

**MARTIAL ARTS** JOE RATHLIN DISCOVERS THAT IN THE ANCIENT ART OF HAPKIDO, IT'S TECHNIQUE – NOT SIZE – THAT WINS THE DAY

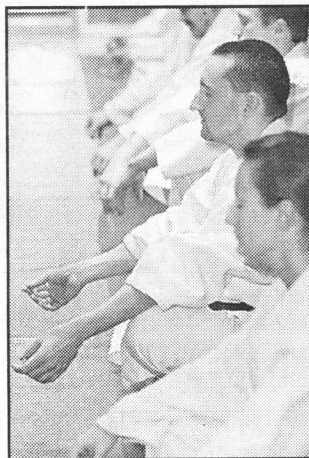
# It's precision over power

**E**ven in these times, it is unusual to find a woman martial arts instructor. You would be forgiven for thinking that, in this male-dominated discipline, this woman needs to out-macho the men. Far from it... and therein lies the strength of Tammy Parlour's teaching and the self-defence aspects of hapkido.

A Korean martial art developed by fourth-century Buddhist monks, hapkido is drawing an impressive following in London thanks to Parlour, a third Dan black belt. 'People from all walks of life study hapkido,' she says. 'Some want to learn self-defence. Hapkido is primarily a fighting art so it's excellent for that purpose as it teaches a variety of punches, kicks, throws, joint locks, pressure point techniques, grappling throws and pins.'

### Ki to success

My introductory session starts with a mixture of stretching and ki exercises. Some clubs make a mystery of ki (also called qi and chi), which employs breathing routines and tension to create stronger internal muscles and improved circulation. Hapkido makes this an integral part of the warm-up. This no-nonsense approach to



pads. These were more similar to moves taught in karate, so the wide mix of skills taught in hapkido was becoming very clear. We move swiftly on to arm and wrist locks that allow you to overpower the other person. Here, Parlour's skill became most evident. Applied with precision, these techniques can outmanoeuvre an attacker of any size. A woman is more likely to be attacked by someone larger and stronger and Parlour's concentration on detail reflected this harsh reality.

If you worry about breaking your wrist while practising, you are to encourage your partner to stop as soon as they have the technique about right. So it's not surprising that they often don't know what it is like to apply the technique properly. Parlour solves this dilemma by ensuring the technique is applied to her. She doesn't flinch unless your strike is perfect.

In the hierarchical environment of a martial arts club, this is a great compliment to the student – something akin to

Kelly Holmes joining a young novice on a warm-up run.

### Confidence booster

Among the school's recent converts is



Strike force: Blackbelt instructor Tammy Parlour (centre) demonstrates hapkido moves for students

Pictures: Andy Blackmore

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and chi, which employs breathing routines and tension to create stronger internal muscles and improved circulation. Hapkido makes this an integral part of the warm-up. This no-nonsense approach to maximising health and fitness benefits continued apace.

Next, we move into a routine of open-palm and knife-hand strikes in which fingers are kept straight, tight and together, while the edge below the little finger forms a striking blade. The self-defence application becomes immediately obvious. Hit

someone in the face with your fist – as they appear to do in films – and you may break your knuckles. The open-hand strike does just as much damage to your opponent but much less to your hand.

The class then practised a range of kicking techniques, against both



to the student – something akin to Kelly Holmes joining a young novice on a warm-up run.

### Confidence booster

Among the school's recent converts is writer Paul Brooks. 'The academy is friendly and the teaching excellent,' he says. 'It's worth checking out if you've always fancied learning a martial art but never had the confidence to take the first step and attend a class. Parlour's hapkido classes are excellent for both sexes as it relies on good technique more than power.'

Parlour abandoned her career in management consultancy to teach hapkido full-time. 'It was a scary move but the school is always attracting new students,' she admits. 'It's at the point where it needs my full-time attention.'

■ *Classes run Monday to Friday at Blackfriars Top Notch Health Club. Free taster classes are being offered to Metro readers. E-mail Parlour at [mail@changshapkidoacademy.co.uk](mailto:mail@changshapkidoacademy.co.uk) [www.changshapkidoacademy.co.uk](http://www.changshapkidoacademy.co.uk)*

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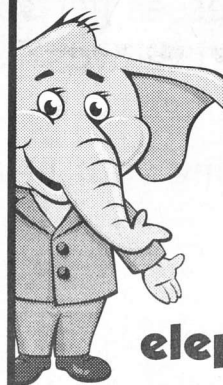
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