



4. Taekwondo Sparring Strategies

Strategy is a method to defeat the opponent through analysis of the situation, judgment of the available options and immediate execution of the most appropriate action. The purpose of using strategy is to manage the course of the match while conserving energy and moving wisely.

To execute an effective strategy in the match the fighter must be thoroughly familiar with the rules and regulations of the game, as well as the strategies in use by the current top international fighters, and have mastered fundamental skills that work in every situation. In the ring, the fighter also must be able to rely on his coach to evaluate the opponent and formulate strategy based on this evaluation.

Competition taekwondo is a game of strategy. The result of the match often hinges on the strategic proficiency of the competitors.

Developing a Competition Strategy

Before developing a competition strategy, each competitor must consider the following elements essential to taekwondo competition:

- 1) Technical structure and variations according to the competition rules. Every competitor must be able to win within the established framework of the competition rules. He must create unique offensive combinations designed to score points while avoiding penalties.
- 2) Economical use of energy over the duration of the match. A fighter must plan his strategy over the course of the full nine minutes of the match. He must clearly decide when it is appropriate to conserve energy and when it is necessary to press the opponent.
- 3) Judicial application of feinting skills. Feinting should be used wisely and sparingly, so as not to be detected by the opponent.

Once the competitor has a general plan, the following process is necessary for the accurate formulation (psychological) and execution (physical) of an individual strategy:

1. Psychological formulation of strategy

- concentration (attention to the opponent's every action)
- information collection (accumulation of information)
- data selection (sorting of the important information)
- analysis of the situation (projection of future events)

- decision making (selection of appropriate action)
- immediate execution (implementation of chosen action)

2. Physical execution of strategy

- adaptation (change of techniques according to situation)
- economic distribution of energy (conservation and assertion of energy at the proper time)
- timing (attack/defend appropriately)
- execution of plan (carry out planned strategy)
- score management (score enough points to win)

Offensive Strategy

Offense, in taekwondo competition, is the strategic application of skills to the target area of the opponent. It is most commonly applied with forward footwork and explosive movements. To be successful, offensive skills must be executed with good timing and an accurate sense of distance.

There are three methods of offense: direct attack, indirect attack and counterattack. A direct attack is an initiative attack, an indirect attack is a deceptive attack and a counterattack is a reflexive attack.

Direct attack

There are three types of direct attacks according to the distance and stance of the opponent.

1. The first is an in-place attack where the distance to the opponent is perfect for a single kicking attack and no footwork or deception is required.
2. The second is an incline attack where the distance is slightly beyond the reach of an in-place attack. Therefore the competitor must shift his body forward without moving his feet, and launch the attack from the inclined position. Timing, distance and speed are essential.
3. The third is a sliding attack where the distance is even greater than that of the incline attack. The competitor must slide his front foot in as he shifts his body weight forward to attack. Speed is essential for covering the distance in a sliding attack. For maximum efficiency, the competitor must execute the technique before the opponent recognizes his intention.



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Indirect Attack

There are three types of indirect attack: feinting, cutting and footwork.

1. Feinting: To create an opening, feint first and then attack according to the opponent's reaction.
2. Cutting: Cut the opponent's attacking movement and follow with a counterattack.
3. Footwork: According to the distance and stance of the opponent, initiate with footwork and attack.

Counterattack

There are two types of counter attacks: direct and indirect.

1. A direct counterattack means countering the opponent's attack without changing position. Speed, agility and fortitude are important for direct counterattacking.
2. An indirect counterattack means avoiding the opponent's attack with footwork and then following with a counterattack.

unless the counterattacker can score a knockout.

4. The most frequently used attacks are roundhouse kick, back kick and axe kick. Successful competitors can effectively counter these kicks.
5. The side kick and front kick are rarely used in competition any more and are highly unlikely to score points.
6. The roundhouse kick is the preferred kick for scoring, followed by the back kick and axe kick.
7. Kicks to the trunk score points more frequently than kicks to the head.
8. Spin whip kick is the least likely kick (out of the frequently used kicks) to score.
9. The most productive round for scoring is the third round.
10. Feinting should be used sparsely and only when there is an intention to attack.
11. Counterattacking fighters should capitalize on the use of their front leg to increase chances of scoring.
12. Occupying the center of the ring is most advantageous.
13. Whenever the opponent approaches the boundary line, push him out.
14. When the opponent positions himself in the corner, prepare to counter an aggressive attack.
15. When the referee says "Kaesok" attack immediately.

Summary of Offensive Options:

Direct Attack

1. in-place attack
2. incline attack
3. sliding attack

Indirect Attack

1. feinting
2. cutting
3. drawing

Counterattack

1. direct
2. indirect

Strategic Tips for Winning

1. Counterattacking has a better chance of scoring than attacking for advanced competitors.
2. Beginning and intermediate competitors are most likely to score with single direct attacks.
3. In a close match, an attacking fighter is more likely to win than a counterattacking fighter