

'Wax on - Wax Off'

BY MICHAEL ROME & DAVID SASSEMAN

Centered and composed you stare deep into your opponent's soul, while at the same time observing any movement with your peripheral vision. Then wait, patiently wait, for the right moment to strike ... not a glancing wound, but a fatal, crushing blow. You sidestep a sudden attack, simultaneously ripping the still-beating heart out of your adversary's chest and calmly showing it to him as he dies.

I love poker, what a great game!

The above scene could also be describing a type of Kung Fu called "White Crane." This is the same style of martial arts used in the old TV show *Kung Fu* and the 1984 film *The Karate Kid*. In this movie, White Crane master Mr. Miyagi has his new student repeatedly wax and paint. Unbeknownst to the "karate kid," his teacher is actually having him practice the basic movements of the style until they are second nature. (I have seen many players unintentionally practicing other styles, such as Drunken Monkey or Whining Donkey. OK ... I made up Whining Donkey.)

White Crane contains useful wisdom for the poker acolyte.

(That's right, grasshopper.)

Picture a calm bird, concentrating and looking for his chance to spear a fish (as we all do at the poker table). If he misses the fish, he doesn't stir up the water but instead remains unconcerned, cool-headed ... even peaceful. *Remaining patient and unruffled at the poker table is a great asset.*

The Crane teaches us that all warfare is based on deception. He can be still and contemplative or hop around on one leg expanding his wings to puff up and appear bigger. The Crane uses illusion, and then waits for the right moment to attack. *A dangerous table image puts your opponent off balance and allows you to attack when the time is right.*

This bird has intense focus that is centered on every move of its prey. Evasion is necessary. The agile bird sidesteps... waits... and chooses his target wisely. The White Crane is a symbol of long life. *Have the concentration to focus on your opponent's slightest tells. Knowing when to be aggressive and when to be cautious is the key to poker longevity.*

Combine defense and attack by using soft and hard power. The White Crane has been known to hold out bait (worms) in its beak to entice fish. *The check-raise and calling on the flop with the intention of taking the pot on the turn or river can be very effective.*

Kung Fu teaches that we should modify our plans and confuse the opponent. Hence, when able to attack, we must seem unable. When using our forces, we must seem inactive. When we are near, we must make the enemy believe we are far away; and when far away, we must make him believe we are near. We feign disorder, and then pounce. *Changing gears and appearing unpredictable are essential.*

Finally, if your opponent is ill tempered, seek to irritate him. Pretend to be weak, that he may grow arrogant. If he is taking his ease, give him no rest. *Use your adversary's own psychology, and even his very nature, against him. He will then go on tilt and make bad decisions.*

In its highest form, both poker and Kung Fu can teach you to overcome obstacles by staying centered and observant. To some masters, it is a way of life. Try absorbing the essence of the crane's spirit. Now excuse me; I must go. I have a fence to paint, a car to wax, and a floor to polish.

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