Second time sparring this week, and I've quickly become obsessed with this side of training. Working on technique is enjoyable, vital, and very helpful, but obviously not quite as satisfying as giving a test to what you've learned against an opponent – even if it is just sparring.

For my 2nd time through, I've noticed a few things about my burgeoning "style," if you can even call it that. For one, I'm much more reliant on kicks than on punches. I think this comes from two things. For one, I just like fighters who kick more, and so that's what I am more used to seeing. And two, for these light sparring sessions we don't wear headgear. As a result, I'm not entirely comfortable throwing a punch at my partner just yet. Because my punching technique is still developing, I am not yet confident at both executing the punch properly, but at the same time pulling it a bit so that I don't hit my partner fully. Seems like that's a tricky line that I'm still trying to find. No worries though, as in the meantime, I'm improving my kicking speed, technique, and defense, and managed to land a number of clean leg kicks and push kicks this time, while also blocking kicks much more effectively.

Speaking of defense, this continues to be an area in need of work, especially where punches are concerned. When punches start coming in, I find it tough to keep my composure and cover up, and instead end up trying to block each individual punch – which only leaves my head exposed and gets me tagged. Been watching a lot of Remy Bonjasky, which helps. He's very skilled at dropping his head, bringing his gloves in, and tucking in his elbows when the punches come in, while still firing back with kicks when there's an opening. That's what I'm aiming for. I also used this little Rob Kamen combo I found online, which worked for me as well.

Last thought for the day is a sort of philosophical training question I've been contemplating – what constitutes being a good training partner, particularly when drilling techniques? Is it helpful to just keep quiet and let your partner throw the combo? To give words of encouragement? If there's something they could improve, do you speak up? How about movement, should I circle, so that they are working different angles? Of course, different people respond to different things, but it's a good question to ask – not only in how you can best help your partner, but how they can best help you.

Any thoughts?

Training Diary is a weekly series documenting my journey starting Muay Thai training. For more

on this series, read the first entry here . I train at Conviction Fitness & Martial Arts, 4430 N. Western Ave., Chicago, IL www.convictionfitness.com .