

# The Darce Choke

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The Darce choke is a submission in Brazilian Jiu Jitsu(BJJ) that is a variation of an arm triangle. Not only does this move have one of the coolest sounding names out there, it is effective at the highest levels of BJJ and Mixed Martial Arts (MMA) competition. Arising most often out of the front headlock position, the roots of this satisfying move might surprise you.

Like many of the moves of BJJ, this one had probably been known and used by jujiteros, judokas far before the Gracie era. Indeed, it is also a known technique in catch wrestling. However, one of the individuals behind the emergence and popularity of this choke in the modern game is none other than John Danaher.

In his front headlock instructional, Danaher introduces the Darce as the "inverted kata gatame." Classic Danaher, taking one of the coolest submissions and giving it a scientific name, right? Well, turns out he invented it, "in the mid 1990's, when I'd just gotten my blue belt."

It wasn't an accident either. Danaher goes on to say how he had noted how most submission in jiu jitsu had an inverted version, but not the kata gatame--the arm triangle. He details how on trying to pass fellow Renzo Gracie protege Shawn Williams' open guard, he noticed that the training partner posting on your far shoulder created an opening to create a gable grip at the far side of their neck. Then, using a "three-quarter-nelson" move from wrestling to get your opponent's shoulders on the mat, it was possible to "lock up a figure of four" and complete the submission.

Famously, Danaher has never competed. Much like how the immense success of his students Eddie Cummings and Gordon Ryan popularised Danaher's leg lock and straight-jacket back control systems, the name and notoriety of the inverted kata gatame came from the exploits of another student, Joe D'arce. According to Danaher, D'arce's success with the move in the California BJJ tournament scene led to opponents being wary about the "Darce," and the name stuck.

Interestingly, as an obscure youtube video reveals, D'arce referred not to the submission as the "Darce," but instead the three-quarter-nelson movement that breaks the opponent down from turtle onto their side.

From the front headlock position, Danaher instructs to cut an angle so that you are aligned with your training partner's shoulder line: the line that runs through your partner's two shoulders. Once this has been accomplished,

Danaher advises putting your ear on your opponent's back and getting your shoulder below theirs. Then, you use your legs and your elbow to drive your opponent down to their shoulder. Then, without unlocking your hands, and punching the elbow through as much as possible, lock up a figure of four so that your hand goes to your opponent's shoulder. Rotating your elbow across your opponent's neck gets you the strong submission and the tap.

While darces are often finished by sprawling your body, Danaher advocates stepping over into mount for a position that facilitates the strangle better. Danaher also shows an alternative method of getting into the darce: instead of breaking your training partner down, you may rotate underneath them and still get a strong finishing position.

Amongst the modern practitioners of Jiu Jitsu, the Ruotolo brothers Kade and Tye are known for making great use of the Darce choke. Tye Ruotolo was able to hit it on Danaher trainee and escape expert Gary Tonon himself in a One Championship full fight, ending the match in less than two minutes. The Ruotolos follow all of the technical principles mentioned above, and add a unique finishing method. Instead of breaking down their opponent from turtle, they rotate under to secure the choke and then perform a backwards roll. Then, they stepover or hook the leg to finish.

A lot of the Ruotolo's entries into darce come from turtle. A fair amount also come from open guard: when the opponent posts and is trying to butt-scoot or stand up away, the Ruotolos will often dive straight into the darce.

The submission is also available when you have your training partner in side control and they perform a knee escape. As they attempt to get out, their underhook presents an opening to go into the choke. Another cool setup opens up when you have your training partner somewhere in between side control and north south. Putting your arm as if you were doing a sort of upside down arm triangle may encourage your training partner to get to their knees: at which point the darce becomes available.

UFC fans have seen the darce choke hit by the best of the best fighters, including Tony Ferguson, Jorge Masvidal, and Dustin Poirier. A recent instance of the submission was seen in the fight between Khamzat Chimaev and Kevin Holland. The finishing sequence of this fight was especially instructive: Chimaev was having a lot of trouble finishing the choke using the sprawling finish, and didn't get the tap until he stepped over into mount. Danaher, as usual, knows his stuff.

