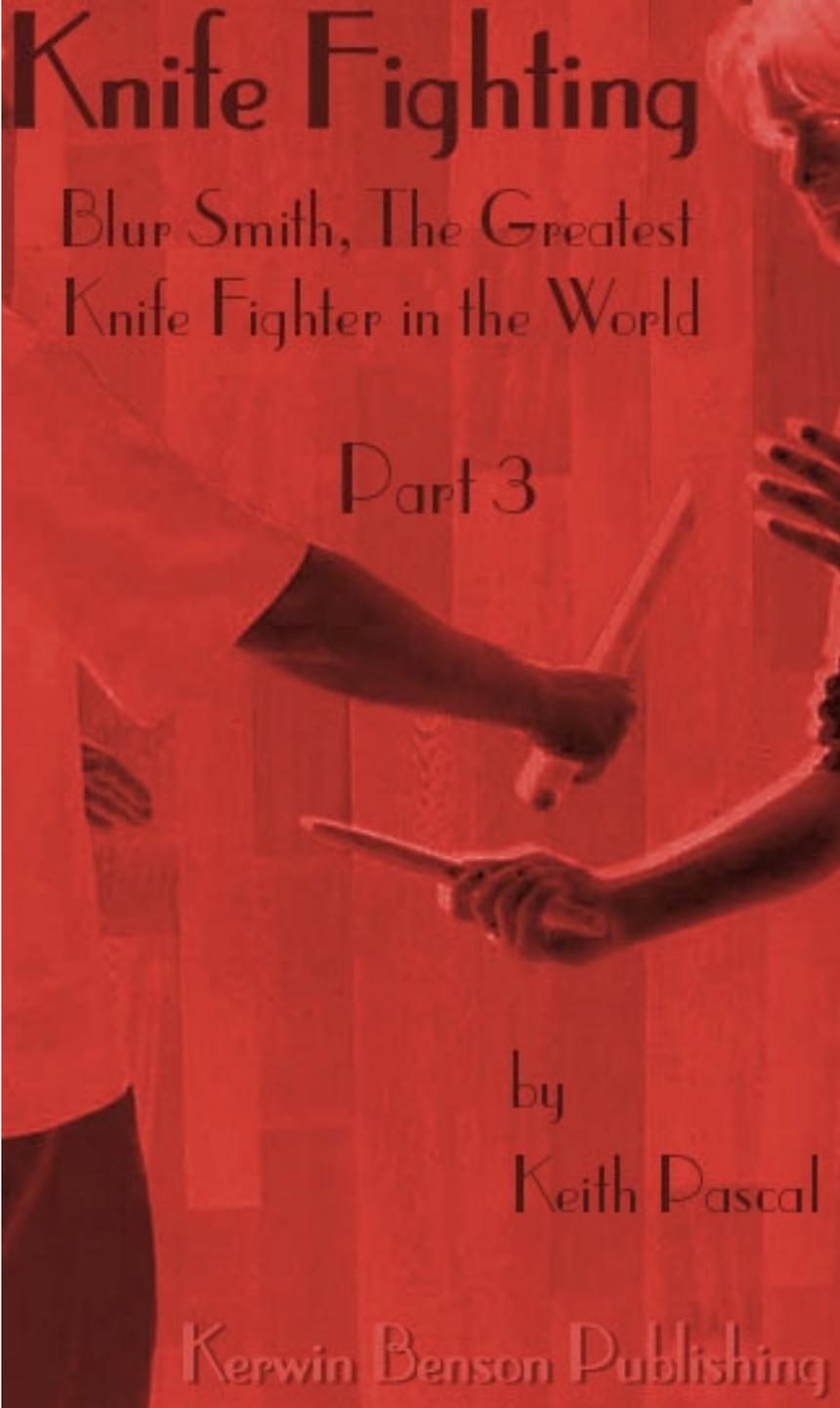


Knife Fighting



Blur Smith, The Greatest
Knife Fighter in the World

Part 3

by

Keith Pascal

Kerwin Benson Publishing

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Readers are urged not to engage in any sort of illegal fighting activity.

Fighting is dangerous — people get hurt and sometimes killed. Even after years of expert martial arts practice and many seasons of professional knife fighting practice, there are still too many variables to predict the outcome of a knife fight.

All characters found in *Blur Smith*, with the exception of Keith Pascal (the interviewer) are fictitious, and the story line is the result of a little creativity from the author. Any resemblance to actual people or events is ... well, a figment of someone's over-active imagination.

Introduction

All too soon, we have come to *Part 3*, the final installment of **Blur Smith, The Greatest Knife Fighter in the World**.

Will there ever be more parts in the *Blur Smith Story*?
More lessons?

It depends on demand. If you request more, it could happen. (info@KnifeFightingBooks.com)

For now, let's see what Blur has to say about Footwork, an advanced principle or two, and even the *aikido knife*.

You'll even discuss grappling and eye jabs for just a bit -- of course, as examples for our knife-fighting context.

Let's get back to the dialogue...

1

Blur Smith's Recipe for Knife-Fighting Footwork

Keith: Before we talk about footwork, can I ask you about something I saw you do?

Blur: Sure, go ahead. Unless it was something immoral or illegal. Just kidding.

Keith: No, actually it was during a break when we weren't recording the interview. I was drinking a glass of juice, and I saw you out of the corner of my eye.

You were waving your pen around in the air. Your other hand was checking while the pen seemed to slice the empty air.

I assume you were practicing, but I was hoping you could comment more specifically on *how* you were practicing.

Blur: I'd be happy to explain. You see, early in my knife training I saw a big mistake others were making.

Keith: During fights or during practice?

Blur: Actually, I saw this error committed during practice sessions. Three times, by different people. And once, the fool who committed the blunder was demonstrating to an audience, on stage, by himself.

He wasn't fighting anyone.

Keith: So, what kind of *boo boo* are we talking about?

Blur: Many knife fighters wave their knives around in the air in front of them, just like these guys were plucked out of a scene from *West Side Story*. They move their empty hand about, while they brandish their knife.

Keith: I can picture what you are talking about. It looks very fancy to see both hands moving at the same time.

Blur: It may look good, at first. But as I said, I have seen several people cut themselves while making fancy patterns in the air with their blades.

Isn't it the ultimate sin to cut yourself during a knife fight?

They are fine with a practice blade, but the minute they switch to a real knife, they accidentally slice the arm of their empty hand.

As I said, I have seen this happen more than once.

Keith: So, where did you learn efficient knife patterns, where you don't slash yourself? From your mentor, your teacher?

Blur: Yes, from him. And I also learned a good deal about how to move the knife from that ebook I was telling you about.

Keith: "10 Days to better Knife Fighting"?

Blur: Yes, that's the one. It really did improve my knife fighting immensely.

Keith: Wait a minute! You said that you never purchased a download of [10 Days to better Knife Fighting](#). So, how did you end up learning from it?

Blur (Smiling): I said I never purchased a *download*. I never said anything about buying the CD-ROM version.

Keith: Hey, that's not fair. I thought ...

Blur: Aren't we here today, to talk about footwork, during knife fighting? So, let's go....

And with that, Blur Smith started talking about footwork.

He explained the special training that his teacher had him go through. After he learned the basics of footwork — not crossing the feet in most circumstances, eliminating wide stances, etc. — he practiced knife fighting on different surfaces.

He started with gravel — and made sure to use practice knives when working on other than ideal surfaces. Falling during a fight on gravel hurt. Blur also didn't like the unstable feeling. Small steps were in order. And more practice.

A soapy cement floor was even worse, for different reasons. He either had to fight holding a rail with one hand, or hold onto a solid table or the bar, or he had to fight from a sitting or kneeling position.

Sand was fine. He didn't live too far from the Coast. He was used to sand. Slow movement down below meant he needed to compensate with faster movement up top.

Blur didn't mind the sand.

It slowed him down, but it would also slow down his enemy.

And Blur was accustomed to changing the pace of the fight.

Blur continued practicing on all surfaces. He wanted to be familiar with all of them. He needed a few surfaces that he had mastered that other fighters hadn't. For example, he liked fighting in a swimming pool.

Blur wanted to feel comfortable fighting on most terrain.

Towards the end of their conversation of the day, Blur told of his recipe for footwork success:

- 1) Think smaller, faster steps for most of your movement.
- 2) Save your lunges for a forward attack. Start the knife moving before the feet. Make sure the feet end at about the same distance from each other that they started. Don't stay *stretched*.
- 3) Make sure your head doesn't bob up and down during your knife-fighting footwork — even during your lunge. With the exception of a lunge on gravel. The head may have to bob, since the feet can't slide the way they would on a smooth surface.
- 4) Learn a different hobby or pastime that requires fancy footwork — boxing, certain dance styles, tennis or badminton, fencing.
- 5) Practice the footwork by itself. Work precision. Then combine it with knife fighting practice.
- 6) With a pen, pencil, or comb, you have an instant practice knife. You may get really weird looks, so practicing alone is advisable. Grab a pen, and practice some efficient knife and hand work, as you practice moving backward, forward, and to either side.
- 7) Copy the footwork of someone skilled at knife fighting. Even if you have to copy each technique, one movement at a time, mimic greatness — at first. You'll adapt to your own style, eventually.

- 8) Footwork is NOT like riding a bicycle — you DO forget. You'll get sloppy, if you don't stay in practice.

- 9) In general, if you have your left foot forward, then you hold the knife in the left hand. Right foot forward, hold the knife in the right hand. This isn't an always— but for the beginner, it's almost a must.

- 10) If you want to move forward in the fight, move your forward foot before your rear foot. If you want to move to the left, move your left foot first and so on. It takes practice, and it takes coordination, but it is a more efficient way of movement. (Just watch a football team practice moving on command.)

2

Blur Smith

Squirms

Keith: You and I were talking the other day, off-line. Do you remember our talk about how you really excelled above the rest in knife fighting?

Blur: Yes. That was an interesting discussion. Intriguing.

Keith: That's it exactly. Something you said *intrigued* me.

Blur: What was that?

Keith: You said that I was on the right track in my ezine, [Martial Arts Mastery](#). It had something to do with the way I paid attention to my whiners — the complainers.

Blur: Yes, you take notes on them. I watched you. It doesn't matter how you choose to respond. Either nice or a little condescending, but you examine what they say. More than that, you try to reduce what they say to a premise.

What underlying principle, what assumption are they making?

Keith: But you have a different way of looking at 'the problem.' It somehow seems similar to my teacher's way of approaching and evaluating new moves.

There are some differences, and there are also a lot of similarities. Just how would you deal with my nay-sayers — the ones whose philosophy ... ahem ... differs?

(Blur squirms a bit. Should he allow this line of thinking to proceed? Finally, he decides not to hold back.)

Blur: Give me an example from your ezine. I'll show you the way I would consider the problem. Then I'll see if I can provide an example from the world of knife fighting.

Keith: Sure. This past year, we had a heated discussion about grappling.

One particular bone of contention is the eye jab. I know, from experience, the effectiveness of the move properly executed. *Properly executed* means with the right timing and distance as well as the right technique of the strike itself.

Blur: So, what's the problem? It sounds like a good move.

Keith: Some of my readers just don't buy into the same philosophy.

They think an eye jab would be ineffective against a decent grappler.

Blur. Wonderful. Now, we have something to sink our teeth into. And we're off. Follow my line of thinking....

- 1) They think the eye jab wouldn't work against a good grappler.

My first task would be to find out why. Why precisely ... why specifically ... why in as much detail as possible ... why would that eye jab fail against a grappler?

- 2) I would list and examine each reason ... from having to deal with leg shoots, to falling backwards. I would look at why they think my timing would be off — why I wouldn't have time to carry out my jab. I would make a list of at least 20 details.

- 3) Now, at this point, I wouldn't judge whether they were right or wrong about each detail. Instead, I would do my best to figure out a counter or an adjustment to a particular detail.

If the grappler has his head down while attacking the legs, then it becomes hard to eye jab, I would assume. So, you examine how you would adjust the eye jab to reach the eyes anyway. From me

doing a little visualizing in my head, I can imagine that beyond a certain angle of head tuck it would be too hard to reach the eyes. At least, you couldn't do it with an efficient, direct-line attack.

OK, the head is low. So, you develop an elbow strike or some other attack to the back of the head or neck. Why? Because that's what's available.

You progressively work through every possible detail of why your technique, in this case the eye jab, wouldn't work. Adjust for each detail.

- 4) Now, combine details and develop exercises that make you rely on more than one component, to make your eye jab work effectively.

Make your training progressively more difficult. Allow the complainers to help you to overcome them.

- 5) Finally, try your technique out against competent grapplers. Put on safety gear, so you don't actually poke the eyes. And agree on tap outs and verbal submission, for safety. Then test your honed skill.

Keith: As I said, this sounds a lot like Steve Golden — just not on those words or exact steps. Could you sum up what you are doing here?

Blur: Sure. You have a technique you think works. Whether it's knife fighting or eye jabs. Then you find that there are reasons why your magic move or theory isn't the absolute end-all. Your theory has holes in it.

So, you plug those holes. Then you allow folks to continue thinking that your technique or tactic is impractical. But you know differently.

The weaknesses they rely on won't be there.

You gain the advantage. Why? You were willing to consider the problem from all sides — including the side that said you didn't have *the secret move*.

Keith: I assume you learned this from your teacher. Could you talk about your first experience with eliminating weaknesses in moves, and maybe give us an example or two?

Blur: Sure...

"I have noticed that you avoid holding the knife in an ice pick position.

"Even though we train both ways, you seem to avoid having the blade protrude from the bottom of your fist. Is there any reason for this," asked the teacher.

Blur replied, "Actually, I read that some of the best knife fighters around avoid the knife-down position. Their

reasoning seemed solid — so , I have sort of adapted or adopted the same principles to my system.”

The teacher smiled at Blur, “Oh, do we have *our own system* now, do we? Interesting.”

Blur started to retort ...

“Never mind,” said the teacher. “Let’s use your assumption in the lesson.

“First of all, I assume you read the lessons on knife-down or ice-pick techniques from **10 Days to Better Knife Fighting**? And you still weren’t convinced?”

Blur said, “They seemed OK — actually, they were awesome. Still, the reasoning ... I mean ... you can’t argue with logic.”

At the teacher’s suggestion, they decided to make a list for Blur, based on the logic of why you shouldn’t hold the knife extending from the bottom of your fist. The teacher even helped Blur with arguments against the knife-down grip.

After about 15 minutes their ideas came more infrequently. Some of the reasoning listed included:

- * less reach or extension with a knife-down grip
- * less mobility with the blade
- * more of a chance of the sharp edge being away from the opponent with a single-edged weapon

* if you use both grips, it takes too long to change from up to down positioning

* you are also vulnerable during the switch

* with the blade down, you can guard the lower lines easily. It's harder to guard your face and upper body.

Keith: Wait. Wait. You make it sound terrible to hold the knife down.

I hope you are about to tell me that you saw the light.

Blur: You guessed it. Actually, the list was a lot longer. But those examples should serve to show what I went through with the teacher.

While it was true that you had less extension with the down grip, you also had a different kind of extension — it was angled. Any time you were above either an arm or the attacker's head or body, you were already closer than assumed. It was sort of an illusion of safety for the bad guy.

As for the extension itself, I learned when I might want extension, and when I didn't care. As responses to certain strikes, extension didn't seem to matter.

To deal with less mobility, I went back to some of the lessons in **10 Days to Better Knife Fighting**. It's funny — once you practice for mobility, and get accustomed to the various ranges of motion, mobility no longer is an issue.

I think 'less mobility' originally meant less comfortable with the position.

The sharp edge held away from the opponent was a myth. There was absolutely no reason to hold the blade with the edge oriented next to your skin.

Switching became a fun exercise. I could do it smoothly and safely, if certain criteria were met.

Keith: Do tell!

Blur: Maybe we could talk about it some other time. This conversation is running long, wouldn't you say?

Keith: We still haven't discussed guarding the upper line with a knife-down grip. That seems pretty inefficient.

Blur: How about we talk about that, next time?

Keith: I can hardly wait.

3

Blur Smith Tells of “The Aikido Knife”

“You know, you can’t cover every line of attack to your body in a knife fight,” said Blur. “Everyone, grab your practice knives and hold them in the knife-down position. Yes. Yes. Yes. Umm, Rebecca, the blade needs to extend out of the bottom of your fist. There you go.”

Keith watched as Blur Smith taught the intermediate knife-fighting class. He noticed that Blur had everyone move around a little, just to warm up.

They held the knives in the down position, and they sort of shadow boxed. They shuffled with their feet. Forward - forward. Side, back.

Left, left, left -forward, forward.

Blur put his fingers to his mouth and gave a short whistle. Everyone stopped moving and focused on Blur.

Blur said, "OK, everyone hold your fists high. Use them to guard your face. Don't worry about the knife pointing down. Be aware of its presence. Know which lines it covers. But other than that, ignore it.

Now, everyone, start moving again."

He let them move for a couple of minutes, before he stopped them again.

Blur asked his students, "When you held the knife high, close to your face, what did it feel like?"

Keith listened as the students responded. One student made a couple of interesting observations...

"Blur, when I hold my fists close to my face, I feel that there is a line open to my midsection and chest. Someone could cut me."

Yes, that's true," answered Blur. "Let me ask you a question — or two.

"Would you rather know or not know what line an attacker could take?

?And question number two, how would you close that open line to the chest, if an opponent were to attack there?"

Blur cut them off before they could answer his questions. He sent them off to *play* with the open line of attack.

When he called the class back together, several of the students had concluded that the open line wasn't a big deal. Their knives could easily drop down a bit and slash at anything coming in on that low line.

Some of the students weren't convinced. These practitioners felt that they could never reach from chin to stomach in time with their knife.

So, Blur told them a story....

"After two years of training, I felt that I was decent with a knife. I had trained with my teacher for a year straight. Then he needed to travel for a consulting job, so he was only able to check up on me a couple of times a year.

"To stay fresh with my fighting skills, he had me 'play' with one of his friends. This guy was some type of Aikido expert. We met and agreed to do a little friendly sparring.

"I thought, I wouldn't have too much of a problem against him. After all, I had a knife, and he didn't.

"I stabbed toward his chest. His hands were low, so I thought he wouldn't be able to raise them in time.

"Not only did I not reach him on the stab, but he *was* able to raise his hands in time. He was also able to pivot his shoulder into the back of my arm on the elbow.

“I spun around in a wide arc, as he pivoted in a much tighter circle.”

(See Lock #4 in the Chapter “A Dozen Super Techniques to Promote Thought,” from [Wrist Locks: From Protecting Yourself to Becoming an Expert.](#))

“As I felt a little slack on the arm, he cranked my wrist back on a tight line. I threw all of my own weight into my wrist. I remember yelping in pain. It hurts just thinking about it.”

One of the students asked, “Didn’t your knife fighting help at all?”

Blur continued, “No. He was able to deal with the knife quite effectively, at first. Later, I figured out ways to confound an aikido practitioner.

“My one saving grace was that my teacher had tried to teach me a street fighting brand of knife fighting. So, I was able to plant a kick to his shins, as he pivoted me. He was shocked by the surprise kick. And I used that surprise to hit with my empty hand.

“He was focusing too much on my knife. My kick upset his pattern enough, to allow me to punch. Still, I was outclassed.”

“What happened next?” asked the same student who had interrupted the first time.

“What happened was that we swapped information. He wasn’t used to sucker shots, and the extra, secondary shots that my teacher had emphasized. This guy dealt with one attack at a time.

“I needed help with redirection of energy. He could control me, once he made contact. So, he taught me a little energy redirection, and I taught him to take extra hits.

“As side benefits, we both started playing an aikido game with practice knives. We tried several techniques while holding the knife. Usually, in aikido they seem to fight empty handed against a knife wielder. We practiced where he held a knife too. So, we both approached the same attack from a different angle.

“He needed to incorporate the knife into his aikido, and I needed to learn a little aikido for my knife fighting.

“Does anyone know why I just told this story?”

There was a silence all around the room.

Finally, Keith answered ...

“Before the story you were practicing dropping your knife to cover an open line to the mid-section. If you start with your knife held in a down position, you’d think that it would expose too much of an opening to the chest and face.”

“Keep going,” said Blur.

“Well,” continued Keith. “If you hold your knife in an ice pick position, but you keep your hands low, then you have to raise the knife to meet the attack ... unless you could use something from aikido to protect that upper line.

“Hmmm — raise the knife to slow down the attack. You meet the attack with the knife. But you redirect with

aikido flow. I assume the shoulder pivot could be used, once you have dealt with the initial attack of your opponent's blade."

Blur smiled and touched his forefinger to his nose.

Keith had hit the nail on the head. But then again, Keith was the author of the *'Wrist Locks'* book that Blur referred to.

As Keith left the building, he could hear the students brainstorming about combining other martial arts with knife fighting, to create a truly effective knife fighting system.

Listening to the brainstorming of the students made both Keith and Blur smile — knowing smiles.

4

Blur ‘Mooks’ It With a Tree

Keith: Blur, you must have had some awesome practice partners over the years. I assume that you didn't get to your skill level working out on your own.

Blur: Well, yes and no. I did have good practice partners, but I do credit a lot of my skill level to the hours that I put in practicing solo. You need to practice against another knife to learn 'practical' application, but you can learn to move the blade and move with the blade on your own.

You can also practice and perfect your techniques before you fine tune them with a practice partner.

Keith: Any tips for solo practice?

Blur: Sure. In fact, this exercise developed because two of my practice partners were flakey....

I had two friends who wanted to 'train knife' with me. Both truly wanted to learn, but they seemed to have problems making it to our agreed practice sessions on time.

We had agreed to meet twice a week in the park. The park contained a little forest, and we decided to train there for added realism. We'd have to train over rough terrain, and work our way around trees.

As I mentioned, my friends had problems making appointments on time.

Often, not always, but often, they left me waiting in the woods.

One day, out of frustration, I slashed at the tree with my practice knife. At the time, I was practicing with a short, wooden blade. Of course, wood against wood didn't hurt the tree at all.

Ding!

I had an idea.

I had seen an escrimador work over a tree with a stick on tape. I had also practiced some wing chun gung fu.

Hmmm.

I looked for a tree with a lot of low branches. I needed some different angles to play with.

Then, slowly at first, I started shadow boxing with the tree. I used my wooden knife to do battle. I imagined each fork in a branch to be a joint on the body. I weaved and twisted, as I slashed.

A check with one hand — accompanied a stab with the other.

It definitely took awhile to figure out efficient lines of movement. At first, my motions were too flowery — too dance-like. Eventually, I practiced shorter steps with tighter angles.

I built up speed too.

Keith: And this is what it took to get good working by yourself?

Blur: No, this was only one component. I used shadow boxing with the tree, to develop a more fluid movement, and to explore angles of attack.

Keith: Did you fight with the knife in an *up* or *down* position?

Blur: Both. I practiced switching as I moved in and out of the tree branches' range.

Keith: Any more advice on shadow boxing with a tree?

Blur: Sure. Remember Bruce Lee's advice, or maybe it was Kato's on *The Green Hornet*. Anyway, either the character or the actor said, "Move with a purpose."

Keith: Bruce Lee, the person, said it. Yes, it's great advice ...

Blur: Especially when fighting a tree.

Keith: May I ask why you call this type of practice "Mooking a Tree"?

Blur: Of course. A wing chun wooden dummy is called a *mook jong*. When I search for branches on trees, I try to think of a wing-chun workout. There is a lot more than striking limbs when working out on a *mook jong*, and there is a lot more to shadow boxing with a knife against a tree.

Keith: So, how to we use tree practice to improve by leaps and bounds.

Blur: The answer is easy. *Implementation* of the answer is a whole other kettle of fish.

Keith: And that advice would be...?

Blur: Learn the ins and outs of working on a wing chun dummy — from someone who knows. A lot of dojos now offer a *mook jong*. The problem is that folks use it the way they imagine that the pros train on it.

It's more than just target practice.

Yes, learn how to use a *mook jong* and then apply the principles to knife training. With the "Wooden Dummy," you have to learn pressure and direction of

energy. This should carry over to knife fighting. Combine the two -- knife fighting is not only slashing, you control with the force of your slash or thrust.

Keith: You have just said something very important that 98% of the readers will miss.

Blur: Ain't that the truth.

5

Blur Smith's Pizza Parlor Advice to His Students

Blur Smith, the greatest knife fighter in the world, decided to treat his three students to pizza.

He had been overhearing their discussions, and Blur felt that they were about to get off track. They needed a little guidance ... over some cheesy pizza...

“Mr. Smith, you had all of us read **10 Days to Better Knife Fighting**,”

said the tallest student. "In fact, you mention it often. When we talk theory, we talk theory -- but when we need specific drills, you often refer to the ebook."

"Yes, that's right. It's a very valuable book. And it does in ten days, what would take most teachers a couple of years to impart." Blur put his wallet back in his pocket after paying for the pizza.

The tall student continued, "We like the directness of the techniques.

"There is no arguing the efficiency of movement in the book..."

The blond student wearing a rock concert t-shirt jumped in, "We think that it's too easy to get faked, if you are always concentrating on slicing an arm."

Blur asked, "Who said anything about only slicing the arm?"

The third student, a young woman with long brown hair, added her opinion. "We know that you employ lots of stabs to the body, after you deal with the initial attack. But it's that initial move made by your attacker that worries us."

The tallest student added, "Yes, she's right. If you deal with an initial stab with your own knife, what if that initial stab is a fake?"

Then you'd be up a creek."

“If you want to be able to deal with a fake, then you have to think lines,” said Blur.

“What do you mean, Mr. Smith?” Asked the blond student.

“I’ll give you three pieces of advice. Then I think the pizza should be about ready. After you play with my recommendations, we’ll talk again. But next time, I think you young students should treat your old teacher to the pizza.”

“You aren’t that old,” commented the third student.

Blur acknowledged her compliment with a nod. “First, I think you should find two specific training sequences in the ebook **10 Days to Better Knife Fighting**.

“Look. If you want to deal with fake stabs from your opponent, then you have to learn to deal with fakes. You have to practice for them. So, my first piece of advice is to find the exercises in the book that deal with fakes — with a knife that could come in from one side or the other.

“Look for the exercises where you don’t know which hand of your attacker holds the knife.”

“There is a good exercise on page 29, but I like the one right before that too — it teaches a fast reaction response.” Said the blond. He had a printout of the book under the table, in his lap.

Blur added, “The exercise, earlier in the book, where your opponent holds two knives, is a good one too.

“My next piece of advice is for you to practice the exercises that teach you to instantly find different targets,

like corkscrewing — or when you practice going for unexpected targets.”

The tallest student pulled out a notebook and started scribbling madly. He was used to taking martial arts notes.

“My last piece of advice can’t be found in the ebook,” said Blur.

He had the full attention of all of his students. Blur was sure they didn’t hear the noise of the pizza parlor around them. They knew instinctively how important this next piece of advice was going to be.

Blur cleared his throat and continued again, “Start playing around with the exercises where your partner stabs at you, and you take it by stepping to the outside. Do this slowly, at first.

“As you step to the side, plan your slice, so that whichever hand of your attacker stabs at you gets covered by your single stroke.

“Think of it this way,” Blur brought his lesson to a close, because he heard their pizza number being called. “A stab from your opponent’s right hand follows one line. A stab from his left would follow another line of attack to you.

“I want you to step off, and consider both lines as one. Your opponent stabs with the right — great, you step off and slash for the arm. But oops — it was a fake, your opponent really stabs with the left.

“Fine. You still step off the same way and you still slice along the same line. Your slice will cover both lines.

“You will have to work this out slowly, but it’s worth it. It’s not 100 %, but I think it solves your concern about fakes on the initial attack.

“Now, let’s eat some melty, cheesy pizza.”

The students gobbled the pizza ... eager to get back to the training. They wanted to explore taking two lines of attack with one slice. They wanted to practice covering fakes.

Knife defense training was taking work, but it was an exciting adventure -- a puzzle to solve -- a skill to learn -- a set of reactions and responses to plan.

Any questions or comments? Please contact us using the current email addresses found at:

<http://www.AdvantageMartialArts.com>