

# OVERTRAINING

## Willie "Bam" Johnson

Willie "Bam" Johnson, 31, has been competing for more than 14 years, and he's compiled a pretty dazzling resume. Among his many accomplishments, Johnson was ranked number one by the North American Sport Karate Association in forms and weapons in 1984; in 1993, he was the first wushu competitor to be ranked by NASKA as a super lightweight fighter; in 1993 and 1994, he was the National Blackbelt League's world champion in forms and weapons; and he earned the gold medal in weapons and the silver medal in forms during the World Association Kickboxing Organization's 1995 world championships.

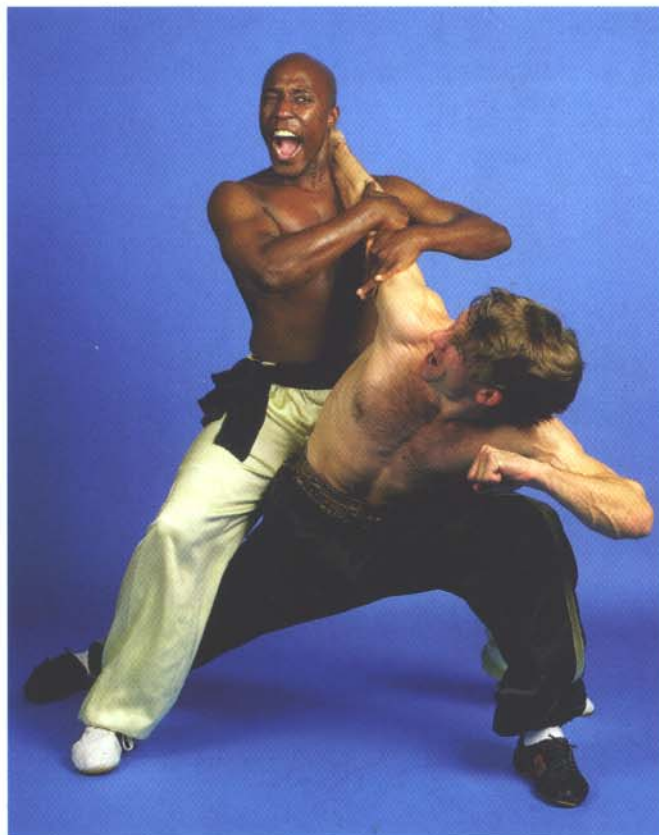
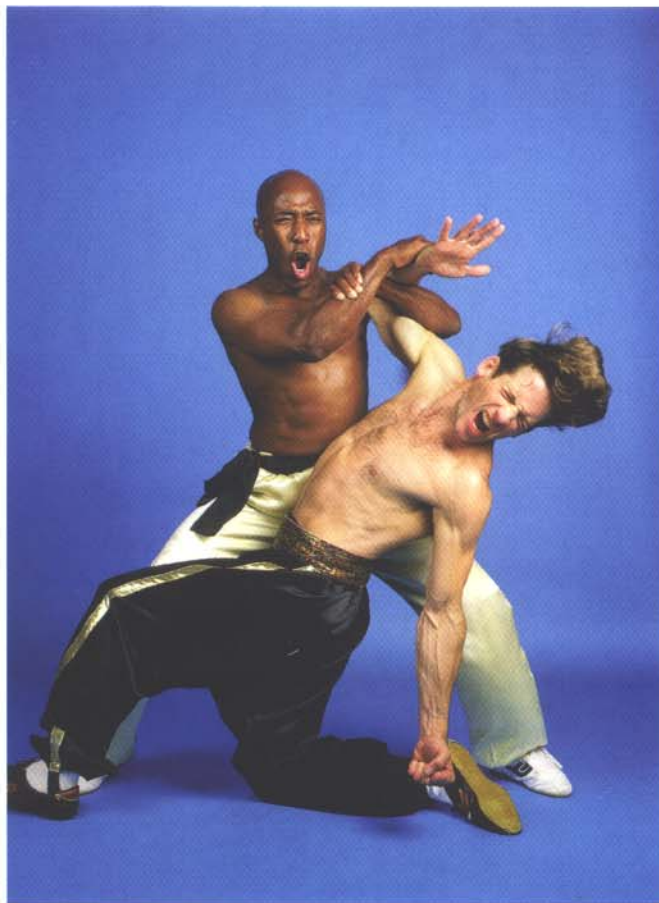
Johnson, who owns The Bam's Universal Martial Arts Concepts in Laurel, Maryland, is also co-starring on *WMAC Masters*, the weekly martial arts television show on the Fox network.

**Martial Arts Training:** What is your definition of overtraining?

**Willie Johnson:** Not having a balance. For example, let's say I'm working out and my body cries out, "I can't go any further." But my mind is saying, "Go, go. I have to win this match."

The two entities are working against each other. My goal is to get the two working together so I don't overexert myself. You're trying so hard to reach your goals that the only thing going through your mind is, "I have to do it; I have to do it." As a result, however, you suffer external and internal injuries so you can't reach your goals.

**MAT:** Have you ever overtrained?



*Varying your program is one way to prevent overtraining, says Willie "Bam" Johnson (above, left). Make some workouts intense and others easy.*

**Johnson:** Many times I have competed in tournaments with injuries that I suffered from overtraining. And when I competed I did not do as well as I should have. As a result, I lost some confidence and self-esteem.

**MAT:** How did you convince yourself to compete rather than rest?

**Johnson:** I guess my desire to be a champion was stronger than my desire to stay safe. In the old martial arts schools, that is what they used to teach. You can't give up in a real fight. You had to keep fighting, regardless of what happened. I was brought up that way, and that plays a factor in how I am.

**MAT:** How do you prevent overtraining?

**Johnson:** I think it's important to achieve a harmony between your mind and body. To do that, you need a set structure or routine. It's not easy to do that if you're training by yourself. Many times your ego comes into play because you want to prove something to yourself. As a result, you get off schedule and stop listening to what your body is saying.

To prevent this problem, I vary my program a little. On some days I go slow, and on other days I go a little faster. By the middle of the week, I am ready to go. I give it everything I've got. By the end of the week, I take it slow again.

I think it also helps if you take vitamin supplements, which I think play an important part in giving your body the nutrition it needs. A lot of

people work out, but they don't eat right.

Finally, I think martial artists tend to think that they have all the answers. Everyone thinks he knows how to train. But I think it's important to consult with others, such as personal trainers or aerobics instructors. **MAT**