

An Expression of Pikal

Here recently there has been a flurry of internet activity concerning the method of blade use referred to as "pikal". This tutorial is meant to illustrate some concepts for the end-user who wishes to familiarize themselves with its application and show one person's expression of it.

"Pikal" is a word that comes from the Visayan dialect in the Philippines and literally means "to rip". It is a way of using a knife combatively that is highlighted in indigenous Philippine arts such as Pekiti-Tersia and the Sayoc family system among a host of others. Pikal is executed by holding the knife in reverse grip, with the edge facing the body, and using a thrust heavy application method. The angles are a simple forehand and back hand, or #1 and #2 stroke in FMA terminology, regardless of whether it's a diagonal, horizontal, upwards or downwards.

There are many variations of flow drills that pikal can be expressed through, but for the most part they are extraneous and tend to make the system more flowery than it needs to be. Flow drills are fine for learning mechanics but one doesn't fight with them. Work those which are relevant (knife-tapping, Sigan-Labo), master what they give you, and quickly dissolve them and focus on application. I personally interpret pikal very directly and viciously. The objective is not to flow with the opponent but to bull through him, thrusting like a sewing machine, rapid-fire and ballistic. I've seen some proponents conversely try and oversimplify pikal, in an effort to make up for a lack of formalized education in a system that has pikal. This is the other side of the argument that overlooks the attributes that drive the system, which are footwork, power, and body mechanics. Without these attributes, the system isn't really alive and loses much of it's effectiveness.

Footwork is an essential that allows one to close and hit. Without it, the system is duelistic and loses its assaultive flavor. Power drives the blade and allows one to sink the tip through flesh and clothing. Mechanics allow one to hook and clear the interrupted thrust line, which is the doctrine that I personally espouse for pikal.



The "stance," for lack of a better term, is with the weapon side forward with the point facing the adversary. The unencumbered hand is held back behind the weapon. Try and stay on the balls of the feet as much as possible for quick zoning in and out of range. Keep everything compacted. Here is a view from the side and the front.





The primary technique is a quick back-hand thrust that's called a jab. It's common with the edge of hand blow from WWII Close Combat and an eye-jab from FMA, as far as the scheme of maneuver. It's nontelegraphic and shoots straight out from wherever the knife happens to be. In the next two pictures we'll begin our jab from our stance.





The jab continues straight to the target with the jabbing arm moving in a line that doesn't waver up or down. In the pic my hand has moved down just a bit from my face towards my arm-pit.





Finally the jab reaches full extension and hits the target. The body should angle slightly to get a bit more reach and use the shoulder and hip for added power to sink that tip into the target. Remember that you're trying to sink that blade into a human being so there's going to be varying resistance offered. Develop a hard, fast jab. It's very difficult to counter. When you retract your jab, follow the same line in as you did out. To develop speed try and think about retracting twice as fast as you throw it out. This also begins to develop the kind of power needed to hook a limb and shear it to the bone.





The jab is the main tool in the arsenal and works at just about any range. Once an effective jab is developed it can be used to keep an opponent at bay or to close with. Jabs should be rapid fire and ballistic, not flowing. The energy here is more felony than FMA.

The pikal method that I adhere to is pretty straight forward and simple.

1. Lead with rapid jabs delivered to high, mid, and low line targets. These should be rapid and ballistic.

2. If anything interrupts your thrusting hand, hook it while striking or kicking, and shear the interrupting limb to the bone.

3. Clear the interrupting limb out of your thrust line with your off-hand and continue thrusting, intermingling your thrusting with knees, low-line kicks, elbow strikes, and body manipulation.

That's really it as far as strategy. It works against an opponent regardless of whether he is holding a knife or not. The next series of pics shows me against an armed opponent, but it could just as easily be a multiple opponent scenario where he's holding something else or nothing at all.

In this picture, my adversary has interrupted my back-hand thrust with his right arm. He's also armed with a knife.



I'll drive forward and hook him back, shearing the weapon arm, while I hit him with a palm strike to his face. Again this works because the edge is on the inside, and not the outside.



After I hit, I sweep his weapon arm down and into him with a sharp driving and hooking motion for a momentary pin.



Staying on him with pressure, I thrust into his mid-line with a forehand. I continue my rapid ballistic thrusting on the forehand line targeted the abdomen, chest, and neck. Notice there is no attempt at disarming him. I want the disarm to occur through bloodloss and trauma.



In this pic he has thrown a forehand thrust and so have I. We've both intercepted each other on the inside line of the attack and basically our position mirrors. If he knows hooking (which he probably doesn't, but don't assume.) than obviously it comes down to who gets it first.



Traditionally in FMA, this problem would be dealt with by a piece of a flow drill. The quickest thing to do to break the impasse is to attack the low-line with a knee or low-line kick. This breaks you out of his OODA loop and reestablishes your assault initiative. When I knee strike or kick, I hook his interrupting limb with the inner edge of my blade and drive his weapon back, which momentarily jams him. This requires footwork and forward drive to do and will not work if your attitude is give and take, versus all give.



After I hook, shear, and clear I continue on my established forehand thrusting line.



Some of the next sequences segue in with PSP 9, which is the ECQ knife defense tutorial. Read that instructional piece also, to see how what's happening in the next few sequences relate.

He attacks with a forehand thrust on the midline, which I counter by jamming with my weapons hand, which is the closest to the threat. Simultaneously I drive forward with a palm strike to his face. This is one motion.



After I jam and hit, I continue by cross-jamming his interrupting arm into his body and thrusting on his mid-line.



He has thrown a forehand which I've been caught on the inside arc of. Because of my position, my left hand is the closest to his knife, so I have to jam his weapons hand on the inside line. Simultaneous with my jam, I drive forward with a backhand thrust into his midline.



Next, I'll hook the inside of his weapon hand, and begin to pass it down and into him. This will not work if you don't maintain forward pressure, and have an understanding of how much of your passing arm needs to be extended to keep his blade out of your belly. Lowline passing is one of the few things that a flow-drill (knifetapping) gives one a good feel for, and it really can't be developed any other way. Lowline passing is risky as opposed to high line passing but one may need to do it none the less. Why pass at all? The answer is in PSP 9, which hopefully everyone has read at this point in the tutorial.



As I pass the knife across my body, pivoting my hips, I'll palm strike him in his face with my left hand.



After the palm strike I'll pick up a cross check on his elbow with my left hand and begin a forehand thrusting line into his abdomen, groin, and inner thigh.



Here he has slashed at me with a back-hand. My left hand is the closest to his weapon hand so I pick it up on the outside.



I'll pass it down and into him, driving forward close with a forehand thrust of my own. Normally I'd try and keep to the outside, but because of my body position, if I want to bring my blade into play and keep driving forward, I have to open him up just a bit.



Once again he has attacked with a forehand slash so I jam with my left because that's what I have to do because of where I'm at, and thrust on his midline.



After my jam and thrust I quickly throw a knee strike which helps break rhythm.



After knee striking I'll pass his knife on the high-line, to the outside, with my weapon hand.



At the apex of my arc in the pass, I'll drive a short edge of hand blow into his ribs to keep him from regaining any initiative.



We'll end by driving with a forehand thrust into his neck.

That's all for this tutorial and to sum things up for my take on pikal:

- 1. The emphasis is on rapid-fire, ballistic thrusting like a sewing machine.
- 2. Anything that interrupts the thrusting line gets hooked, sheared, and cleared while low-line kicking, knees, and elbows are intermingled as appropriate.
- 3. Once the thrust line is cleared, thrusting is resumed.

That's it. The method should be driven with the attributes of footwork, power, and body mechanics. These three attributes are developed through appropriate drill, that is conceptually learned and mastered and then dissolved. Drills can always be revisited if one feels that a particular attribute is waning, but the primary training thrust after the drills are understood, should be application.

Enjoy SN