

# Mat Time

BY KID PELIGRO

## Jiu-Jitsu Basics

The other day I was talking to a friend of mine about (what else?) jiu-jitsu. He is a four-year purple belt and told me how impressed he was by the level of today's jiu-jitsu players. I could only agree. Back when I started BJJ, the technical level was much lower than today. One of today's good blue belts has the moves of yesterday's brown belt, and a purple belt now looks like a black belt of a few years ago. The sport, like most technical things, is progressing at lightning speed. Since Royce Gracie won the UFC in 1993, shocking the world with his family's techniques, the sport has experienced unprecedented growth. With its expansion throughout the world, there are not only more fighters but also more instructors and more competitions. This has caused very impressive progress.

This is not to say that the fighters of yesteryear were not as good as today's fighters. Everything is relative and those guys were the very best there was then, and even now give top young guns a hard struggle. But there is no denying that progress leads to advancement. Take running, for instance. In 1954 the first sub four-minute mile was run and nowadays the world record is three minutes, 43 seconds. The same is happening with swimming, gymnastics, and any sport you can name.

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Jiu-jitsu has been the benefactor of the same competitive pressures and therefore has also progressed quickly. Jiu-jitsu today is a highly advanced and sophisticated sport with an immense variety of styles, positions and techniques. Much like young kids now are computer wizards before they hit puberty, jiu-jitsu beginners are learning advanced moves much earlier. The flip side to all this quick progress is that a great number

of today's practitioners lack strong fundamentals as compared to even a decade ago.

If you have a smaller array of techniques to choose from, you practice them over and over until you get very good at them. Conversely, when you have three times the variations and options it takes you a much longer time to master them. I was at a tournament recently and one of Rigan Machado's white belts was competing. He was using a very sophisticated guard and giving his opponent a hard time. I turned to



Rigan and joked, "Hey, Rigan, you're sandbagging! This guy is not a white belt!" Rigan turned to me and smiled, "Kid, that's all he can do. If his opponent defends this he'll be lost." Sure enough, as soon as his opponent passed the guard and mounted, he submitted Rigan's student as if he was, well, a white belt. Rigan shrugged: "Just like I told you, Kid. I have tried to tell him to learn the basics but he is fixated with this fancy guard. He won't listen."

In a bigger sense, it isn't just this white belt who has a problem. Many of today's fighters and practitioners have skipped the basics and proceeded to the most advanced positions. That hasn't been a problem because they are fighting, in many cases, mirror images of themselves. But when they are faced with fighters who know the basics their weaknesses come out. How else can you explain Rener and Ryron Gracie's performances in the 2002 Nationals and the 2003 Pan-Ams? They submitted many opponents with basic guard chokes, arm-locks and foot-locks, and scored numerous points with simple sweeps. When I asked Rener about this he said, "It isn't like I'm doing anything special – they are just not that solid with the basics." So learn all the new stuff, but don't forget to work on the basics, too! **Grappling**

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# Brazilian Jiu Jitsu Techniques:

## (notes from a beginner)

Below are some rudimentary notes on Brazilian Jiu Jitsu -- a style of Jiu Jitsu originated by the Gracie family in Brazil.

This information comes from several sources. First, I and several friends have attended seminars by Rickson Gracie and by Rorion and Royce Gracie. I took notes at these. More recently, people in our group have purchased the "Gracie Basics" and the "Brazilian Jiu Jitsu" video tape sets. The most knowledgeable member of the group (and hence our tour guide on this trek) has been Don Geddis. So for example, my notes on the triangle choke are directly taken from what Don has taught in class (what I can remember of it).

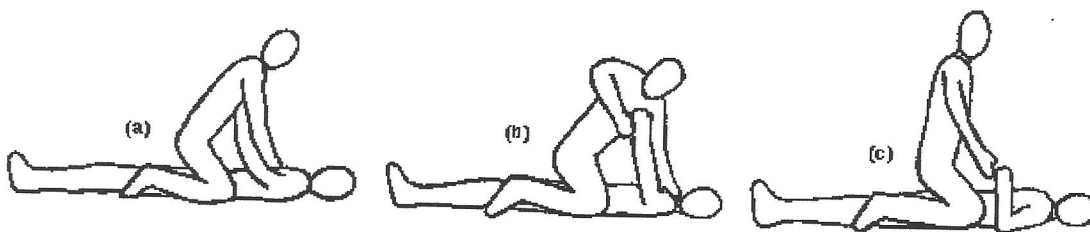
One should note that I am quite serious about being a beginner and thus my notes come with all the caveats appropriate for a beginner. These notes represent my best understanding of this material. Along with my friends, I am trying to learn this material from the above named sources. However, since neither I nor any of my friends are instructors in Brazilian Jiu Jitsu, the fact that there may be some inaccuracies in the notes does not imply that the techniques themselves are faulty. I feel quite confident in saying that were these techniques being explained by a qualified instructor, rather than myself, then they would be extremely effective.

So, even though I am trying to be as true as I can be to what the various qualified instructors teach, and even though Rorion Gracie was cool enough to goof around with me in a picture (at his and Royce's Stanford seminar), no endorsement by him or any other member of the Gracie family is implied nor should any be inferred. If this was not obvious in a previous version of this Web page, I apologize.

## The Mount and the Guard

This is my understanding of these two basic positions and why they are considered important in groundfighting.

### The Mount:



In the mount (a), the person on top has their legs astride the chest of the person on the bottom. This is a very advantageous position for the person on the top. In fact, for the person on the bottom, this is the single worst position to be in in a fight.

The reason why this is so bad for the person on the bottom is mainly due to punching. Due to the relative position of the shoulders and faces, the person on top can punch the face of the person on the bottom (b), but the person on the bottom cannot punch the face of the person on the top.

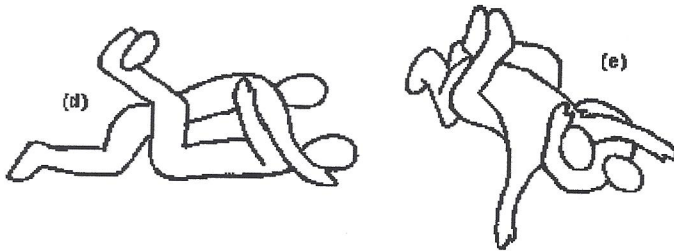
Furthermore, the person on top has gravity on their side to aid their punch (b) and can fully cock their arm. The

person on the bottom cannot fully cock their arm as it is blocked by the ground (c).

## The Guard:

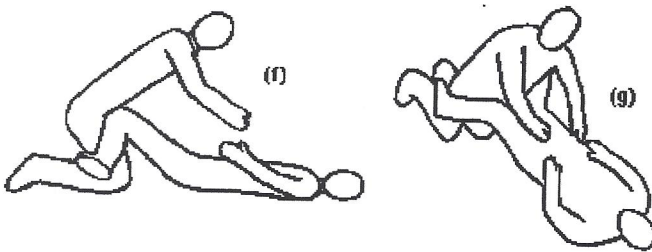
When the person on the bottom is able to use their legs to control the hips of the person on the top, then they have the top person in their guard.

### Near Guard



In the near guard (d) & (e) the person on the bottom has their legs wrapped around the hips of the top person. The opponent is clinched close, so that they do not have the distance to punch. The bottom person uses their legs to control the hips of the top person.

### Far Guard

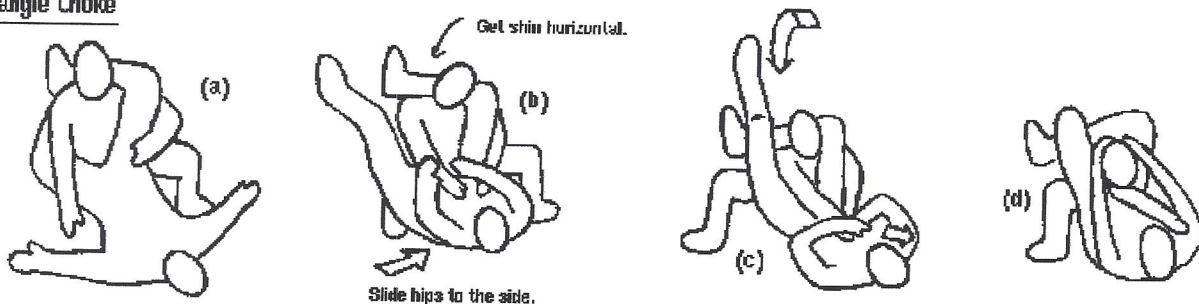


In the far guard (f) & (g) the person on top is kept away with the knees. In this position, the top person is too far away to effectively punch at the bottom person's face.

## The Triangle Choke

This is the choke that Royce Gracie finished off Dan Severn with in UFC IV. Renzo Gracie seems particularly fond of this one as well.

### Triangle Choke



A triangle choke is a useful choke to use from the guard. It is a defense against someone trying to pass the guard (a).

As they try to pass, they put one leg on their shoulder (b). (In this picture, your right leg.) Unlock your legs and pull their right arm down and across your body (b) \& (c). At the same time you want to get the crook of your left knee over your right ankle (c). This is often hard to do. It helps to get your right shin horizontal and to slide your hips to your right. You may have to use your hands to lock your left leg over your right (b) \& (c).

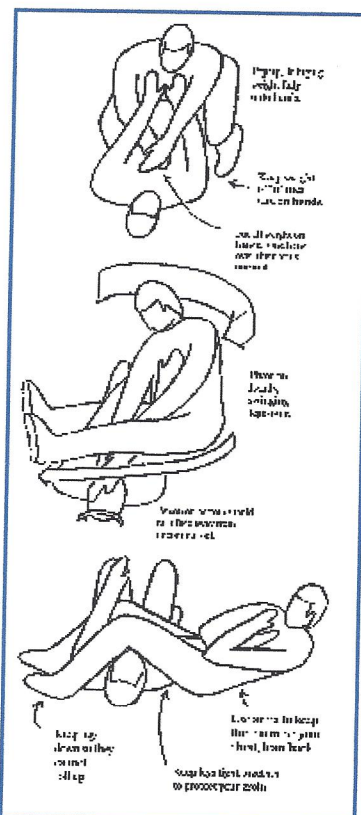
Once you get the left leg folded over (d) \& (e) this is an incredibly powerful choke. Fold your left leg down while pulling their right arm towards your right shoulder (c) \& (e). Stretch your hips back (e) while holding their arm.



Extra pressure can be applied by releasing their right arm and grabbing the back of their head (d) \& (f). Pull the head down into the V formed by your thighs while stretching the hips out (e).

This is very much like a Kata Gatame, put on with the legs.

Their defense involves early on reaching with their left hand across your neck and securing the lapel (g). From here they drive forward and down to put a choke on with their forearm. It becomes a question of who does it best -- soonest.



**Finishing move:**

going from the mount to an arm