

LUCKY PUNCH BOXING & ZENDO



Paper Street & Paris

THE ZEN BOXER

Zen Principles for Seeing Clearly, Staying Present and Fighting the Fight That's Actually Happening.

Go with the Flow

My purpose in writing this is to discuss and illustrate the symbiotic relationship created by combining fundamental principles and philosophies of Zen with boxing - that in doing this we create the Lucky Punch System of boxing.

WHAT THIS PAPER IS NOT

Here's what the paper is not - it's NOT a replacement for boxing specific fundamentals. It's NOT an excuse to not learn the basics, to not drill and drill and drill your footwork. To NOT practice slipping and rolling and coming back into position *with insurance*. To NOT drill and drill and drill pre-defense, defense, shadow boxing and all your tools. It's NOT permission to disregard what builds and maintains the structure and foundation of what boxing is.

It's also NOT just a continuation of blindly buying into boxing's superstitions or the "it's always been done this way" mentality that permeates our sport.

WHAT THIS PAPER IS

This paper *hopefully* will be less like simply teaching Zen to boxers and more like **a complete Zen-based boxing methodology**

QUICK HISTORY OF WHERE AND WHY

Since 1995 I've been obsessed with "The Triangle Offense" — it's a basketball thing. Created by Sam Barry, masterminded by Tex Winter and made into gold by Phil Jackson. If you're unfamiliar simply Google or go to YouTube and ask "what is the triangle offense?" - I'll wait.

I don't want to overload us here with too much information. I want to keep this paper fairly short and simple, but I do tend to ramble — and have been known to overly explain things so please bear with me.

Ok, when it comes to the Triangle Offense (which you're now an expert in having Googled it) Jackson's view is that the Triangle has a structure—but the structure *creates* freedom rather than *eliminating* it.

Jackson describes it as a system that aligns itself with the Zen principles of selflessness and mindful awareness, and in *Eleven Rings* (awesome book) he calls it a "*beautiful system*" because the system gives players a framework within which they can make their own decisions.

"Don't force the game"

C'mon — that's totally Zen!

The Triangle doesn't say:

"We're going to run this play and make the defense deal with it."

It says, essentially:

"Create the conditions. Move. Watch. Feel. Respond."

And *this* is my mission for Lucky Punch Boxing - we're going to create conditions. We're going to move, watch, feel and respond.

The Triangle has a structure—but the structure creates freedom rather than eliminating it.

It's the same with Lucky Punch Boxing — we have a structure.

We have a foundation, structure, we have the basics and boxing fundamentals.

We have "plays". We have tools ... lots and lots of tools ... so many that the running joke about Lucky Punch is that I need to make a glossary.

We have all the "normal" things that boxers have in gyms all over the world.

If understood and practiced right - all of the fundamentals and all of these tools CREATE freedom - *the more tools you have, the more freedom you have* -

Structure creates freedom

Training creates freedom

Tools create freedom

Zen creates freedom from the mind that gets in the way of using them

WHAT SETS US APART

THE key thing that sets us apart from other gyms and clubs is our Lucky Punch System.

There is of course SO MUCH to get into here, but like I said I want to keep this paper short - so let's look at one example about a concept from our system.

PUNCH VS POSITION

For us - it's not about the punch or the combo to throw - *it's about the position* - it's about creating the conditions that allow for the position in order to throw what needs to be thrown.

THE LUCKY PUNCH TRIANGLE

This is where the Lucky Punch Triangle comes in - **space, position and controls** (see luckypunchboxing.com for more on the Lucky Punch Triangle - it's explained brilliantly and ramblingly on the Philosophy page)

"Oh - so this is just about free styling with like no foundation, no structure, right?"

NO ... *dummy* ... THIS IS NOT ABOUT SIMPLY FREE-STYLING in and with no foundation, no structure - FAR FROM IT —

PRACTICE AND REPETITION

A core part of what we do — practice, repetition, drills — the unsexy and boring footwork drills over and over and over again - drilling, drilling, drilling all our different bases, our "plays", all our different pre-defense, all our fundamental defenses and head movement — **all our different tools**.

The more tools you have, the more freedom you have

So, you're now an expert on the Triangle Offense and you understand Lucky Punch's Triangle of space, position and controls ... congratulations ... ok, you don't have to be an expert - I'm just making sure you're paying attention - you know where to find that stuff when you're ready

Regardless of what you know or don't know about basketball, boxing or anything we've been talking about so far there's an aspect we'll address that I think is really groovy ... ya, that's right ... "groovy" - when it comes to what we're doing here and what you're about to learn

There's a beautiful relationship and love affair between the Zen principles inside the Lucky Punch System and the Lucky Punch Triangle

The Lucky Punch System is the *methodology*

The Lucky Punch Triangle is the *framework* for reading the fight

The 10 Zen Principles are the *mindset* that allows the fighter to use the system

Dig it -

The Triangle tells you what to look at

Zen teaches you how to look

Alrighty — let's get to it

ZEN-BASED BOXING METHODOLOGY

The following principles are a major part of the heart and soul of our system

The 10 Principles of Zen Boxing

1. BE HERE — Presence

The fight is happening now.

Zen idea:

The past is gone. The future hasn't happened. The only place you can actually experience reality is here, now, in this very moment.

In boxing:

Don't live in the last exchange. Don't fight the next round. Don't anticipate what might happen. Feel your feet. See your opponent. Hear your corner. Feel your breath.

Lesson:

The only moment you can fight is this one.

2. SEE CLEARLY — Perception Without Distortion

See what is actually happening.

Zen idea:

Our thoughts, fears, desires, anger and expectations distort reality. Practice seeing things *as they are* rather than as you want or fear them to be.

In boxing:

See space. See distance. See position. See rhythm. See momentum. See openings. See what your opponent is actually giving you. Don't let fear tell you they're stronger than they are—or ego tell you they're weaker.

Lesson:

Don't see what you expect. See what is there.

3. GO WITH THE FLOW — Don't Force

Don't make the fight happen. Let it happen.

Zen idea:

Stop trying to force reality into the shape you want. Work with what is happening rather than constantly resisting it.

In boxing:

If they move, move with them. If they pressure, don't automatically resist pressure with pressure. If you can't reach the position you want, find a new position. If your combination isn't there, abandon it. If the opponent gives you something different than expected, adapt.

Lesson:

Don't make the fight you want. Fight the fight that's actually happening.

The Koan:

You CAN make the fight you want IF that's the fight that's actually happening

4. LET GO — Non-Attachment

Engage Fully. Empty Instantly.

Zen idea:

Attachment creates suffering and rigidity. When we cling to an outcome, a mistake, a plan or an idea of how things *should be*, we lose our freedom to respond to *what is* happening now.

In boxing:

You miss a punch—let it go. You get hit—let it go. Your strategy isn't working—let it go. You land something beautiful—let it go. Don't carry the last exchange into the next one.

Lesson:

Every exchange is already gone. Let it go and be ready for the next one.

5. STAY EMPTY — Beginner's Mind

Don't assume you know what comes next.

Zen idea:

The beginner's mind is open to possibility. Experience is valuable, but when experience becomes expectation, it can prevent us from seeing something new.

In boxing:

Don't think, "*I know this fighter.*" Think, "*Let's see.*" Every opponent is different. Every exchange is different. Every moment is new.

Lesson:

Stay curious. Stay open. Never stop seeing.

6. REMAIN BALANCED — Equanimity

Don't let the fight move you emotionally.

Zen idea:

Remain steady regardless of changing circumstances. Don't become attached to either success or failure.

In boxing:

You hurt them—stay calm. They hurt you—stay calm. You're winning—stay calm. You're losing—stay calm. Don't let excitement, fear, anger or frustration take you away from your center.

Lesson:

Don't get high. Don't get low. Stay centered.

7. DROP THE EGO — No “Me”

Stop making the fight about you.

Zen idea:

Ego wants to protect an identity: *I’m better. I’m tougher. I can’t lose. I can’t let them make me look bad. I have to put on a good entertaining show.* When you become invested in proving who you are, you stop seeing clearly.

In boxing:

You don’t have to prove you’re tougher. You don’t have to prove you’re better. You don’t have to entertain the crowd. You don’t have to get the last word. You don’t have to retaliate because you got hit.

The ego wants to be right.

The boxer wants to **respond correctly.**

Lesson:

Don’t protect your ego. Protect your ability to see.

8. TRUST THE TRAINING — No-Mind

When the moment comes, get out of your own way.

Zen idea:

No-mind isn't having no thoughts. It's freedom from being trapped by thought. When the mind stops interfering, trained action can happen naturally.

In boxing:

You don't need to know exactly what you're going to do before the opening appears — you need to trust that you have enough tools to recognize it —and respond when it does

Lesson:

Here's a little something from behind the curtain - I don't train you to know the answer - I train you to *recognize the problem and have enough tools to solve it*

9. ACCEPT IMPERMANENCE — Everything Changes

Nothing stays the same.

Zen idea:

Everything is constantly changing. Nothing can be held in one fixed state—not your circumstances, your body, your emotions, or your opponent.

In boxing:

Your opponent changes. The space and distance change. The rhythm changes. Your body changes. The momentum changes. The fight you thought you were going to have may disappear in the first thirty seconds. The fight you thought you were having may already be gone.

Don't try to freeze the fight in the shape you want it to be.

Lesson:

When something changes, change with it.

10. RESPOND TO WHAT IS — Acceptance & Adaptation

The opponent gets a vote.

Zen idea:

Acceptance doesn't mean giving up. It means seeing reality clearly and responding to it rather than fighting against the fact that it is happening.

In boxing:

You have a plan. They have a plan. Then the bell rings—and reality takes over.

Don't ask:

"How do I make them fight my fight?"

Ask:

"What are they giving me?"

If they move forward—respond.

If they retreat—respond.

If they change rhythm—respond.

If your plan fails—adapt.

Lesson:

Don't fight reality. Respond to it.

THE PATH

These aren't ten unrelated rules. They're a progression:

BE HERE

Become present.



SEE CLEARLY

See what is actually there.



GO WITH THE FLOW

Don't force what isn't there.



LET GO

Release what has already happened.



STAY EMPTY

Remain open to what comes next.



REMAIN BALANCED

Don't let the moment disturb your center.



DROP THE EGO

Stop making it about "me."



TRUST THE TRAINING

Get out of your own way.



ACCEPT IMPERMANENCE

Recognize that everything changes.



RESPOND TO WHAT IS

Meet reality as it arrives.

The 10 Principles teach you **how to be**.

The Lucky Punch System teaches you ***how to read the fight***.

And then the two come together:

Be here. See clearly. Go with the flow. Let go. Stay empty. Stay balanced. Drop the ego. Trust the training. Accept change. Respond to what is.

And when the opening appears—take it.

That feels like the core of *The Zen Boxer* to me.

What I like best and think is super special is that the Zen principles inside the Lucky Punch System combined with the Lucky Punch Triangle of Space, Position and Controls - is that the system isn't telling you **what punches to throw**. No, the system is *giving* YOU THE FREEDOM to use whatever tool YOU understand to be the best tool for the job

The Zen principles inside the Lucky Punch System combined with the Lucky Punch Triangle are telling you for example(s) - that your **position will determine what you throw**. That you need to **create space**, or **take space away**, or **occupy space**. That you need to **control their lead glove**, or **control their head** or **control the air** with ... whatever tools YOU see as best from your practice and understanding.

The Zen principles inside the Lucky Punch System combined with the Lucky Punch Triangle are teaching you **what kind of mind to bring into the ring**.

And the Lucky Punch System teaches you **how to use that mind to navigate the fight**.

So, there it is - * *deep breathe* * that's what we call it the **Lucky Punch System** and sometimes when you watch us perform the best punch might look like luck.

But it isn't really luck.

It's preparation meeting perception.

It's seeing an opportunity because you're present enough to see it.

It's having enough tools to take advantage of it.

It's being unattached enough to abandon the thing you thought you were going to do.

It's being empty enough to recognize something you didn't expect.

It's trusting your training enough to act without hesitation.

And it's responding to what is actually happening rather than trying to force the fight into the shape you imagined.

The punch looks lucky.

But the conditions weren't.