

Southpaw versus Orthodox Explained!

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I've carefully checked this report for accuracy. However, I'm human. I may have made mistakes. If you spot any, [please let me know](#) so that I can fix them in future editions.

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Introduction

If you happen to be a southpaw boxer, I know what you were thinking when you signed up to get your free copy of this report, “Here we go, another attempt to explain to orthodox boxers how to overcome a southpaw!” Doesn't it at times seem like the whole world is against you! Well listen, I can assure you now that when I set out to produce this report I was determined to provide a balanced analysis that treats both orthodox and southpaw boxers the same. I think I have managed to achieve this balance, but we'll see how you think it goes!

So what exactly was my aim in producing this report? Well, it has become apparent over time that many visitors to my site have visited with the aim of establishing how to deal with a boxer of the opposing stance. I would have thought that it would pretty much be a constant flow of orthodox boxers searching for solutions for how to deal with a southpaw. Sure, the majority of cases do relate to this, but you'd be surprised how many southpaws are looking for effective solutions for dealing with orthodox boxers (in particular with boxing combinations.)

It has to be said, a southpaw boxer is often considered to be awkward. Orthodox boxers come up against southpaws far less than they come up against fellow orthodox fighters, so it's not surprising that this view of 'the awkward southpaw' has developed and become ingrained in many boxer's (and coach's) minds. But is it as clear cut as a southpaw just being 'awkward'? What happens for example when a southpaw meets a southpaw? Do they consider each other 'awkward'? It's a very compelling area of technical discussion and I hope that by the time you've read this report, be you southpaw or orthodox, you will understand some of the key factors and will have more tactical options next time you climb between the ropes.

This report will cover the following areas:

- General information about the boxer's stance, both orthodox and southpaw.
- An exploration of the factors that are in play when a boxer of a given stance face off in the ring. This exploration will be dealt with in 3 scenarios.
- Derived from the factors previously described, some ideas and discussion around tactics and boxing combinations that may provide some successful outcomes when used in a contest.

Before we move into the body of the report, I need to remind you of some common sense principles around the views that I am presenting here. If you are now or intend to become a boxer, then you must practice your sport in the controlled environment of a gym, staffed by suitably qualified coaches who can instruct you on the skills of the sport, look after your fitness and any medical considerations (in conjunction with your Doctor/Physician) but most importantly ensure your safety.

Boxing, as with other contact sports, has inherent risk. Reading a bunch of words in a report like this gives you no basis to go out and hit a fellow human being on the premise of it being boxing! Go to a boxing gym (one of the many thousands all over the world) and get looked after and taught properly by a coach! Boxing has always been and continues to be a sport with few, if any, social or economic barriers to participation. For this reason, you have no excuse to not make the most of the boxing facilities available in your neighbourhood!

OK, sermon over, let's get going!

The Boxer's Stance

The boxer's stance has not come about by accident. The stance is a form developed with purpose and understanding of the body's capabilities and the demands that a boxer will have placed upon them during a boxing match. In a nutshell, the boxer's stance requires that the boxer's favoured arm in terms of strength and dexterity is held to the rear, as is the leg of the same properties. This means that a boxer who happens to be right-handed will hold the right hand and right leg to the rear, and vice versa for the left-handed boxer.

Why is the stronger arm and leg held further away from the opponent? Because by holding the strongest arm further away from the opponent, it enables greater rotation of the body and therefore greater power to be generated. Add to this the fact that the favoured leg allows the boxer to 'drive' forward when pressing home the attack. This set-up is not exclusive to boxing and in fact a sport from which many comparisons may be drawn also relies on this principle, fencing. A left handed fencer has a very definite advantage in that (apparently) their dominant arm covers the line of defence. Could this be true of boxing also?

So, what are the types of stance in boxing? I'm sure if you've got this far into the report that you'll already know, but just for me to be sure that I've covered the bases:

- An orthodox boxer is a boxer who is right-handed and who 'leads' with (or holds out in front) the left leg and left arm.
- A southpaw boxer is a boxer who is left-handed and who leads with their right arm and

right leg.

While we have the chance, let's look in a bit more detail at the orthodox and southpaw stances.

The Orthodox Boxer

The orthodox boxer is a boxer who is right-handed and therefore leads with their left hand and left leg. If you search out a dictionary definition of the word 'orthodox', you'll find an explanation that goes something like *"following or conforming to the traditional or generally accepted rules."* I have read somewhere (don't ask me where) that there was a time when all boxers were coached as an orthodox, whether they were right handed or not. More remarkable than this is that in some forums I've been visiting, some boxers have stated that this still seems to be the case!

Back to the definition of 'orthodox' and the 'traditional or generally accepted rules' issue, we should bear in mind that between 90% and 93% of the adult population are right-handed and that this in fact may be origin of 'orthodox' as opposed to lefties not being allowed to be southpaw! I believe very strongly that a right-handed person should be coached as an orthodox and a left-handed person should be coached as a southpaw.

The Southpaw Boxer

The term 'southpaw' originated in baseball and was first used during the mid 1800's. It is thought to be a reference to the fact that the baseball diamond could represent the 4 points of the compass, and a left-handed pitcher would therefore hold the pitching arm on the 'south side' of his body, hence, 'southpaw.'

So, we know that a southpaw is in theory left-handed. I use the phrase 'in theory' because both Marvelous Marvin Hagler and Manny Pacquiao are naturally right-handed but were coached as southpaws. Whilst these 2 guys have produced some of the finest world championship boxing ever witnessed, I don't think we should use them as a case to all of a sudden start coaching every right-handed boxer to box from the outset as a southpaw. Simple rule if you are a lefty, you are southpaw. If you are a righty, you are orthodox!

As mentioned previously, the southpaw boxer (I believe) has had somewhat of a bad press in being regarded as just plain 'awkward'. The fact is that a southpaw boxer may be unfamiliar to the orthodox, but this is by virtue of the fact that only 7% to 10% of the adult population and therefore boxers are likely to be southpaw! As a general rule of thumb, an orthodox boxer can expect to meet a southpaw only 1 time in ever 10! It's hardly surprising then that we consider a southpaw awkward rather than judging them on their boxing skill. Better boxing skills will always win out, be you a southpaw or an orthodox, and you'll do well to remember this!

When Boxing Stances Collide!

The focus of this report is about when an orthodox boxer meets a southpaw boxer. In order to identify the key issues surrounding the orthodox/southpaw conundrum, it's important that we understand the mechanics and implications, in outline at least, of all 3 scenarios prior to understanding the specific scenario of southpaw versus orthodox:

- Orthodox versus orthodox
- Southpaw versus southpaw
- Southpaw versus orthodox (the promised land!)

Orthodox versus Orthodox

By far the most common of encounters is orthodox boxers meeting in the ring. Whenever 2 boxers meet, there are a number of factors that will determine the overall direction of the contest. I've created a very simple diagram below which is in effect an overhead/bird's-eye view of two very peculiar looking boxers!

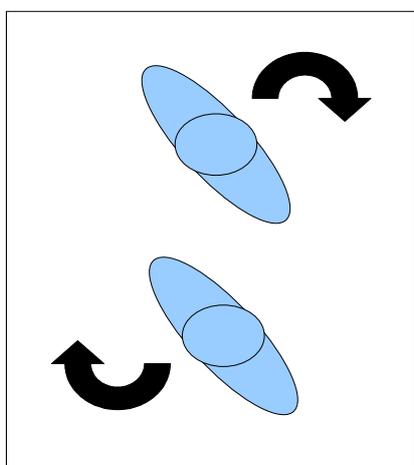
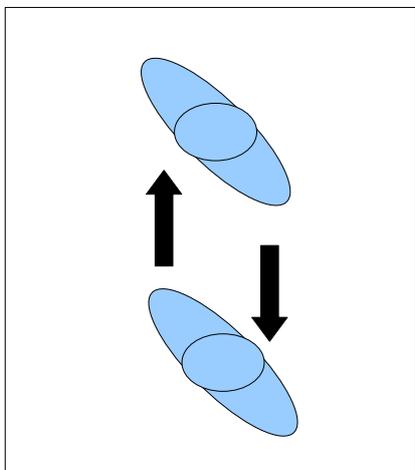


Fig 1: Orthodox v Orthodox

In *fig 1*, we can see that these orthodox boxers are leading with their left arm (signified by the left shoulder.) **An orthodox boxer is much more effective and is more comfortable moving to their left.** When moving right, it can feel quite unnatural. The orthodox boxer cannot pop out multiple jabs and must constantly readjust the feet when throwing combinations. You can see on the diagram that the solid black arrows represent

the movement of the fighters; you might say it's complementary. The two boxers almost click and they are not competing for the same ground.



Let's now examine another aspect of the orthodox versus orthodox scenario, the lines of attack. Figure 2 (left) examines the natural lines of attack between orthodox boxers. The line of attack relates to the jab, given that this shot is by far the most commonly used punch in a boxer's arsenal.

Fig 2: Orthodox v Orthodox Jab

We can see here that each of the boxer's may throw an 'unimpaired' jab to the target. **Orthodox boxers will most often block or parry an opponent's jab using the back hand (right hand)**, this allows them to respond immediately with their own jab. This allows the 2 boxers to exchange blows largely unaffected by anything other than intentional defensive actions. So, we have 2 issues here to consider; I) the boxer's are content to circle to the left and therefore do not necessarily compete for ground and ii) both boxers are free to use the jab with out running into any obvious obstacles. Keep these things in mind as we progress!

Southpaw versus Southpaw

Seeing two southpaws competing against each other is a rarity, as the statistics might suggest! For the purposes of this report I think it's important to check out the implications of southpaws facing off, but I'm sure you aren't going to be surprised when I say it's exactly the same as orthodox boxers meeting only in reverse! However, there is one very significant additional consideration that we must understand. This consideration is simple again comes back to

statistics, a southpaw will be unfamiliar with facing another southpaw as the majority of opponents that they face are use an orthodox boxing stance.

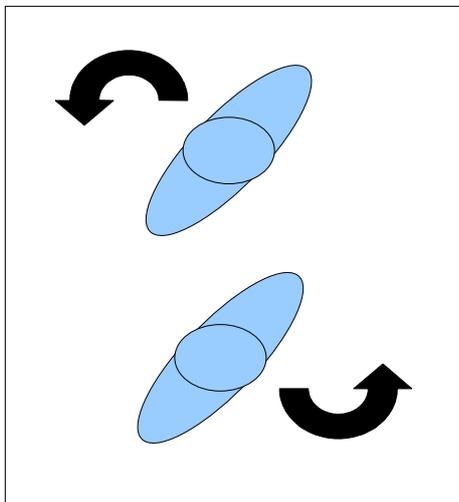


Fig 3: Southpaw v Southpaw

As with the orthodox boxers, a southpaw will find it more natural to move in the same direction as their leading leg is placed i.e. to the right. With both boxers preferring to move predominantly to their right, then both of the styles 'click' and the potential for an open boxing match taking places is increased. The key thing to remember is that **a southpaw boxer is generally more effective and therefore prefers to move to their right.**

In terms of line of attack (for the jab), again we can demonstrate a 'fit' between the two boxers, but there is one key difference. We mentioned previously that an orthodox is used to blocking and parrying an opponent's jab with their back hand (right hand).

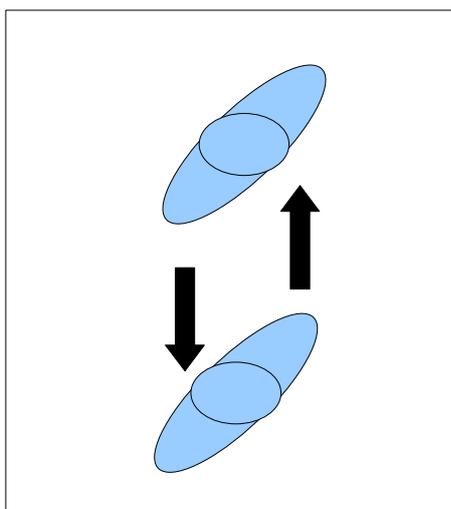
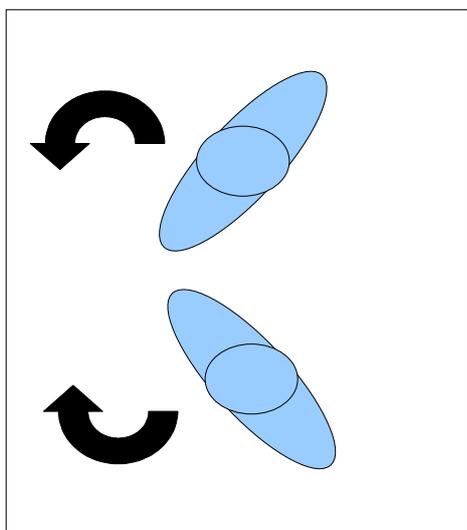


Fig 4: Southpaw Line of Attack

Now, a southpaw is used to dealing with an orthodox jab, so *Fig 4* demonstrates that both southpaw boxers have a clear line along which to throw their jab. However, the southpaw boxer will not be used to blocking an opponent's jab with their back hand (left hand). So, the key thing to note is **a southpaw boxer is used to blocking an orthodox jab with their (lead) right hand,** so when southpaws meet, both may

feel unusual when blocking a jab with their left hand! We need to remember this for the final scenario of a southpaw meeting an orthodox in the boxing ring which is ultimately the primary subject of this report!

Southpaw versus Orthodox



In the previous scenarios, we identified a number of key issues and all of these issues will come into play during this final scenario. Let's first look at the preferred movement of the southpaw and orthodox boxer. *Fig 5* demonstrates the likely directions that the southpaw and orthodox boxer would naturally prefer to move, and we can instantly see that something is different.

Fig 5: Southpaw v Orthodox

The southpaw, leading with the right leg and arm, moves more naturally to their right. The orthodox boxer however, leading with the left leg and arm, moves more naturally to their left. We can therefore state with some degree of certainty that **both the southpaw boxer and the orthodox boxer may compete to occupy the same ground.** A main result of this is the boxers literally stepping on each others toes, and this is very frustrating in particular to the orthodox! Not that I'd condone any kind of 'guerilla' tactics during a boxing match, but I have noticed boxers in this scenario stepping on the opponent's lead foot and firing head-shots. Quite unsavoury, but difficult for the referee to spot and act upon. This is a southpaw special as the average southpaw is far more used to 'feet issues' than an orthodox!

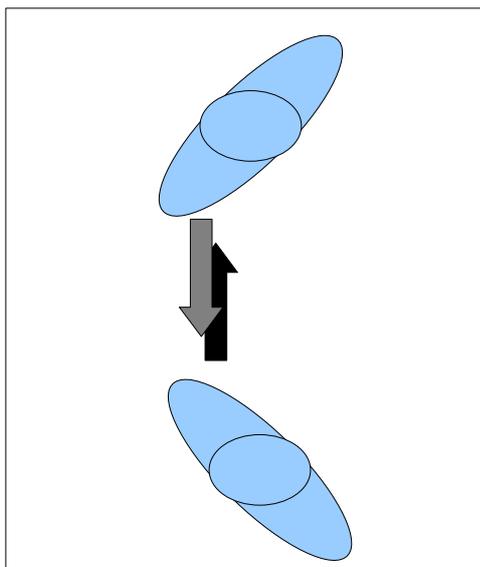


Fig 6: Southpaw line of attack

Let's now examine the issues around the main line of attack when a southpaw boxer meets an orthodox boxer.

Fig 6 clearly shows an issue when both boxers attempt to throw a jab. There is a definite impasse! Ask any orthodox boxer and they will confirm that this is one of the key difficulties when facing a southpaw boxer. **When a southpaw boxer and an orthodox boxer throw a jab at the same time, the shots travel along the same channel but in opposite directions.**

So what are the implications of this aspect of both jabs impairing each other? Well, as previously mentioned, an orthodox boxer conventionally blocks or parries a jab using their right hand. We can see here that the orthodox boxer, if he/she decides to use a block, must block a southpaw jab with their leading (left) hand. This has a key impact in that the orthodox boxer is unsettled in terms of throwing their jab. **An orthodox boxer is not used to blocking oncoming jabs with their leading hand, whereas a southpaw having boxed many orthodox boxers is well-versed in blocking with the lead hand.**

Southpaw V Orthodox – Putting it Together!

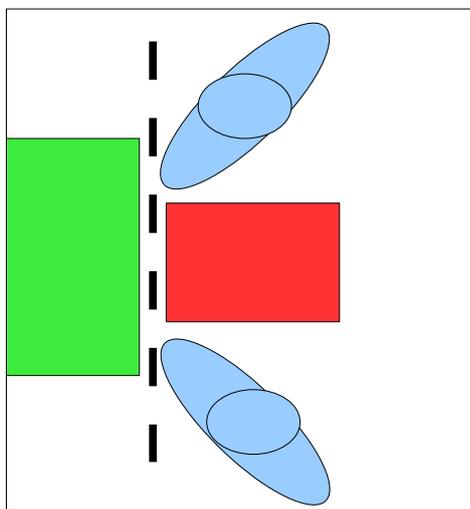


Fig 7: Area to Control

So, let's bring this all together. I believe that when a southpaw boxer meets an orthodox boxer, the primary aim of both boxers should be to control the area on the outside of their leading arm; we'll refer to this as the 'Safe Area' and it's represented by the green box on the diagram. The reason that it's the safe area is that when occupying this area, the opponent's back hand (power shot) cannot be used. By being in this area, your risk of being hit with a

meaningful shot is significantly reduced; finding a 'safe area' in a boxing ring has surely got to be a great thing! The red area is the 'Strike Area' and when here, you can get hot with anything...so use caution!

To reiterate then, anything to the left of the dotted line is the area that needs to be controlled.

When a southpaw meets an orthodox, the southpaw should aim to keep the lead (right) foot to the right of the opponent's lead (left) foot., and vice versa for the orthodox. This will ensure a presence in the 'safe area'.

Now, don't get into the mindset that what I'm saying here is that whenever you meet an opponent of an opposing stance that you should always move to the left as an orthodox or to the right as a southpaw. Repeating the same tactic over and over again will land you in trouble, even against an opponent of a moderate skill level. My point is that taking control of this area

will 'unlock' the opponent. Variety in terms of tactics will always add dimensions to your boxing that will minimize the likelihood of an opponent controlling you as opposed to the other way around.

OK, let's look at the line of attack from the safe area. *Figure 8* and *figure 9* clearly show the line of attack for the orthodox boxer and the southpaw boxer. In each diagram, the boxer has taken their front foot to the side of the opponent's lead foot (as previously described) and has opened up a clear line of attack to the target. So, the safe area provides ample opportunities for attack...BONUS!

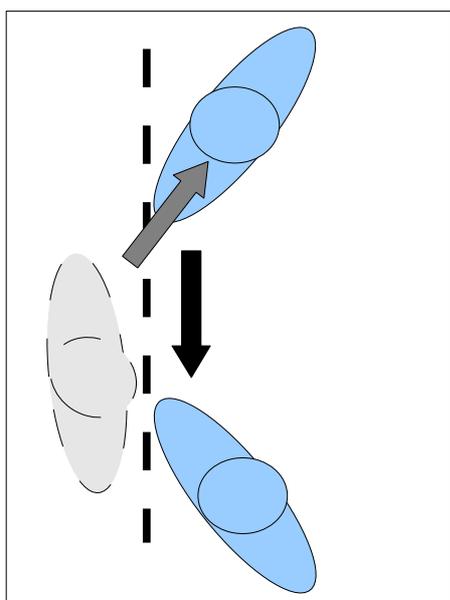


Fig 8: Orthodox Attack

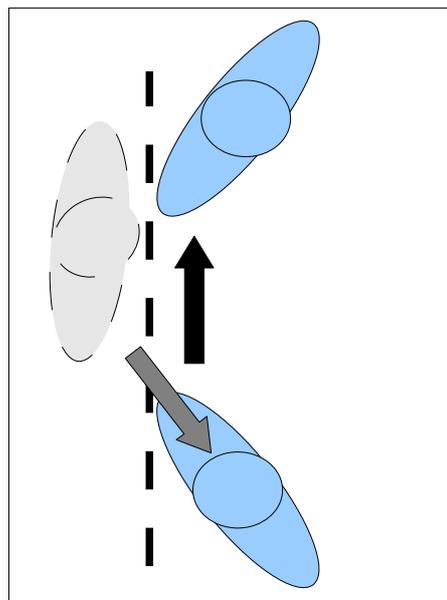


Fig 9: Southpaw Attack

How to Control the 'Safe Area'

A key way to control the 'area' is using appropriate boxing skills in the form of boxing combinations. To give you some ideas, the final section of this report covers 3 boxing combinations that may 'unlock that defence.' Remember that these combinations are

interchangeable and are designed to be used against an opponent of an opposing stance i.e. southpaw v orthodox and orthodox v southpaw!

Also, we covered earlier that you shouldn't repeat the same attack over and over or you will end up taking shots. Use feints to bamboozle and confuse the opponent, making them really nervous about doing anything because they are unsure exactly where you will attack. To illustrate this, I've focused the first 2 combinations on attacking from the safe area and the 3rd on feinting and attacking through the strike area.

Boxing Combination	Notes
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Double Jab combined with a diagonal move forward• Back hand (right/left cross)	The diagonal move forward combined with the jab allows you to transition to the 'safe area' in order to unleash the powerful back hand (right or left cross.)
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Jab• Pivot combined with a mid range left hook	The initial jab draws a lead (jab) from your opponent. The pivot takes you to the 'safe area' and also adds a significant 'whack' to the mid range left hook. Remember that an orthodox boxer will pivot left and a southpaw boxer will pivot right.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Feint the diagonal move forward• Duck combined with a side step• Back hand (right/left cross)	The feint of the movement forward (left for the orthodox, right for the southpaw) draws the reaction. The duck combined with the side-step (right for orthodox or left for southpaw) is a defensive action but also a mobility aide in order to deliver the left or right cross to the target. You attack directly through the 'strike area'