





TAE KWON DO'S EXCITING NEW 540 DEGREE KICK

It's Turning
More Than
Just Heads!

It's new, it's flashy and it's very effective. It's the new kick on the block--the 540 degree jump turning kick. A combination of tornado kick and roundhouse kick or crescent kick, the "540" takes kicking expertise to new levels. If you think of the devastating roundhouse kick of Muay Thai boxers--with its large, circular follow through--made into a jumping technique, you have a fairly good description of the 540 kick.

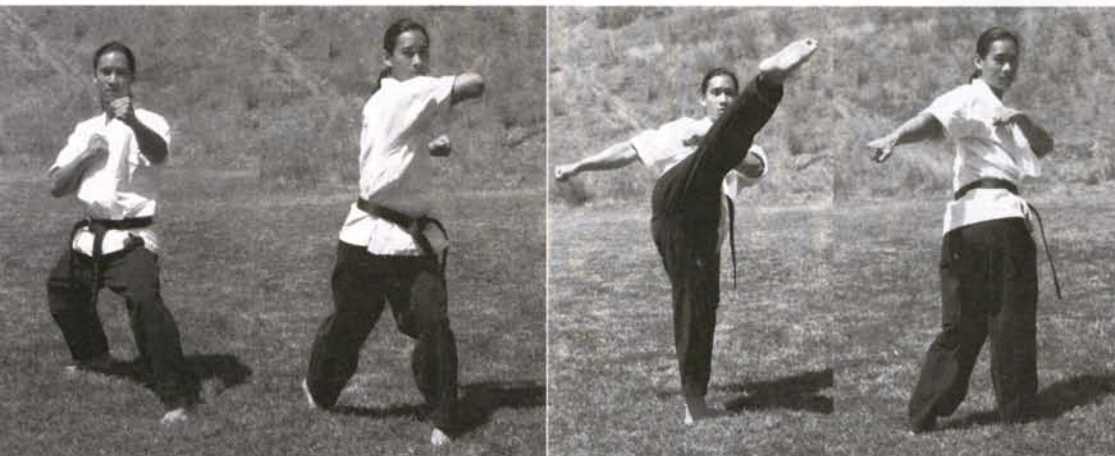
**Story and Photos
by
Jane Hallander**

One of the best people to demonstrate the 540 degree kick is Michael Chaturantabut, one of the top tournament competitors in the world. Originally from Thailand, Chaturantabut started his martial arts career in this country's Midwest in Okinawan Shorei-ryu Karate, studying with John Sharky, Jr. for twelve years. When he moved to San Jose, California, for college, he discovered Tae Kwon Do and studied with the senior Ernie Reyes. Chaturantabut now lives in Los Angeles, where he is pursuing a film career along with his martial arts.

Chaturantabut was the overall forms and weapons champion on the 1995 NASKA tournament circuit. He is currently ranked the number one musical forms and hard style weapons competitor in North America by NASKA. He also won two gold medals at the huge World Amateur Karate Organization (WAKO) 1995 championship tournament in Germany in forms and in weapons. He also appears regularly in the WMAC Masters series on Fox TV, where he plays the role of "Wizard."

"The 540 degree kick can be done as either a crescent or roundhouse kick. What distinguishes it from other circular kicks is that it is jumping, kicking and landing on same leg."

540° kick



Chaturantabut demonstrates the hand and arm movements during a 540 degree kick. The hands scoop downward from the right side, lifting up to the left shoulder. The last photo shows what the hands look like on the other side of the body.

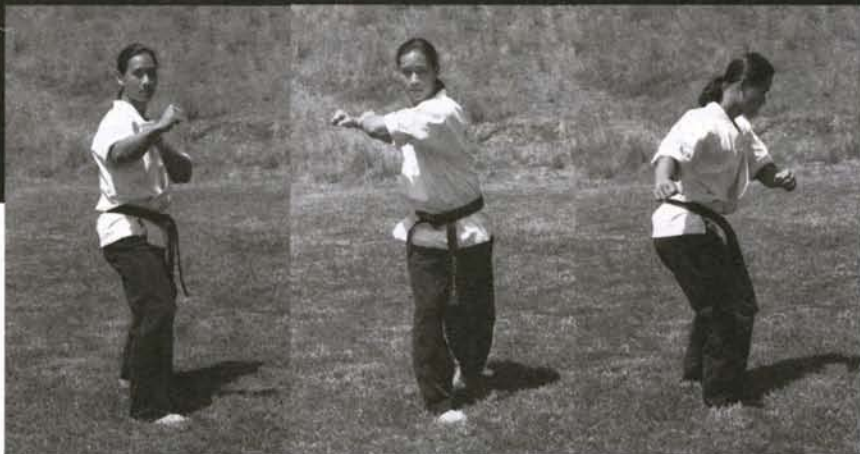
Explains Chaturantabut.

He further clarifies that there are two ways to do a 540 kick. You can take a big jump straight up, using the quadriceps muscles for lifting power; or--you can do what he does--use the punch method. The punch method involves using fast twitch muscle action that propels the body into the air, rather than bending the knees and pushing the quadriceps forward. The punch method has a more spontaneous appearance.

At one time, he jumped into the 540 kick, but now Chaturantabut punches into it. He explains that you must stay relaxed for that method. At the moment you are about to jump, exert all of your energy in an upward force--similar to a pop-up kick, but without using the quadriceps as much as with a pop-up kick. Chaturantabut doesn't bend his knees as much as with a pop-up kick.

Chaturantabut trained for the 540 degree kick by building up to it. "It's a

Here, Michael shows how to do the jump. The 540 degree kick jump looks like the beginning of an inside crescent kick. Starting with his right leg forward, he turns counterclockwise, lifts his left knee and thrusts forward with his right leg and lands on his left leg.





Preparing for the next technique. The middle photo shows what the kick looks like in the air. Right photo depicts the beginning footwork for the jump and tuck.



The 540 degree kick at its fullest extension.

difficult kick to do. Its difficulty level rises even more when you add the combinations to it. I often use a combination of several techniques, such as a left hook kick that moves into the 540 kick and then into an aerial. If I had not perfected the 540 kick through gradual stages, I wouldn't have the clean technique I have now." Explains Chaturantabut.

Here is how the 540 kick is done. Start with a basic kick: a snap roundhouse that has plenty of hip action. Then add a jumping technique that is similar to a tornado or jump inside crescent kick.

Start with a basic roundhouse or crescent kick (Chaturantabut likes to start with a round kick). Make sure that this kick uses a snapping knee action with hip action follow through. The roundhouse or crescent kick continues as a circular follow through, kicking above the opponent's head. The follow through looks similar to the follow through of a Muay Thai fighter's lethal roundhouse kick.

Continuing with the jump and tuck, immediately before the kick is extended-- complete with proper hand and arm positions. Note the left leg is firmly tucked behind the right knee and the jump takes off.





540° kick



Chaturantabut shows how training for a 540 kick starts--with a snap roundhouse kick that contains a circular follow through. First the arms whip to one side, then to the opposite side as the roundhouse kick is launched.

Next comes the jump. Chaturantabut maintains that if you cannot kick well, you won't have power. If you can't jump, you won't get enough height to make the technique work.

The 540 degree kick jump looks like the beginning of an inside crescent kick. If you start with your right leg forward, you will turn counterclockwise and spot the jumping point with your head and eyes. Next, lift your left knee and thrust upward with your right leg in a circular motion. Then land on your left leg.

Now that you have both the kick and the jump perfected, you can work on putting them together. The jump is the same, bringing the left knee up and jumping off the right leg. Execute a complete roundhouse and spin a full 360 degrees in the air. This is not yet the 540 degree kick. At this point, you have developed a good tornado kick.

Finally, the 540 kick. Jump counterclockwise off the right foot, picking up the right knee. Your right knee should come up toward your chest, with the left foot tucked close behind the right knee. Then,

land on the right leg. Although you are jumping from and landing on the same leg, this is still similar to a tornado kick--until you add the roundhouse kick. With the roundhouse added, you are jumping off the right leg. Both knees are up, however the right leg extends into the roundhouse kick and the left foot tucks behind right knee. This is a 540 degree kick.

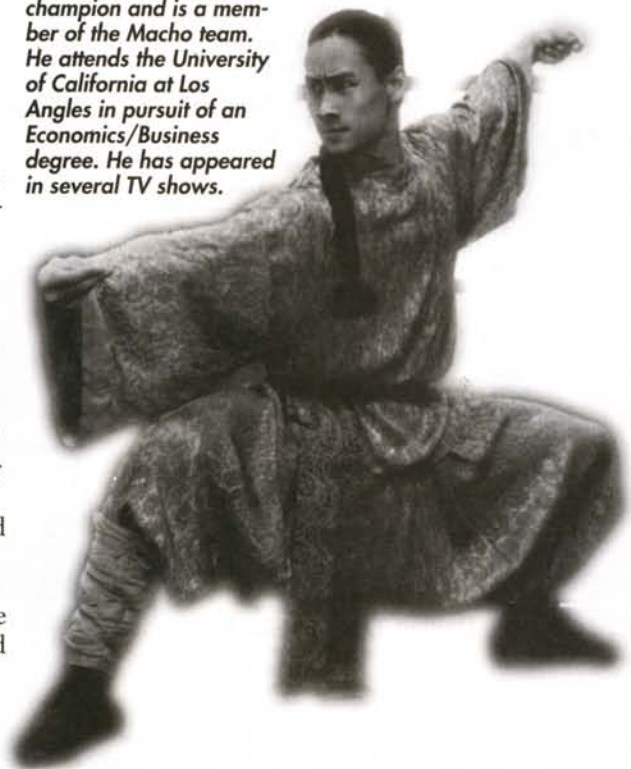
The arm movements for a 540 degree kick are important since they help the body gain momentum necessary for the kick to turn a full 540 degrees. The hands scoop downward from the right side and lift up to the left shoulder as you jump. As you extend the kicking leg, your hands shoot to the opposite side of the kick--hands to the right, kick to the left. Immediately after the kick, the right hand swings to the body into a crossed hand's position and your head snaps to the left, preparing for the next technique in the combination. The next technique may be something simple, like a forward stance and reverse punch, or something difficult, such as another aerial kick.

Chaturantabut explains that Tae Kwon Do fighters use the 540 degree kick as if it were a tornado kick, swinging the left leg into a pop-up roundhouse kick. It is a deceptive move that easily fakes the opponent into thinking something else is coming, but is very difficult to execute with accuracy. While Tae Kwon Do fighters get to use some contact and kick the opponents' head, point tournament fighters must show techniques without much, if any contact.

The 540 kick isn't used much by point fighters, since it's a very visible kick that is easily telegraphed. However, Chaturantabut maintains that if you are really fast, you can throw three different unexpected kicks. You can change a 540 kick into a hook kick if your opponent expects another 540, or do two 540 kicks together. Tae Kwon Do fighters use the 540 kick with 720 degree kick, adding another 180 degree turn and throwing a hook kick instead of a roundhouse kick.

Chaturantabut has used the 540 degree kick to great advantage, both in tournament forms and sparring competitions. He is especially known for his expertise with it in empty hand and weapons forms--using it to help him become one of today's top tournament competitors.

Michael Chaturantabut was born in Rayong, Thailand, 21 years ago, and now resides in California. He is a world champion and is a member of the Macho team. He attends the University of California at Los Angeles in pursuit of an Economics/Business degree. He has appeared in several TV shows.



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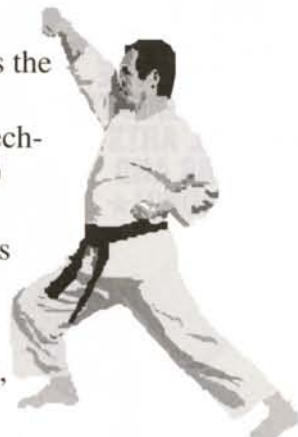
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