

Sleeping Bags

Ninpo Library::Ura & Omote::August 1995::

SLEEPING BAGS

Ron Blackwood

As you progress in your training, you will find yourself out in the wilderness on more than one occasion. In our dojo, promotions through the Kyu and Dan ranks require certain survival skills. I will direct my articles toward educating you "city folks" to the ways of the outdoors and the equipment necessary to make it fun.

To me, the most critical item to take with you is the sleeping bag. I don't think there is anything worse than freezing my buns off in the middle of the night on the hard ground. The following is a short course in the selection of a sleeping bag.

There are four types of fill and certain advantages to each:

HOLLOFIL 808 is a hollow short-crimped polyester fiber. It retains most of it's loft when wet. It must be sewn to another fabric to prevent clumping, shifting and cold spots. This adds weight. HOLLOFIL II is the same but has a silicone slickening agent added to make the fibers more resilient and more compressible.

POLARGARD is a continuous filament polyester that is manufactured in bats. These bats require no stabilizing fabric making the bag somewhat lighter. It too retains most of it's loft when wet.

QUALLOFIL is a four-hole microscopic short-crimped polyester fiber. Since it has more surface area, it is a superior insulator. It has a soft down-like feel and retains most of it's loft when wet.

### Sleeping\_Bags\_1995.txt

DOWN is the best insulator with the widest comfort range. Look for at least 550 cubic inches per ounce as a fill guide. DOWN loses 90% of it's warmth when wet and will take atleast two days to dry. The synthetics lose only 10% of their warmth and will drip-dry in less than a day. Carry your bag in a waterproof stuff sack.

There are two styles of bags. The camping bag is rectangular in shape and is usually quite bulky. Rectangular bags are usually only good for weather well above freezing. The mummy style is less comfortable, but is more thermally efficient. The mummy style is excellent at sub-zero temperatures.

Selection of a sleeping bag is a personal decision but should be carefully thought out before spend a lot of money on any expensive mistake.

Weight: If you are going to be backpacking, this can be very important. Every pound will weigh ten pounds out on the trail. If you drive to your campsite, then weight is of no concern.

Temperature Rating: I would rather have a bag that is too hot than one that is too cold. If I get too warm, I can always unzip the bag or sleep on top of it. If the bag is too cold, there is nothing I can do to warm it up.

Size: I like a bag with more girth. If the bag is too tight then I feel constricted. If the bag is too short, then either your feet or your head will compress the insulation and either one end or the other will get cold and uncomfortable.

Price: A good quality sleeping bag will cost from \$80 to \$300 depending on the construction, fill, shell material, and the store you buy it from. In general, you should be able to buy an excellent sleeping bag for \$200. I have purchased six sleeping bags over the last ten years before finally finding one I like.

Other items to consider are a ground cloth and/or sleeping pad. Both will keep the damp from accumulating under the bag. The pad should be either the self-

#### Sleeping\_Bags\_1995.txt

inflating type (expensive) or made of a closed-cell foam. Both are lightweight and both make sleeping much softer and warmer. The final item to consider is either a tent or a bivouac sack (bivy sack). I'll discuss tents in a later issue. Bivy sacks are sacks into which you place your sleeping bag. The bivy should have Gore-Tex on the top to allow it to breathe and yet still be waterproof. The bottoms are usually made from a urethane coated nylon packcloth. The bivy will add about 10 degrees to the rating of your sleeping bag. The bivy has the advantage of being significantly lighter than a tent. Bivy sacks cost between \$90 and \$150.

Ron Blackwood just passed the Godan test at the 1995 Tai Kai. He has trained for 10 years under Kevin Millis, 9th Dan. His hobbies include technical rock climbing, Scuba Diving (1 more class to qualify as Master Diver) and competitive shooting. He's backpacked all over the country including Mt. Whitney.