

Names of Taiji Training Tools

Taiji Ruler (Bang)

1. Beginning posture
2. Hold the Ruler to Loosen the Wrist (left)
3. Hold the Ruler to Loosen the Wrist (right)
4. Upper Level Folding
5. Shoulder Level, Right Hand Closing
6. Waist Level, Right Hand Outward Closing
7. Kua Level, Double Closing
8. Waist Level, Lead Internally, Issue Externally
9. Shoulder Level, Left Hand Closing
10. Waist Level, Left Hand Inward Closing
11. Kua Level, Double Closing
12. Kua Level, Lead Internally, Issue Externally
13. Step to Left, Neutralizing and Striking
14. Step to Right, Neutralizing and Striking
15. Elbow Closing
16. Lower Folding, Double Shaking
17. Winding and Intercepting
18. Closing posture

Taiji Qiu (Sphere, Ball) The Taiji Sphere of Chen style Taijiquan Internal Training

- by Grandmaster Chen Qingzhou, 19th Generation Most people who practice Taijiquan know about the Taiji sphere. When you reach a certain level in your barehanded practice, it is good to train with the Taiji Sphere. Many people who trains, for which purpose it is useful for and what form its practice takes, is frequently neglected by those seeking "gongfu". In the investigative spirit of the present, I present my experience and developed skills to all Taijiquan players, in order to "toss a few bricks to entice some jade".

In 1944, when I was ten years old, in the yard of my house was a roughly finished stone (qing shi) sphere with some white veins in it. It was about the same size as a soccer ball, which everyone called the "stone egg". I thought I could lift it up into my arms, but I couldn't do it. At times, my father would take an interest and approach the stone. He'd take a horse stance, pick the "stone egg" up with both hands, and proceed to roll it around his abdomen. At times, he would fling it off (with his abdomen) and at the end of his training, the ball remained on the ground. My father said, "this is to play with after you have gotten a grasp of the barehanded postures". Many years later, it occurred to me that the "stone (qing shi) sphere" must have been the ancient "Taiji Qiu" (Taiji sphere).

Nineteen years later, when I was studying Chen style Taijiquan with Master Chen Zhaopei, I observed a basketball game being played on a basketball court. It reminded me of the teachings of the Taiji sphere. When they caught a pass, the better basketball players really looked as if they were working out with a Taiji sphere. Just as in the peng (ward off), Lu (roll back), chan si jin (silk reeling force) of the posture Jin Gang Dao Dui (Vajra Pounds the Mortar) - first they would rotate toward the rear to neutralize the incoming force of the pass and then they were able to turn at will with the ball.

In the past, the previous generations of masters placed great emphasis on special power training techniques (xing gong), training with a Taiji sphere of over fifty pounds, hitting three sandbags (da san dai), and training with a stick or ruler (xing gong bang) in order to develop the foundation gongfu of Chen style Taijiquan.

From the Qing Dynasty, after the introduction of Western rifles and cannon into China, people became indifferent to traditional martial arts training. The more difficult postures were eliminated from the old Taijiquan training routine, which then developed into (more of) a health oriented practice. A few of the methods that were of benefit to developing "gongfu" were no longer practiced and basically ceased to be transmitted at the same time, the set was being changed to express the following sentiment: Do you want to know the entire purpose of Taijiquan. It lies in enhancing longevity and extending radiant good health into old age.

When I was learning the Taiji sphere, there was no Taiji sphere to practice with. My teacher only explained a few movements, described the movements with his empty hands, and performed the techniques pretending to hold a Taiji sphere. Later, I found an old leather ball, filled it with sand, and practiced revolving it continuously. Luckily, in 1973, I had a chance to see three steel Taiji spheres in Zhengzhou. I happily purchased one as if it was a precious object. I practiced with it up until the present day, causing the surface of the sphere to turn into a shiny black color.