

# A Brief Look at Filipino Martial Arts



Filipino Martial Arts refers to ancient and newer fighting methods devised in the Philippines. It incorporates elements from both Western and Eastern Martial Arts, the most popular forms of which are known as Arnis, Eskrima and Kali. The intrinsic need for self-preservation was the genesis of these systems.

Filipino Martial Arts have seen an increase in prominence due to several Hollywood movies, like the Bourne Identity, Book of Eli, and among others. Moreover, the teachings of modern masters such as Venancio "Anciong" Bacon, Dan Inosanto, Cacoy Canete, and the Presas brothers, Remy and Ernesto helped brought this art in the mainstream.

## Introduction to Arnis

Arnis, also known as Eskrima and Kali, is the national sport and martial art of the Philippines. The three are roughly interchangeable umbrella terms for the traditional martial arts of the Philippines ("Filipino Martial Arts," or FMA) that emphasize weapon-based fighting with sticks, knives, bladed weapons and various improvised weapons.

Arnis also includes hand-to-hand combat, joint locks, grappling and weapon disarming techniques. Although in general, emphasis is put on weapons for these arts, some systems put empty hands as the primary focus and some old school systems do not teach weapons at all.

## Balintawak Arnis System

Balintawak Arnis is a Filipino Martial Art developed by Venancio Bacon in the 1950s.

Bacon developed the single stick techniques. The system's basic strike and defense patterns are used by most Balintawak practitioners. This pattern forms the basis from which a practitioner can develop basic, semi-advanced, and advanced movements. All techniques must be demonstrated with power, control, and body mechanics.

In the Balintawak system, the stick is only used to enhance and train the individual for bare hands fighting, and to achieve perfection in the art of speed, timing and reflexes necessary to acquire defensive posture and fluidity in movement. It aims to harness one's natural body movement and awaken one's senses to move and react. It guarantees its practitioner to experience a revelation in the fundamentals of street fighting.

## Modern Arnis: The Art within your Art

Modern Arnis is the system of Filipino fighting arts founded by Remy Presas as a self-defense system. His goal was to create an injury-free training method as well as an effective self-defense system in order to preserve the older Arnis systems.

It is said that, originally, the cane was considered sacred by practitioners (Arnisadores), and therefore an arnis practitioner was expected to hit his cane at the hand or forearm of his sparring partner and not at the latter's cane. This had the advantage of being the preferred method in actual combat, referred to as "defanging the snake", that is, making the opponent drop his weapon so that he is less of a threat. However, it discouraged many would-be practitioners who found this training too painful and injury-inducing. The result was that the Filipino martial arts became in danger of dying out; in most areas of the Philippines, Japanese martial arts such as Karate and Judo were much more popular than the indigenous systems. Remy Presas' modernization of the training method was intended to help preserve the Filipino martial arts. He taught the method of hitting cane-on-cane during practice, which attracted more newcomers to the art and allowed the art to be taught in the Philippines' school system. "Defanging the snake" remains a principle of Modern Arnis, however, and in practical application, one would typically strike the hand or arm. The technique can be used empty-handed, where it is known as "limb destruction".

In addition to its Filipino influences, elements of Judo, Shotokan Karate, and Wally Jay's Small Circle Jujutsu appear in the system.

## Remy Presas: The Balintawak Connection

Remy Presas, or "The Professor" as he prefers to be called, studied his family's system from an early age. He went on to study the Japanese systems of Shotokan Karate and Judo, achieving high rank in each; but he simultaneously studied a variety of other Filipino systems, most notably Venancio Bacon's Balintawak. His desire to reinvigorate interest in his country's traditional martial art grew over time, and he began making modifications and improvements to what he had learned.

In the early 70's, when political considerations forced him to relocate to North America, he met Wally Jay, George Dillman, and other artists who influenced his development of the art of Modern Arnis. In particular, many locks from Small Circle Jujutsu were added to Modern Arnis. The art continued to grow and change, in technique and in emphasis, though it always retained a focus on the single stick and on general self-defense.

Presas died on August 28, 2001 in Victoria, Canada from brain cancer. Since his death, several groups have emerged to carry on instruction in his art.

## Tabak-Toyok

Sometimes colloquially referred to as *chako*, is a Filipino flail weapon consisting of a pair of sticks connected by a chain. It is closely related to the Okinawan *nunchaku*, the primary difference being that the Filipino version tends to have shorter handles and a longer chain than its Okinawan counterpart, making it better suited for long range.

Filipino martial artist Dan Inosanto introduced the weapon to his friend and student, the martial artist and actor Bruce Lee. Lee would later become famous for using the similar nunchaku in his films.

# Waikato Filipino Martial Arts Club

## About the Club

A sports programme of the Waikato Filipino Association, **Waikato Filipino Martial Arts Club** (WFMAC) is a family-oriented, recreational martial arts, performance arts, and competitive sports club. We are a group of people with the mission to promote and preserve the indigenous martial arts of the Philippines.

## Key Member Benefits

- Great all-around exercise for health
- Great fitness and coordination
- Improves posture and enhances reflexes
- Easy to learn and performed effortlessly
- Develops patience, focus, and self-discipline
- Practical self-defence
- Suitable for all ages

## Club Member Creed

I will foster positivity within myself and avoid anything that would limit my journey towards mastery of my art.

I will develop self-confidence while remaining humble.

I will respect others, never abusive nor offensive.

I will be a responsible citizen.

This is my Waikato Filipino Martial Arts Club.

## Training Guidelines

- Use of arnis sticks and nunchakus are for demonstrating forms and techniques, and flow drills.
- Regularly inspect your arnis sticks/nunchakus to ensure perfect condition before use.
- NEVER use arnis sticks/nunchakus for contact sparring without wearing any protective gear. All sparring sessions will be supervised by the training facilitator.
- User assumes all risks of injury

## Frequently Asked Questions

### *Is the club only for the Filipino community?*

Absolutely not. We welcome new members from different cultural backgrounds who want to learn the art.

### *What is the cost to sign up?*

Membership fee is very affordable and is due beginning each school term.

### *Do we have to wear a uniform?*

WFMAC does not strictly impose on wearing the traditional uniform. It is suggested, however, that you wear plain black track pants and plain red t-shirt for unity, camaraderie, and equality.

### *What is the training schedule like?*

We train once a week, usually Fridays, from 5:30 pm to 7 pm, following the school term schedule. We may, however, train on some Saturday mornings subject to majority decision.

### **Term 1**

2nd week, February to 2nd week, April

### **Term 2**

1st week, May to 1st week, July

### **Term 3**

4th week, July to 3rd week, September

### **Term 4**

2nd week, October to 2nd week, December

### *I'd like to know more about the club instructor...*

Unlike most martial arts clubs, we have no instructor nor a grandmaster. The club is a gathering of FMA enthusiasts led by a training facilitator who is a natural-born Filipino. He has knowledge of Balintawak Arnis, Modern Arnis, and Tabak-Toyok. He has practised these systems privately in the Philippines for a decent number of years and has decided to share his love and passion of the art to those interested. He insists to be called a training facilitator to build a less formal, friendly, and non-intimidating relationship with the members.

He imparts his knowledge through the following channels: (1) regular training sessions; (2) FMA@home; (3) online references; (4) Facebook fan page; and (4) video tutorials and demonstrations.

### *Does the club have a belt ranking system?*

No. With the help of the training facilitator, you will learn at your own pace. Skills progression is only achieved by your sustained interest and dedication.

### *How do I know if I have progressed or not?*

While we do not have a belt ranking system in place, we have the 'grouping method.'

### *What is the 'grouping method'?*

The 'grouping method' groups the techniques in various categories. Each member is set out to master one set of techniques at a time, and then move to the next set of related techniques. Training routine cards will be given to you outlining the techniques or skills you need to perform, complete and master. The training facilitator will guide you every step of the way.

### *When will I progress to the next group?*

Your demonstrated skills will be assessed by your training facilitator, peers, and by yourself. When you are ready, you can step up to the next group.

### *I am interested but would like to know more information.*

Email. [waikatofmaclub@gmail.com](mailto:waikatofmaclub@gmail.com),

Webpage. <http://www.waikatofilipino.org.nz/sports/arnis/>

Facebook. <https://www.facebook.com/waikatofmaclub/>

YouTube channel **keyword:** Waikato Filipino Martial Arts



The Waikato Filipino Martial Arts Club (WFMAC) realises that it is possible to cause significant physical harm through the irresponsible use of arnis sticks and nunchakus. It is for this reason that the club encourages members to use them under the supervision of the training facilitator.

The following items must be strictly observed during training:

- Use of arnis sticks and nunchakus are for demonstrating forms and techniques, and flow drills.
- Regularly inspect your arnis sticks/nunchaku to ensure perfect condition before use.
- NEVER use arnis sticks/nunchaku for contact sparring without wearing any protective gear. All sparring sessions will be supervised by the training facilitator.
- User assumes all risks of injury.

---

---

### Liability Waiver and Release Form

I, \_\_\_\_\_, age \_\_\_\_, have enrolled in ( ) **Tabak-Toyok (Nunchaku) Training Program** and/or ( ) **Arnis Training Program** offered through Waikato Filipino Martial Arts Club (WFMAC) supported by the Waikato Filipino Association (WFA).

I recognize that the program may involve strenuous physical activity including, but not limited to, muscle strength and endurance training, cardiovascular conditioning and training, and other various fitness activities. I hereby affirm that I am in good physical condition and do not suffer from any known disability or condition which would prevent or limit my participation in this program.

I acknowledge that my enrollment and subsequent participation is purely voluntary.

In consideration of my participation in this program, I, \_\_\_\_\_, hereby release Waikato Filipino Martial Arts Club (WFMAC) and its representatives from any claims, demands, and causes of action as a result of my voluntary participation and enrollment.

I fully understand that I may injure myself as a result of my enrollment and subsequent participation in this program and I, \_\_\_\_\_, hereby release Waikato Filipino Martial Arts Club (WFMAC) and its representatives from any liability now or in the future for conditions that I may obtain. These conditions may include, but are not limited to, heart attacks, strokes, muscle strains, muscle pulls, muscle tears, broken bones, shin splints, injuries to knees or other joints of the body, injuries to back, injuries to a foot, heat prostration, or any other illness or soreness that I may incur, including death.

I HEREBY AFFIRM THAT I HAVE READ AND FULLY UNDERSTAND THE ABOVE STATEMENTS.

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Participant's signature)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Parent/Guardian)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Training Facilitator)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Date)

# CONSENT FORM

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Age \_\_\_\_\_

Contact Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

Term (Please encircle): 1 2 3 4

\_\_\_ I give permission for my son/daughter to enrol in ( ) **Tabak-Toyok Training Program** and/or ( ) **Arnis Training Program**

\_\_\_ I understand that membership fees are payable in cash or, thru internet banking. Fees are non-refundable and exclude nunchakus and arnis sticks. Fees are due beginning each school term.

\_\_\_ I understand that nunchakus and arnis sticks are offensive weapons and are not to be used in public, including but not limited to, parks, shopping malls, school, etc., otherwise I may face legal action. Prior approval from the NZ Police must be sought for public demonstration.

\_\_\_ I understand that I am responsible for the possession of ( ) nunchaku ( ) arnis sticks outside club training hours.

\_\_\_ I release the club and its representatives from any liability that I may obtain as a result of my actions outside training sessions.

\_\_\_ I understand that training sessions may be photographed and recorded for educational and promotional purposes.

\_\_\_ I agree to have my / my child's photos and video captures uploaded to the club's public Facebook page and YouTube channel.

Signed by \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

# CONSENT FORM

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Age \_\_\_\_\_

Contact Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

Term (Please encircle): 1 2 3 4

\_\_\_ I give permission for my son/daughter to enrol in ( ) **Tabak-Toyok Training Program** and/or ( ) **Arnis Training Program**

\_\_\_ I understand that membership fees are payable in cash or, thru internet banking. Fees are non-refundable and exclude nunchakus and arnis sticks. Fees are due beginning each school term.

\_\_\_ I understand that nunchakus and arnis sticks are offensive weapons and are not to be used in public, including but not limited to, parks, shopping malls, school, etc., otherwise I may face legal action. Prior approval from the NZ Police must be sought for public demonstration.

\_\_\_ I understand that I am responsible for the possession of ( ) nunchaku ( ) arnis sticks outside club training hours.

\_\_\_ I release the club and its representatives from any liability that I may obtain as a result of my actions outside training sessions.

\_\_\_ I understand that training sessions may be photographed and recorded for educational and promotional purposes.

\_\_\_ I agree to have my / my child's photos and video captures uploaded to the club's public Facebook page and YouTube channel.

Signed by \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

# CONSENT FORM

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Age \_\_\_\_\_

Contact Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

Term (Please encircle): 1 2 3 4

\_\_\_ I give permission for my son/daughter to enrol in ( ) **Tabak-Toyok Training Program** and/or ( ) **Arnis Training Program**

\_\_\_ I understand that membership fees are payable in cash or, thru internet banking. Fees are non-refundable and exclude nunchakus and arnis sticks. Fees are due beginning each school term.

\_\_\_ I understand that nunchakus and arnis sticks are offensive weapons and are not to be used in public, including but not limited to, parks, shopping malls, school, etc., otherwise I may face legal action. Prior approval from the NZ Police must be sought for public demonstration.

\_\_\_ I understand that I am responsible for the possession of ( ) nunchaku ( ) arnis sticks outside club training hours.

\_\_\_ I release the club and its representatives from any liability that I may obtain as a result of my actions outside training sessions.

\_\_\_ I understand that training sessions may be photographed and recorded for educational and promotional purposes.

\_\_\_ I agree to have my / my child's photos and video captures uploaded to the club's public Facebook page and YouTube channel.

Signed by \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_