

Hate-Helmet

Every nation at war produces propaganda. The former Soviet Union brought the skill of conditioning the populace to think the enemy was inferior, if not inhuman, into the cold war; so did the USA. Now, whether we like it or not, it is a part of politics even in the parties of United States that, in the 1950s, claimed to detest it.

During war, it is important that soldiers NOT consider the foe as fully equal, fully moral, or fully human. How does a decent kid from Kansas eliminate a human enemy target if he thinks that target was a draftee who would rather be home with his wife, kids, and dog? He has to put on his hate-helmet, at least for a while, to change from the farm boy to the sniper.

In a similar way, fighters have to turn on the “killer instinct” so they can press an opponent when he is weakening and thus finish the job of defeating him. One of the reasons MMA jocks often trash talk about their opponents during a pre-bout interview is to convince themselves that the opponent is no better than a annoying intruder in the territory of the true and intended victor, the interviewee. This helps them put on a hate helmet when entering the octagon. The less potentially damaging the contest, the lighter will be the helmet. Although I have seen some non-contact karate-ka decorate their head if not with hate-headbands, at least boast-brow-bands, before the referee signals the start of the match, seldom do they go as far as making their foam bonnets abhorrence-headgear.

What does a self-defense-oriented martial artist, seldom competing outside of dojo sparring, never having had to go to war—what does a self-defense-oriented martial artist do for a hate-helmet? I suspect the answer depends on the amount of training and level of expertise that martial artist possesses; add to that, the threat he/she is face with.

Picture a Model Mugging session in which women, many of whom are neither athletes nor used to physical interaction, are asked to simulate a self-defense response in a rape scenario. After a short segment of keeping the guy at arm’s length with definitive “No” statements, she responds to his aggression not only yelling at him in a way that would turn your dock-working grandfather blue, but beating the bejibbers out of his legs, groin (if open), and head. She becomes a mad dog in a hot second, her leash having been substituted for a hate-helmet. But she is generally not a trained martial artist. And she has the law on her side since (a) she has been accosted and (b) the guy was twice her size. In fear for her life, she could afford to strap on that hate-helmet. One could argue that she could not afford not to.

What about the seasoned martial artist who is supposed to have self-control and whose skill can be considered a “lethal weapon” in some states? Unless the assault on him is fierce and formidable, he cannot afford the hate-helmet. He has to conjure up a skill that balances the surprise of a single attack with the appropriate situational response. Even if he would never appear in court, his martial-arts-trained ethics might preclude packing a hate-helmet in his rucksack. Therefore, instead a hate-helmet, he is better off developing a fashionable shock-chapeau. Staying cool under unexpected pressure is not easy. Weighing the nervous jump to

a negative evaluation of the circumstances with a wait-and-see attitude is not easy. Balancing a response that both eliminates an opponent's aggression and causes as little harm as is necessary is not easy.

While it is appropriate to train in a way that recognizes the need for a well-fitted hate-helmet, the civilian martial artist must also train in a way that allows him a utility belt of options from helmet to bandana to light perspiration.

As important as is owning a hate-helmet and managing a the tools in a utility belt, is managing the state of surprise.

Next time: Why I hate Surprises.