHENG: The skill of the pop and catch. It's that timing. It's such a fun skill. That's the thing with Kung Fu weapons, is you're learning to manipulate objects other than your body, and you can have more control over the environment, so to speak.

[08:37] - 3 Loyalty Spear (三義槍)

JOHN CHENG: We're just gonna practice this individual move. So it's poke. So you're using this to pull, pull it through. It's right hand slides, left hand stable. So whichever hand you're stabbing with, the thumb's down.

So left foot forward, forward stance, it's poke, then you're come back into a forward stance, poke. Here, here, here.

If you think about it though, the hand transfer is not really happening. Poke, shoot out.

Okay, then on the last one, so you're gonna do five. One, two, three, four, five, and then turn the hand, and then you're gonna shoot it, shoot it forward.

(yells)

Oh man, it's a nice shirt too. Oh well.

[10:35] - Why Did You Choose Jonie Uniforms As Our Supplier?

JOHN CHENG: She was the only supplier of decent Kung Fu uniforms. Well, let me rephrase. She was the only supplier of good looking Kung Fu uniforms that came in different colors. 'Cause it was before just the old, that Bruce Lee black jacket with the frog buttons. That was it. That's the only thing that was available. And so when Jonie came around, you know, that was revolutionary for Kung Fu uniforms.

[10:57] - Practicing Stances on a Frozen Lake

JOHN CHENG: Another story, I remember more with Yang Jing Ming. I did one of his workshops. I'm recalling, Sifu Fogg said that Chan Pui did this too. They took him out to the frozen lake and then they would practice their stances on a frozen surface. If you're doing your kung fu stances correctly, it's like a chair that just sits on the ice and it stays stable. But when you are on the ice and if your weight is pushing one way or the other, your stance is not, you're not doing it properly. So they would take their students out and practice on the ice, making sure that your Horse stance is really like this. If you're like this, you're gonna slip a little bit.

DONG THAI: Sir, we do that with the furniture sliders on carpet.

JOHN CHENG: Oh.

DONG THAI: So that they transition from--

JOHN CHENG: Oh, that's a great, oh, that's a fun one.

DONG THAI: Their center as well.

JOHN CHENG: Oh, wow. That's a great modern training tool. So it's just the furniture mover, the--

DONG THAI: You can buy the furniture movers, but they make it specifically for athletes.

JOHN CHENG: For athletes.

[11:58] - How Did You Meet Sigong Raymond Fogg?

JOHN CHENG: Sifu Jones had met Sifu Fogg before I met him. Sifu Fogg was teaching theatre, and Sifu Jones was in one of his theatre acting classes, play classes, and he was under his tutelage at the time. And Sifu Jones remembered him saying that

he said, "He taught Kung Fu." Sifu Jones, "Nah, nah, nah, nah, nah, nah, nah, nah," "No, you don't."

And then I saw an ad in the newspaper one day, and it says "Authentic Kung Fu coming to Marshall, Texas." It had a mantis man on there, the half mantis, half man. That was Sifu Fogg's design. I saw that thing and it just spoke to me. What do you know, you're a seventh grader, you're looking through this ad and it just like, I wanna do this. I've never been so sure of a thing before. You go do different stuff growing up, you go bowling, you go to ice skating, but nothing spoke to me until I saw that ad and I go, I wanna do this.

When seventh grade let out, it was first month in June, My mom brought me down there and she signed me up with Sifu Fogg and he was teaching at a, he was sub-leasing space from a gymnastics studio. It started from there.

And Sifu Jones, I asked Sifu Fogg, "Hey, can he join? Can you give him a discount or something like that?" And then he joined soon after.

[13:15] - What Were Classes Like?

JOHN CHENG: When Sifu Fogg had classes at that time, it was like an hour and a half class. It was a lot of the stuff that I incorporated into the curriculum. Everyone would kind of like do the drills, conditioning, kicks and punches, push-ups, sit-ups, flutter kicks. Everyone would do that together and that was probably like an hour already.

And there was a rope because it was in gymnastics studio. There was one of those ropes that went up to the ceiling and had a bell. You had a little break. People go to the bathroom but then you line up, and then everyone takes their turn to climb the rope and then ring the bell. I got to the point where I could climb the rope without using my feet. If you finished climbing the rope then you get back in line.

Then he would have everyone come out two by two, and then you do your form in front of him. He would watch you do it a few times. He would make corrections or adjustments, and then show you the next one or two moves. Then he would say, "Go practice that a hundred times." And so you could find your corner to go practice the new moves he showed you.

Saturday and Sundays he had a kicking clinic. That was like a kicking class. It was just kicks, sweeps during the entire class. And then he taught, he called it Classical Kung Fu Fighting Class. So that was more just like spar--, the Tui Chi Sau, playing hands. That went on for the whole summer. That was great. That was summer going into eighth grade.

I remember I would practice in the morning, then I'd practice again at night. So I'd practice on the stuff that he showed me, and then I'd practice again at night.

[14:33] - How Did You Meet Sifu Brandon Jones?

JOHN CHENG: It's amazing how God works in some, I don't wanna say mysterious, but it is mysterious in our way of thinking. He orchestrated our lives to be so intertwined. When our family first moved to Texas from New Jersey, it was fourth grade. They were already in session. I remember that. So mom brought me to school, said hi to the principal, and then they walked me to the fourth grade class. Everyone was looking at me, they introduced me. There was one chair that was empty, and I walked, and I sat down right behind, Sifu Jones.

Our friendship started with just, we loved superhero comics. In class, we would draw stick figure comic strips. I would do a scene, and then I would give it to him, and then he would do the next scene, and then he would give it back to me.

At that time, we were living in an apartment complex. My parents had purchased a home, we were waiting for the home, but at the same time we were living in the apartment complex there for, I don't know, maybe like a few months to a year. I have to ask my

mom and see. And then we ended up moving to the same neighborhood just right down the street. We just grew up riding bikes, skateboarding, until seventh grade when we discovered Kung Fu.

Session End

[15:37] - Wah Lum Mantis Performance by Sifu John Cheng (Archive Footage)

[Music: "Amazing Grace" performed by Annie Zhou]

"Character is not made in crisis - it is only exhibited"

JOHN CHENG: Hey, how are you doing Nala? Doing okay today? Doing all right today? You doing okay?

[17:29] - END OF TRANSCRIPT