

CELEBRATING 30 YEARS IN MARTIAL ARTS

BLITZ

AUSTRALASIAN MARTIAL ARTS MAGAZINE

HOW WILL YOU REACT?

The beginner's guide to real scenario training

REALITY CHECK

How martial arts saves lives on the front line

30

YEARS OF BLITZ

Words from the masters: 2010-16

HONEST AIKIDO

Robert Mustard
Shihan's no-BS take on budo

BJJ VS BLADE

Adapt your grappling skills to deal with deadly weapons

SLOW YOUR FOE

How to beat faster opponents

FULL CONTACT

Shihan FRANCISCO FILHO'S legendary life in Kyokushin and K1 kickboxing

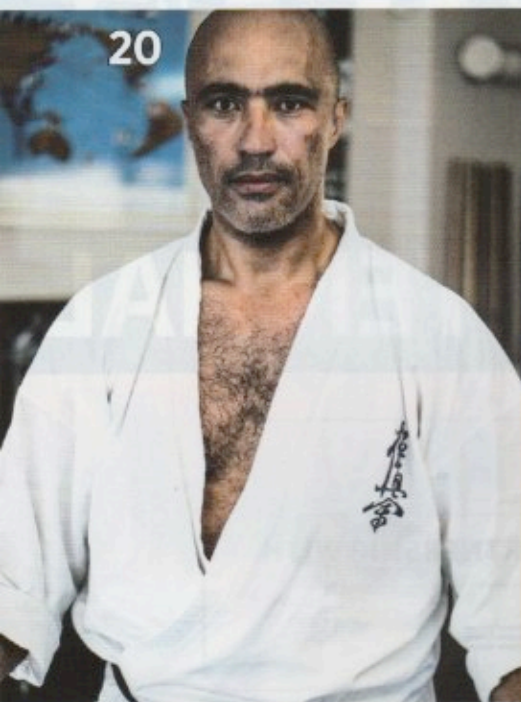
AUS. \$9.95 Inc. GST
NZ. \$10.95 Inc. GST

VOLUME 31 NO. 2 / APR-MAY 2017



9 770818 959005

In This Edition » April - May 2017



20



28



36



42



54



60



66

Features

20 **Cover story: Indisputable Proof**

An interview with former Kyokushin full-contact karate world champion and K1 kickboxing king Shihan Francisco Filho, following the Brazilian's recent visit Down Under

28 **BJJ vs The Blade**

Jeet Kune Do Unlimited and BJJ for the Street founder Burton Richardson shows how to adapt your grappling skills to account for weapons

36 **When Reality Comes Knocking**

Krav maga instructor Jeff Phillips offers a handy rule book for introducing reality-based scenario training to improve any martial art's self-defence capabilities

42 **Throwing Down - Part Two**

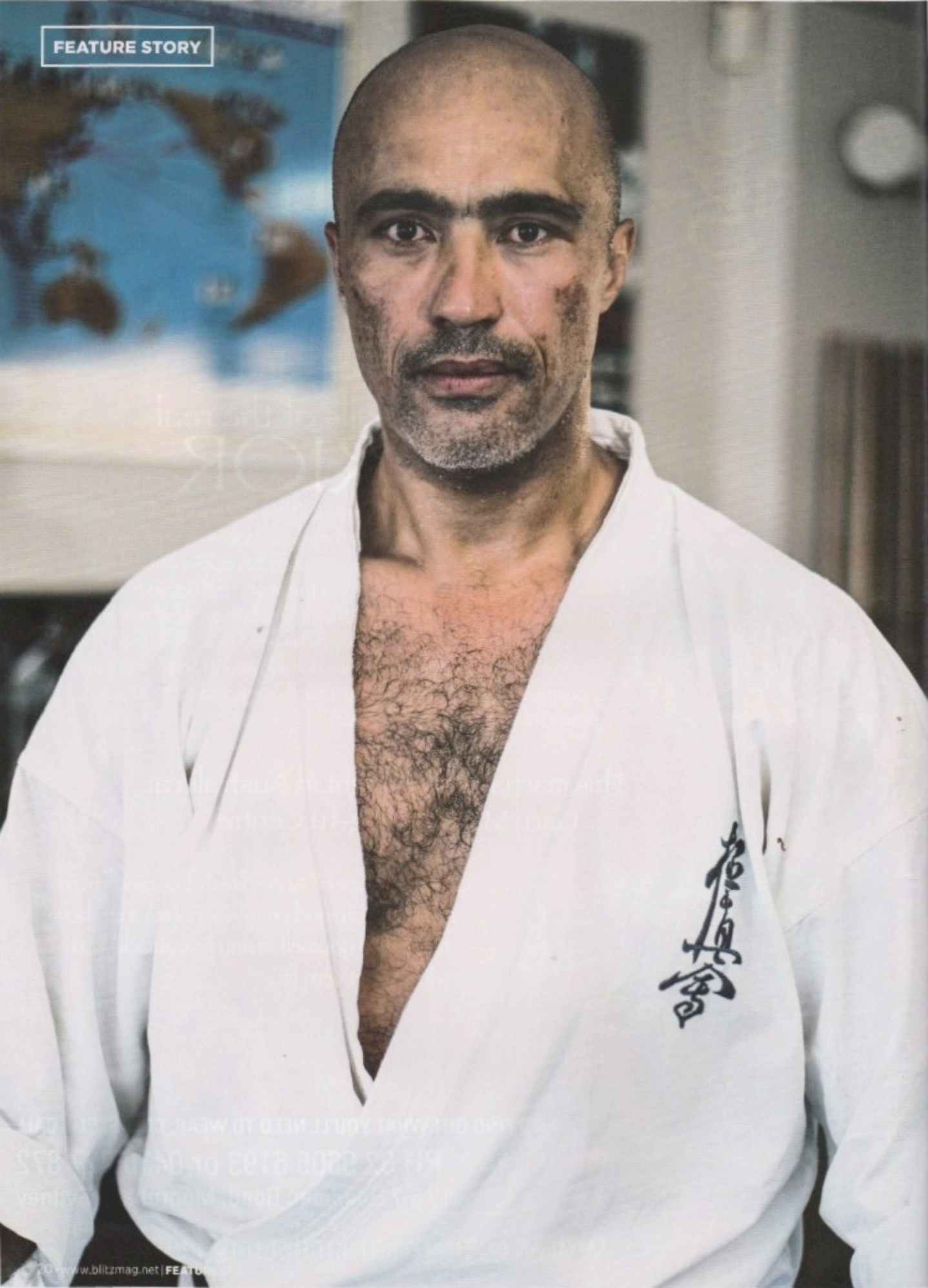
An insightful chat with Canada's Shihan Robert Mustard, one of the world's most in-demand teachers of Yoshinkan aikido and a recent visitor to Australia

66 **Slow 'em Down**

Mixed Martial Boxing founder Mannie de Matos reveals a few useful tips and sparring strategies for mitigating an opponent's speed advantage

70 **30 Years & Kicking - Part Three**

In celebration of *Blitz* magazine's 30th year in publication, masters who have featured on its covers over the past decade talk about the martial arts' past and future



INDISPUTABLE

PROOF

Kyokushin legend Francisco Filho

STORY BY JARROD BOYLE | IMAGES BY ALEX KARNASOPOULOS

Francisco Filho has long been revered in Kyokushin karate circles, where he made his mark with spectacular victories in what was then the world's toughest full-contact tournament: the Kyokushin Open World Tournament in Japan. He won the Kyokushin crown in 1999 and went on to show the world's kickboxing fans what Kyokushin was capable of, smashing his way through the ranks of K1, which had risen to become the world's penultimate stand-up fighting contest. Today, the Brazilian traverses the globe extolling the benefits of his beloved karate and recently took the time to talk to *Blitz* while visiting Sydney for a seminar tour.

“**K**yokushin is a made-up word; it's not a word in the Japanese language,” says Shihan Trevor Tockar, principal of Kyokushin Karate North Bondi.

“The closest you get in translation is, ‘ultimate truth.’ It doesn't mean ‘we're the best.’ What we're saying is that through the Kyokushin way of training and full-contact fighting, there is no room for self-deception. You can't fool yourself. You can't rely on a grade or rank, or some other psychological thing. Your pretensions are knocked out of you very quickly; not only in terms of what you can do, but what can be done to you. You learn your strengths, but you also learn your weaknesses. Only once you do that can you really develop.”

Shihan Trevor's words echo those of Mas Oyama, founder of Kyokushin karate. A protean martial artist, he built his style around a practical philosophy he defined as follows: “The heart of our karate is real fighting. There can be no proof without real fighting. Without proof there is no trust. Without trust, there is no respect. This is a definition in the world of martial arts.”

Francisco Filho is, by Oyama's definition, the ultimate karateka. He has defined himself by the proof repeatedly offered in combat, both in full-contact ‘knockdown’ karate, being the first non-Japanese to win the world tournament, and then going on to extend both his own reputation and that of real karate in the K1 kickboxing organisation.

His career did not conclude

there, however. Those successes have become a platform to inspire students of real karate the world over. Surprisingly, very little has been written about him in the English language.

As with so many martial artists, Filho found his way into a karate school when introduced by a family member.

“When I was an 11-year-old kid, my older brother said that he believed that I had good potential to be a fighter and he enrolled me in the karate academy. This made me very happy, but I remember one thing that he said to me when I first went to the gym; he said that once I was there I had to do my best and never be afraid of anybody.”

Even from that time, fighting was a key tenet of his education.

“[My brother] said that if somebody asked me to fight, I must never refuse. But there was one condition: if I did not work hard at school, he would take me out of the gym. After that, I never had a problem with school.”

In Brazil, sport is as much a part of recreational life as it is in Australia — but fighting more so. “In Brazil, most of the people are engaged with soccer, or football. My brother was almost a professional soccer player and so was I. But karate was my passion. All I wanted to do was karate.”

The hard, intense training spoke to the young Filho, although some of his initial expectations were not met.

“Actually, when I started training I think I was a little disappointed because in the movies I was seeing people

flying from one tree to another tree and doing all kinds of fantastic things, but I saw nobody flying anywhere in the dojo! But then I realised this is the real thing, and it was a big challenge for me, and I just love a challenge. You challenge me and then I am happy."

Kyokushin gave Filho something he had not been able to find in his other sporting pursuits.

"It's the truth...the ultimate truth. It's the thing of 'never give up'. It's [fighting] with your spirit more than anything else. That's what attracted me to the Kyokushin way."

Filho was a natural athlete and soon found his way onto the biggest stage in the world for full-contact karate, the

Kyokushin Open World Tournament in Japan.

"I reached the final 16 [fighters] in the Fifth World Open Karate Tournament in 1991, and it was my dream to become world champion at the next tournament in 1995. That dream did not come true, and I had to settle for third position."

Tockar was also at the Fifth World Open Karate Tournament, and it was here that he saw the young Filho for the first time.

"Everybody was blown away. He was largely unknown, and then he KO'd Andy Hug. His fighting skills were just amazing. One of the guys was out in the back watching the fighters warm up, and described him as moving 'like a panther'. He had exceptional speed and grace.

Even at that time, he stood out as something special among the elite."

Filho finally achieved his goal of tournament champion in 1999.

"In 1999 I won the tournament and for me it was everything. I was satisfied with life. I am sorry to say, but I could die in the day after the tournament because my mission in life was to do that. But then I realised that I had much more to achieve and to complete."

"In '99, when he did win it, he had to beat Feitosa and Kazumi," says Tockar. "The thing was, he won with such a variety of techniques. His side-kick was phenomenal. He had it all. He also has an incredibly strong will. The more I've got to

know him, the more his will has become apparent.

"There's a highlight reel somewhere which shows him fighting Andy Hug. Andy threw his famous axe kick, and Filho actually blocked it with a side kick."

Francisco became a star within the Kyokushin organisation and found himself spending a lot of time in Japan.

"I have travelled to Japan on a regular basis and lived there from 1996 to 1997. The basics are the same all over the world, but each country has its own details. Brazil is actually not so different from Japan because Shihan Seiji Isobe was sent to Brazil when he was a young man by Sosai Oyama to develop karate in Brazil, and he taught in the Japanese way."

Filho with friend and host of his Australian seminars, Shihan Trevor Tockar



FILHO IN ACTION: EVASION & TAKEDOWN

In his career as a karateka, Filho fought the best the competition had to offer.

"The greatest, I think, was Kazumi. He beat me in the semi-final of the sixth World Tournament and I beat him in the final of the seventh World Tournament. Kazumi was very strong, but also a very nice human being. Like most good Kyokushin fighters, he is very respectful of other people. It was an honour and a privilege to fight him for the world championship."

Tournament success distinguished him in the eyes of Kyokushin's august founder, Masutatsu Oyama.

"I met him for the first time in 1991. He gave me the award for the best technique and shook my hand and said to me, 'Oh, you are a good fighter.' I remember [Englishman] Mike Thomson who was standing next to me [at the time] saying, 'Hey, I think he likes you,' and I thought, 'Wow, this is so good.'"

"Sosai Oyama was a great man and I was honoured to be acknowledged by him. Another important thing to say is that when I was 17 years old, Kancho Matsui (who was then the reigning world champion) was present when I won a tournament in São Paulo and I remember him calling me aside and telling me that I had the potential to be world champion. That really inspired me."

Francisco is also one of only 10 people to complete the infamous 100-man *kumite*. But he didn't just do it the once — his training for the mammoth test escalated from doing 50 to 80 fights every week.

"I did this every Friday for about two months. And then one month before the event, we decided to do a 100-man fight," Filho recalls. "I prepared for this when my instructors called 100 people into the gymnasium and then I fought them all one by one, just to have an idea how it would be the next month."



As David Tockar fires a leading left, Filho steps across and checks it with his forearm...



...angling off to scoop under Tockar's front kick with *gedan barai* (lower sweeping block).



▼ ...and lifts the leg as he drives down through the upper body, using a circular motion with both hands to uproot his opponent...



...drawing a follow-up right punch from Tockar, which Filho parries as he continues to the outside...



◀ Hooking under the extended leg, Filho controls Tockar's body with his opposite arm...



...and drive him down into the mat while continuing to maintain leg-control...



▶ ...creating an opening for finishing strikes to the body.



Filho leads Aussie students through an outdoor training session in January

Most walk away from the ordeal requiring serious medical attention, if they are able to walk at all in the days following.

"I did the 100-man kumite on the same day as [Kenji] Yamaki, who won the Sixth World Tournament in 1995," says Filho. "He spent nearly a month in hospital afterwards."

The Brazilian fared somewhat better.

"Actually, I went to Disneyland afterwards. People were saying that this was impossible, and that I was a ghost. They appeared scared!"

As with any true martial artist, his toughest opponent was with him all the way.

"My toughest opponent was myself. First, your body goes against you and says 'enough,' but your mind is still there and then suddenly your mind says the same thing, but then your spirit must be strong."

Aussie Kyokushin champ turned K1 and MMA star Peter

Graham met Filho for the first time when staying in Japan and training as an *uchi deshi*, or live-in student.

"The first time I met him, I was quite young and had moved to Japan as an *uchi deshi*. I was around 20 years old. By then, Francisco was a Kyokushin superstar. I was living in a dormitory at the Honbu [headquarters] dojo, and he was in an apartment around the corner, in Ikkebukoro.

"I saw him every day. We trained together and ate together. The first time I went to his apartment, he was cooking Brazilian food. It was a traditional dish of meat with black beans and pork bits, white rice and a substance that looks like sawdust, which is actually a grated root from the Amazon.

"He was awesome to train with; an unbelievable athlete. His ability to kick and move for someone so big — around 115 kilograms and 194 centimetres

— was freakish. He was also super-cool.

"He trained really hard and was never short or cross with anyone. No signs of attitude. He was respectful of the hierarchy of Kyokushin and always considerate and mindful of the lower grades.

"As he got more famous, he pretty much stayed the same. Brazilians seem to have a collective chilled-out personality. If you're not chilled out, you'll freak out, there's so much going on in their country."

Francisco Filho is better known in Australia than many other countries in the world, given that many of his definitive contests were fought against Australians.

"Garry O'Neill and I used to live nearby to each other in Japan and we became very close friends," says Filho. "I learned a lot from him. I also got to know Walter Schnaubelt very well. He spent about eight

months training in Brazil. He is a great guy."

Given the divisions that have occurred in the Kyokushin organisation since the death of its founder, Australia has managed to keep its reputation intact.

"Unfortunately there have been a lot of divisions in the past," Filho laments. "However, I see that our organisation is in good hands. Both Shihan Trevor [Tockar] and Shihan Nik (Cujic) have beautiful dojos and strong students with very good manners and spirit.

"It doesn't matter how big we are, but we must be strong all the time. We must do our best so that the organisation can always grow. What I have seen makes me very happy."

Filho was in an interesting position as a tournament contemporary of Oyama's successor, Matsui, himself a gifted fighter and former champion of the World

FILHO IN ACTION: STRAIGHT KICKING

Tournament. Matsui went from being a rival to becoming the steward of Filho's career.

"He is a great man. The work he has been doing for Kyokushin is amazing. When I was a kid, I was already a big fan and would put on videos of his fights. He was my hero. His techniques are super techniques. He has very good balance, stamina and power. I think he was above everyone."

Matsui gave the go-ahead for Filho to enter the K1, the world's premier stand-up fighting tournament, in 1997. K1 was a professional organisation, while Kyokushin remained awededly amateur.

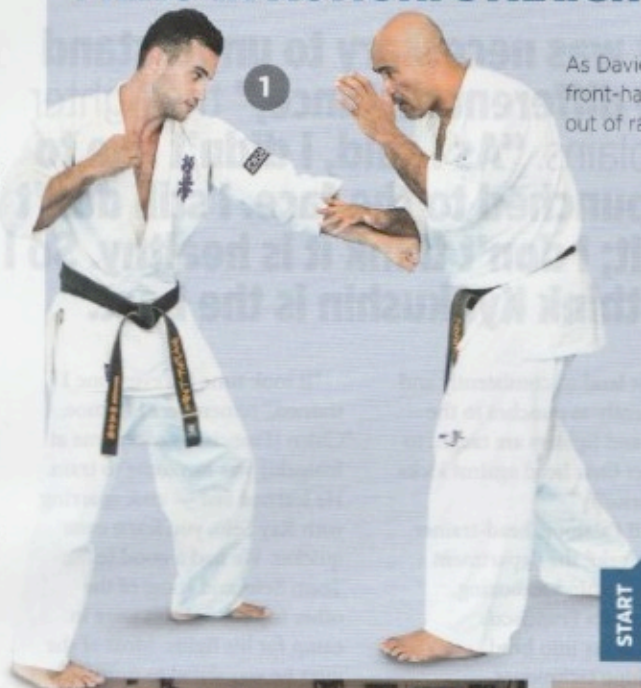
"This was discussed with Kancho. He supported me in this, and a number of other Kyokushin fighters did very well in K1."

It was in the K1 that Filho again found himself facing the late, great Andy Hug.

"There was some history behind this," Filho reveals. "When I knocked Andy out with a *mawashi geri* [roundhouse kick] in the Fifth World Tournament in 1991, there was some controversy and I think Andy wanted to get payback in the K1. Because we do not punch to the face under Kyokushin rules, I think that I was regarded as vulnerable to this technique.

"However, I remember that Andy threw a straight punch to my face early in the first round and I countered with a right hook which caught him in the right spot. He went down and I was like, 'What? What? It's finished?'"

Filho wasn't as passionate about kickboxing as he had been about knockdown karate, but he saw the value in continuing for the Kyokushin organisation. "It was not my dream to be K1 champion," he admits, "but I saw some great fighters in K1 and I thought that I would really like to face those guys. I wanted to see how strong I was, even though I didn't know the technique."



As David Tockar launches a front-hand strike, Filho shifts just out of range and pats it down...



...drawing the rear-hand body shot from Tockar, which Filho parries with the same arm, guiding it across his body.



As his opponent turns back to follow his target, Filho again edges out of range and scoops the punch across...



...and fires a straight *yoko geri* (side kick) through the gap to his opponent's face before Tockar can follow through with his low roundhouse.



5
Turning his body as he whips his left leg back to the floor, Filho follows with a 'Brazilian kick'...



...rolling his hip over as his roundhouse kick elevates, to slam his shin and foot down into the opponent's jaw/neck/collarbone area.

"I went to Seattle to train and when this guy hit me in the face, I really didn't like it and I thought, 'now you are in trouble for hitting my face'... and I thought about my kicks. I [believed] nobody could kick as well as I could. I know this may sound arrogant, but I was thinking that I was the 'king of the kicks' and that nobody could kick better than me. I really believed in myself and I felt that I was the best kicker. I was 100-per-cent convinced about that."

The transition to kickboxing was not a straightforward affair, even for someone as gifted as Filho. He estimates it took him about two years.

"It was necessary to understand the different distance," the fighter explains. "As I said, I didn't like to be punched to the face. I still don't like it; I don't think it is healthy. So I think Kyokushin is the best. Of course, to be punched to your ribs without gloves is not healthy, but if you break your ribs they can recover with time... but if you keep getting punched to the face, you can suffer permanent brain damage."

"Although Kyokushin does allow kicks to the head, they

"It was necessary to understand the different distance," the fighter explains. "As I said, I didn't like to be punched to the face. I still don't like it; I don't think it is healthy. So I think Kyokushin is the best.

do not land so consistently and frequently as punches to the head and fighters are taught to protect their head against kicks as a priority."

Faii Falamoe, head-trainer at 'Ichigeki', the department of Kyokushin kickboxing, remembers Francisco's initial foray into head punching techniques.

"From karate to boxing and kickboxing wasn't hard — karate has many kicks in all different directions," says Falamoe. "It was the getting hit in the face that was hard. Don't get me wrong, karate is very strong [in terms of] mind, body and soul, but getting smashed in the face and jaw...well, that's something they weren't ready for."

Francisco's transition wasn't especially difficult, although it may have been confronting and somewhat painful.

"It took time for everyone I trained," remembers Falamoe. "Chico [Francisco's nickname at Ichigeki] was awesome to train. He learned fast — and, sparring with Ray Sefo, you learn even quicker. We had a good team; 'Team Sefo' and some of the other top K1 fighters were in camp for his fights. Most of the guys he was slated to fight, Sefo had already fought."

Was it easier to fight people like Andy Hug and Sam Greco who had a Kyokushin background than fighting some of the other fighters like Peter Aerts?

"Not really," says Filho, "Because when I fought them, Andy Hug and Sam Greco were already kickboxers. I remember Sam Greco scaring me. He was a great fighter. He was named 'the beast' and he actually was a beast! He punched like crazy.

"What happened is that I was trying to go easy because we were both from Kyokushin and I started the fight with a light mawashi geri and then he blocked it and came back with two punches and then did what he should not have done: he hit my face!"

Filho eventually got used to it, both receiving and delivering — in a K1 career that ran until mid-2004, Filho won by KO punches twice as often as he lost by the same method, and delivered several TKOs with his thunderous low kicks. He finished with a record of 16 wins (9 by KO/TKO), seven losses and two draws, defeating almost every K1 legend at least once in his tenure, and taking the K1 World Grand Prix title in 2000.

Since retiring from fighting, Francisco has become a key figure in the Kyokushin leadership.

"I am South American President of the IKO [under Matsui] and Honbu always asks my support to help in the international organisation, so I keep flying all over the world teaching Kyokushin and" also kickboxing.

"So I am here now to develop Kyokushin karate and to take it to the people. Everybody should participate because it is not only about fighting, and not only about getting in condition, but it's about being a better human being. That's what we need in society. It's not important only to be strong. The best thing is for you to be nice and to respect others."

Filho is convinced that MMA will not be the death of the traditional full-contact martial arts, in part because the values they promote will never become passé.

And he is happy to lead the charge on behalf of Kyokushin.

"It all depends on us — the shihans. We must maintain the energy and give back to Kyokushin in order to make a better world." ■

A happy Filho receives recognition of his teaching at North Bondi Kyokushin

