

Local couple imports Filipino stick-fight expertise

By **KATHERINE MCINERNEY**
SPECIAL TO THE REPORTER
 Brian Jacobs, owner and operator of CSE-Boston, blocks an incoming jab and holds his attacker

at bay, striking him just below the ribcage. "That's a lotta love right there," Jacobs says to his students who come to his Uphams Corner apartment each week

to learn the Filipino martial art of Combat Serrada Escrima. "Every step of the way I'm disturbing him in some way," Jacobs continues, hooking his

opponent under the arm. "Start to short circuit them and take them down into the cycle of doom." In seconds, Jacob's attacker is on the floor, immobilized.

"Does it work with somebody her size against somebody his size?" Jacobs asks the class after each demonstration, pointing first to CSE-Boston co-owner and instructor, Trish Del Rosario at 5-foot-1 inch, and second to Sherwin Richardson, a 6-foot-6-inch Boston bouncer.

"I don't think it does," someone responds each time, and the two take the floor. Richardson taps the floor twice and she eases up. Serrada means "to close" in Spanish. Combat Serrada Escrima is a closed system where you keep your opponent close to you, controlling their movement within a small box. Jacobs and Del Rosario have taught Serrada Escrima in their apartment-turned-school on Columbia Road in Dorchester since August; together they have nine years of experience teaching.

Classes focus on restraint and control, the first of three levels in the system, though they also discuss destruction and

termination, to be used in more life-threatening situations. Introduced to the United States in 1966 by grandmaster Angel Cabaleta, a 4-foot-9-inch, 98-pound Filipino immigrant, the system is more about efficient movement and positioning than size or strength.

"It's a reality-based system meant for saving your life," Jacobs says, as his students practice their moves. Students work in pairs, practicing choreographed sequences that begin with an initial attack, or entry. The system is "tremendously smart," according to Jacobs, because you are constantly responding to someone else, building muscle memory and training your instincts to respond to an attacker.

As they learn Serrada Escrima, students transition from sticks to knives to bare hands. Beginning with sticks introduces a fear factor. Students are naturally scared of the stick and respond to it instinctively. "A stick can come at you at 100 mph," Jacobs says, during a break in the action. "If you can train yourself to stop a stick, a punch is coming at you at a snail's pace."

Richardson, one of three students in the class working as nightclub security personnel in Boston, said: "Serrada has saved me in a number of incidents."

Not only does his training give him the skills to deal with aggressive people quickly and effectively, he said it also helps him to control his temper and deal with tense situations at work with a clear head and confidence.

For info about CSE Boston, see combatserrada.com or call 617-869-0516.

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