

# Case Study 2012

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(Contra-Mestre Navarone)

Capoeira Na Praia



# INTRODUCTION

To find a sense of perspective for my BTech Project, I've decided to write my case study on the group where I first learnt, and still practice and teach Capoeira, Capoeira Na Praia. As well as it's current head instructor Patrick Mkhize, Contra-Mestre Navarone (Semi-Master Navarone). I've decided to focus on Patrick as he has been involved in Capoeira almost since it had started been practiced in Durban; as well as he is a BTech qualified, Graphic Designer from Durban University of Technology, who can provide good insight for this study.

## SETTING

On Sunday the 19th of February, I arrived at Pat's house to start my initial interview with him, and was welcomed as always with a warm greeting from his family, who have also been involved with Capoeira for many Years. We chat about the past week's Capoeira sessions, any news going on in the Capoeira world or what websites we have found with cool videos, interesting Capoeira literature.

This relaxed welcome is very typical of the nature of our group and the relationship we have as leaders and instructors of Capoeira Na Praia, we are a group of individuals who train together, socialize together, and eventually become important members our lives, making our relationships with each other grow deeper, transcending outside of the training space. This is not unique to our group, it happens in all Capoeira groups across South Africa and worldwide. Which is why I personally believe many students continually return to training week after week, Capoeira is more than just a martial art. Our bond with it exceeds the physical workout; it helps us grow as people on many levels.

## HISTORY OF CAPOEIRA NA PRAIA

Capoeira Na Praia was created in 2003, and has experienced many instructors taking leadership of the group, from Matt Clark, Chris Mason, Breton Vandenberg, Ed Zungu, Charlie Mitchell, Nelson Miranda, and currently Patrick Mkhize and myself, Mark Hardie.

“Capoeira Na Praia was established in 2003 on the basis that the school would ensure the growth and promotion of Capoeira and the Afro-Brazilian culture it encapsulates. Our Aim is to truly represent the art-form to the best of our capabilities and to ensure the positive development of the martial art within Durban and the rest of Kwa-Zulu Natal.” (Clark, 2003:4)

The group is associated with Barravento Capoeira from Rio de Janeiro, which is run by Grande Mestre Bogado. Barravento, and by association Capoeira Na Praia, is part of the Federation of Capoeira of Rio de Janeiro (FCDRJ), which is the official federation for Capoeira in Brazil. This also links us to the group Casa Da Capoeira, based in Johannesburg, run by South African master, Mestre Paulo. This interconnection between groups, people and ideas already grows the Capoeira Na Praia family across national and international borders.

The interview started very informally, where I asked him to dig deep into his memory, and share information on Durban's Capoeira scene before Capoeira Na Praia. I wanted to know which group originally taught and practiced the art, which were some of the original members and more importantly who were the original Capoeira Instructors in Durban. (Part of this information was supplemented with the knowledge and memory of Breton Vandenberg, of whom I had to email, as Pat wasn't sure on the exact names and information.)

The first official group in Durban was formed through an instructor called Dema (Capoeira name Pantera, Panther), who had learnt the art with a group in Brazil, under Mestre Nene. The Durban group formed when Dema and a few mates trained and experimented with new movements and ideas, forming 'Panteras Grupo De Capoeira' (Panther's group Of Capoeira) in 2001. New members joined the group in its existence, including Matt Clark, Chris Mason and Ed Zungu. But these 3 members eventually found themselves Studying at the University of Kwa-Zulu Natal (UKZN). They looked to create a Capoeira group, which would become an official sport at UKZN, looking for new membership with university students. This Group became what is now Capoeira Na Praia (Capoeira by the sea). Panteras Grupo De Capoeira ceased to exist after the creation of Na Praia, as many of its members moved to the new school and Dema (Pantera) had since stopped training.

## CAPOEIRA & PHILOSOPHY

The following set of questions I looked to find out about Pat's personal history of Capoeira, his views and opinions. The first thing I ask any new students is how they first heard about Capoeira, and its usually through the game Tekken 3 or some contemporary martial arts movie, Pat was no different. Scene's from Mortal combat and characters playing and showing crude elements of Capoeira grabbed his attention as something he could give a try. He had experience with other martial arts, but this particular art seemed different.

The cool movements intrigued him, the integration of music, dance and acrobatics into one artform appealed to many aspects of his life. Capoeira unlike other martial arts encourages you to be creative with your movements with in a set space, have the discipline to be resourceful with the knowledge you have to allow you to survive in the game. Similar when he was young growing up in townships, having the ability to survive the circumstances with what you have in life. Capoeira binds itself to your life, making it competitive with your training mates as well as with yourself, making you a better capoeirista as well as a better person, by challenging yourself and looking to always get better.

He has been training for 10 years and played Capoeira with many different groups, exposing him to lots of knowledge and skill. Which has helped him teach Capoeira for around 5 years, Where he now reached the level of Contra-Mestre. Even though Pat is graded to a very high level capoeirista, he still believes in the value of a non-federation (non-grading) style of Capoeira.

As this style of Capoeira encourages freethinking, resourcefulness, 'organic Capoeira', and allowing the group to be opened up to many different Mestres, learning from many different minds of thought, not just 1 regimented system. He believe in the notion of developing a Capoeira community, rather than just strict training groups, where the members can interact, socialize and learn outside if the training venue. As a Contra-Mestre, he has the responsibility to plant the seed of knowledge into new Capoeira students at the group, and from then on, help and allow them to develop their skill and knowledge at their own pace. Mestres and Contra-Mestres aren't just masters because of the knowledge of the movements, it runs deeper, where they can connect with different students at different levels, knowing how to push and encourage them.

He has learnt through training with Capoeira Na Praia and other groups, is that people with similar goals and purpose help break down boundaries in life. Common purpose allows people to grow and develop, in a positive manner. Your journey in Capoeira truly opens up when you share your beliefs and views with the other students and instructors. Very often they will share the same views, and as with any aspect of people's lives prosperity happens when people of a similar nature interact and work together. This happens at Capoeira Na Praia, other groups and when separate groups interact at major events; a common goal is quickly understood and the event/workshop suddenly has a great energy, new students share their knowledge, instructors and masters and share and reflect on techniques and philosophy, and everyone participating gains more than what they thought they would.

Personally, all of us instructors have seen it when a student is slowly developing in their Capoeira skill, and suddenly they open up about their life and share a unique insight to a set of movements they suddenly understand more about Capoeira, which is that everyone can learn from anyone in the art. A Mestre can learn more from a beginner, than from an instructor. Everyone training has a common purpose, of playing the game. Instructors and Mestres don't look to show off and intimidate the new students, rather to provide the skills and atmosphere that promotes learning, personal and group development. When students learn easily it means the instructor is doing something right, which they can take lessons from themselves; such as what teaching concepts do or don't work, how to work with different types of people, and what style of Capoeira promotes the longevity of the group.

For Patrick, some of the challenges in Capoeira are managing his work, family, Capoeira and social time. Keeping a balance in life is a constant challenge. But on the other hand his most enjoyable elements of the art have helped him grow into who he is today. He met his wife through Capoeira, he has seen parts of the world he would usually never see, the physical experience of playing in the Capoeira Roda and the ability to express himself in a unique manner. Through Capoeira he has met many different people and made many new friends of diverse culture. It has provided an escape from the elements of everyday life. Different philosophies he learnt in Capoeira have been used in business, work environments and how he operates in the world. Capoeira is part of his life and allows him to see the world differently, breaking the mould of a conventional world.

# CAPOEIRA IN KWA-ZULU NATAL, AND SOUTH AFRICA

“We have the ideal ingredients which can give birth to something that’s really beautiful” (Mkhize, P 2012)

Through the different community projects we run in Durban we can make a big impact on people’s lives, making it part of the culture in Durban. The individuals running Capoeira have great mentalities for healthy growth of the art. All of the projects we run work together on various levels, from the kids mixing in different projects, sharing of ideas and the instructors helping where they’re needed. The way Capoeira (and Afro-Brazilian culture) works with communities, works well with the traditional communal cultures in Kwa-Zulu Natal. Similarities in the cultures, such as crime, mysticism, gang life and working through struggle, helps Capoeira relate to a new sphere of Capoeira players in the country, as it existed in Brazil when Capoeira was created. Capoeira’s elements of music, dance and fight being mixed together are an African concept. Even though it had been developed into a unique art in Brasil, the fundamentals are the same. Capoeira is an art of the mind, allowing for you to express yourself and learn through your own beliefs. Luckily for Durban and South Africa alike these mannerisms are similar to that of Brazil and other African cultures Capoeira had been developed through.

## GROUP EXPOSURE

Being a qualified graphic designer, Patrick always had the responsibility of designing the group logos, t-shirts and training gear. The first logo he developed was a blue and white logo, which was used to create some hype around the new group of Capoeira Na Praia. The logo had a strong aesthetic value, mixing the flags of Brazil, South Africa, as well as Durban’s Ocean Currents into 1 shape. The figures in the logo created a Yin-Yang feel as they wore different coloured pants, 1 was attacking in the air, the other defending the attack. Patrick hoped the logo would describe the group in a very literal sense. The elements of Brazil, South Africa, Durban, and Capoeira could be understood within seconds of observing the logo. They originally limited it to a one-colour print (sea blue) as it would save on initial printing costs as the group had not yet made a lot of money. A few years later the same logo was given some colour as they had more money for printing, additional text and inclusion of berimbaus under the logo were added to the colour version.



Once the group was fully established with a constant stream of students, the final logo was developed. Capoeira Na Praia had since had many visiting Capoeiristas from around Africa, and wanted the group to be more welcoming to a bigger sphere of Capoeiristas from around the country, Africa and to show worldwide Capoeiristas that we had an African identity. The logo consisted of a lion’s head within the Africa, with the continent making up its mane. A Berimbau was placed in the lion’s mouth to again line the logo to Capoeira. The Blue/orange/black colour scheme was used to make the logo stand out and be easily recognizable.



Pat Compared Durban's logo to other Capoeira groups' logos from South Africa, Casa Da Capoeira in Johannesburg, has a logo that represents the city, using its unique skyline for most people to recognize it easily. Grupo Cordão De Ouro in Capetown uses the logo that was created in São Paulo, Brazil. The logo represents the atmosphere of Capoeira that existed in São Paulo; being is used worldwide to this day.



## REFERENCES

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Vandenberg, B. Former Capoeira Na Praia Instructor