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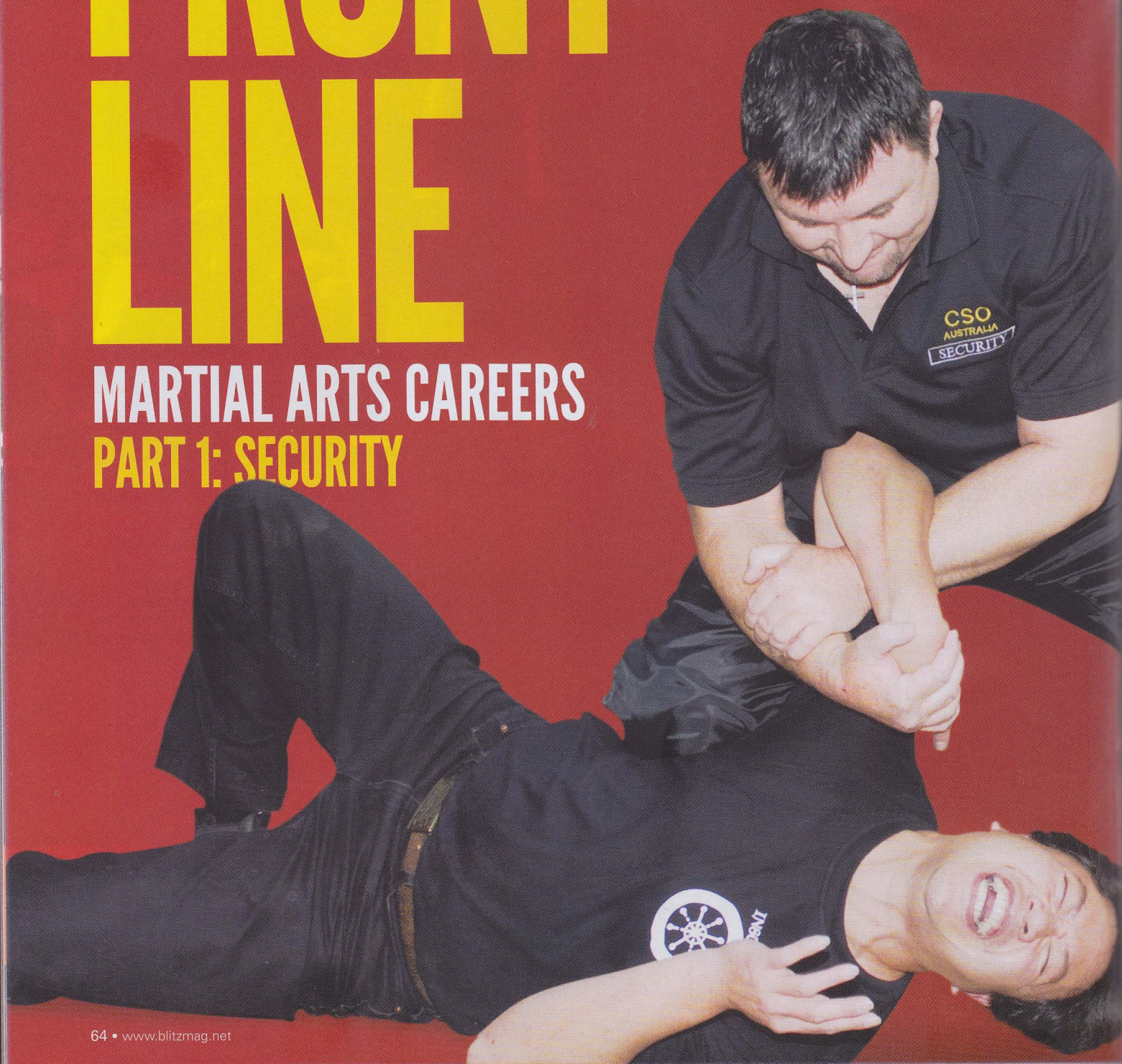


# ON THE FRONT LINE

## MARTIAL ARTS CAREERS PART 1: SECURITY

Do you fancy making a career out of martial arts? In this series we look at different avenues of employment in which martial arts training and knowledge can be applied. For this first installment, *Blitz* interviewed several of Australia's most experienced security professionals and trainers about the skills needed for success in the industry, as well as the rewards and challenges of working 'on the front line'.

STORY BY BOON MARK SOUPHANH & BEN STONE





**T**hey're all skilled martial artists in their own right, with decades of training in various styles under their well-worn Black-belts. But what Mannie de Matos, Karl Thornton, Noel Watson, Deane Lawler and John Forsyth have in common is that they've all used the skills they've acquired over the years to advance their careers in the field of security — and, at times, just to survive. Having established themselves as some of the country's leading security professionals and trainers, these men have been confronted with all kinds of treacherous and testing situations while on the job. From guarding VIPs on international visits to fighting off hordes of drunken punk rockers, the security professional must possess a wide range of skills.

"I have always been about control instead of contact," explains de Matos, the founder of Hakarac Martial Boxing and the TTS-100 security training company.

To cite one example, de Matos remembers an incident at a pub where he was a crowd-controller. Confronted with an intimidating, 120 kg patron sexually harassing females in the pub, de Matos chose to defuse the situation with brains instead of brawn.

"I asked around if anyone knew the patron and after the third attempt, I found out that his name was Simon. I informed the other officer of my plan and approached Simon, and said 'Hi mate, is your name Simon?' He replied 'Yep'. I said, 'There's a girl at the front door who doesn't have any ID and says that you can vouch for her. When you get a chance, can you come to the front door and I'll tell her that you are on your way?'"

Simon was at the door within minutes, and de Matos and his co-worker quickly led him outside the pub.

"He started getting abusive and saying he was going to smash our heads in," recalls de Matos. "I replied 'Simon, I don't know if you are aware, mate, but everything that you've been doing is being recorded. You will be charged if you don't leave right now.'"

Simon left shortly after without a punch being thrown — the best way to win battles in a job where the physical route can land someone (or everyone) in hospital or court.

Noel Watson, former bodyguard for Jimmy Barnes and author of *Bolters & Coolers*, agrees. "Every situation can be unpredictable and, especially now, more than ever, potential violence is everywhere. Having awareness and being able to

the years, and has found that quick and intuitive thinking is also key in applying those skills with success. He recalls one altercation between two males in a bar where he was forced to get particularly inventive: "There was the risk of being subjected to some form of infection, as one the individuals had been glassed and was bleeding profusely from the severe lacerations to his face," he recalls.

"My first concern was safety, realising that trying to control this altercation was going to be difficult... I walked over to the bar, grabbed a long cloth off the barman, and went straight to the dominant individual. I wrapped the cloth over his face, using both ends to pull and control him as I dragged him to the ground — this helped me avoid a lot of the blood contact.

"I spoke to the individual, calming him down and explaining to him that I was going to help treat his injuries and sort the situation out."

Having worked over the years doing crowd control for top local and international music acts, Watson has been involved in some crazy, all-out brawls. Perhaps the wildest was when he and his team were forced to defend members of UK ska band Madness from a rowdy 'skinhead' crowd.

"There were about 16 of us

Verbal and physical altercations are one thing, but controlling one's emotions is also an important skill for a security professional. Karl Thornton has been involved in covert security operations for individuals in need of protection and has dealt with groups involved in murder and arson. In one incident, Thornton was thrust into a tense situation when approached by two men while he and a partner were in their car doing covert security work.

"The individuals circled the vehicle trying to establish if there was anyone inside. My partner and I had to slowly prepare for what could eventuate; a sudden motion of the vehicle would give us away... We had to stay calm, as we could not react until the individuals either trespassed on the property, or we could identify that they had criminal intent. We did not want to blow our cover by overreacting, otherwise the assignment would be over and we would have achieved nothing," says Thornton.

Despite being full of adrenaline, Thornton and his co-worker fought the urge to pre-emptively deal with the potential assailants, remaining calm and motionless behind their vehicle's tinted windows until the men walked away.

"Although we didn't have to physically respond, this is

## THE DIPLOMATIC SOLUTION IS ALWAYS THE SOUGHT AFTER OPTION. HOWEVER, SOMETIMES VIOLENCE SIMPLY CAN'T BE AVOIDED.

effectively communicate may help defuse most situations... Physical violence should be your last resort," he says.

Of course, sometimes violence can't be avoided and it's then that martial arts skills come to the fore.

Deane Lawler has experienced his fair share of violence while working in a range of security jobs over

who hopped onto the stage, standing on the balls of our feet in fighting stance and knocking these crazy skinheads off the stage. It became a full-on brawl and I thought, 'What hope have we got when they're even attacking the band?' I looked down and the lead singer was under my feet with his black top hat covering his head," says Watson.

how training in more than just a physical sense is an important factor in professional protection services. With that said, if you do need to react, you better know how," he says.

Although the scenarios a security professional might face are many and varied, martial arts training will give most an excellent platform from which to launch a career in the field.





Karl Thornton runs bodyguard company 538 alongside Modern Defensive Tactics Australia



Mannie de Matos teaches his Tudik Raan knife-defence system to security personnel worldwide



Deane Lawler seeks good communicators for CSO Security

In a series of recent interviews, these veterans of the security game offered some advice to martial artists aspiring to enter the industry:

#### WHAT ATTRIBUTES DO YOU LOOK FOR WHEN HIRING A CROWD CONTROLLER, BODYGUARD OR SECURITY PATROLMAN?

**Mannie De Matos:** As a security employer, when hiring security officers (especially crowd controllers), I look for attributes that will represent my company and instil client confidence. Things like presentation, communication, confidence and attitude are what I am always looking for.

**Karl Thornton:** Many enter the bodyguard industry with the belief that their basic security or bodyguard license will see them gain and maintain work. The reality is that it is a hard industry to get into in the first place. I don't mean the qualifications; I mean the contacts and/or work.

We base our vetting process on many factors, including past experiences and employment history, as well as courses undertaken that will help in the development of the skills required to deal with different situations and with different clients. It is not what many think; it's not all brute force and intimidation. If that is all you have to offer, then you won't find many opportunities in close

personal protection. Hollywood is not the best advertisement for real-life CPP work.

A bodyguard is not simply a crowd controller — it is totally different. It doesn't matter if you work as a primary escort, secure transportation driver, or are part of a security escort team, the skills required are specific to that role, so you need to undertake professional development training to become proficient in the area you want to specialise in.

**Noel Watson:** Although crowd controllers and bodyguards have two distinct identities, they both require similar attributes in different situations. I would say the role of a bodyguard is much more personalised and therefore would require not only basic managerial and organisational skills, but also total awareness and focus. Personally, the best attribute you can have as a bodyguard is loyalty.

As a crowd controller, working in an industry where

crowd size, clientele and alcohol consumption may make fights or arguments a possibility, you have to have the ability to strategise and react quickly. Therefore, besides being physically fit, your attitude and body language usually will play a major role in any outcome. I tell people who have worked for me to take three deep breaths before reacting — physical violence should always be the last resort.

**Deane Lawler:** One of the most important attributes or qualities is that of presentation. First impressions are a major ingredient in containing and controlling a situation. The guard needs to have a presence, not only of professionalism, but of exuding confidence in his position and in his knowledge of the job. If possible, it's customer service first, with control and restraint as the last resort.

**John Forsyth:** When hiring a crowd controller, bodyguard or patrolman, you look for

separate things for each one. A security patrolman doesn't need the same attributes of a crowd controller or bodyguard; they should be presentable and have a good work ethic, and be diligent and honest.

A crowd controller should possess the same as the security guard but also have great communications skills and a strong physical presence — and be able to read a crowd.

A bodyguard, on the other hand, should possess the same skills as the others but also have a good grasp of body language and have good martial arts skills.

#### IS IT HELPFUL FOR PEOPLE WORKING IN SECURITY TO HAVE A BACKGROUND IN MARTIAL ARTS OR SELF-DEFENCE TRAINING?

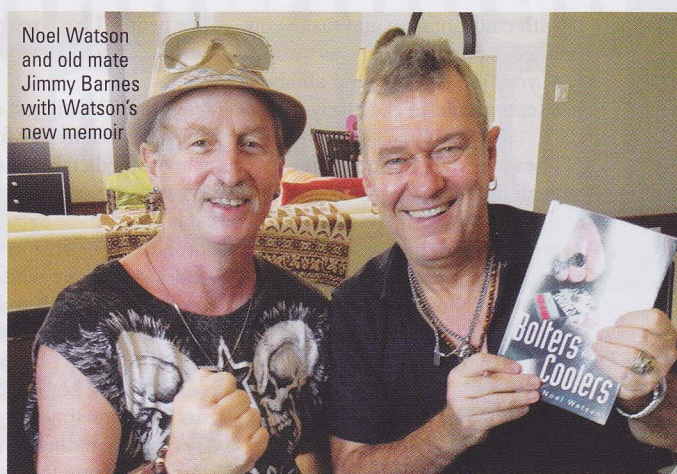
**De Matos:** Absolutely. It is always helpful to know the officers that you send out to control crowds have skills in relation to protecting

“The guard needs to have a presence not only of professionalism but also needs to EXUDE CONFIDENCE IN HIS POSITION AND IN HIS KNOWLEDGE OF THE JOB.”





Intercept Security CEO John Forsyth is one of many who 'bounced' with Soke Bob Jones while training in his Zen Do Kai system



Noel Watson and old mate Jimmy Barnes with Watson's new memoir

themselves, their colleagues and clients. The only issue is the type of martial art that they have had training in. For example, controlling patrons generally does not require striking skills, but rather body-control and limb-manipulation. I'm not saying you shouldn't have striking skills as a crowd controller; I'm saying that training and the martial art system you train in should enhance your ability to prevent [using them].

**Thornton:** The [fundamentals] of defensive tactics as undertaken in your licensing process is basic training. You need to then seek out training that will develop your skill set for the varied roles involved in close personal protection. If protecting a high-risk client, where there is a high probability that you may face a violent and armed individual, you need the training in the area of third-party defensive tactics as well as the skills to deal with weapons defence, and the strategies required to evacuate and secure the safety of your client.

Whereas, if protecting an entertainer in, say, a 'red carpet' environment where you have overexcited fans coming up to your client, you need to be able to redirect and deflect without resorting to pain-compliance techniques. It doesn't look good if you take the person down and cuff them for simply wanting an autograph!

There are many environmental and situational factors involved, depending on the client and the job, and you will need self-defence training, as you need to be able to respond accordingly.

**Watson:** I strongly recommend that anyone who wishes to pursue a career in any aspect of crowd control or security be trained in martial arts. Especially these days, when everyone is dabbling in some form of self-defence matched with the technological age. It is no longer a bad boxing match and can sometimes end tragically. One punch and the other guy's head hits the concrete, then it is lethal contact.

Self-defence is using control and an untrained fighter will lock on contact, whereas a martial artist will know how to ride out the hit and bridge the gap. As a bodyguard for Jimmy Barnes, I was able to play the dual role of protector and [Zen Do Kai] karate trainer, so it is an asset for an employer to have someone with that additional skill.

**Lawler:** Some form of martial arts or self-defence training can help in creating confidence and help the guard deal with a violent situation — but skills such as verbal de-escalation, a keen sense of awareness of their surroundings, and understanding human nature

are probably more important than having the ability to punch, kick or grapple someone in the majority of situations.

**Forsyth:** Having a background in self-defence is a must when protecting property or persons. You never know when you may need to assist someone in danger or protect your client from the threat.

#### WHAT REWARDS ARE THERE FROM WORKING IN THIS INDUSTRY?

**De Matos:** There are many rewards associated with the security industry. Apart from the obvious financial rewards, you gain experience in dealing with aggression (from passive to violent), test and improve your skills, meet people from diverse industries, acquire confidence and gain personal safety habits that stay with you forever.

**Thornton:** I've had the opportunity to meet many individuals in the entertainment and corporate industries that I would have never met if not working in this industry. It has also allowed me to get involved in an area of protection many would never consider, that being my involvement in working against human trafficking. I was awarded the Medaille OTT by the International Bodyguard Association for my operational service in South

East Asia in child protection, working under hostile conditions as well as infiltrating and helping to eradicate child trafficking syndicates.

Many think the rewards are all financial, but that is also a bit of a Hollywood myth. It can be long hours, irregular hours and sometimes outright boring. Those who succeed in this line of work don't chase the dollars or the adrenaline dump, they simply commit to it because it is what they love to do.

**Watson:** I can only speak from personal experience regarding what I consider to be rewarding. Travelling and touring around the world gave me not only many opportunities but I enjoyed the exposure to other cultures, meeting people and enjoying the many different foods. One of my favourite perks of travelling was trying different foods in each country...I found it so intriguing that you could get good quality food served to you very cheaply from a vendor on the street.

It was these experiences that sparked my dream of pursuing my own business of a café/bar and becoming a self-taught cook, whereby the kitchen became my dojo.

**Lawler:** Security is one of those industries that there is always work around for a competent guard. I believe the role can increase confidence when dealing



with confrontation and make you a better public speaker, as most of your job is using your ability to communicate effectively.

**Forsyth:** The rewards come in all different aspects, from self-satisfaction that you are protecting people's assets and persons, to travelling to exotic places, rubbing shoulders with the rich and famous, and great financial remuneration.

### WHAT ARE THE BIGGEST CHALLENGES AND WHAT DO NEWCOMERS TO THE INDUSTRY NEED TO BE PREPARED FOR?

**De Matos:** The biggest challenge to officers coming into the security industry is overcoming their personal fears; dealing with ever-changing challenges from clients, management and sites. They need to be prepared for everything that might impact upon their personal boundaries and safety, focus on preventative measures and work as part of a team.

**Thornton:** Be prepared for a hard and long slog. Bodyguard work is not easy, but if it is something you really want to pursue for the love of it, then go for it. If you simply want to add another string to your security bow, then think again. There is a bit of 'who you know, not what you know' to get in some doors. But once you are in, then the work really relies on what you know as well.

In the area of covert operations, or what I specialise in, which is low-profile security, you need to also have a code of conduct that you adhere to, no matter what: that is the code of confidentiality. Never reveal or 'sell out' a client, or their information, as that is career suicide. No matter which end of the spectrum you work at, confidentiality must be number one on your code of conduct list.

I always joke that when I retire I will write a book titled,

'The people I have never met, and the places I have never seen'.

**Watson:** The biggest challenges are being able to stay focused in an unpredictable and fast-paced environment. It takes a certain person to be a doorman; you have to be able to stand for 12 hours or more while being confronted with all walks of life. You can be spat upon, verbally abused, hit with objects like rocks, knives, bottles, baseball bats and sometimes even cars! Your health and fighting ability start to fade and that is normally when shit hits the fan, in the wee hours of the morning.

You need to understand the complexity of crowd control without a badge and the consequences of lethal contact, which can sometimes be a split-second, life-changing moment.

In this day and age, newcomers to the industry must be prepared to allow for modern technology, which can either be your best friend or your worst enemy, depending on your attitude and body language.

**Lawler:** A prerequisite for this job is the customer service component; you need customer service skills and the ability to take flack from the patrons. The patrons will get personal and insults will fly, usually ending up in a physical confrontation. This, unfortunately, can be an ongoing part of the job. If you don't have the skills or can't handle confrontation, realising that sometimes you will be sworn at and abused, then this is not the job for you. You need to be able to cop the insults on the chin and maintain your professionalism, and respond appropriately.

**Forsyth:** Long hours, on your feet all day and long spans of concentration. However, these

things become second nature the longer you are in the job.

### IN YOUR OPINION, WHAT IS THE BEST ROUTE TO TAKE IN TERMS OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING TO BECOME A GOOD SECURITY PROFESSIONAL AND GET THE MOST OUT OF IT AS A CAREER?

**De Matos:** Do an accredited security course with a reputable security-training provider that has its focus on producing quality officers instead of quick money. Then, seek employment with a security company that slowly integrates officers into the industry by having them work closely with an experienced senior officer to provide them with confidence and positive development.

**Thornton:** As stated before, after your basic licensing requirements have been fulfilled, and you are licensed, then all I can suggest is to gain a broad spectrum of knowledge and skill sets. All I can do is give an example of my different qualifications, other than my required licensing credentials.

As far as non-martial arts background, I continue to stay up to date and trained in firearms, baton and handcuffs,

as well as continually taking self-education programs in protocol and etiquette in different social environments, including the entertainment industry, the political environment and the corporate environment.

I also hold a diploma in counselling in the areas of conflict-resolution and human behaviours. I am qualified in crisis negotiations after undertaking a professional development course by former hostage negotiator and FBI unit chief Vince McNally. I am qualified in the principles of undercover operations after undertaking a professional development course by former undercover operative Sam Hall (FBI and CIA).



De Matos trains corrections officers for several of Australia's largest prison security firms





Thornton teaches defensive tactics skills to volunteer operatives to fight child trafficking in Asia

I also believe in the continual development of the physical requirements by training in defensive tactics for all related environments.

Once again, your desired area of work will determine the type of professional development courses you should undertake. But remember, bodyguard work is different in Australia than in the international environment, so if you are looking at working mainly in Australia, don't spend thousands of dollars on a professional development course that relies heavily on firearms, as you will be throwing your hard-earned money away.

**Watson:** Ask yourself what area interests you in the security industry, research and get as much knowledge about it as you can, then align yourself with a security company that can provide you with as many tools as possible. Use martial arts and fitness training as a self-development tool, which will empower you to be focused, have discipline and assist you in making conscious decisions.

A couple of my friends who trained in Zen Do Kai went

on to work for international bands after starting out as personal security professionals. This is just one example of where it can take you. It is not a one-size-fits-all industry. If you are passionate about something, whether it is within the security industry or not, set goals for yourself and keep striving to get where you want to go. I tell all young people, do what you love and the money will follow.

**Lawler:** As I've mentioned previously, you need to learn customer service skills, effective communication and some form of basic defence with a background in control and restraint techniques. Then, if possible, work with as many good, experienced guards as possible, because nothing beats hands-on experience.

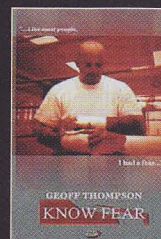
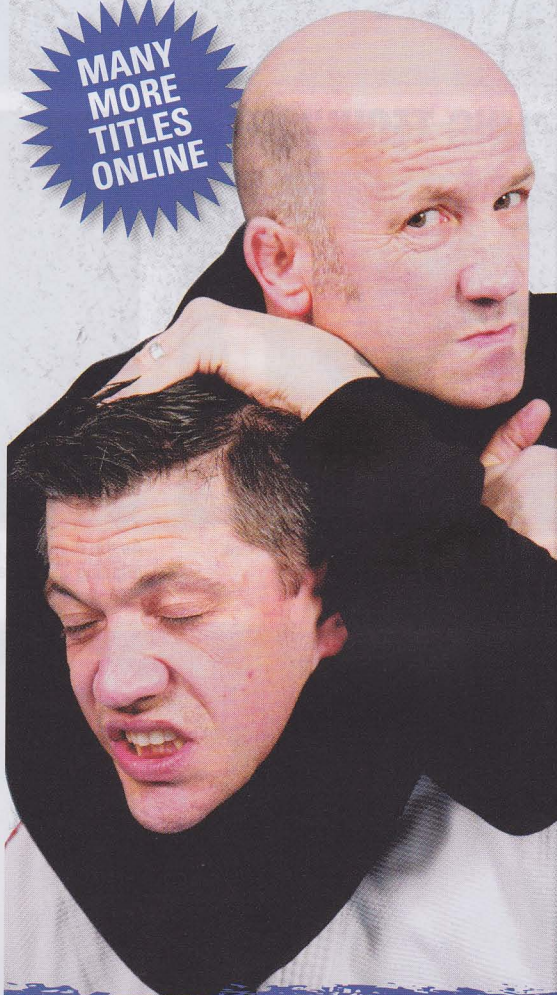
**Forsyth:** My motto is 'failing to train is training to fail'. We can teach new entrants in two weeks of hard training what it would take a year to learn in the field, as most of the time the threat doesn't materialise. So, seek out a good company and get training if you want to be the best. ■

# Knowledge You Need!

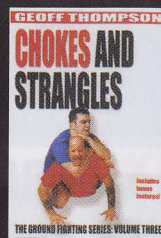
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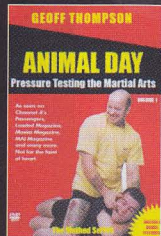
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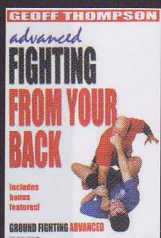
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