

How to Take Down Better Wrestlers Than You

It's more simple (and safer) than you think.



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I'm a decent wrestler — for Jiu-Jitsu.

I had an over .500 record in my last season in high school, but I never really did anything remarkable in wrestling.

When I switched to Jiu-Jitsu, due to being a mostly gi competitor in IBJJF tournaments, I spent a few years avoiding wrestling and playing guard only. By the time I reached the brown and black belt division and switched to no-gi, I had to relearn how to wrestle for Jiu-Jitsu. It was like starting over (with a good base, of course).

I've spent the last 2 years developing my own kind of style for wrestling the ADCC rulesets. It's evolved a lot from just "sending it" once the match went to overtime.

Here's how you can take "good wrestlers" down without being one yourself.

The most important part about wrestling for Jiu-Jitsu is...

Grip-fighting — also known as "hand-fighting".

The reason that I've been using the term grip-fighting over hand-fighting is because think it's a bit more specific. It implies the goal.

Hand-fighting is a bit neutral and it doesn't specify the purpose of the fight. Grip-fighting, on the other hand, is very specific. It explains exactly what we're doing.

We're fighting for grips.

Your grip-fighting in training should be extremely specific. You should be looking : specific ties, set-ups, and even specific reactions from your partner on those setups

Likewise, good grip-fighting is the best way to neutralize an opponent who might be better at actual wrestling than you.

Why I love foot sweeps, ducks, and slide-bys.

My 3 favorite takedowns right now are:

- Foot sweeps
- Slide-bys
- Duck under

Why?

They're low-energy and low-risk techniques.

When I first started relearning to wrestle for ADCC, my biggest goal was to get good at "takedowns". I didn't know what the takedowns were and I adopted my style to look like that of good wrestlers.

I watched a lot of college wrestling and studied the most commonly used takedown (single-leg takedowns and front headlock), and I assumed that that was what I need in order to reach a high level.

I was wrong.

Jiu-Jitsu wrestling is not wrestling.

Think about wrestling like a boxer.

In boxing, the jab is the most commonly thrown punch.

If you want to build a successful wrestling game in Jiu-Jitsu, things like trips, elbow passes (something I added for ADCC), attacks toward the back, and snaps should all be your "jabs".

You should throw these attacks at a relatively high volume from most grip configurations.

Take a foot sweep, first:

- You can foot sweep from an over hook and under hook
- You can foot sweep off a snap
- You can foot sweep when you're behind on grips
- You can foot sweep from drags and Russian ties

The foot sweep is a highly versatile takedown.

A duck under can be attempted from many places as well:

- You can duck from distance (super duck)
- You can duck from neutral and slight offensive grips
- You can duck when your partner comes toward you aggressively
- If you miss a duck, at the very least you'll get "a reset"

A slide-by falls into this category as well:

- Any time your partner grabs a collar tie on you, a slide-by attempt is possible
- Collar ties are the most common grip and most people don't know how to use them
- A failed slide-by is just a foot sweep attempt waiting to happen

After you throw your jabs, you set up the big shot.

Just because you're using my special old man with back problems wrestling game does not mean that you can't hit cool takedowns too.

I throw my singles, doubles, and even throws into the game when I have my partner thinking about the bevy of other attacks I have because of the million variations of 3 takedowns I listed above.

Good offense comes from understanding concepts.

What makes a foot sweep work *in general*? It disrupts your partner's balance. A takedown happens when your partner's balance is compromised.

What makes a duck-under or *slide-by* work? It disrupts your partner's posture. A takedown to the back happens when your partner overcompensates to correct their posture.

And that leads us to the grand finale.

The big shot. The blast double.

A few years ago, I hit a really nice blast double against a former ADCC Trials winner at the end of a match to win a \$5000 prize. It was a huge takedown.

But the reason it worked is not because I have a great blast double. It was because my opponent stood straight up. I played defensively until they compromised their posture. Once they did, I capitalized.

In Jiu-Jitsu, the best wrestlers don't necessarily have the best takedowns — they have the best skills and strategies from the standing position.

And that approach is what most of you guys are going to have to do if you want to take down better wrestlers than you.

Closing Thoughts

I don't hit as many pretty takedowns in BJJ anymore as I used to.

At blue belt, I'd hit double legs and fireman's carries with ease. If I was feeling like I'd try a single leg.

At the lower belts, my wrestling was above most of my opponents, so I had options.

At black belt, thanks to my own not working on wrestling much in the middle of my career and the rising skill of my opponents, I have not hit as many pretty takedowns. I've had to use my brain.

However, all of my best takedowns have come from:

- Good grip-fighting
- Turning defense into offense
- Attacking with “safe” attacks like foot sweeps, slide-bys, ducks, or occasionally snatch single legs
- Throwing one or 2 “big takedowns” per match

I'll admit that there are times in ADCC matches when I've thrown this strategy to try to win and just taken careless shots. This is done so that I can get a high initiation count and eventually get to the guard, but it's not really the strategy I'd prescribe to most people. It's not really my A-game.

The plan is always to control the match — which means to get on top.

You need to know the safest and best way to do it.

Lastly, if you're looking for some DVDs that will help you develop this type of strategy, I recommend:

- [Closing the Gap by Michael Pixley](#) (Pixley is one of the most accomplished wrestlers actively competing in BJJ today)

- [Silver Medal Slide-Bys by JB Bechtloff](#) (I train with JB daily and stole a lot of wrestling techniques from him)
- [The J_FLO Academy by Justin Flores](#) (I've trained with J-Flo many times in SD learned how to blend Judo and wrestling from training with and watching him)

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