

12 Experts Reveal the Secrets of

Unlocking BJJ

with Stephan Kesting
Grapplearts.com



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An Introduction to Unlocking BJJ

by Stephan Kesting

At some point in your Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu career you're going to have to decide whether you want to take your grappling skills to the next level.

If you're a beginner right now, then the next level means having a firm grasp of the basic positions, submissions and transitions, and beginning to connect them together into combinations. At this point you're also starting to individualize your game, specifically tailoring it to your physical and mental attributes.

When you make the jump to intermediate-level BJJ you'll start reacting instinctively to your opponent's moves. Your mind won't always be fixated by having to remember each individual step of a technique, so this frees it to think about higher-level tactics and strategy in a match,

When you get to intermediate level you'll start developing an appreciation for how your BJJ has to adapt to deal with different situations and opponents. If your technique just doesn't work on a certain opponent then you'll have other techniques to use instead.

At the same time, your body is adapting to the physical challenges of BJJ, and is getting stronger and faster. You can now grapple 10 times longer than you ever thought possible when you started.

Every practitioner, student and instructor brings a unique set of skills and knowledge to the table. That's why the top BJJ competitors and MMA fighters cross train at different schools and learn from different instructors! And that's also why I've brought together eleven other experts contribute to this book.

The contributors have a wide range martial arts background and life experience, but we are all united in our love for Brazilian Jiu-jitsu and grappling. Furthermore we all believe that you can make the jump to the next level in Brazilian Jiu-jitsu. I hope you enjoy reading this book and come away with something that directly helps you.

Sincerely

Stephan Kesting

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Five Tips for Martial Artists Crossing Over to Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu

by Roy Dean

Coming from a background in traditional martial arts, I know how humbling and exciting it is to strap on a new white belt. Here are some recommendations for experienced martial artists stepping on the mat to explore the world of Brazilian Jiu-jitsu.

1) Be patient with yourself.

Many people walk into their first BJJ class with unrealistic expectations. Expect to tap, and to learn! You may advance quickly, but don't despair if you grow at a normal rate. Some of the most talented individuals get surpassed in time by those more consistent in their efforts. Dedication means going to train even when you may not perceive the progress in your game. It takes time. The trick is learning to enjoy the journey itself.

2) Realize that your previous training is not wasted!

If you're a skilled kicker, all the power and dexterity you've gained in your earlier training can be applied in BJJ – just not right away. You'll have to learn some other skills, like escaping sidemount, in order to keep a good position to attack and put those legs to use. Only if your opponent is in your closed or open guard can you snap into armlocks and triangles. All your skills will eventually merge, but only if you train long enough to sew up these segments of your ground game.

3) Relax. Go slow. Feel it out during sparring.

You are not defending the art you've already trained in. You are learning a new art, so act appropriately. Be the empty cup. Every time you tap, observe how they got you. In time, you'll be able to reproduce the same sequence of movements that led to that tap! Also in time, you'll know when your opponent is going to make a move, by reading his pressure.

Learn to relax and feel with your entire body (hands, elbows, knees, hips, head and feet) as early as you can. Sensitivity is closely linked with timing. Both are critical to skill development.



4) You've been a student before. Take advantage of this.

You know how to train, so delve into the realm of repetitions early. Get started right away and program your body with the movements you need to learn in order to advance. Breakfalls, shrimping, bridging, and positional escapes should be on the training menu. Tackle this now and you'll thank me later.

5) Enjoy the differences.

BJJ training offers tremendous freedom in comparison to many traditional martial arts.

Some Brazilian Jiu-jitsu academies are laid back and less punctual than Japanese dojos. In many BJJ schools you can wear a gi that's any color, and have a freedom with patches to snaz it up as you wish. The technical palette of BJJ is also very rich. New techniques come to life as the game evolves and the art spreads around the globe.

It's a good time to train!



Roy Dean has black belt rank in Brazilian Jiu-jitsu, Judo, Aikido, and Seibukan Jujutsu. His school is a friendly, safe and controlled enviroment for learning martial arts, and is located in Bend, Oregon. His site is www.RoyDeanAcademy.com.



The Beginning of Your Journey in Brazilian Jiu Jitsu

By Roy Harris

Each year, hundreds of new students begin their journey in Brazilian Jiu Jitsu. Many of them start off by learning all kinds of new and exciting techniques. Some start off by learning cool things like the flying arm bar or omo plata techniques. Others begin by learning simpler techniques such as a spinning arm lock or triangle choke from the guard. And still others begin by learning some escapes from headlocks and bear hugs.

While all of this training is good (to some extent), if the student is not given an understanding as to where these techniques fit into the whole scheme of things, he or she will be left wondering "How should I progress or where should I begin my journey in Brazilian Jiu Jitsu?" So, in this short article, I will give you some ideas on where you should focus your training.

For starters, I believe your training ("learning" and "practicing") should mimic your sparring. Consider the following:

When sparring, most practitioners of Brazilian Jiu Jitsu (those who wear a white, blue or purple belt) spend the majority of their time jockeying for control or position. Therefore, when a person trains their groundwork in Brazilian Jiu Jitsu, most of their time should be spent working on jockeying for control or position. Does this make sense?

Let me say this another way:

If you spend the majority of your time jockeying back and forth for control when you spar, but yet you spend the majority of your training time learning cool and interesting submissions, how applicable will your training be to your sparring? In other words, if you cannot escape from vulnerable positions, if you are forced onto your back like many beginners and cannot control an opponent from inside your guard, but yet you haven't trained these areas adequately, how on earth do you think your learning and practicing of submissions will apply to your sparring sessions?

Having said that, can you now see how spending large portions of time on unimportant areas is really a waste of time? (NOTE: I'm not saying a student should NEVER learn cool and interesting submissions. Rather, I'm saying "The training of cool and interesting submissions is an unimportant area for beginners." Does this make sense?)



So, where should a beginner spend most of their training time? I believe the answer is simple:

A beginner should spend most of their training time on the things that matter most. What are those things that matter most? Two things:

1. Fundamental movements.
2. Basic techniques.

Here are some fundamental movements that will lay a solid foundation to your game:

1. Bridge.
2. Shrimping / Snakey movement.
3. Go to your knees.
4. Stand up in base.
5. Roll over your shoulder.

These fundamental movements are found within your basic techniques!

Here are some ideas on "basic techniques" that will lay a solid foundation to your game:

1. Two or three simple, high percentage, bridge and roll escapes.
2. Two or three simple, high percentage replace the guard escapes.
3. Two or three simple, high percentage sweeps and reversals.
4. Two or three simple, high percentage guard passes.
5. Two or three simple, high percentage control holds from the top.
6. Bent arm lock submissions (Paintbrush and Kimura).
7. Bare arm guillotine chokes (Arm in and Arm out guillotine chokes).

So, your foundation in Jiu Jitsu can be built on fourteen to nineteen techniques! Does that sound doable? Do you think you can accomplish this in 18 to 24 months of consistent training? I think you can!

Now, please know that as a fourth degree black belt in Brazilian Jiu Jitsu, my entire game is built around thirty-eight techniques! That's right, when I grapple with people all across this planet, from California to Germany, and from Indonesia to Peru, I use less than forty techniques! It doesn't matter what the color of their belt is.



To illustrate this point, allow me to share an interesting experience with you:

Several years ago, a brown belt from another Jiu Jitsu school (someone with ten years of experience) came by my school to "test" himself. Instead of asking to learn from me, he kept telling me how he wanted to "spar" with me. Three or four times, I told him I wanted to teach him first. Still, he insisted on sparring with me. So, I told him, "OK, let's spar."

As soon as we shook hands, he morphed into a "Tasmanian Devil." He quickly pulled me into his guard and became a hurricane of explosive movements. He tried this technique and that technique. All I did was position my body to neutralize his attacks. I waited for a specific point in time, as well as a specific position of his body, and then I passed his guard with precision, tightness and slowness. In case you're wondering what technique I used to pass his guard, it was a basic knee over the leg guard pass.

After passing his guard, I held him down for a while, and then slowly applied the kimura arm lock on his left arm. He tapped the mat, paused for a couple of seconds, and then said, "Let's go again." So, we grappled again.

Wanna know what happened the second time? The third time? The fourth time? The fifth time? And the sixth time? I performed the exact same series of techniques:

1. I positioned myself inside his guard to neutralize his attack.
2. I waited for a specific point in time, as well as a specific body position before I began the process of passing his guard.
3. I passed his guard using the basic knee over the leg guard pass.
4. I held him down with a basic hold down (and a bit of my signature "Pressure").
5. I applied the basic bent arm lock to finish him.

Two points I'd like to make about this incident:

1. The person I grappled against had ten years of experience in Jiu Jitsu. At the time of the incident, I only had eleven years of experience. So, our experience levels were very similar. What was the difference? My basics were more polished than his!
2. Most of the time when I grapple with people, I let people into the game. Why did I "turn it up" with this guy? Because he came to me with a "hostile" agenda. No matter how I tried to be nice with him, he kept forcing his agenda on me. So, to make my point clear to him, I decided to perform the same techniques on him, over and over and over. I did so until he said, "Stop."



When our sparring had ended, I taught him some details of the basics – things he had never seen before. At the end of our lesson, I told him I had another person coming in for a lesson and that I needed to take care of some things in my office. He said OK and I went to my office to work.

Twenty minutes later, my next lesson came in. I escorted him into the training area and told him to warm up. When I got to the training area, the brown belt was still sitting on the mat. I walked up to him and asked, "Are you OK?" He replied, "Yeah. I'm just sitting here thinking about what you did to me. No one has ever made me feel like that before. Not even my instructor." We talked for a bit. Then I told him I needed to get to my next lesson. He shook my hand and walked out of the training area.

Sixty minutes later, I finished my second lesson of the day. I was walking towards my office when I noticed someone was sitting in the reception area of my academy. I thought it was a prospective student. However, as I got closer, I saw it was the brown belt from the other school. He was sitting in a chair, staring at the carpet. I asked him if he was OK, and he replied, "Yeah! I just can't get over what you did to me in my lesson. You made me feel like a blue belt. You passed my guard using the same techniques, and you tapped me with the same submission every time. I knew what you were trying to do, but I couldn't stop you. No one has ever made me feel this way. So I'm trying to figure out what you did."

To make a long story short, I explained to him the importance of having a solid foundation in the basics. My words seemed to go in one ear and out the other. He shook my hand and walked out the door. I never saw him again.

So, now that you have begun (or are about to begin) your journey in Brazilian Jiu Jitsu, what are you going to focus on? I hope it will be your fundamental movements and your basic techniques!

Good training to you,



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In addition to teaching students at his own school he has taught over three-hundred (300) seminars in eighteen (18) countries around the world. He has also worked with many different law enforcement and military agencies, including the US Marine Corp and the Navy Seals.



Seven Supercoach Strategies

(Share Your BJJ More Effectively)

by John Will

What makes a great instructor? What is it that sets some of the world's best instructors and coaches apart from the rest. I believe that there are certain principles and teaching strategies, and even personal belief systems that we can look at to help bring us closer to the ideal model of the Supercoach. Let me share some of my thoughts with you.

Please note though: the following thoughts are expressed in no particular order. Read through and take what you find to be of interest. If these principles are valid for coaching then they can also be applied by the average student to his own learning process.

First Principle: The 90/90 Rule:

To put it most simply; I believe that for 90 percent of the time, we should teach and instruct the student to prepare for what happens 90 percent of the time. Time is simply too valuable to be spending equal amount of it in training everything; besides, we simply cannot do this; there is too much to be done!

As in investments of any sort, the investment should be spread across several areas (diversification) in order to better our overall return and minimize our losses in any one area. The same goes for training. We all, to some degree or another, have a training-spread. We do some of this, some of that, etc.

To be more effective though, we need to dedicate more time to the situations and techniques that will come up regularly and less time to those situations and techniques that only occasionally pop their heads up. Eg: Spend lots of time dealing with a big, 'looping overhand right', and less time dealing with 'the way an old lady may come at you with an umbrella'.

I also take this principle a little further.

Often, rather than practicing an entire move or technique, say, 100 times; I will practice the bit that makes or breaks it (the most important bit) 90 times, and then the whole thing – say 20 times. This is simply more efficient and often more effective. Sometimes, taking a 'takedown' or 'finish' all the way through to its conclusion just wastes so much time that we only end up doing a few repetitions. Do more of 'the bit that counts'.



Second Principle: Build Rapport

You can have the best information in the world; but if the student is not listening to you, then nothing is achieved.

If I am teaching the military, I will wear army fatigues, and not a martial arts uniform. I will do enough research, depending on the group I am instructing, to know what they are about, and as best I can, be able to understand and use their particular jargon. If you are teaching children, get down and talk to them at their level – eye to eye.

People relate best to their own – their peers – so you need to ‘fit in’ and develop rapport before you begin to deliver the information. Fit in, build rapport, which builds trust, which makes their minds more receptive to the information.

A final note on building trust – a big secret in fact; build trust by making small promises and keeping them. If you tell the student that you will send them that e-mail or post the that book – then make damn well make sure you do it!

Third Principle: A.D.A.P.T – Analyse, Drill And Pressure Test

This is a basic principle that I use daily to further develop new techniques and strategies. It really fits into the Research and Development side of the equation. But it does promote one of the most essential traits of the excellent coach – the act of ‘thinking’ and being ‘observational’.

By analysing technique we become more cognizant of how that technique works; we deepen our understanding of the leverage, the mechanics and the timing involved in the technique.

By drilling it we develop the muscle-memory needed to execute it under duress.

Then by looking at how the opponent reacts as we pressure-test the technique, we learn what to expect from him, and ultimately this allows us to develop effective and realistic combinations.

When I am teaching seminars, I often just finish instructing the group in a technique when someone ask ‘how do I counter that?’ or ‘what’s the defence to that move?’. Usually I don't show them the counter to the move (though there are a few special circumstances when I break my own rule). Next I will discuss why I don't usually give that student what he or she is asking for....



Fourth Principle: Whisper the Counter

If we instruct the class in a technique, and then in the same breath, teach them the counter; it becomes highly unlikely that anyone will bother to try the technique when they wrestle or spar because they all know that everyone else knows how to counter or stop it. So both parties lose out.

The protagonists lose out because they are not likely to even try the move; and the defenders lose out because if no-one is trying the move, then no-one will develop the good counter.

So my basic rule-of-thumb is 'teach the technique and whisper the counter'.

In other words, I will introduce the counter gradually, over time, after some people have successfully tried the technique and are 'invested' in it. I will introduce the counter 'organically' (slowly) so that the students are not inclined to give up the technique just because others are beginning to thwart it. Now they will instead, develop a counter to the counter – and we have organic/Darwinian growth and development.

Fifth Principle: Looking Good and Going Nowhere

Keep an eye open for this problem – it's an easy trap to fall into. I have been victim many times myself. In other words, always be prepared to look foolish – don't be so worried about 'keeping up appearances' and 'looking good' that you stop taking risks and trying new things.

A lot of what we are doing is about exploration, about trial and error, and that means giving it a go, failing, and then learning from that failure. Learning to love failure is one of the keys to becoming highly successful. How many times did Thomas Edison try to build a light bulb before he got it right?

This is a very important part of learning and achieving excellence; we need to embrace failure for what it really is; another step closer to achieving our goals. This is a very tough one for martial artists!



Sixth Principle: Process, not Goal

Rather than fixating on the goal you want to achieve, learn to embrace the ‘process’ of ‘getting there’. In other words; it’s the journey, not the destination, that is ultimately the most important thing. Immerse yourself in the process and the goal will manifest itself.

I remember when I had my first weeks coaching in rock-climbing; I hired Australia’s best climber at the time, Malcolm Matheson, and had him take myself and a buddy out for a week of intense climbing. On the first day, we got to a climb (several hundred feet high) but very, very easy foot and handholds (a ladder really). I was standing there looking up at the top of this highly scary climb, and I said to Malcolm, ‘I don’t mean to tell you your business but shouldn’t we start on something a little easier?’ He replied ‘What are you looking up there for? I just want you to get three feet off the ground.’

I laughed, felt foolish, and so climbed easily up the first meter or so (a four year old could have done it) – as I turned to tell him how easy it was, he said to me “good, now repeat!”

The lesson to be learned that day was simple; don’t be stuck staring at the goal you want to achieve, just immerse yourself in the process instead. This is fundamental to the concept of high art!

Principle 7: Make Fine Distinctions

If we are to master anything, we need to learn to make many fine distinctions.

For example; an important distinction that serious fighters and martial artists need to learn at a fairly early stage is the difference between discomfort and injury. Many times, especially when students are new to training, they are uncomfortable and mistake this feeling for ‘being injured’ – now they stop training or begin to shy away from learning as they are too distracted by what they are experiencing to properly engage their mind.

The finer the distinctions we make, the better understanding we have.



Eskimo's have many, many different words to describe 'snow' – the really get it, they understand it; of course, they need to, as their lives depend on having a deep and highly personal relationship with snow! Most people, have only one word for it; they don't need to have more than one word for it because their lives do not depend on a deep understanding of it.

The closer we look at things, the more we study things, the deeper our understanding becomes. Learn to make fine distinctions about things. Learn to distinguish between fact and opinion for example. Is the belief we have about a technique or training method really based on fact? Or is it just someone's opinion? Fine distinctions!

Conclusion

The above are only a few of the many pointers that may help in the development of good teaching attributes. They are general principles and may be readily applied to both stand-up and grappling classes.

There are many traits that go together to make up the total teaching package. Good communication skills (both verbal and non-verbal), the ability to tap into more than one of the students 'learning systems', the way the class is structured, logical and meaningful explanation of techniques and strategies, motivational factors, etc.

However, I consider the abovementioned Seven Principles to be of prime importance when it comes to the understanding and further development of the art of teaching. I hope you find some of these few pointers to be useful.



John Will heads Australasia's largest BJJ organization, and teaches more than 50 seminars a year to spread the art. He also produces a BJJ DVD curriculum available at www.bjjamerica.com. His personal blog can be found at www.bjj-australia.blogspot.com



Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu in the Real World

By Marcus Soares (with Stephan Kesting)

Stephan Kesting: So we're here with the seventh degree black belt, Marcus Soares, whose been teaching Brazilian Jiu-jitsu for many decades and has taught thousands of people. So why do you think Jiu-jitsu is the best art for self-defense?

Marcus Soares: I think it is very important when someone gets attacked, that the attacker cannot surprise him. If you know what you can expect from your opponent, you're going to be very calm and be able to take care of the situation.

Stephan Kesting: Okay, but then why do some people say in the UFC that more fights end with knock outs than they do with submissions; and of course, submissions are Brazilian Jiu-jitsu specialties, so why not train boxing, or kickboxing, or Muay Thai?

Marcus Soares: So the name explains it, right? Mixed martial arts. You need to know a little bit .of everything; you need to know how to strike, how to take people down and how to fight on the ground. If you're not a striker, then you need to learn how to keep out of your opponent's range during a fight so you don't give him a chance to strike you.

And when you see the best boxers fight, how easily they clinch their opponents, because if you clinch your opponent, the striking will have no more effect. I think, if a guy just trains in Jiu-jitsu, and if he practices how to keep the distance during the fight, and is trained to clinch the opponent, then opponent won't have too much chance to strike him.

Stephan Kesting: Well, what if your goal is self-defense rather than mixed martial arts, would you still recommend Jiu-jitsu?

Marcus Soares: I recommend Jiu-jitsu for self-defense. Many people don't know this, but Jiu-jitsu has a complete program of self-defense against any kind of attack; if a guy holds your hand and tries to punch you, tries to kick you, tries to push-kick you, tries to hold you over your arms, under your arms, headlock, rear neck chokes, whatever. Any way that he tries to hold you, we have a way to escape



If the striker doesn't have space to punch or kick, then it's over for him! In Jiu-jitsu, we train you to neutralize these types of attacks, and of course, bring the fight to the ground and submit our opponents.

I believe that the only technique that you can kill the opponent with is the choke. If you choke someone and you keep the choke, for sure he's going to the cemetery.

Stephan Kesting: Okay, well just to jump back a second, you were saying bring the fight to the ground, but many Jiu-jitsu clubs don't even train any kind of takedowns; they only start on the knees.

Marcus Soares: I know, but I that is wrong because takedowns are part of Jiu-jitsu. In my style, I prefer my students fight on the top. So to fight on the top, you need to know how to take the guy down.

I teach a little bit of takedowns to my students until, at least, they learn how to avoid the takedowns, and be patient during the fight. I know that when you compete in Jiu-jitsu today, 90 percent of your opponents will jump to the guard and they save the work for you.

Stephan Kesting: Some people say that Jiu-jitsu is no good because grappling doesn't work against multiple attackers.

Marcus: First of all, if someone can say he can fight a lot of people, an 'army', he's just a liar. If you put any professional fighter in the ring to fight two guys at the same time, I can guarantee you nobody's going to succeed. Nobody is that fast, you know.

Stephan Kesting: Okay. So you say it's a problem for all martial arts and not just Jiu-jitsu?

Marcus Soares: Yes, exactly.. In my opinion, if there is more than one guy, then those guys are usually cowards, because real men fight one guy against one guy. Since they are cowards, they will get scared very easily.

So if multiple guys try to attack you, and if you decided to choose one and run over to the guy and choke him out; put the guy to sleep, I can guarantee you, the other attackers, are going to be scared and they are going to run away.



I know because this happened to me many times in Brazil in street fights. They were easy fights, you understand?

Stephan Kesting: So you used the choke in these fights in Brazil and not the arm lock, say, or the leg lock...

Marcus Soares: Exactly. If you're going to fight on the street, you have to put the guy out of action. If you break someone's arm, he still can fight. If you put the guy to sleep, my friend, it's all over – no more, you know.

Stephan Kesting: Okay. So if someone's training in Brazilian Jiu-jitsu just for sport, do you think that they should sometimes be training with a bit of punching just to become familiar with that range?

Marcus Soares: In Brazil, the young people fight more on the street then, I believe, than here in North America. In my club over there, people used it to practice a little bit, what we call free-style – without the gear. We were allowed to strike the guys, but just with open hand.

The intention is not to hurt anybody, but make the student not be afraid against the strikes and know how to defend themselves. So this kind of training used to be very common there, but here, we don't do this because I train the guys more for sport. On the other hand, the times that my students from here have been attacked on the street, they took care of that situation very well.

Stephan Kesting: Could you talk a little bit more about the days back in Brazil. Did you ever have guys coming in to want to fight at the school?

Marcus Soares: In the '70s, when I started to practice Jiu-jitsu in Brazil, Karate and Judo used to be more popular – I don't know why, maybe it was because people jiu-jitsu was a little bit expensive.

But many times, people didn't believe in Jiu-jitsu, so they decided to come to the school and check it out, to see if our martial art was really good. I remember guys wanted us to fight the challengers, you know, but we are not allowed to strike the guys. They could strike us, we could just clinch the guy, take him down and control the guy, you know, even if we put some submission, do it very light, don't put nobody to sleep or break arm, or nothing like that – just to prove things to the guy.



Some guys, they still want to go one more time, one more time, you know. So we let the guys play however many times they want, but I can tell you the average of those kinds of challenges used to be under 30 seconds.

Stephan Kesting: Okay. You talked a little bit about how the choke is better than the other submissions in self-defense, what about positions? Are there any positions on the ground that might be great for Jiu-jitsu in tournaments but are not so effective on the street or in mixed martial arts?

Marcus Soares: Yeah. If you're going to fight on the street, the intention, I think, is to control your opponent. Of course, you can control the guy better if you are on the top and are very aggressive.

If you go to the Discovery Channel, and see an the animal that is hunting; you can see the animals take the other animal down, control the animal from the top, take control, and go for the kill on the neck. They don't go for the legs, they don't go anywhere, they go to the neck.

So I think the real fighter should follow the same instincts that the animals use to hunt, and when you fight, you should do exactly the same. You go to the neck because you'll really put the guy out of action when you put the opponent to sleep.

Stephan Kesting: Okay. Are there any other self-defense tips you'd like to talk about?

Marcus Soares: Yes! In fights, everything is very subjective because you never know what the opponent is going to try to do against you. So I think you have to be ready to expect anything. They might throw a kick, a punch, or try to clinch, or try to do a flying knee, or a flying arm lock, or pull a knife out.

You have to be calm; that is the most important thing. Be calm and see what your opponent is going to do next. You have to control him- don't give any space for him, don't give him a chance to attack you.

There are bullies in the world. You have guys upset that their girlfriend left them for another guy. In schools - many things can happen when you are a kid, and many cowardly kids like to beat up other kids that are smaller or skinnier than them. I never liked this kind of abuse. I think nobody has the right to use power against weaker opponents. I think this kind of thing just shows you are a coward.



So I try to defend, not only my family, but also my friends. Sometimes you go to the nightclub, some people are drunk, you know, they try to create problems; they want to test you, whatever.

Many people just go out to have a fight, they don't have any talent to find the girls, so they're going to try to pick a fight to try to impress the girls, something like that. I've found some kinds of people like that on my way, you know, and I gave some lessons.

Stephan Kesting: I heard a little story about you getting in a scuffle in downtown Vancouver a few years ago...

Marcus Soares: Oh, this – I was just driving my car, I stopped my car at the stop light, and beside my car there was a bike that had the front wheel locked up. So this guy came, he opened the front wheel of the bike from the rest of the bike, left the front wheel locked and put the bike on his shoulder and started to walk, like he was the owner of the bike.

This, you know, shocked me a little bit because of how calm this guy was when he did this. Usually you are a little bit scared when you're going to steal something, but the guy came, sat right down, you know, opened the bike, put it on his shoulder and kept walking, you know, like nothing is going to happen to him.

So I saw this happen and I thought that it wasn't nice of him, you know, to do something like this, so I parked my car and I started to follow the guy. He started to walk really fast, because I was following him and suddenly I told him to leave the bike, and the guy said, "Shut up, this is my bike." So I push the guy to make him stop, but the guy fell over the bike, and the bike was between his body and the floor and one of his arms was trapped. So right away, I put my knee on his spine and control his other arm that's free and told someone else to call the police.

Anyway, the guy started to ask me to let him go, so I told him to shut up. If I had let him go he could fight and cause more trouble. Anyway, and the guy told me, " You can beat me up, but please let me go and I won't take the bike."

After that, the police came and, and the police officers were impressed how I controlled the guy, so I gave my card to the cop.



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I think that the cops here (in North America) are very scared and not very well prepared. I sometimes see one cop wait for another to help, or even situations where five cops are needed to dominate one person here. So they are not ready; they don't feel confident to deal with the problems.

Stephan Kesting: What should someone just starting out in BJJ concentrate on?

Marcus Soares: When starting Brazilian Jiu-jitsu, you have to concentrate on properly learning the basic curriculum. Every instructor has a different way to teach. I created a curriculum to teach to my students, to make it easy for them to understand the techniques.

When you go to school, you start by learning how to count 1 to 10, then go from 10 to 100, 100 to 1,000, and after that, how to add, subtract, multiply and divide. You need to learn, step by step.

Jiu-jitsu is exactly like this. So I like to work a lot with the on balance, the space you give to the opponent, how to control the hips of the opponent, how not to let give your opponent any leverage. You need to learn how to control your opponent in all the different positions.

And of course, you need learn the escapes from all those positions and how to defend against the submissions too, because if you tap, the fight is over. So you need to know how to defend first and to attack the guy, you need to know how to stabilize in the position that you are going to start to attack the opponent.

Stephan Kesting: What do you think is the common mistakes that beginners make?

Marcus Soares: The biggest that beginners make is to be impatient. They want to learn the submissions right away. It's like if to go to school, and you want to be a doctor, and you want to do the surgery right away but you don't even know what you're going to find inside the human body. They want to learn right away how to submit, how to do this, how to do that; they need to be patient.

You need a lot of coordination for Jiu-jitsu. If you're going to try to do a sweep, you have to use different muscles of your body at the same time, and if you don't have the coordination, it is very hard to catch the timing to do the technique. I think the best way to improve this, is make the student repeat it many times.



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Stephan Kesting: So that's if you have a clumsy or an uncoordinated student.

Marcus Soares: Yes. Once again, you need to be patient and repeat it many times because I think the human body is incredible and can adapt to almost everything. The only way I think it's going to help them to improve their coordination, is to repeat the movement many times.

Stephan Kesting: What about older students? People who are getting into Jiu-jitsu at age 40 or 50?

Marcus Soares: Of course, when you go to a martial arts school, you're going to find people of different age, different shapes, different conditioning, so I think the instructor has to try to balance the average of the group that he is working, and make the kind of work that everybody can follow. It's very important to the students with more experience to help the beginners too.

In my class, for example, the students do 30 minutes of warm-up and conditioning to start. Even the guys who've trained with me for 10 years have a hard time to do the complete warm-up and do everything perfectly. So, if someone just arrived in the school, the guy is going to have a problem, you know.

Stephan Kesting: Or if he's 50 years old...

Marcus Soares: Yes, exactly. But he can start by making his goal to complete 10 percent of the warm-up, then, one month later, can try to do 20 percent, and you know, every month later, the guy will be in better condition. So again, it is important to be patient. He can't think, "Oh, everybody can do this way better than me." If you keep training, of course you're going to improve.



Marcus Soares is an 8th degree Carlson Gracie Black Belt, and is based in Vancouver Canada. His most famous students include Ricardo de la Riva, Marcus 'Conan' Silvera, and Denis Kang. Find out more at www.marcussoares.com



Hoist Up Your Sail!

How to Challenge the Mind to Release the Body
by Martin Rooney

“Accept challenges, so that you may feel the exhilaration of victory.” – George S. Patton

Although Brazilian Jiu Jitsu is rapidly growing in popularity around the world, this 100 year old art is relatively young. Over the last few decades, we have seen some incredible changes during this sport’s fast evolution. Due to the current high level of Jiu Jitsu, people often ask if I believe the sport “is as good as it will get” or “if fighters are at the highest level achievable.” My answer is simple: “Not even close.”

I put this answer to the test when I accepted a great challenge last month in Helsinki, Finland. Helsinki was where I held my first International Training for Warriors seminar. This was an amazing experience, not just because of the information that was delivered, but also the personal growth I made as a result of the event. The months I spent preparing to present 3 days worth of material (teaching for over 10 hours a day) forced me to challenge what I believed about training for combat. Over the 3 days I lectured and then physically trained over 250 attendees in these beliefs. This was physically and mentally taxing, but in the end, I found that when there is great effort and exploration, there is always accomplishment and enlightenment.

“The Beginning of Philosophy . . . is a consciousness of your own weakness and inability in necessary things.” – Epictetus

Even though the Finnish attendees may have thought that the exercises were the most valuable aspect of the seminars, I strongly disagree. During my ten years of training fighters I have noticed that, regardless of technical prowess, most fighters have similar areas of physical weakness. My preparation helped me conclude that it is not a physical limitation that has led to these weaknesses, but a mental one. These fighters all had errors in their training philosophy that led to subsequent physical limitations, yet failed to see them.

My most important mission in Helsinki, therefore, was to change every attendee’s philosophy about training. Without a philosophical change, all the exercises in the world might not make any of these athletes better.



Helsinki is a city on the water and has a beautiful harbor. To use an example for the group, I described all our exercises and drills as a sailboat. I then described their philosophy, or what would guide and control the direction of the boat, as the sail. You see, without the right philosophy, you can have all the tools and still either go in the wrong direction or even nowhere at all. Just as this is true in life and business, having an improper sail set in training is no different.

“It is not the answer that enlightens, but the question.” – Decouvertes

My question to you is, “Do you even have a sail and if you do, is it up?” Success in Jiu Jitsu today depends on a high level of both mental and physical attributes. My new book, Training for Warriors takes this physical side of training head on by delivering over 350 exercises. This article will take a step back from just delivering workouts and once again challenge your underlying philosophy.

Understanding yourself, your plan and your direction will always leave you feeling more confident about your training program. Without understanding what it is you stand for, you run an increased risk to fall for anything.

“All philosophy lies in two words, sustain and abstain.” – Epictetus

Below are 10 common problems in training philosophy and the key or solution to correcting each one of them. Your challenge is to ask yourself how many of these errors you should stop performing and how many correct choices you are prepared to maintain. If you really want to realize improvement in both Jiu Jitsu and personal fitness, you must first fix the problems in your philosophy before anything else.

Identifying and solving these problems will give you a better chance to increase performance, decrease injury and dominate the competition that is unwilling to raise a new sail and make a change.

Problem #1 “I know what I need to know about training”

The day you choose to stop learning is the day you stop growing. Keep the white belt in your mind and remember it is not what you know, but what you don’t know you don’t know that can lead to ultimate success.

Solution: Challenge yourself to get out of your comfort zone and constantly seek out new information.



Problem #2 “I work my muscles enough in technical training”

A stronger, faster fighter with better endurance and confidence is a more dangerous fighter. You cannot achieve these gains with technical work alone.

Solution: If you aren't strength and speed training, you'd better start.

Problem #3 “I like doing what I am good at”

The enemy of being great is being good. If you do what you always did, you will get what you always got. Don't ignore your weaknesses because they are an opportunity to turn a limitation into an advantage.

Solution: Instead of only training what you are good at, also get great at what you are not good at.

Problem #4 “I am following fighter X's world-class program”

Cramming the square peg into the round hole will not work in training. What works for one fighter, may not work for you. Like a building with bad foundation, the fighter with no base will eventually fall.

Solution: Your program must address your individual needs and work on your physical foundation.

Problem #5 “I only train when I have a competition coming up”

Training is an all-year process and you can't rush physiology. Without consistent training, too much emphasis is placed on immediate needs like cardio instead of building up muscular weaknesses over time.

Solution: Commit yourself to an all-year training and nutrition program.

Problem #6 “I like to do the fancy stuff”

You cannot put on your tie before you put on your shirt. Don't be lured into working on advanced training before you have completed the basics. You may have to take a few steps backward to eventually take many steps forward.



Problem #7 “I believe big is better”

Don't spend too much time on the bigger muscles and areas of the body and forget about the smaller frontal plane and stabilizing muscles. Without balance around your joints, a preventable injury could be right around the corner.

Solution: Work the feet, rotator cuff, hip abductors, hip adductors and the neck.

Problem #8 “I choose quantity over quality”

Since Jiu Jitsu can be demanding, many athletes believe that is what every workout should be too. Many fighters are now placing too much emphasis on circuit training instead of addressing weaknesses.

Solution: Your workout should be measured in results, not difficulty.

Problem #9 “If I train hard, I can eat what I want”

There is never an excuse for putting the wrong food in your body. Whether you are lean or not, the food you put in your body is still the fuel you have to work with.

Solution: Regardless of your training regimen, always put the best food in your body.

Problem #10 “I'll have enough time to rest when I'm dead”

Recovery is the most important piece to first fit into your training. Without recovery, the gains from your training will not be completely realized.

Solution: Make sure there is adequate physical and mental recovery after every training session.

“Twenty years from now you will be more disappointed by the things you didn't do than by the ones you did do. So throw off the bowlines. Sail away from the safe harbor. Catch the trade winds in your sails. Explore. Dream. Discover.” Mark Twain



Is YOUR Sail Up?

Everyone has a boat floating in the sea of life. Some sails are up and many sails are down. Do you have your sail raised and is it taking you in the direction you want to go? Have you achieved all of your personal goals? Are you where you want to be in sport and life? If the answer to these questions is “no” or “not yet”, then it is an obvious time for change.

Change in life is inevitable. It is not the changes in life that decide our destiny, but how we respond to those changes when they become necessary. To resist change is to stay where you are or even go backward. To accept change may still leave you lagging behind the competition. Only by embracing change and even seeking change out, will you be pushing your personal limits. Now get to work warriors!



Martin Rooney is the author of 'Training for Warriors: the Ultimate Mixed Martial Arts Workout' and is director of the Parisi Speed School and conditioning coach for Team Renzo Gracie. He has trained champion fighters for the ADCC, UFC, IFL, Pride and Olympics. His “Training for Warriors” blog and warrior community are at www.trainingforwarriors.com.



A NEW AND CONCEPTUAL APPROACH TO STRENGTH AND CONDITIONING FOR COMBAT ATHLETES

By Peter Roberts and Krista Scott-Dixon

There are lots of effective ways to improve your strength and conditioning for grappling competition. Unfortunately, there are many more ineffective ways of trying to accomplish the same objective.

In our research and experience working with athletes, we have found that all highly effective strength and conditioning regimes share some key elements and principles. This article will outline those areas and offer practical suggestions on how to incorporate them into your training.

Train How You Move

This is a fairly simple concept, but it is surprising how many people seem to ignore it.

Think about the basic movements you use in grappling. You need to be able to push, pull, extend your hips, rotate your body, and so on. All of these movements are done while the entire body is engaged. For example, you may need to “frame” against an opponent (pushing) while rotating your body underneath to escape. You may need to pull them into you to control their posture and then raise your hips to finish a submission.

We should therefore train our body as an entire system, and train the basic movement patterns it uses during a match. This means you should train what are called universal muscle recruitment patterns.

In order to execute a takedown or bridge into an opponent, your body uses many muscles. These groups of muscles are often called kinetic chains. Some, which we might call stabilizers, play a supportive role and hold your body steady. Other muscles, which we might call prime movers, drive the intended action by extending or flexing certain body parts.

Let's take the example of a hip bump sweep. You may rely on the muscles of your torso to keep your midsection rigid while your hips, legs and arms move and your body turns over. In this case, your abs, obliques and much of your spinal muscles are stabilizers that prevent your torso from crumpling as your body rotates.

Other muscles also contract to keep you stuck to your opponent's body as you move: your legs may grip their sides and your hand may grip their wrist, or your tricep may clamp their upper arm. In contrast, your hips are the prime movers here – it's their explosive extension that flings your opponent's body over.



For each type of movement, your body needs to recruit these various muscles in a certain pattern. This pattern depends on what action you want to do; and how much force you have to exert to do it.

Some muscles need to be activated violently, others need only be activated minimally. Even if the actions look similar, the load you're trying to move will change the pattern of muscle recruitment. Throwing a frisbee is different than throwing a 5 pound discus, even though the movement looks similar. Most of us could throw a frisbee pretty far with only a flick of our wrist. Because a discus is heavier, you need to generate more force to do it, and so your body recruits the bigger muscles of the shoulder girdle, midsection, hips, and legs.

While some muscles, such as the abs and low back, are much more likely to be stabilizers than prime movers, there are no distinct "stabilizer muscles". Each muscle's role depends on the nature of the movement. For instance, when attempting a takedown your leg muscles may be prime movers; when resisting a takedown and trying to maintain balance, your leg muscles may act more as stabilizers.

The order in which muscles are engaged is also important for optimal movement. If you try to punch without recruiting your midsection and lower body for balance first, you'll fall over. If you try to punch without recruiting your hips first, your punch will have no power. (You may recall the old boxing adage to "punch from the belt".)

To be as efficient as possible, athletes need to train movement patterns that roughly mimic what they will be doing in sport. Otherwise the nervous system never learns how to properly and efficiently recruit the body's muscles. This is one reason why traditional bodybuilding routines, which focus on isolating (rather than integrating) muscle groups, often at slow speeds, are not optimal for athletic performance.

This doesn't mean that you should try to reproduce specific movements exactly with resistance. Using our example above, if your ultimate sport goal is to throw a frisbee, then you should not train by throwing a discus. Holding a dumbbell like a pencil won't improve your handwriting. Muscular recruitment for finely coordinated skills is tailored to the exact demands of these skills.

We have all had the experience of working with a new opponent who is much bigger or smaller than we are used to, and discovering that even our most familiar techniques feel "off". (Krista's note: I still remember joining a judo class full of men accustomed to throwing 200-lb opponents. As a woman half that size, I spent a lot of that class being airborne or having my face mashed into the mat! My training partners were skilled, but had not practiced the specific sequence of muscular recruitment required to safely throw a small opponent.)

As much as possible, train specific techniques in the exact way that you intend to use them. This is particularly true if you intend to compete against weight-matched opponents.



Exercise Selection

Thus, when you are evaluating movement patterns, you do not need to be overly specific. Simple, broad categories like push, pull, rotation, hip-extension dominant, and leg-extension dominant are sufficient. While there are almost infinite variations on these themes, the body as a single unit only moves in a relatively small number of general ways, and these straightforward groupings capture that fact. Plus, this makes it very easy to match movement patterns found in your sport with those in your strength and conditioning training.

When you're picking strength and conditioning exercises, just ask yourself: "Does this exercise use my entire body or does it isolate a very specific part of my body?" If it uses your entire body or at least several parts, that's a good sign. Then figure out if it roughly replicates anything found in your sport. If you need to shoot in on an opponent quickly, a squat or long-jump might be a good exercise to roughly mimic that movement. If you need torso rotation, check out cable wood chops.

Here is one quick tip: Almost all powerful athletic movement comes from the strong muscles of the legs and hips. If you want to figure out how to do something with more power, figure out a way to get the hips involved. In our book, we have an entire section explaining the basis of good athletic movement. Unfortunately we don't have the room to explain the various details and the roles of each of your body parts here, but know that the hips are always important in generating power with your body.

Conditioning Programming

Now that you have an idea about the kind of movements you should be training, you need to think about how best to build your conditioning. This is really about training your body's energy systems as effectively as possible. A basic understanding of the body's energy systems is useful, though not really necessary. But in general your training should reflect the demands of your sport.

In a match, for example, you go as hard as you can for between four to seven minutes with little or no rest. You should emulate this type of stimulus in your conditioning training. Workouts (excluding warm-up, cool down, skill work, etc.) should not usually last more than 20 minutes. During this time you should give maximum effort.

Despite the fact that matches are short and intense, many combat athletes spend time on long, relatively slow jogs for their training. Unfortunately, they are not making the best use of their time, and might even be damaging their own performance on the mats. There are a number of specific reasons why this is so, but for now just remember our mantra: train how you move. This applies to exercise choice as well as the kind of conditioning you require.

Your body will adapt to the specific demands you put on it. If you train to be slow, your body will adapt to be slow. If you train to go hard and be explosive, your body will adapt to that stimulus and improve in those areas.



Your body will adapt to the specific demands you put on it. If you train to be slow, your body will adapt to be slow. If you train to go hard and be explosive, your body will adapt to that stimulus and improve in those areas.

Quantify Your Fitness & Keep Track of Your Program

What can be measured can be improved. Thus it is absolutely essential to be able to record a number, time or score for each workout you do. This way, you can repeat the same workout several weeks later and compare your results. In a pure strength context, how this will work is fairly obvious. If you could lift more this week compared to last week, are you getting stronger.

When it comes to conditioning, there are two common ways of attaching a score to your work.

In the first case, you generate a time based on a conditioning circuit. You give yourself a fixed amount of work to do, and get it done as fast as possible. You can also play with rest intervals, where you might do one round of a circuit as fast as possible, record your time, then wait 2 minutes and do it again. An example of this kind of workout would be:

Complete six rounds as quickly as possible of:

- 10 sand-bag shoulders
- 15 burpees

Or

Complete each round as quickly as possible. Complete 5 rounds total:

- 10 deadlifts
- sprint 200 meters
- rest 3 minutes

A second method is giving yourself a fixed amount of time, and doing as much work as possible in that period. For instance:

Complete as many rounds as possible in 15 minutes:

- 10 sledge hammer tire hits per side
- 20 kettlebell swings

Or

As many rounds as possible in 4 minutes, for 4 rounds:

- 30 bodyweight squats
- 10 pull-ups



Record the details of each workout, including the weights you used, your time or score, and how you felt before, during and after the workout. This is an invaluable tool to track your progress, to look back and see what was working or what was not working. You can really develop a simple but sophisticated analysis of your training regime based on these records.

In fact, this is a wonderful idea for all of your training, including the skill training aspect of your sport. Record your repertoire of techniques, how they fit into your larger game plan, etc.

Ensure Continued Progress

Recording your workouts will also help to ensure continued progress and make it easier to meet a series of more challenging goals each week or month. You should constantly strive to get faster and stronger.

Review your training logs regularly, and note patterns. Did you get the results you wanted? If not, then you need to adjust things. If you did, then keep going or increase the challenge. A good training log will show areas that are not improving as quickly, and that therefore need more attention. It will also show you how hard you need to push to move beyond your current level of fitness to get to the next level.

A training log lets you make decisions based on objective evidence rather than our often fallible memories and perceptions. You may feel you are not progressing, until you review your training log and see that you have added 2% consistently to your output per week. After a few months, that really adds up.

If you are doing the same old routine all the time without varying the intensity, exercises, and/or workload, or without at least occasionally pushing past your comfort zone, you're probably not seeing very substantial or continual progress. Unless you believe that you've already reached your genetic potential for fitness (which in practice almost never happens), you probably need to adjust your program.

Rest, Recovery and Nutrition

Most athletes are good at training but poor at recovering. They want to train all the time, but don't eat or rest properly. Combat athletes in particular tend to think that more is always better, and that they can tough it out.

The most unfortunate instances of this problem are when an athlete comes to a competition overtrained and all of a sudden feels weak and tired much earlier than they should. At worst they end up with an injury that forces them to sit on the sidelines for weeks.



In reality, your body recovers, adapts to the training stress you've been applying, and grows stronger during the rest periods, not during the workouts. Without enough rest, recovery and adaptation does not happen. Eventually, you'll actually get weaker, your performance will decline, and you'll probably end up with one or more nagging injuries.

Rest is therefore critical to ensure continued success and avoid overtraining. Everyone has a different threshold beyond which they begin overtraining. This threshold is trainable, and you'll get better at recovery over time. Beginners cannot handle as much work as experienced athletes.

Recording your workout scores will help you know when you've overtrained, and when it is a good idea to take some extra time off or have a very light week. Finding just the right amount of training is a constant balancing act – especially for elite athletes – and it is a smart idea to have strategies in place to deal with this potentially problematic area. Too much or too little training will lead to less than optimal results.

Also remember that what happens outside the gym affects what happens inside the gym. Other mental, emotional and physical stressors such as work, relationships, illness and so forth also impact your ability to recover. Consider the total load of stress you may be carrying from all areas of your life – you may need to adjust your workouts to accommodate this.

Finally, a very quick word on nutrition: if you are eating garbage, your performance is going to suffer.

Just like rest, proper nutrition is absolutely critical to reaching your potential.

There are lots of ways to improve your diet, and most of these methods have to do with hormonal balance (controlling insulin levels and inflammation) and maximizing micro-nutrient density (eating foods that have lots of vitamins, minerals, phytochemicals and fibre relative to the number of calories), but the most simple advice is to just eat real food.

If it comes in a box or can, don't eat it.

If it is processed, stay away.

You don't need sugary sports drinks or supplements. You aren't running an ultramarathon in the Sahara. Stick primarily to fresh vegetables and lean meats, then fruits, nuts and seeds, then a few starchy foods like squash or sweet potatoes around the time of your workouts. It isn't rocket science, and intuitively we probably all know this.

Eat lots and lots and lots of vegetables. Then eat some more.



INTEGRATING SKILL TRAINING WITH STRENGTH AND CONDITIONING

Combining a demanding strength and conditioning program with a lot of sport training can be a difficult balance at the best of times. If you are training regularly, you need to seriously consider how much extra physical work you can handle. There are all kinds of factors that come into play here, from time management to your current fitness level, to your short-term and long-term goals.

For those new to intense physical training, we strongly recommend a ramp-up period before you begin a more comprehensive and arduous strength and conditioning program. In this phase, gradually increase the number of workouts you're doing each week, as well as the intensity of those workouts. Start out very conservatively to avoid injury or potential problems, and steadily advance from there.

During this initial phase, it is also critical to pay attention to your exercise form. Take the extra time to learn good movement mechanics, and start with light weight until you get it right.

Even though some of the more complex lifts take a while to perfect (and some weightlifting coaches would say that perfection never happens), developing proper technique is a great investment that will yield massive rewards. This will help you avoid injuries – which are a serious downer and disrupt your training and progress royally – and will get you using more efficient and powerful muscle recruitment patterns. This will translate directly to increased power not just in your strength and conditioning, but also in your grappling.

SUMMARY

1. For exercise selection, pick full-body movements that roughly emulate the various movements in your sport.
2. Use shorter duration and higher intensity workouts for conditioning.
3. Make sure that you can quantify your workouts and record all your results.
4. If continued progress stops, decide if you are overtraining or undertraining based on the notes in your workout log.
5. Pay attention to getting proper rest and eating real food. You probably need to eat a lot more vegetables, and while you're at it, stop eating any refined sugar.
6. Think of a way to integrate your sport training with your strength and conditioning. These need to be in sync and work together for best results. Your workout log can also be helpful here.
7. Always start off slow and take proper form very seriously. We can't emphasize this enough. Leave your ego outside.

(continued on next page)



UNLOCKING BJJ - TAKING YOUR GRAPPLING GAME TO THE NEXT LEVEL

Unfortunately there is only so much detail we can cover in such a short article. Hopefully this has given you a good overview of some of the most important concepts in designing a strength and conditioning program.



Peter Roberts is a graduate student and a strength and conditioning coach in Toronto, Canada. He trains clients out of CrossFit Toronto and has considerable experience with grapplers, MMA fighters and other combat athletes. He has spent the last two and a half years studying Judo and Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu. Currently he co-heads a project aimed at bringing a new approach to the strength and conditioning programming of combat athletes. It considers the widest number of training variables while remaining simple to utilize, and it elevates athletes' and coaches' understanding of the principle concepts involved so they can easily modify a training regime to fit any situation.



Dr. Krista Scott Dixon is the Research Director of the Healthy Food Bank, the Editor-in-Chief of Spezzatino magazine, and a strength and conditioning coach in Toronto, Canada. She runs the women's weight lifting site www.stumptuous.com. She's trained in boxing, Muay Thai, judo and BJJ.



A Glossary of Guards Part 1

The Closed Guard

By Stephan Kesting and Elliott Bayev
Principal Photography by Keith Haist

Originally published in Ultimate
Grappling Magazine



Introduction

Brazilian Jiu-jitsu terminology can be both confusing and intimidating to people beginning their grappling careers. Some martial arts – Kodokan Judo for example – have a central organizing body and relatively well-defined terminologies. Jiu-jitsu, however, is a young art that is constantly evolving and as a result, produces limitless new positions and variations.

Of all the positions, techniques and submissions in Brazilian Jiu-jitsu, the guard position has spawned the greatest amount of variations and terminology. There are many different guards: Closed Guard, Open Guard, Spider Guard, Half Guard, Butterfly Guard, de la Riva guard just to name a few. Furthermore, guard positions usually have further variation, depending on exactly how you grip with your hands and where you place your feet

It is important to recognize that there is no single superior method of guard, and also that all guards are not created equal for every environment. Some positions work best with the gi, others work with or without the gi, and the presence or absence of striking can completely change the value of a position. Certain positions are great for winning submission grappling tournaments, but may be very risky in a self defense or mixed martial art (MMA) context.

Ultimately the type of guard(s) you specialize in will depend on many things, including your physical attributes, your competitive environment and the style of your instructor. The purpose of these three articles is to provide you with a reference for some of the more common guards, to help you understand some of the terminology used in class, and maybe give you some ideas on how to develop your own game.



Basic Closed Guard



The Closed Guard used with a basic sleeve and lapel grip



With an overhooking lapel grip and wrist control



Keeping the opponent close by controlling an arm and the head



Using the Closed Guard to rest for a moment; not recommended for mixed martial arts (MMA)!



Basic Closed Guard (Continued)



Maintaining the Closed Guard against a standing opponent

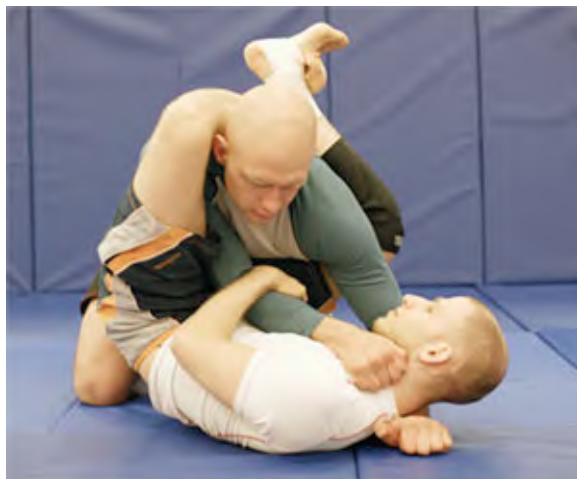
This is the style of guard most often taught to beginners, and it is still effective at the highest levels of competition. Like all Closed Guards, it locks your opponent between your legs, offering great control, preventing the opponent from improving position and providing you an opportunity to attack with sweeps and submissions.

A 'relaxed' position in the Closed Guard can be used for resting in BJJ or submission grappling, but it can get you very hurt in an MMA or self-defense scenario. If you use the Closed Guard to defend against strikes you **MUST** keep your opponent's head down, close to you, or he will have the distance and leverage to land some very damaging blows.

In a context that involves striking, if you simply can't break his posture then immediately switch to a form of Open Guard that keeps him away, out of striking distance.



High Guard



Trapping the opponent's right shoulder in the High Guard

The High Guard, also known as the Crooked Guard or Climbing Guard, requires you to climb your legs up to trap at least one of your opponent's shoulders. Once trapped here, your opponent is in continuous danger from armbar, triangle and sweep attacks.

The High Guard requires less flexibility than the Rubber Guard (discussed next), but is similar, as the legs are used to keep your opponent's posture down. This is a great guard for both BJJ and MMA, because it is difficult for your opponent to strike you or pass your guard without giving you the sweep or submission.



Rubber Guard



Eddie Bravo demonstrates one variation of the Rubber Guard



Attacking from the Rubber Guard

The Rubber Guard, here demonstrated by Eddie Bravo who coined the term, is a method of keeping your opponent's posture broken by locking your legs and feet into a very high position around his neck. Other guard players, perhaps most notably Nino Schembri, have developed guard attacks along similar lines, though Bravo has certainly helped popularized it in North America.

This is an effective guard for MMA as it limits the opponent's striking options and keeps the guard player safe to attack. It has been used successfully by a number of MMA fighters, most recently by Shinya Aoki, a Japanese MMA Star.

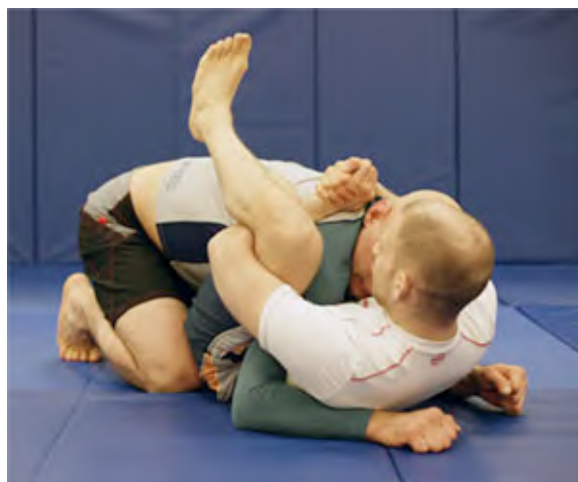
Flexibility in the hips and legs is very important to apply this guard effectively and to avoid injury. Being able to touch your foot to your face is probably the minimum amount of flexibility required. If you can put your foot behind your head then you may be able to make your opponent's life miserable from your back using the Rubber Guard.

A triangle choke attack sequence from the Rubber Guard can be found here:

www.grapplearts.com/Rubber-Guard-Setup-1.htm



Leghook Guard



Holding your own leg and your opponent's head in the Leghook Guard

The Leghook Guard position has been used in the UFC several times, most notably by Dean Lister to set up a triangle on Alessio Sakara at UFC 60. You can achieve the Leghook Guard when your opponent places an arm on the mat; as soon as he does this you trap his arm by bringing your leg up towards your shoulder and then link your hands, encircling both his head and your own leg.

This position keeps an opponent's posture broken. In an MMA or self-defense context this is very important because with his posture this far forward it is difficult for your opponent to use his arms to strike you with very much force.

Your main attacks from this position are the omo plata and the triangle choke; if you can bring your free leg over your opponent's shoulder then the triangle is right there for you. You can see a triangle setup from the Leghook Guard at this link:

www.grapplearts.com/Rubber-Guard-Setup-2.htm



Shawn Williams Guard



Shawn Williams working the Shawn Williams Guard



Shawn Williams deeper into an attack sequence

This guard is named in honor of Renzo Gracie blackbelt Shawn Williams who is known for using this position. It is closely related to the leghook guard except that both your arms have been moved to one side of your opponent's head – rather than encircling the head – making it harder for your opponent to counter you (see 1st photo).

Once again the most common attacks are the omo plata and triangle choke, typically used in combination. Shawn Williams demonstrates this guard in both pictures, and is shown partway through a triangle attack in the second photo.



This concludes our look at the Closed Guard. Don't be fooled by its apparent simplicity: it is a sophisticated and dangerous position that has ended many fights. Every grappler and BJJ practitioner needs to explore using the Closed Guard, and also know how to defend against it.

Other articles relevant to this topic include:

- 16 Tips For Your Closed Guard
www.grapplearts.com/Closed-Guard-Tips.html
- Don't Have a Flat Guard
www.grapplearts.com/2007/07/dont-have-flat-guard.htm

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A Glossary of Guards Part 2 The Open Guard

By Stephan Kesting and Elliott Bayev
Principal Photography by Keith Haist

Originally published in Ultimate
Grappling Magazine



Introduction

This is the second of three articles discussing variations of the Brazilian Jiu-jitsu guard position.

In this article we are going to focus on the Open Guard, where your legs are NOT locked around your opponent's torso (the other articles cover the Closed Guard and the Half Guard).

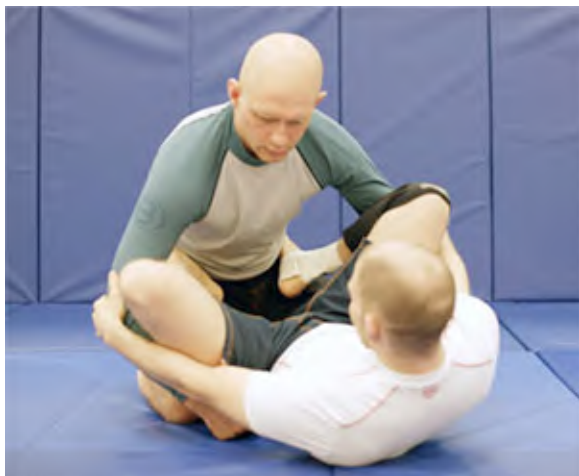
Just because your legs aren't closed doesn't mean that you can't control or attack your opponent – far from it! There are many positional variations, sweeps and submission setups for the Open Guard, making it the bread and butter for many Jiu-jitsu competitors.

You can transition deliberately from the Closed Guard to an Open Guard, or your opponent can do it for you by forcing your ankles to uncross as part of a guard pass attempt. Regardless of how you get there, in Open Guard the options and possibilities expand considerably.

Once achieved, the Open Guard isn't quite as neat and tidy as the Closed Guard. There is less static control available in Open Guard and positions often change in an instant. You may be in Spider Guard one minute and in de la Riva the next. It becomes important to be able to transition between different Open Guards in order to stay a step ahead.



Standard Open Guard



The Standard Open Guard applied against a kneeling opponent



The same position used against a standing opponent.



Against a standing opponent, using feet on hips and two hands to control one wrist

It is difficult to precisely define the Open Guard, because it is such a dynamic and variable position, seamlessly flowing into other guard positions and/or borrowing elements from them. Nevertheless, we first heard the term “Standard Open Guard” from BJJ black belt Marc Laimon, and think that it is a very useful term.

For the sake of this article we define the Standard Open Guard as a position where your legs are not locked around your opponent's waist, and at least one foot (but often both) is on your opponent's hips

Having a foot on the opponent's hip enables you to control the space between you. There are different upper body controls, each offering different sweep, submission and transition setups.

When the gi is worn the Standard Open Guard and the Spider Guard are very closely related: it is hard to use one without using the other at some point. Also keep in mind that in MMA it is imperative to control the opponent's wrists or elbows, or to push your opponent away with your legs to prevent strikes.



Spider Guard



The Spider Guard being used against a kneeling opponent (both feet on biceps)



Against a standing opponent, one foot on biceps and the other on the hip



Against a standing opponent using one foot on the bicep and one leg wrapped around the arm

The Spider Guard is a position mostly used in gi grappling. It is characterized by gripping your opponent's sleeves and placing at least one foot on his bicep; the other foot can also be placed on the bicep, or it can push the hip, hook behind the knee, encircle the arm, or otherwise control/off balance your opponent.

As the Spider Guard controls the opponent while your hips remain free it offers great off-balancing and sweeping options with the triangle choke remaining a constant threat as well.

The Spider Guard is applicable whether your opponent is standing or kneeling. It also transitions well to other guards like the de la Riva Guard, the Upside-Down Guard, the Grasshopper Guard, etc. Butterfly Guard



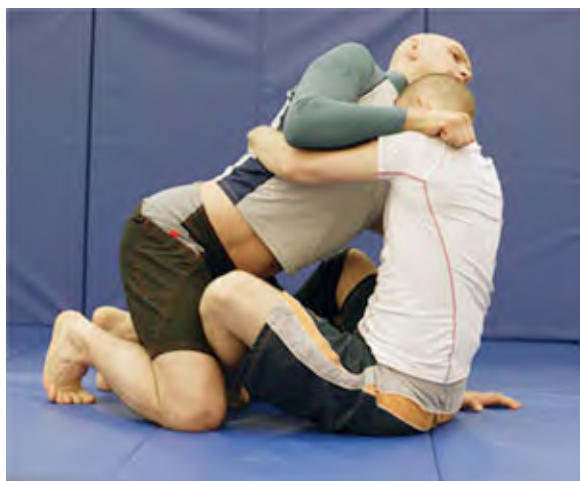
Butterfly Guard



The Butterfly Guard using an underhook and a belt grip



Using a pant leg and lapel cross grip



The Butterfly Guard in no gi using a bearhug grip. This grip is occasionally used in MMA, since it's difficult for your opponent to generate a lot of force in his strikes.



A very difficult position from which to play the Butterfly Guard (referred to as the TK Guard by early UFC commentators)



Butterfly Guard (Continued)

The Butterfly Guard is also called the Sitting Guard (a term used for several different styles of guard) and/or Hooks Guard. Regardless of terminology, it is a very dynamic position with many powerful sweeping options. Submissions from Butterfly Guard are not very common, but some practitioners use the Butterfly Guard to set up leglocks, which are available if you can get a leg between your opponent's legs. Also, because your legs are not locked in place, it allows smooth and fluid transitions to other positions, such as the X Guard and Half Guard.

You can't really 'hang out' in the Butterfly Guard – you need to be sitting up and actively working to off balance them and threatening them with grips, sweeps, and submissions,. Gaining the upper hand in Butterfly Guard closely resembles clinch-fighting, as both torsos are facing each other at approximately the same height. One should generally NOT lie flat on one's back (as shown in the third picture), although there are a few practitioners who can make that position work for them.

Butterfly Guard has been used successfully in MMA, but mostly with the exponent using two tight underhooks or a bearhug because these arm positions prevent an opponent from getting the space to strike effectively.

For more information about this position go to:

- The 'Basic' Butterfly Guard Sweep
www.grapplearts.com/Butterfly-Guard-Sweeps.htm
- A Buttterfly Guard Crash Course
www.grapplearts.com/2007/04/butterfly-guard-crash-course.htm
- Butterfly Guard and X Guard DVD
www.grapplearts.com/Butterfly-Guard-Info.php



de la Riva Guard



Ricardo de la Riva demonstrating his namesake guard



Details on leg and hand placement



As applied against a kneeling opponent



Using a shallow hook and no wrist control against a standing opponent



de la Riva Guard (Continued)

This position is named after Ricardo de la Riva, a famous competitor and teacher from the Carlson Gracie lineage, and it is de la Riva himself demonstrating his guard in the first photo.

The de la Riva guard is predominantly, but not exclusively, a gi-based position, in which you wrap one of your legs around the outside of your opponent's lead leg. Your foot can be inserted deeply or shallowly in his knee or hip. The position of your other leg depends on what your opponent is doing and/or on which sweep you are attempting to set up at that moment.

In the de la Riva Guard your hands typically control both his sleeves, or one sleeve and the heel of his lead leg. If you use this position without controlling his wrist or arm you are exposing your legs and feet to a variety of leglocks, so be on alert and move quickly. This position best known for its sweeps, but offers a few transitions into submissions as well.



The Reverse de la Riva Guard



Here Ricardo de la Riva demonstrates the Reverse de la Riva Guard, usually used in conjunction with the "traditional" de la Riva Guard.

It is often employed as a counter when your opponent attempts to cross-slide his knee across your free thigh to pass your guard. In this case you simply switch hooks: instead of your outside leg wrapping his leg you use your inside leg to trap his leg at the knee or thigh. You can also use your free hand to support your own knee instead of grabbing the sleeve.

From the Reverse de la Riva you can sweep your opponent or transition to other open guard positions such as Deep Half Guard and X-Guard.



Cross Guard



The Cross Guard using a sleeve and pant leg grip against a kneeling opponent.



The same grips being used against a standing opponent.

The Cross Guard is another gi-specific position. It relies on cross-grabbing the opponent's opposite sleeve with one hand and gripping or underhooking his leg with the other.

In the Cross Guard you have a number of sweeping and submission options, the most common being the omo plata submission, omo plata sweeps and the triangle choke. Pe De Pano is probably the most famous exponent of the Cross Guard.



Sitting Open Guard



Joe Moriera demonstrating what he calls the Sitting Guard



Another view of the body position and stiffarm lapel grip

Various BJJ practioners use the term Sitting Guard to refer to some very different positions. As used by black belt instructor Joe Moreira (and described in his Strategic Guard book) it refers to an upright posture using a rearward posting arm and a stiff arm on the collar bone using a lapel grip to keep your opponent at a distance.

In this position you have the freedom to move left and right, forwards and backwards, come to your feet or go to another style of guard. Typically you will make small adjustments every time your opponent moves, allowing you to counter his guard passing attempts and also to set up various armlocks and chokes.

The term Sitting Guard is also sometimes used to describe the Butterfly Guard and/or a sitting half guard position.



Grasshopper Guard



Elliott Bayev demonstrates the Grasshopper Guard

Most commonly attained from Spider Guard or when an opponent is passing with double underhooks, this is a gi-dependent position named by Elliott Bayev. It is characterized by sleeve control and butterfly hooks or crossed ankles, with the opponent's arms hooked under the legs.

The control over the opponent's arms and shoulders offers a number of unique sweep, submission and back-taking options. There is always the danger, however, of the opponent passing your guard if you lose your grips or butterfly hooks.



Upside Down Guard



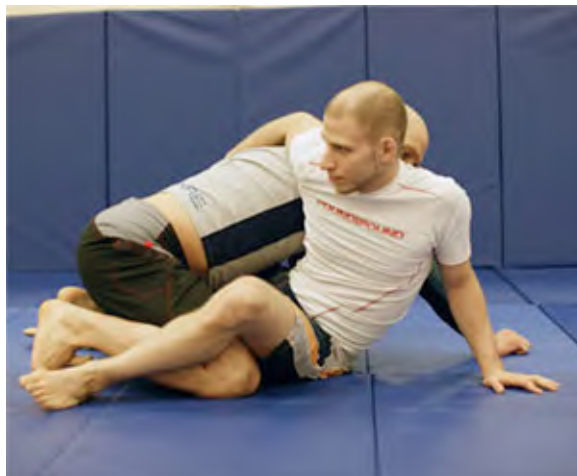
The Upside Down Guard in action

The Upside Down Guard is an unusual position in which the practitioner inverts himself, keeping his feet in contact with his opponent. This can be done either intentionally or in response to an attempted guard pass.

When used in gi competition this position is sometimes maintained for some time; in no gi situations it is more commonly only a momentary, transitional position. In either case, the most common submission from this position is probably the triangle choke, but it also leads into a variety of sweeps and submissions.



Octopus Guard



The Octopus Guard in no-gi

The Octopus Guard was named by BJJ and submission grappling competitor Eduardo Telles. In this position you duck under your opponent's armpit and lock his body down by placing your arm across his back.

This position opens up various sweeps and submissions, as well as a clear route to your opponent's back. With slight variations the Octopus Guard can be applied from the Closed Guard, the Open Guard or even the Half Guard.

Once again, Telles is not the only person to have developed and used this position. BJ Penn, for example, used it to take Matt Hughes's back in their second battle at UFC 63.



This concludes our look at the Open Guard. You don't need to master every single variation shown here, but having a passing familiarity with them is probably a good idea. A little knowledge could save your hide if you end up there in a scramble, or someone decides to use the position on you.

Other articles relevant to this topic include:

- The 'Basic' Butterfly Guard Sweep
www.grapplearts.com/Butterfly-Guard-Sweeps.htm
- A Butterfly Guard Crash Course
www.grapplearts.com/2007/04/butterfly-guard-crash-course.htm
- Butterfly Guard and X Guard DVD
www.grapplearts.com/Butterfly-Guard-Info.php
- The Guard for Short Legged People
www.grapplearts.com/2007/12/short-legged-guard-work.htm

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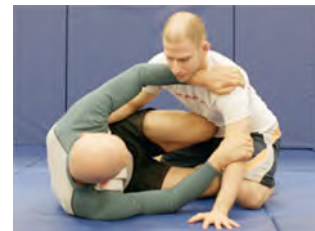
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A Glossary of Guards Part 3 The Half Guard

By Stephan Kesting and Elliott Bayev
Principal Photography by Keith Haist

Originally published in Ultimate
Grappling Magazine



Introduction

This is the third and final article in a series introducing a wide variety of guard positions. Today we are going to tackle the Half Guard, where you have only one of your opponent's legs trapped between your own. Previous articles were dedicated to variations of the Closed Guard and the Open Guard, and readers should be aware that these classifications are somewhat porous, there being areas of overlap between styles and variations of guard work.

Half Guard is a very common position in jiu-jitsu, as guard passes rely on first getting to Half Guard, and many pin escapes also result in Half Guard rather than Full Guard. Years ago it was seen as a pitiful position, just one step before having your guard passed. From the 1990s to today, however, this position has evolved considerably. Jiu-jitsu practitioners realized that the Half Guard allowed them to get right under an opponent's center of gravity which in turn led to the development of whole series of new sweeps.

One of the catalysts for this change was Roberto "Gordo" Correa, a Brazilian black belt who had an injured knee, which prevented him from playing a more typical guard game. He started having a lot of success from the Half Guard and when he started winning tournaments with it the word was out: the Half Guard was no longer an inferior position

Since that revelation other people have explored and expanded the offensive potential of the Half Guard and today it is the favored sweeping position of some of the best jiu-jitsu and submission grappling competitors in the world.



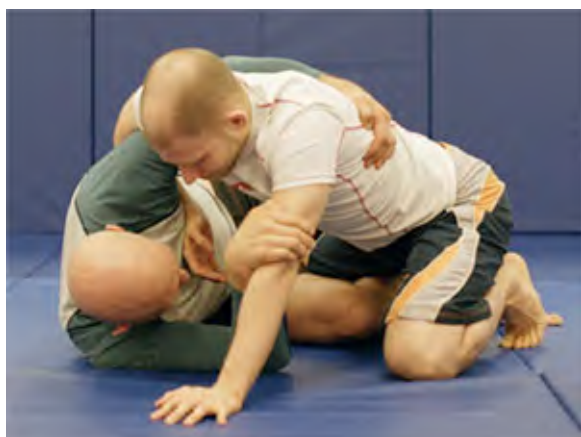
Standard Half Guard



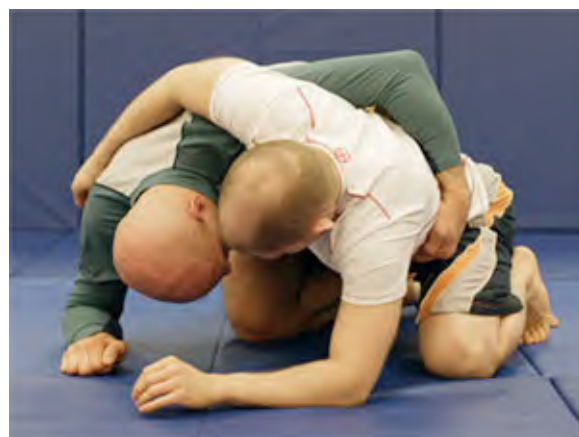
The standard Half Guard with the legs triangled and one arm grabbing the belt.



A similar position, grabbing the far lapel behind the back and hooking only with the bottom leg



In no gi with the bottom leg hooking the opponent's right leg



Coming onto the knees from the Half Guard with an underhook



Standard Half Guard (Continued)

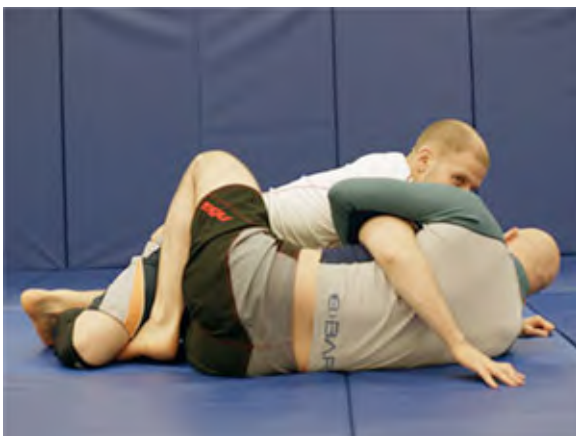
We are using the term 'Standard Half Guard' to describe a situation where you are on your side using your inside leg to hook one of your opponent's legs and have some sort of underhook with your top arm. There are many minor variations to this position, including having your legs triangled, gripping his gi or his belt, etc.

Standard Half Guard is great for taking the back, sweeping an opponent by getting under their hips, and coming up to your knees, which greatly enhances your ability to sweep.

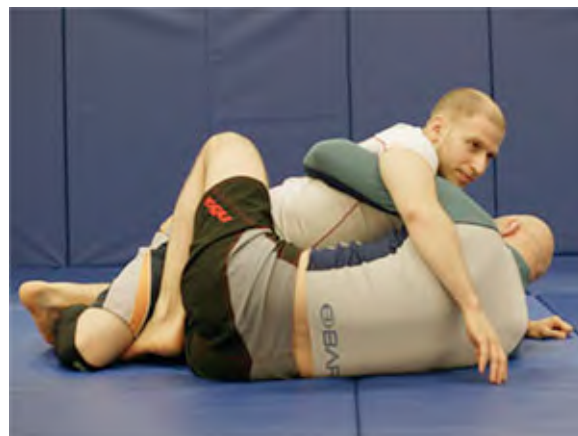
You can get Stephan Kesting's DVD on the half guard which covers strategies, attacks and sweeps at: www.grapplearts.com/Half-Guard-Sweeps-Info.php



Half Butterfly



The Half Butterfly Guard with an overhook...



...and with an underhook

The Half Butterfly combines the Half Guard and the Butterfly Guard into a very powerful sweeping position. You are on your side with your bottom leg hooking your opponent's leg and the instep of your top leg buried under his thigh. Your arms can be in a variety of positions including the overhook (photo 1) and the underhook (photo 2).

Maintaining the butterfly hook with one leg offers several advantages. If returning to guard is your goal then it provides a leverage point to swing back into Butterfly Guard as soon as your opponent relaxes his forward and downward pressure onto you.

If you want to use this position offensively, the hook allows you to lift his leg and manipulate him in a variety of ways to sweep him. Finally, placing your foot in this position nullifies many of the most common leglock attacks available to your opponent in Standard Half Guard.

The main thing that you have to watch out for in Half Butterfly is your opponent pushing your top knee down with his hand and popping his leg over top of it, directly into mount!

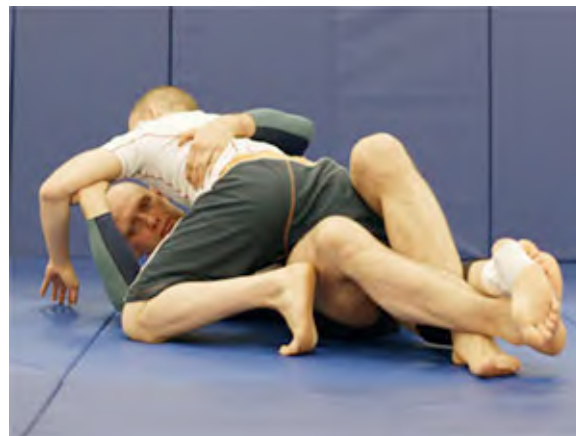
Check out this link for a ton of more information about the Half Guard on the Grapplearts site: www.grapplearts.com/Blog/tag/half-guard/



Double Triangle



The Double Triangle with the gi...



...and in a no gi context.

The Double Triangle Half Guard position, also named the “Lockdown” position by Eddie Bravo, is a solid way to prevent your opponent from passing your Half Guard and also to set up various sweeps and submissions. This position has also been used in Japanese Judo, although primarily as a stalling position.

Typically you will use this position with at least one underhook, if not two. Both of your insteps are tucked under something: the foot of your inside leg is snug against your opponent’s shin or instep, and the foot of your outside leg is tucked under your own inside leg.

Controlling your opponent’s leg this way makes your half guard difficult to pass and makes it possible to attack your opponent’s posture by stretching out his body. Once his posture is gone you have a variety of sweeps, and even a few submissions, available to you.



Deep Half Guard



Deep Half Guard with triangled legs



In no gi, with one butterfly hook inserted under the opponent's lower leg

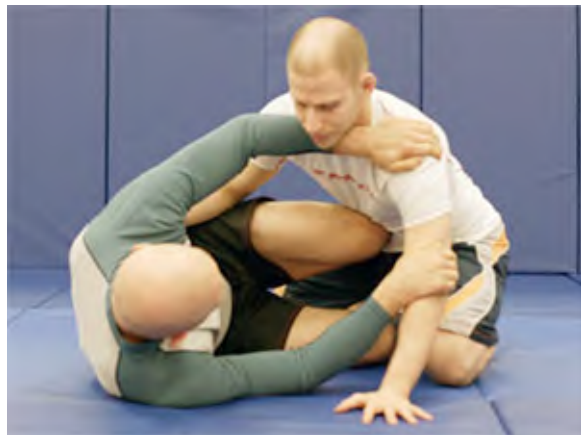
In the Deep Half Guard you are – as the name implies – deep underneath your opponent's hips. Typically you are trying to keep your body turned onto its side, and can control either your opponent's hip (1st picture) or your opponent's thigh (2nd picture) with your top arm. The legs can do a variety of things, including triangling around the opponent's leg, butterfly hooking underneath it and more.

The Deep Half Guard is primarily used for sweeping your opponent and has very few submission attacks available from it. The Deep Half Guard and related techniques are explored further at www.grapplearts.com/Blog/tag/deep-half-guard/

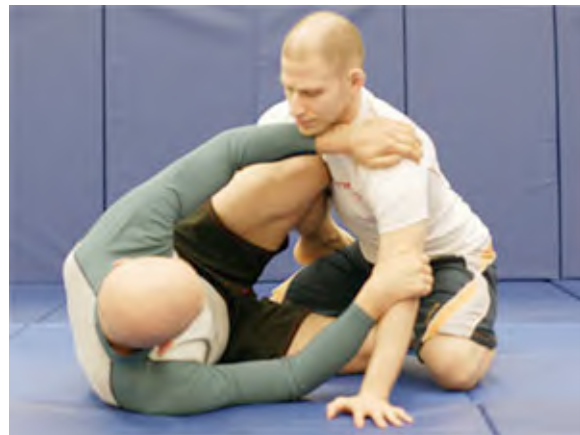
To date this position has not found a lot of application in mixed martial arts competition, probably for fear of getting punched in the face. Perhaps a future competitor will yet come along and offer some new insight into using the Deep Half Guard in an MMA context...



Z Guard



The Z Guard with the bottom leg hooking and the top knee pushing at the hip area



The same position with the top knee pushing in the chest/shoulder

The Z Guard, thus named by Leo Kirby, is also known as a Knee-In Half Guard. This guard is shown here in a no gi situation, but it is equally useful with the gi. In this position the bottom leg hooks your opponent's leg while the top knee maintains distance between you and him by pushing into his hip, chest or shoulder.

From here you have both sweeps and submissions available to you, Kimura armlocks and various collar chokes being the most popular.

With the gi, you typically hold the far collar with your top hand and your opponent's sleeve with your bottom hand. Without the gi you often frame his neck with your forearm while controlling his far arm to prevent him from controlling your head and neck.



X Guard



The basic X Guard position, in this case with the right foot in the hip and higher than the left foot which is at the knee



A variation with the feet crossed the other way and both positioned at the opponent's knee (left foot over right foot)



The Scissored X Guard variation



The X Guard applied against a kneeling opponent, here shown with an ankle lock style grip



X Guard (Continued)

Marcello Garcia popularized the X Guard when he used it to cut a swath through the competition at ADCC 2003. In the X-Guard, your whole body is positioned between the opponent's legs, stretching them apart. This provides a great ability to destabilize, sweep and leglock the opponent. In the X Guard you keep your opponent's leg on your shoulder, not in the crook of your arm, which is a common mistake. Your hand at his kneecap helps control his top leg.

There are several leg position variations, and on the previous page we showed four of them. All these variations offer powerful sweeping options.

1 – In the first, most popular, variation (1st photo) you have one leg behind his knee and the other in the crease of his hip.

2 – In another variation (2nd photo) you stack your legs differently and position both at the knee.

3 – In the Scissor X Guard position (3rd position) you are lying even more on your side, with one foot behind his knee and the sole of your other foot pushing near his ankle.

4 – Finally the X Guard can be applied against kneeling opponents, either with his foot on your shoulder (as in the first three photos) or even in an ankle lock style grip (4th photo).

The X Guard can be used by a variety of body types and usually offers great control of your opponent upon completion of your sweep.

For more information on this position you can check out the Grapplearts instructional 'Dynamic Guard Sweeps Vol. 1: Butterfly and X Guard' available at www.grapplearts.com



Sitting Half Guard



The Sitting Half Guard, gripping the lapel with the hand of the arm that goes around the leg

The Sitting Guard is one way to deal with an opponent standing up in front of you: you sit up, bringing your chest to his shin, your legs to either side of his lead foot, hug his leg from the outside with one arm and post on the ground behind you with the other. Gripping your opponent's belt, lower lapel (shown in the photo) or the sleeve of one of his arms make the position even more secure.

Most of your offensive options from this position are sweeps; although it is possible to apply a few leglocks from the Sitting Guard, they probably won't be enough to base your offense around them. Sitting Guard transitions well to Deep Half Guard, Instep Guard and X-Guard.

Note that some BJJ practitioners use the term "Sitting Guard" to refer to the Butterfly Guard position rather than the position shown in this photograph. Other practitioners use the same term to describe a position in which one is sitting up and stiffarming an opponent with one arm.



Instep Guard



The Instep Guard, here demonstrated with a shallow grip



The position being used to sweep an opponent

This position, also known as the Shin Guard, is similar to the Sitting Guard position with the addition of your instep being placed across your opponent's instep. While this is a seemingly minor variation, it allows you to tremendously destabilize your opponent by lifting his foot off the ground. It is also a lot less gi-dependent a position than the sitting guard.

Your arm secures the back of his leg in one of two ways: shallow (shown in these pictures) with the hand at the back of the knee, or deeply with the entire forearm. Both the shallow and deep versions are good, and they both work with and without the gi.



This concludes our examination of some Half Guard variations. As you're probably beginning to understand, this is a diverse and versatile position. The Half Guard is fact of life – it's here and it's not going away. Make sure you've got a plan for using, and countering, the major variations of the Half Guard position!

More Info about the Half Guard

- A Half Guard Secret
www.grapplearts.com/2008/05/half-guard-secret.htm
- The Evolution of the Half Guard
www.grapplearts.com/2005/08/half-guard-evolution.htm
- An Attack Series from the Half Guard
www.grapplearts.com/Half-Guard-Sweep-Series.htm
- Half Guard Crossface Counter
www.grapplearts.com/Andreh-Half-Guard-Crossface-Counter.htm
- 17 Tips for an Active Bottom Half Guard
www.grapplearts.com/17-Half-Guard-Tips.html
- Leg Position Drill Video
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qW7FmJayh8o>
- Finishing the Kimura from Half Guard Video
www.grapplearts.com/Half-Guard-Kimura.html
- Finishing the Half Guard Backclimb Video
www.grapplearts.com/Half-Guard-Kimura.html
- The Two-Pronged Half Guard
www.grapplearts.com/2005/02/two-pronged-half-guard.htm
- The Deep Half Guard
www.grapplearts.com/2008/11/deep-half-guard.htm
- Half Guard Sweep From Standing
www.grapplearts.com/ShaoLin-Half-Guard.htm
- Two DVD Guard & Half Guard Sweeps Package
www.grapplearts.com/ShaoLin-Half-Guard.htm

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Roberto Leitao's Ten Principles of Grappling

by Ed Beneville

INTRODUCTION

The article below came about as a result of meeting Roberto Leitao several years ago when he came to visit Joe Moreira and Marco Ruas in Southern California. During that time he was teaching series of classes at Joe Moreira's school. Leitao demonstrated a variety of techniques many of which I had never seen before.

What was most memorable was his emphasis on what he called "the ten principles of grappling." Whenever Leitao demonstrated a technique, or commented on someone's grappling, he referenced his principles to illustrate how they apply over and over again in practical situations. Though the principles are somewhat abstract, it quickly became apparent that their applicability was concrete and ubiquitous.

The principles are the result of more than 30 years of searching, analyzing and experimenting with grappling by Leitao. He is in his mid 60's and is arguably the Helio Gracie of Luta Livre. (If you disagree, I am not interested in arguing about it, I understand that some will maintain that Helio deserves credit for Luta Livre also. I have insufficient knowledge to say either way.)

Some of these principles may seem obvious and familiar. Nevertheless, seeing them in print may make you more aware of them, which in turn will make you better able to utilize them.

The numbered statement are meant by Leitao to be concise mnemonic devices. Leitao says that with these principles we can answer almost all grappling questions. We can know why, when and how.

This information is based upon a handout distributed by Roberto Leitao at a lecture I attended. [My comments and notes appear in blue](#). The rest is based on the handout. I rewrote parts of it to make up for what I perceived to be rough spots in translation.



THE TEN PRINCIPLES

1. If I don't know, I will not allow.

If you do not know what it is that your opponent is attempting to do, do not let him do it. A strong opponent with little knowledge in grappling who obeys this principle will be tough to defeat. Grappling is a continuous process. You have to block your opponent's steps. This is the most important principle.

Additional Lecture Notes

- Unexpected attacks are dangerous ones.
- Executing a technique always requires a variety of elements to come together. Generally speaking these elements include things such as leverage, base, positioning, timing, momentum, and control points or grips. If you can deny your opponent crucial elements for his technique, you can stop the technique.
- Even if you do not know what your opponent is trying to do, you can discern the steps he is taking to make it happen and thwart those steps.

2. A systematic repetition is always dangerous.

If you continue to show your opponent the same move you will give him the opportunity to anticipate it and counter it.

Additional Lecture Notes

- Keep the element of surprise on your side.

3. Every part of our body must work.

It is natural that you concentrate your attention to the parts of your body that are involved in one situation while forgetting others that could give you a big help. Put them to work!

Additional Lecture Notes

- It is easy to concentrate on one element of a technique at the expense of others. For instance in executing an arm bar you might become so focused on having the proper grips with your own arms that you forget about putting your hips



at a correct angle and how you should be employing your legs. Use everything. I find this to be particularly important in passing the guard and for escapes. Use your torso and all of your limbs including your head in executing movements. This correlates with the principle of maximum efficiency espoused by Judo.

- Your torso and upper legs are the strongest parts of your body. Beginners tend to concentrate too much on what they are doing with their upper body at the expense of their core strength.

4. We must keep our forces at the same level of our opponent's.

If you are with one arm going against two arms of your opponent, something is wrong. If you are matching the strength of your arm against your opponent's leg, something is wrong.

Additional Lecture Notes

- This is not about meeting force with force. It is about avoiding situations where you may be overwhelmed by force.

5. An intelligent movement is a continuous movement.

Additional Lecture Notes

- Keep moving. Use your opponent's momentum and movement to your own advantage.

6. If you control the space you control your opponent's actions.

Two objects cannot occupy the same space at the same time. Use your body to block your opponent's movements.

Additional Lecture Notes

- Blocking your opponent from moving by putting yourself in the space where he wants or needs to go is easier than trying to control him moving him outright.



7. If you support properly, you support strongly.

Use the mat and your opponent's body for support, not your own strength.

8. If you did not conquer the position, be suspicious of it.

"If there is a beautiful fruit on the side walk, it belongs to somebody or it's spoiled inside."

Additional Lecture Notes

- I am unfamiliar with the saying, but the meaning is clear enough. Be wary of what appears to be free. In the context of grappling positions you may be headed into a trap. Players will appear to give something only so they can take something better.

9. Don't show what you are feeling, only what is convenient for you.

If your opponent doesn't know how you are feeling about a position, he will not know what he should do.

Additional Lecture Notes

- Don't telegraph your intentions. In grappling that usually happens when you start making pressure the way you want to go before the moment arrives. It also can happen because you tense up the muscles you are going to use, or because you change your breathing. On the other hand you can fake your opponent into believing he knows what you are going to do by any of those means and thereby coax him into reacting in a way that suits you.

10. You must always do something.

If you don't do anything your opponent will be more efficient in his attacks but he does not need to worry about yours.

Additional Lecture Notes

- Don't allow your opponent to dictate the fight and don't be passive.



Ed Beneville is a black belt in Brazilian Jiu-jitsu under Joe Moreira. You can find out more about the three great books he has written about the BJJ guard position by going to www.grapplingarts.net



Tactical BJJ

How to adapt Grappling for Self Defence

By John B Will

A funny story ...

A few years back, I was invited to instruct an elite Defensive Tactics Instructor cell over at Quantico in the States. One of the reasons I got that job was because of recommendations made to them by other specialized law enforcement and military groups that I had done work for in the past.

When I arrived at Quantico, I was wearing military greens, had my hair cropped 'high and tight' (marine style) and has familiarized myself somewhat, with the history and culture of their organization.. In short, I had fulfilled the first rule of teaching, always start the students journey, from the place they currently occupy. I started where they were, not where I think thought they should be.

My second rule of teaching is also important – always establish rapport. If you cannot develop rapport with the client, they won't hear what you have to say! Simple stuff really.

Anyways, it was obvious after our first few training sessions, on that first morning, that I was 'the right fit' for their group. We spoke the same language, we were dressed the same way, and everything was travelling along nicely. Later that day, the Colonel in charge told me that only a few weeks before, they had invited a well known Brazilian Jiu-jitsu instructor up from California to teach for a week. As it turned out, he didn't last very long. They sent him packing before the morning was out.

It seems the first thing this instructor asked when he walked into their training facility was 'Where are your gi's?'. He then gave a brief demo of Classic BJJ – whereupon, they took a small break before training started. They never came back. The instructor was given an apology, and that was the end of that!

Different Strokes ...

I see this scenario quite a bit in my travels. Martial artists of one style or another, trying to peddle their particular art as if it was a tailored solution to someone else's particular needs. It just doesn't work that way! This is good for me – as I am happy to do the research, gain a clear understanding of my clients needs and then embark on the sometimes-arduous process of coming up with training solutions to those needs.



One of the main reasons I continually get work with various law enforcement and military groups, is because I do not try to peddle a classical martial arts solution to a set of real-world operational problems.

What do I know about the real world ops these professionals find themselves in? Usually, next to nothing. I need to talk to these highly experienced pro's and get info on the types of situations and scenarios they find themselves in; what kit or equipment they will be carrying, etc. These are professional warriors, with a warrior mid-set, many of whom have serious real-world experience. Only after collaboration, can we begin the process of working out what training approaches and techniques will give us the best results.

The martial arts are represented by a vast number of styles and systems of combat; each with their own sets of strengths, weaknesses, beliefs and customs. Most commonly, martial arts systems have evolved in ways that best prepares the practitioner to fight his or her fellow practitioners.

For example, Taekwondo practitioners practice to fight and beat fellow Taekwondo practitioners, Karateka practice fighting Karateka, Boxers fights Boxers, and Brazilian Jiu-jitsu fighters evolve better counters, and attacks to circumvent the defences thrown up at them by other Brazilian Jiu-jitsu fighters.

In short, although the martial arts are about interpersonal combat, when it comes to real-world functionality, their evolution is driven by the forces present on the mat, in the ring or in the dojo; and not necessarily by what happens in actual no-rules assault.

This doesn't mean that these arts cannot be effective; I would definitely put my money on a Boxer or a BJJ fighter in a one-on-one street encounter any day; but the fact remains, these arts (as do all systems) have small deficiencies in them that could, if the circumstances were right, lessen the chances of a positive outcome.

Drawbacks of Generic Martial Arts Training

Most martial arts training is done in an environment where courtesy prevails; so loud and abusive language is missing, the adrenal dump that goes with that is missing and so even highly experienced martial artists with thousands of hours training under their belt may never have experienced the tempo and stress as is commonplace in the real world no-rules assault scenario. And most often, their techniques and strategies (particularly training strategies) reflect this.

Apart from these environmental considerations, there are many technical considerations., that should be taken into account when determining the effectiveness of a specific martial arts system as a solution to real-world assault. Does the particular system have strong answers to the problems inherent in close-range nitty gritty fighting. If the system emphasizes long range kicks,



for instance, then when it is 'pressure tested' at close range, the deficits and holes will become very apparent. If it is an art that does not practice 'full contact', then again, when 'pressure tested', the practitioner may experience a very rude (and most likely 'dangerous') awakening.

And so it is, that those particular arts that are practiced under 'full contact', 'in-close' and 'non-compliant' conditions tend to be the more effective in limited or no-rules encounters. Boxing, Kickboxing, BJJ and Wrestling (and the synthesis of such) reign supreme when the real-world pressure has been turned on full blast!

And Now – the Drawbacks of BJJ

Each and every system, even those pressure-tested and more effective systems, have their drawbacks and deficiencies; and Brazilian Jiu-jitsu is no exception.

One of the strengths of BJJ is it's continued evolution due to the Darwinian forces at work in a highly competitive sporting environment. Paradoxically, this is also where the weakness lies.

To achieve better outcomes in the sporting arena, the BJJ athlete can easily spend the majority of his or her time becoming entangled in the intricacies of that environment. For example, loads of time can be spent in the development of yet another counter to the counter of a favourite technique. This evolutionary path can be exciting and stimulating, while not necessarily addressing any of the problems encountered in the real-world assault scenario.

A few examples:

- Setting up a favourite sweep while not considering 'striking options'
- Entering for the takedown while not considering 'striking options'
- Ignoring the dynamics of how fights start and having no pre-fight strategy
- Applying the footlock for the 'tap' but not considering what happens afterward
- Engaging in grappling while not considering third part interference
- Not considering how the fight dynamic changes in tight tubular environments

The above are only a few of the more obvious deficiencies in trying to apply a sporting application of an art to a real-world environment.

Do not misunderstand me! BJJ, just like Boxing, Kickboxing or Wrestling, will still provide you with more useable real-world skills than other more theoretical and non-contact arts – it's just that we still need to apply some tweeking if we are going to take it to the 'street', 'into battle' or into any other no-rules, 'live' environment.

So, it's time to apply a Tactical Patch ...



The Tactical Patch

TACTICAL: "pertaining to a maneuver or plan of action designed as an expedient toward gaining a desired end"

In my view, it is good policy to apply tactical thinking to most situations we find ourselves in. In fact, most martial arts systems are a product of tactical thinking – it is just that most of them are considering ‘sporting’ outcomes as the desired end – and not ‘self defence’ or ‘life–death’ outcomes.

To apply tactical thinking to any martial art in order to make it more robust for real–world assault, we need to be clear on a couple of things, namely:

- What outcomes do we want?
- What will the likely real–world environment be like?
- How would the real–world assault be likely to unfold?

Once we consider these things carefully and truthfully, we can begin to see the shortcomings of any sporting applications or practice we do. That is the first step toward modifying our training so that we can more readily cope with real–world assault, using our preferred art as the ‘core’ of our practice.

The Way of Progress

This is the way the world works; the way things evolve. Most every big jump made in any field is made by identifying the shortcoming of something and then through either pure creative invention or a process of synthesis, coming up with a way to make something else, something different, something that fills a newly identified niche.

I do this in my work, all the time. I am faced with a particular problem; a problem that quite often, cannot be answered by any mainstream technique or training method that I have heretofore been exposed to. So I need to synthesize. It is this act of combining different elements from different fields/arts that most often affords me an answer to the problem.

Whilst I fully respect those many people who are passionate about the preservation of the ‘original’ art (whatever ‘original’ may mean), for the world needs librarians and book collectors just as much as it needs new authors and writers. But in my view, true progress is really about synthesis and creativity, and not about the preservation of a single idea or methodology.

In using any martial art for the purposes of real–world self defence, we need to consider how well it suits a particular environment or operational need. The world is not the mat, and the mat is not the world!



Here are a few situations that impact drastically on the outcomes of conflict when employing grappling measures in real-world environments.

Tubular Environments

When considering real-world operations or environments, we need to take into account how the fight dynamic can change dramatically in a tubular environment. Hallways, aircraft isles, corridors, train carriageways, etc, all present unique difficulties for the grappler and stand-up fighter alike.

For the stand-up fighter, round kicks, for instance, are of little or no use. In fact, in a tubular environment, it is far more likely than usual, that the fight will go to the clinch. And the problems certainly don't end there.

Grappling in a tubular environment is fraught with problems. Classical BJJ for instance, needs to be drastically modified. When fighting from the Guard, sweeps will not work – there just isn't the room for the opponent to be taken to one side or the other. Side control is out; as are many other commonplace ground positions.

For combat in the tubular environment, the training emphasis needs to be placed on remaining on our feet. If the fight goes to the floor and we end up on the bottom, we need to have put time into 'vertical disengagement'. By creating space from bottom and with the correct use of our feet to make space, we can get back up and onto our feet. Apart from 'vertical disengagement', our only other main option is to 'finish' or incapacitate the opponent. Chokes from the bottom are our best bet in this regard.

3rd Party Intervention

One of the biggest problems with the conflict going to ground is the real possibility of 3rd party intervention. A sporting approach to the conflict, where we are fully focussed on a single opponent, can leave us open to dangerous, even deadly attack from other parties.

If our grappling skills are superior, then it may be possible to bring about a quick resolution to the fight and regain our feet. If we cannot quickly resolve the fight, then 'vertical disengagement' or getting back to our feet, should be our top priority.

There are some situations though, where it may be strategically prudent to stay on the ground. During a melee, or 'all in brawl', I have had students (working in security roles) survive without a scratch by staying on the ground, on the bottom position, with their opponents in their 'Guards' until the melee was virtually over. Upon emerging at the end of the conflict, they discovered that almost every other member of the security detail was injured; some of them quite badly.



So certainly, there are odd times, where the bottom position can provide effective cover, but usually only when the battle or conflict is of an impersonal nature, as in a melee.

If there are other people standing by, but the conflict is really only between ourselves and one other assailant; then it can be prudent to make use of positions such as the Kneeride. This position allows us to vertically disengage if needed, but also provides visual evidence to bystanders that we are 'in charge' of the situation. From this position we can also set up a convincing and authoritative 'verbal fence'.

Use of Weapons

The use of weapons, although increasingly more commonplace in today's society, are rarely considered in the sporting world of martial arts; and the BJJ environment is no exception. Much of Guard Strategy is about trying to stop your opponent from 'passing your Guard'; but remember, in a real-world environment, the assailant is not trying to pass your Guard, he is just trying to injure you and inflict maximum damage in any way he can. If he is armed, then basic Guard strategy will not prevent us from becoming the victim of a multiple stabbing incident.

When knives or other improvised weapons are employed, we should ideally remain on our feet, at least until the weapon arm is under total control. If we are on the ground and the weapon is in play, then the focus must be put on 'weapon arm control'. If our normal BJJ practice sees us develop a game where the opponents arms are usually controlled, then this type of game can more readily adapt to a conflict that includes use of weapons. The rule is mandatory – control the weapon arm!

The Mat Tap

Most often on the grappling oriented mat, people are over focussed on a single outcome; and that outcome is usually to get the opponent to submit, or tap. But it is important, for real-world application to ask the question, 'would the submission that illicited the 'tap' from the opponent during that match, have incapacitated him in real no-rules confrontation?

Now, many commonly employed subs will end the fight; chokes for example. There is no doubt about the outcome; the opponent is unconscious, we are still in play! Usually, dislocated elbows and shoulders (armbars and armlocks) result in the opponent 'shutting down' and will effectively have brought the fight to a conclusion; but not necessarily always. Sometimes, mentally tough or extremely highly motivated people can still function with dislocated joints; so there is no 'guarantee'. I like to say 'switch 'em off or break 'em! – but I much prefer, the 'switch 'em off' part; chokes rule supreme on the ground, just as the knockout rules supreme in the ring!



What is the priority

In sporting applications of grappling or BJJ, the objective or priority is clear; control and submit the opponent! In real-world environments or 'operations' this may not necessarily be our number one priority.

For example; consider the scenario where we have found ourselves grappling in the middle of a road. The priority then becomes clear – we need to 'disengage' and get off the road before we get hit by a vehicle.

In military or law enforcement scenarios, the operator may often need to 'disengage to task'. That is, it becomes important for us to get away from the assailant, to get out of the house, to re-acquire our weapon, etc. The practice of disengaging from our assailant is a very different process than that of seeking the submission. Most usually this means seeking a position of control first, and then effecting an escape strategy; and it is by no means straightforward. Like everything else, it takes practice to be proficient at this.

Conclusion

Having explained some of the shortcomings of grappling when it comes to certain real-world environments and situations, it is still important to understand that you may well find yourself in a grappling situation whether you like it or not. Simply put, it is quite often not your choice. So it still remains imperative that we have strong grappling skills in case this happens; but we need to temper those skills with 'real-world' or 'operational' considerations.

Train Safe, Train Smart!



John Will is a BJJ black belt based in Australia. You can find out more about his new series of books at www.rogueblackbelt.com



Self Defence 101 – The Core Strategy of BJJ

A BJJ Beginner's Guide To Overcoming A Bigger Opponent

By Elliott Bayev

Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu has two major aspects. The first addresses the question – what do we do when we're facing a bigger, faster, stronger person who intends to hurt us. This is really the core of BJJ and what we commonly refer to as Self Defence.

Then the second, deeper question come up – what if the opponent knows what we know? What if they know our strategies and techniques and know how to stop them? This is where the sport and art of BJJ come in – the sophisticated skill-based strategy game we play with the body, where timing, experience and finesse become more important.

It's generally acknowledged that within its limitations (multiple opponents, weapons, etc) BJJ is an incredibly powerful form of self defence. But many practitioners who learn the art today jump right into that second tier – the game of BJJ – without first developing the understanding of BJJ's core self defence strategy. That core strategy has four main components:

- 1) Stay Out of Range
- 2) Close The Gap
- 3) Take The Opponent Down
- 4) Secure The Mount.

This article will look at a safe, simple, effective way to apply that strategy, which applies not only to self defence, but is itself the foundation of all BJJ, beginner or advanced, recreational or competitive.

Self Defence Control

Our first and most important self defence technique is our sprint. A true self defence situation is something to avoid, so if possible, running away should be our first choice. But sometimes that is not an option, or it doesn't feel like an option.

However, if we feel like there is no choice and we're forced to physically engage a bigger, stronger person, then trying to hit them might not be a wise choice. Though it may sound unlikely, controlling them is easier.



Controlling Aggression – “Passive Hands”



We begin by trying to control aggression, if possible. By taking a passive posture, we can give the impression that we've already given up.

Rather than escalating our opponent's aggression level, this may lower it, as they've already won an emotional victory. Ideally we diffuse a situation before it starts. If not, our hands are already up, ready to protect us.

Controlling Space – “Staying Out of Range”



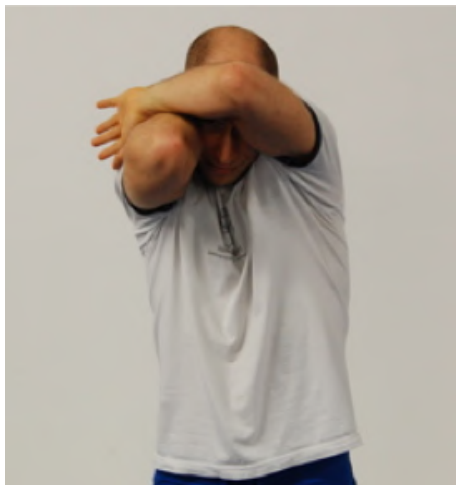
Regardless of whether we're able to pacify our opponent, we must control the space around them, which is the first major component of BJJ's core strategy.

If we let the opponent get close, they will be able to hit us, so we start by staying out of range of their legs and arms. If they come towards us, we back up. This can give us an opportunity to run or pacify the situation verbally.

We may, however, hit a wall, and cannot back up as quickly as the opponent can come toward us, so we have to be prepared for the possibility that they may try to hit us.



Controlling Impact – “The Helmet”



Though we'd rather avoid it, we must accept that we may get hit. When facing a stronger person, our priority should be to protect our head, as we cannot afford to take the risk of getting knocked out.

By wrapping our head tightly with our forearms, we can create a “Helmet” that can absorb much of the impact of a punch.

Controlling Space – “Closing The Gap”

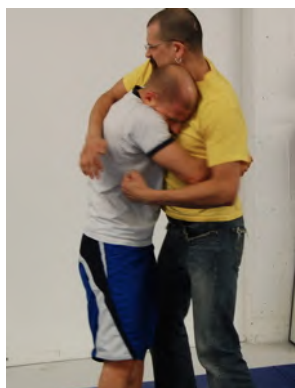


At first, we controlled the space by creating too much. Now, we have to take it away.

For the opponent to hit us, they need us close; but if we're too close – close enough to connect our arms around their body – they may still be able to hit us, but not with nearly as much power as when we're standing in front of them.

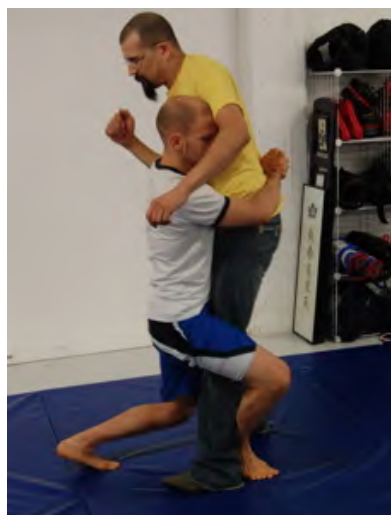
So rather than just getting the "Helmet up" when the opponent gets close enough to reach us, the second major component of BJJ's core strategy is to Close The Gap or Clinch.

Lunging towards the opponent, we connect with our elbows as we continue to drive through them and wrap around their waist with our arms, keeping ourselves tight to them.





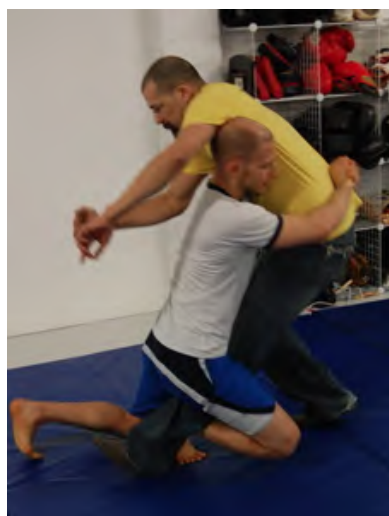
Controlling Balance – Take Down



How do we overcome someone bigger than us? With the aid of something much bigger than them – the Earth! If we can take a fight to the ground, the dynamics of size, weight, movement, and even strength change considerably.

So, once we close the gap and clinch with our opponent, we must take away their balance and get them on their backs – the third major component of BJJ's core strategy.

One way to do this is by first wrapping an ankle around the outside of one of the opponent's ankles.



Blocking the ankle will prevent them from stepping back to catch their balance as we drive into them. As we drive our knees to the ground, our hips lock their leg out, forcing their hips to drop to the ground.

Particularly if we're on concrete, we must make sure to unlock our hands before the opponent hits the ground, so we do not crush them under the opponent's back.

Opening our arms on the way down will also enable us to catch our own balance, making sure we land and stay on top, which in turn will ensure weight, space and gravity are on our side.



The more connected with the ground we are, the more balanced we are, so we make sure to spread our hands wide and shift position if the opponent tries to push us off.

Top position is critical in Self Defence!



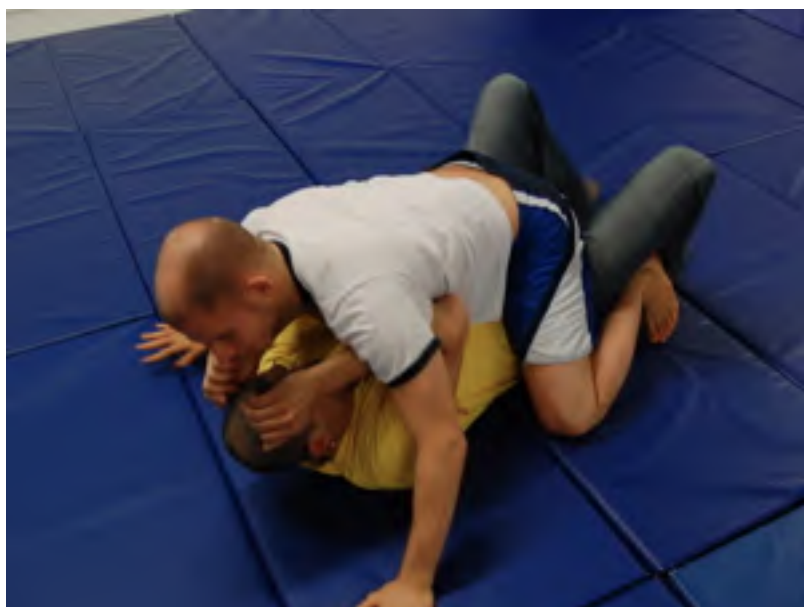
Controlling Position – “Mounting”



Now that we've gotten the opponent to the ground, we can start to really control them.

To do this, we must find a position where they have a limited ability to impose themselves on us and where we are free to impose ourselves on them.

If we can bypass their legs by pushing one down and stepping over it, we can get into The Mount, completing the final step in BJJ's core strategy.





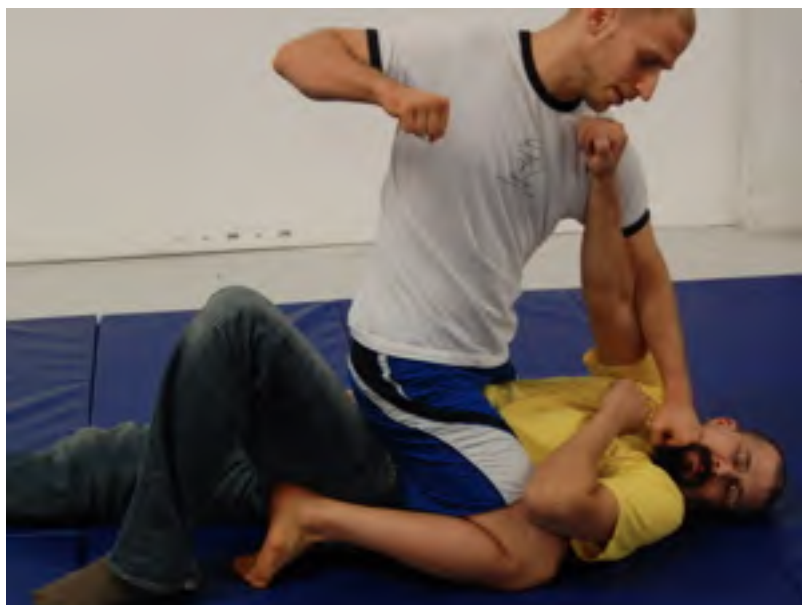
Controlling Position – “Mounting” (Continued)



From The Mount, we have many natural advantages: we can reach the opponent's face, they can't reach ours.

If they have long arms, we can always pull back, they have nowhere to go.

We can wind up and use our bodyweight and gravity to hit if we choose to – the bottom person can only use their arm strength. We can also isolate their limbs or smother them with our chests without having to use much energy.





Controlling Position – “Mounting” (Continued)



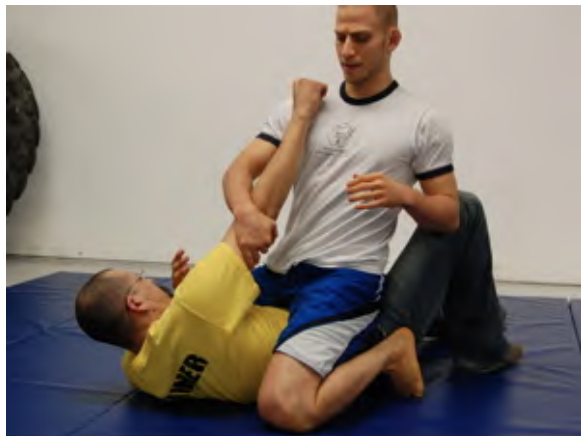
A very common response is for an untrained person to try to roll to their knees to escape.

This gives us the opportunity to take their back and choke them unconscious.



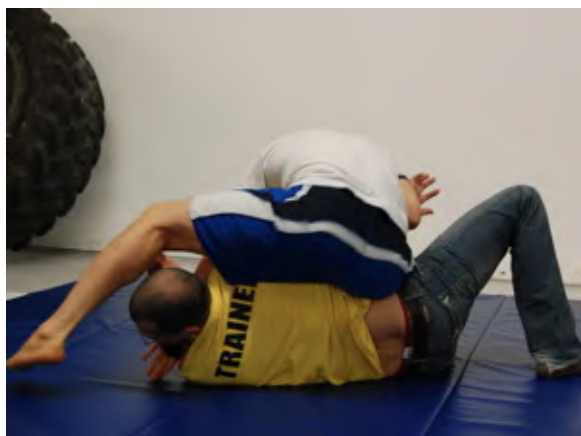
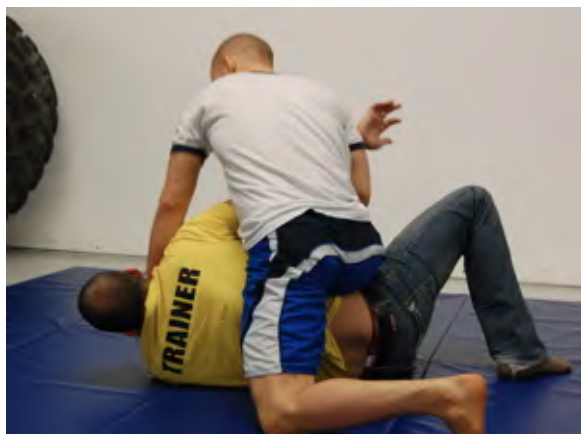


Controlling Position – “Mounting” (Continued)



Another common response from an untrained person is to try to punch or push us off with their arms.

This leave them open to an armbar submission attack.





Controlling Position – “Mounting” (Continued)



Of course, we have to balance the risk of losing position with the advantage of taking a submission, but a great option that offers even more control than a traditional mount is the 'Gift Wrap' control position.

We can see that from here, size strength and speed matter little, offering us, again, the opportunity to hit the opponent, or just talk to them in order to calm the situation down.

Summary

- Stay Out of Range
- Close the Gap
- Take the Opponent Down
- Mount

The above strategy is not only the core strategy of BJJ for self defence, but it's the core strategy of competitive BJJ as well: in general, it's better to be on top in mount, than in any other position except the back. It's common to see BJJ practitioners and competitors favour their guards these days, and it's a powerful, fun strategy. But it's important to remember the core strategy of what we do – particularly if we want our skills to apply to self defence.

This is, of course, not the only or best strategy for every possible self defence situation (again, sprinting generally is), but it is one that reduces the chances of us getting hurt and gives us a great opportunity to overcome a physically dominant person.

Elliott Bayev is a fifteen year veteran of Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu and is the head instructor at 10th Planet Toronto, OpenMat BJJ & MMA, and Kimonogirl Women's BJJ and Self Defence in Toronto. See www.openmat.ca for more details.



How To Win The BJJ 'Arms Race'

By Stephan Kesting

What is an 'Arms Race'

Is there someone at your club that you are always battling against? One week you kick his butt, and the following week it's payback time? Back and forth... week after week? If you do, then consider yourself lucky! It's a terrible thing to be the best grappler at a club...

Even if you train at a school with hundreds of members you will still probably do most of your sparring with a smaller subset of people who are roughly at your level. This core group of sparring partners will drive your development as a grappler and as a martial artist. Part of your development is because the 'arms race' that you have with each specific individual.

To quote Wikipedia, an arms race is "any competition where there is no absolute goal, only the relative goal of staying ahead of the other competitors." On the mat it might look something like this: one week you submit your sparring partner three times with a specific kneebar technique. The next week he figures out a counter to that technique and squashes you. The following week you've figured out how to counter his counter, and so on.

This doesn't have to be animosity between you and this other person, in fact your development is going to be fastest if you actively try to help that person beat you. What I'm talking about creating is a cooperative arms race, where you are each competing against each other, but also trying to help the other person get better.

Helping them is a bit of a selfish thing. Your goal is to make your training partner as good as he can be, so that he can then help you get better too. He will force your game to evolve to the next level.

For example, I have a long-standing (and friendly) arms race with one of my main training partners, Vlado. The first time Vlado and I sparred, which was about 10 years ago, he triangle choked me and I footlocked him. We've been great friends and great sparring partners ever since, but that doesn't mean that I'm not continuously plotting how to defeat his techniques, and I know he's doing the same for me.

The key detail is that it's a friendly rivalry – all I really want is for my new technique or counter to work for one day. Then I'll show him exactly what I'm doing, and the probable result is that my hard-fought advantage will slip away. That's what being a great training partner is all about. It's an arms race all right, but it has tremendous benefits for all parties involved.



Now both Vlado and I have our own approaches to developing 'the next big thing' to nullify the other guy's techniques. We each do this a little differently, and I'm going to tell you exactly what we do...

Secret Weapon #1

Vlado often plunks a small digital camcorder down at the side of the training area when he starts to roll. He then lets it record the whole sparring session.

Later, when the sparring is still fresh in his mind, he watches the action again at home. Here he simultaneously critiques his own performance and looks for holes in his sparring partner's game. This doesn't take as long as it sounds, because there is always the fast forward button to get past the boring sections and on to the interesting bits.

It is scary how effective this analysis method is for Vlado. Let's say that I'm working on a new technique or variation of a technique. I might spend a month working on it and using it only on the lower belts at the club until I think I have it down. Then I unleash it on him, and sometimes – if I'm lucky – it may even work once or twice in that first session!

Then Vlado goes home and watches the tape. Usually by the next time we spar he's figured out what my trick was, what he did wrong, and how to completely shut down my new move.

If you have the time, and especially if you're a visual learner, then give video self-analysis of your sparring sessions some consideration.

As for me, maybe I should get in touch with some counter-intelligence people, and see if I can borrow a digital video jamming device. I'm sure the big spy agencies would understand the importance of my jiu-jitsu game to national security...

Secret Weapon #2

Having leaked Vlado's secret, I figure it's time to talk about one of MY secret weapons in the everlasting dojo arms race. That method is focused partner training.

Here's what I do. Suppose I consistently run into the same problem with a certain individual – perhaps he's catching me with the same submission all the time, or he's always countering my sweeping techniques, or whatever.

As we're sparring I'll try to make note of the problem – I might even put myself into the exact problem position on purpose, just so I can see exactly what my opponent is doing to make my life difficult.



Then I call up a different training partner, and we meet behind closed doors with the windows blacked out and the room swept for listening devices. I show that partner the situation that is frustrating me, and we look at it from all angles and brainstorm for solutions. Going back to the problem in this calm and controlled environment usually results in us soon having an answer to the original dilemma. Then I take it back to the original partner and see if it actually works in reality.

Many of the sequences I teach in my various instructional programs were developed exactly like this. First I had an initial attack that worked for a while. Then my opponents figured out how to counter those attacks. And then I used focussed partner training to discover and refine the recounters to those counters.

As we leave this topic I want to emphasize once again that this arms race is a mutually beneficial process. After I use my new super-duper recounter one or two times in class, I then share it with my sparring partners. That way the cycle goes on and we both continue to grow.



This advice first appeared in Stephan Kesting's Grappling Tips Newsletter. You can sign up and receive that newsletter for free at: www.grapplearts.com/newsletter

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Focused Training

By Roy Harris

Over the years, I have been asked thousands of martial arts related questions. One of the most prevalent questions I have been asked about Brazilian Jiu Jitsu is, "How can I improve the quickest?"

Here is my response:

To improve the fastest, a student must first to learn, and develop the ability, to focus. What is focus? In short, focus means, "To exclude other areas of interest for extended periods of time." Let me give you an example of focus that will illustrate this point.

Way back when, I spent a considerable amount of time focusing on my side mount escapes. I felt this was an important area to focus on as a blue and purple belt. So, I focused on it exclusively for two years. Then, I took a break. I began to focus on it again, this time for about 18 months. Then I took another break. I focused on it again for another 18 months or so, and then took another break. I focused on it again for a year, and took another break. Then I focused on it again for a final year.

All in all, I focused on side mount escapes for a total of seven years! That's a long time!!

What exactly did that look like? Here's a glimpse:

Whenever I would grapple with students, I would pull them into my guard, work my guard control for a short period of time, then let them pass my guard and go to the side mount. I would escape the side mount and place them back into my guard. I would do this over and over again, each and every sparring session. I would do this with student after student.

My goal in training the side mount escapes was to get past "thinking" about the techniques. I wanted to know the techniques so well that I could feel WHEN to perform WHICH escape. In other words, knowing the escape was not enough. I needed to learn to FEEL for the appropriate time, distance and positioning before attempting the appropriate technique. I did this because I had discovered that feeling is faster than thinking!

Besides grappling with my students, I also had various training partners. Sometimes, during our training sessions, we would focus exclusively on side mount escaping techniques. In other words, we did not spar during the training sessions. All we did were a couple hundred repetitions. (Now, I know some people will disagree with me on the whole "repetitions" thing, but that's OK. I know what I am talking about because I have experienced it, taught it and



witnessed several of my students progress to very high levels using this training methodology! It does work when the student is taught how to use it correctly! (i.e. Knowing how to use this training methodology is paramount to developing the desired skill sets.)

Sometimes, our training sessions would be nothing but sparring two or three side mount escaping techniques.

Sometimes, our training sessions would be a mix of sparring and repetitions.

In either case, I want you to observe how my training sessions were focused on one topic. In other words, these training sessions excluded ALL OTHER AREAS of Jiu Jitsu.

Why was it important to exclude other areas? Well, I felt it was important to exclude some things in order to develop an intimate knowledge of that which is being focused on.

I had observed how we've done this in our relationships with members of the opposite sex. We did this with close friends. We did this with family. We did this with our jobs. We even did this with our college degrees. Why not do the same thing in our martial training by temporarily excluding other areas?

Now, some might argue and ask, "Aren't other aspects of our game suffering because we are focusing?" My response is, "Yes. What's your point?" Those who have asked me this question have said something along the lines of, "Why should I allow other aspects of my game to deteriorate just so that I can focus on one thing?" My response was usually:

Allow me to ask you a series of questions to allow you to see the obvious answer:

1. When you went to college to get your degree, didn't you temporarily focus on getting your degree? Didn't certain aspects of your life deteriorate? Weren't certain aspects of your life put on hold, temporarily?
2. When you decided to marry your spouse, didn't you temporarily focus exclusively on your spouse? Didn't certain aspects of your social life deteriorate / change? Weren't other aspects of your life put on hold, temporarily?
3. When you were working on that important project at work, the one that required you to put in tons of over time, didn't you temporarily focus on getting the project done and doing the best job you could do? Didn't certain aspects of your "home" life change or deteriorate, temporarily?

So, you can focus on the important things in life, but you can't focus in your hobbies? Hogwash! You CAN focus your training in martial arts without suffering any great loss.



Now, the real reason why you “can’t” focus is because you don’t want to focus. You are having so much fun learning, that when it comes to DEVELOPING A SKILL (which takes time, effort, discipline and persistence), you’d rather continue the euphoric experiences of learning new techniques than putting in the time, effort, discipline and persistence to develop a skill through focus and repetitions.

Now, there's nothing wrong with having fun in your training sessions.....unless of course you planned on developing a skill set. If you want to develop a skill set, you will need to spend more time FOCUSING!

For those of you who want to have your cake and eat it too – meaning, you want to have fun AND develop a skill, simultaneously, this is what you will need to do:

Have fun 15 to 20% of the time. Work hard and focus 80 to 85% of the time. In the beginning, you won’t make as much progress as those who remain focused for 95 to 100% of the time, but at least you will have some fun along the way.

For those of you who would reply, "That doesn't sound very fun", all I can tell you is the honest truth:

"Everything of substance, meaning, purpose and lasting quality in this life comes through the combination of time, effort, discipline and persistence!"

So, if you want to have more fun in your training, that's OK. Enjoy yourself! But be honest with yourself! On the other hand, if you truly desire to obtain a useable and repeatable skill set (sooner than later), you will need to combine time with disciplined effort and persistence!

Beside, once you get past the boring stuff (two to three years), things become much easier and that’s when Jiu Jitsu becomes REALLY fun!

So, may I encourage you to focus your training for an extended period of time? Here’s how:

1. This month, evaluate where you are with your side mount escapes and guard control. Videotape your evaluation. Give yourself a score.
2. Take the next three months and focus exclusively on side-mount escapes.
3. After you’ve focused your training on side-mount escapes for three months, take another three months and focus exclusively on guard control.
4. Take one more month and focus your training on the combination of side mount escapes and guard control.
5. Videotape yourself performing another evaluation. Compare the two tapes. Make note of where you have improved. Give yourself a new score.



Once you do this, I promise you that you will get hooked on this kind of training. After experiencing a substantial and quantifiable progress in your game, you will want to do it again in another area of your game. If you want to become fanatical, you can do what I did and train one area for a year or longer. Keep in mind; Training like a fanatic takes A LOT of discipline. It is NOT easy – but it is very rewarding!

Well, I hope this short article has encouraged and inspired you to reach for new heights in your Jiu Jitsu game. I hope you can see how the quickest way to develop a useable, repeatable skill is through focused, disciplined effort.

In closing, please remember:

The playground of focus is where you'll find the treasured skill sets hanging out!

Good focused training to you!



Roy Harris is the gentleman scholar of Brazilian Jiu-jitsu. He has authored numerous instructional DVDs and informative articles, and teaches at his school in San Diego, CA. More information is available at www.royharris.com.



168 Ways to Improve Your Jiu-jitsu

By Matt Kirtley

Here's a tool I made to help keep myself motivated. It's a list split into two parts:

101 Questions to Ask Yourself, and then 67 Things to Try.

Together they give you something to be thoughtful and introspective about and something to get out there and do. The idea is to turn to it each week (or when you're in a slump) and see if it can't help you improve.

Try this:

Pick out a random question and give it serious thought. Be objective and honest with yourself. Write down your answer if you need to. Did you have any new ideas?

Pick a random thing to try. Follow the instructions as well as you can. Write notes on how it went. Did you learn anything new?

101 Questions to Ask Yourself

1. How good is your hip movement on the bottom?
2. What part of your game needs the most work?
3. What position gives you the most trouble?
4. What do you need to improve next?
5. How good is your posture in guard?
6. How can you improve your diet?
7. Are you getting enough sleep?
8. Is there a move you "should know" that still gives you trouble?
9. How well can you open the closed guard?
10. What is your favorite position?
11. What submission do you have the most trouble escaping?
12. Do you keep fighting from your back when you could get to your knees?
13. Are you confident with your closed guard?
14. Could you keep playing the same game if you were less athletic?



101 Questions to Ask Yourself (continued)

16. Are you confident with your open guard?
17. What positions do you avoid that you shouldn't?
18. What moves can you do on one side but not the other?
19. How many rounds can you go before you're gassed?
20. If your armbar fails, where do you go from there?
21. Are your legs really too short for the triangle or are your mechanics off?
22. Do you do something that goes "against the rules" (e.g. submissions from bad positions)?
23. What was the last submission you got caught with?
24. What causes you the most frustration?
25. Are you ashamed to pull guard?
26. Do you train takedowns enough?
27. Can you do your favorite throw while moving in different directions?
28. Do you prefer to pass from knees or standing?
29. How good are your standing guard passes?
30. If you had to start over, what would you do differently?
31. Are you making the best use of your training time?
32. Are there "basic" moves you wish you were better at?
33. Are there moves you never tried because you worried they were "too advanced"?
34. How can you use less strength?
35. How can you use less flexibility?
36. How confident are you with the gi?
37. How confident are you without the gi?
38. How different are your gi and no-gi games?
39. Are you aggressive enough?
40. Are you relaxed enough?
41. Are you too passive?
42. Are you too defensive?
43. What parts of your game could you simplify?
44. What submissions do you never try?
45. Have you surprised yourself lately?
46. If your triangle fails, what's your backup plan?
47. Why didn't you do karate instead?
48. Do you hold your breath when you shouldn't be?



101 Questions to Ask Yourself (continued)

49. Do you know of a black belt with your body type to watch?
50. Do you use the omoplata much?
51. Do you have a favorite finish from each position?
52. Whose guard do you really admire?
53. What does your belt mean to you?
54. Why are you afraid of competing?
55. Are you still worried about self defense?
56. How good are your headlock escapes?
57. Is your guard “too open” and loose?
58. Do you have a “go to” move for each guard you use?
59. What’s your main attack from mount?
60. What is your worst skill?
61. How do you measure your performance?
62. How much have you improved in the last six months?
63. Where would you like to be in 6 months?
64. Do you really want to compete?
65. Can you visualize moves and positions as simple geometry?
66. Do you use the americana much?
67. How often do you get the cross collar choke from guard?
68. How good are your side control escapes?
69. How far can you push your endurance?
70. What is your proudest moment?
71. What do you regret?
72. How many of the people that started with you are still training?
73. Do you remember what it was like to be a white belt?
74. What would be the simplest and quickest move from each position?
75. Are you overlooking simpler solutions?
76. Do you do moves just because they look cool?
77. What is a “basic” technique?
78. How do you define the fundamentals?
79. Would doing things differently be wrong or just different?
80. Is there a move you always wished you could do better?
81. Are there moves you just never seem to remember when you need them?
82. How do you keep yourself motivated?
83. Are the health risks worth it?
84. Do you drill moves on both sides?



101 Questions to Ask Yourself (continued)

87. Do you find drilling boring?
88. Do you put in enough repetitions?
89. How is your half guard?
90. Do you just stall in certain positions?
91. Are you always looking for the finish?
92. Do you worry that lower belts are catching up to you?
93. Is there something you always wished you were better at?
94. What part of competing makes you most nervous?
95. How can the last technique you learned fit into your game?
96. Do you have one really good training partner to work one-on-one with?
97. Do you need private lessons?
98. What sweeps and submissions go together?
99. What part of the mental game do you need to improve?
100. How do you deal with anxiety?
101. Are you afraid of losing?

67 Things to Try

1. Pick just one submission to focus on for a week.
2. Concentrate on how your hips are moving while sparring.
3. Find a way to make your hips as heavy as possible while passing.
4. Drill a sweep you didn't like the first time you learned it.
5. Take two different positions and figure out how to transition between them.
6. Pick one position and work on it for a month.
7. Try a new move today.
8. Pick a move you don't use enough and drill it before class for a week.
9. Draw a diagram of a move that explains its mechanics.
10. Write down how to do the last move you learned with as much detail as possible.
11. Draw a flowchart of the positions you use and how you transitions between them.
12. Try a new move just because it looks fun.
13. Almost let a white belt tap you today.
14. See how long you can hold a "strange" position while sparring.
15. Let people pass your guard so you can work on your escapes.



67 Things to Try (Continued)

20. Don't close your guard in sparring today.
21. Find a "fancy" move and see if it really is that fancy.
22. Drill the escapes to the last submission you got caught in.
23. Make a combination of three guard passes that have you go over, under and around the legs.
24. Ask a lower belt for his perspective on something.
25. Try to stand up from guard more often.
26. Try to take the back from everywhere.
27. Watch and study higher belts sparring.
28. Figure out how much your game changes with and without the gi.
29. Stretch before and after training.
30. Play guard as much as possible for a week.
31. Replay a round of sparring in your head as you're going to sleep.
32. "Steal" a good move from someone else.
33. Coach two white belts against each other.
34. Make your intentions obvious and see if you can still get the move.
35. Focus on controlling your breathing.
36. Set a faster pace than normal.
37. Set a slower pace than normal.
38. Move slowly and deliberately while sparring today.
39. Move fast and light with sparring today.
40. See how long you can hold mount.
41. See how many transitions you can do in one round.
42. Find a high level competitor with your body type and try to emulate him.
43. Stop halfway through a move and see how long you can maintain control.
44. Try a dumb move today.
45. Spar with your eyes closed.
46. Try sparring two people at once.
47. Hold knee-on-belly for as long as you can in sparring today.
48. Stand to pass guard this week.
49. Don't use one of your arms today.
50. Work on your rear mount escapes.
51. Try holding side control on a balance ball to develop pressure.
52. Compare where you are now to where you were 6 months ago.
53. Try not using your arms at all while sparring today.



67 Things to Try (Continued)

- 56. Do a full round of sparring from under side control.
- 57. Train transitions instead of positions.
- 58. Figure out a way to improve your scramble.
- 59. Draw a picture of how you think of a certain movement.
- 60. Pick the toughest person at your gym and spar with them.
- 61. Only use moves you learned as a white belt today.
- 62. Put in extra repetitions on your bad side.
- 63. Be single-minded in going for what you learned and drilled in class today.
- 64. Fine tune your chokes with feedback from your training partner.
- 65. See how long you can hold the triangle position without finishing the submission.
- 66. Put yourself in submissions and see if you can get out.



Matt Kirtley regularly shares his jiu-jitsu insights, techniques, and training methods at www.aesopian.com, one of the best BJJ blogs on the internet.



5 Common Mistakes in Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu

By Ritchie Yip

MISTAKE 1: Thinking That Mistakes Are Always Wrong.

Understand that you can make mistakes or technical errors as long as you do them on purpose.

If you are fighting a skillful opponent who is savvy enough to recognize an opportunity to submit you or sweep you, then you can set a trap for him.

By making a calculated error you bait a specific response from your opponent or training partner and then counter-attack his attack. You are creating an opening for you to take advantage of.

Let's say that you are trying to pass someone's closed guard. They have a closed guard from hell. You can't even get their ankles uncrossed. Set a trap for him by laying your arm onto the center of his chest. It has to be obvious enough for him to go for it, but, don't over-exaggerate it or else he'll sense the trap. When he throws his leg over your head to go for the armbar, turn your thumb towards his nose to stay safe from the armbar, stack him by bringing his knee to his nose and then pass his guard.

You were able counter his armbar attempt by attacking with a guard pass. You elicited his armbar attack by making the 'error' of laying your arm directly on his chest.

This is sometimes referred to as "attack by drawing" or as "baiting". Attack by drawing works: you are setting up a trap for your training partner with yourself as the bait.

Mistakes and technical flaws can be made as long as they're done as conscious choices.

MISTAKE 2: Singular Attacks

A common mistake in BJJ is to only ever have a single attack in mind.

People will fight for an armbar and their training partner will defend it. They continue to fight for the armbar until it's obvious that it has failed, then they'll jockey around a bit to control a wrist or a lapel and only then go for another attack.



A singular attack has the least likelihood of succeeding. A higher percentage way of attacking is to seamlessly blend 2 or 3 attacks together in a combination.

For every attack there are 2 or 3 typical ways to defend. You need to anticipate his most likely defensive maneuvers and have secondary attacks ready to counter it. For example, in the closed guard you could go for a scissor sweep, then attack with a kimura as he bases out with his hand, then go for a bump sweep as he defends the kimura.

Typically, it is the final attack in the combination that you want to score.

Keep in mind that sweeps, guard passes and position changes (like taking the back from top cross side) are all forms of attack. So another combination might be going for a guard pass, changing into a head and arm choke (aka arm triangle), then completing your guard pass, and then finally finishing with an armbar.

A higher degree of success is found when you combine your attacks together.

MISTAKE 3: Attacking From an Inferior Position.

Often people will be in an inferior position, bottom mount say, and they'll still be trying to submit their training partner with a lapel choke.

The success rate of a lapel choke from bottom mount is so profoundly slim that it's almost not even worth trying for. And, realistically, you'll just give your training partner your arms for him to armbar.

In the martial arts, you always need to be mindful of where you are and where your opponent is. For BJJ, there's a four step process to figure out what is going on.

Step 1: What position am I in?

The 6 basic positions in BJJ are the Guard, Cross Side, Mount, Back, Four Point and Knee Mount.

In reality there's actually 12 positions because you have to account for being on top or on the bottom. To illustrate, Mount position is actually one person in Top Mount and the second person in Bottom Mount.



Step 2: Is this position good or bad?

Typically, if you are on top you're in a good position. Guard is the exception. From the guard, you can be on your back and on the bottom and still be offensive.

As well, there are some grey areas. For instance, in half guard both the top player and the bottom player have equal opportunities to attack and transition to better positions.

Step 3: If I'm in a good position then I'll attack.

Step 4: If I'm in a bad position then I'll first defend, and then escape the position.

The mistakes occur when people get the sequences wrong. For example, people will often try to explode and scramble out of a bad position – but leave their neck open for chokes and their arms open for armbars. If you're in a bad position, first defend and making sure you are safe. Often this means keeping your arms short and defending your neck. Only then try to escape.

Similarly people will sometimes attack when they are in bad positions. For example, they'll be in bottom cross side and still be trying for a choke. Doing this will usually open them up for an easy counter.

Finally, keep in mind that like many things in martial arts, these steps are not absolute.

There ARE some submissions that work from inferior positions, and you CAN submit people during a scramble before you've solidified a strong superior position. These types of submissions are just less common and not as high-percentage as the bread and butter submissions you see on the mats every day of the week.

MISTAKE 4: Not Breaking Posture When Attacking From Closed Guard.

Did you know that your number one goal in closed guard should be to break down your opponent's posture? Breaking his posture allows you to set up all of your attacks from the closed guard. It also shuts down his easy escape routes once you're beginning to lock the submission on.

Most of your attacks from the closed guard (e.g. triangle chokes, Kimuras, armbars, omoplatas, etc.) are virtually impossible to set up on someone maintaining a strong posture. When he has his posture strong and with his eyes to the sky and posting with his hand on your belly, your ribs, your biceps, your belt or your lapel, then it is virtually



impossible to sweep or submit him. Your only recourse is to unlock your ankles and switch to an open guard game.

If you want to stay in closed guard, then you have to break his posture. One very effective way to do this is to pull the top of his head down. Bring him down. Get his head down to your chest.

Many people think that the priority is controlling the arms. That is not the case: controlling the arms is important, but only because it gives you a clear path to his head. He will try and block your attempts to grab his head. He'll push you back down to the mat and he'll keep you pinned down by driving into your biceps and chest.

That is why you may need to control his hands!

When you pull him down cup the back of his head, close to the top. Don't pull on his neck. If you grab onto his neck, he might still be able to maintain posture.

Once his posture is broken you can set up your lapel chokes, Kimuras, triangle chokes, or omoplatas.

When your opponent gets pulled down he'll often react by pushing on your chest, which opens him up to an armbar. Alternatively, you can use the momentum of him driving back up to sweep him over with a hip bump sweep.

Pulling down his head and attacking his posture from the closed guard is like the jab in boxing: it sets up all of your attacks.

Mistake 5: Staying Flat On the Back When Attacking With A Kimura From Guard

When executing a Kimura from the guard, you should be on your side, looking directly at your training partner's head. Instead, most people are flat on their back with their shoulder blades square to the mat.

To tap someone out with a Kimura, you have to bring their hand behind their back, like they're going to touch their own head with it.

If you're flat on your back it's not going to work. When you execute the Kimura



you'll probably have to straighten your arms in order to bring your training partners arm into the correct position for applying the lock. This requires a lot of upper body strength on your part, and it also allows him to escape the submission by straightening out his own arm.

A great example of this scenario playing itself out occurred in the Rich Franklin vs. Yushin Okami fight at UFC 72.

It's very important to have a tight keylock on your training partners arm and pin your elbows to your side. By doing so, you'll ensure a 90 degree bend in your training partner's arm- a necessary component to finishing the Kimura. Now there is no need for anyone to straighten their arms, and a much smaller chance of him escaping.

Once your grip is secure use your abs and turn to face him even more. Most people will tap at this stage, simply from you turning your body. If he still isn't tapping, only now is it okay to use your arms to push his hand up behind his head.

So, get on your side, get a tight keylock on his arm, and turn your body. Do not stay flat on your back and don't apply the lock using only your arms.



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The 100 Word Key to Unlocking Any Technique

by Stephan Kesting

Learn a **technique** and study all its aspects including set-ups, grips, body position, timing, balance, counters and recounters. Get help from your instructor, class-mates, the internet and instructional media.

Repetition makes you smooth. Smooth makes you fast.

Isolate the technique in sparring. Start with the smallest, least experienced person in the club. When the technique works consistently, move on and try it on the second smallest or second least experienced person. Repeat.

In **grappling**, observe problems you encounter with the technique. Then take time to analyze, brainstorm and discuss with coaches and training partners. Test solutions with more live sparring.



Stephan Kesting is a BJJ black belt and has instructor ranking in 5 other martial arts as well. He runs www.grapplearts.com and www.beginningBJJ.com.

To date he has produced over 20 instructional products, including DVDs, books, online training and apps for Apple and Android devices. He hopes that the sport and art of Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu will continue to grow and evolve throughout the world.