

the **CrossFit**[®]

JOURNAL ARTICLES

Body Shots

Becca Borawski



While kicks to an opponent's head and one-punch knockouts might make for great highlight reels, less dramatic-looking punches to the body can drop an opponent with stunning pain. A memorable example of this in boxing is the 2004 Bernard Hopkins vs. Oscar de la Hoya match. Nine rounds into the fight, Hopkins landed a devastating blow to de la Hoya's side that dropped him and left him pounding on the canvas, unable to stand.

In last month's article on the left hook, I talked about the three distances between opponents—long, middle, and tight. There are also multiple levels from which a fighter can throw strikes. In boxing, a fighter can work the head and body. In kickboxing or Mixed Martial Arts, a fighter can target the head, body, and legs.

In this month's article, part three of a four-part series on striking, we'll look at the middle level of striking—to the body. Again this month, boxer and kickboxer Bridgett "Baby Doll" Riley demonstrates the moves in the photographs.

In Bridgett's experience, there are times when it seems you can throw a number of strikes to the head with no apparent effect, but when you start landing shots on your opponent's body, they begin to weaken. Once the core has been shaken, the rest of the body weakens, and the pain can also provide distraction that you can capitalize on.

1 of 3

Body Shots (continued...)

The liver shot

The left hook to the body, also known as the infamous “liver shot” is one of the sweet spots a striker is looking for. Landing a blow to the opponent’s liver, usually invoking a pause from the opponent and then a sudden doubling over or drop to the canvas. The effects of the liver shot can sometimes be felt for days following the bout.

The basic mechanics of the liver shot are the same as the left hook, but you are dropping level to land the shot on the body instead of the head. You accomplish this not by leaning over but by stepping into the punch and dropping your body down while keeping your torso erect. (For a more detailed description of the left hook, see last month’s journal [issue 55].)

To execute a liver shot, begin in your fighting stance, and then transfer weight onto your front foot, bending your knee, and pivoting your left heel outward. Your hip will follow the rotation of your knee in toward the target. As your hip turns inward, your upper body and shoulder follow as well, putting your entire body behind the shot as your fist lands.

Land the strike with your thumb pointed vertically. The punch is thrown with a slight upward angle to dig up under the rib and into the liver. Keep your chin tucked down and your right hand up at your face. Protect yourself at all times, even when executing offensive movements, and especially when fighting at a tight distance where the opponent will be looking to counter.

One of the prime opportunities for using body shots is when an opponent is trapped in the corner of the ring or up against the ropes. This minimizes their ability to maneuver and escape.

A good setup for the liver shot involves the jab (see *CFJ* issue 54). The jab can be used as a blinding technique. By throwing the jab in the face of the opponent and then slipping to the left, you place yourself in the perfect position to throw a liver shot.



The liver shot can also be used effectively in combination with a left hook to the head. Opponents frequently expect left-right combos and can be caught off guard when multiple strikes come from the same direction. Doubling up a left hook to the head and then the body, or vice versa, can be a winning combination.

Right uppercut to the body

Another great strike is the right uppercut to the body. As with the liver shot, the key is to get inside on the opponent and deliver the punch to the midsection without leaning over to do so.

Body Shots (continued...)

Like the right cross, the power for the right uppercut is coming from the right foot. First, the right heel pivots outward, causing the right knee to turn inward and the hip to pivot and turn over. This propels the right shoulder, and therefore the right arm and fist, forward. Your whole body should be behind the punch to lend it the most power and explosiveness possible. "Sitting down" into your body shots will make them much more dangerous.

Remember that you are starting from the neutral fighting stance, and then pivoting, putting your hip into the shot. Your stance should look like that in Photo 6, and look like that in the next [Photo 7] when you land the right uppercut.

Bridgett also likes to turn her fist slightly as she lands this strike. [Photo 8] This really drills the punch into the opponent's body. As always, she is keeping her other hand up at her face and her chin tucked into her shoulder.

The key to finding success with body shots is a lot of practice (to hone down the perfect balance and leverage. Working with a trainer holding a pad, and learning to slip her opponent's strikes and throw body shots as counters is one way that Bridgett gets her practice in.



[Bridgett Riley](#) is a former world champion boxer and a five-time world champion kickboxer. She trains and works at the world-famous Wild Card Boxing Gym in Hollywood, California, and also works as a stuntwoman and actress. To see Bridgett in action, watch a clip online from her [World Kickboxing Association championship fight](#)

Becca Borawski teaches and trains at [Petranek Fitness/CrossFit Los Angeles](#) in Santa Monica. She has a master's degree in film from the University of Southern California and a background in martial arts training. She has blended these skills together to produce DVDs and build websites for professional fighters. Her main job is as the music editor on the TV show *Scrubs* and she currently trains jiu-jitsu under Eddie Bravo at 10th Planet Jiu-Jitsu in Hollywood.