

Metadata: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1UKqIBX1HEI>

A couple weeks ago now, Gordon Ryan faced off against Felipe Pena. And I know you guys are probably pretty sick of hearing it by now, but Gordon Ryan claims he wasn't even trying. But from an outsider's perspective, it did look like Gordon was having trouble passing the guard and kept getting stuck in these 50-50 situations. So in this video, we're going to talk about whether I believe Gordon was telling the truth and what we can expect to see if these two face off again at ADCC. So luckily for us, Gordon was pretty open about his strategy after the match. He talked about how in his preparation for Pedro and Felipe Pena, the number one threat was their guillotine. So his strategy was to focus more on foot sweeps, as opposed to more traditional takedowns like single eggs or double eggs, to minimize the threat of a guillotine. And I think Gordon is definitely telling the truth here, and it was observed by one of our Discord members as well. But the question is, how hard was Gordon really trying for these foot sweeps? The match starts out with Felipe winning the grip fight, getting a collar tie, and throwing Gordon across the mat. And Gordon gave credit to Felipe for doing such a good job at preventing collar ties. And I think you could tell this was frustrating Gordon a little bit because he started to get more dynamic by using foot sweeps to set up collar ties, or initiating collar ties with one hand before switching to the other. And every time he was able to successfully get a collar tie, Felipe Pena would aggressively push him away. And you can see this happening over and over and over again. So Felipe Pena was doing a great job at preventing collar ties, but once the collar tie happened, Felipe Pena was using a lot of energy to clear it. And on top of that, when Felipe Pena got his own collar tie, he was relatively aggressive with his foot sweeps to off-balance Gordon. Whereas Gordon's foot sweeps were very half-hazard, and he didn't really put much effort behind them. So I do truly think that he wasn't trying, and this was level one grip fighting from Gordon Ryan. After doing this for a little while, Gordon decides to pull guard, and Felipe Pena initiates the guard pass. But it leads to the first sweep of the match, with Gordon starting out with this body lock, and then as he's working to transition to the back, he switches to this thigh pry. And we can see a similar transition in Maragalli's match against Lovato Jr. But Maragalli stays with this tight waist grip instead of inserting it as a thigh pry, making it easy for Lovato to get his back to the mat and prevent the back take. And you can see Felipe Pena is addressing this thigh pry right away. And as soon as he clears the grip, he has success in getting his back to the mat. And then switches gears to try and maintain top position, but Gordon says, okay, I need to get my hips higher than your hips, so I'm going to knock out your post a little bit to lower you before bringing myself up to complete the sweep. And it leads to Gordon getting very deep in our first guard passing situation, but Pena has both underhooks, which he uses to recover his guard. Mika found himself in a similar situation, and when he lost the battle for the underhook from the 3 quarter mount, he says, okay, let me backtrack a little bit and you can have my leg, putting me back in half guard, but I'm taking that underhook back. So while yes, we technically went backwards in positions, we're now in chest to chest half guard with an underhook in a very dominant passing position. And Mika easily works his way past the guard and back into mount. Another way we can use this principle of backtracking is that when we're in mount, we want our opponent's arm in front of our face, because that gives us the ability to set up arm triangles in other attacks. So if we're having trouble bringing our opponent's arm in front of our face, one thing we can do is hop off to knee on belly. And if our opponent leaves their arm over our back, it gives us perfect head position and makes the pass very easy. So our opponent will reason to themselves that a good frame is to bring my hand in front of your face to make it more difficult for you to pass. But that's exactly what we're waiting for. So now when we mount, our opponent brought their own hand in front of their face, and we're able to start isolating that arm and attacking submissions. Now I was hesitant to discuss this, because I think a lot of people will be saying to themselves that Gordon should have backtracked just like Mika did to get that underhook before passing to mount. And while I think this is the correct technique to do, and I

think Mika is amazing, I do not think that the conclusion should be that Mika is better than Gordon. Because the whole reason I'm thinking about this idea of backtracking, or just calling it backtracking, is because Gordon talked about it in his bodylock instructional. So he definitely knows and is teaching this principle, which backs up the idea that he wasn't really trying to pass Flípe's guard at the beginning of the match. I wasn't really trying to pass him, I was just putting pressure on him and focused on keeping him down. In a previous video, we talked about how Gordon used the strategy of keeping his head below his hips to pass Pedro's guard. And I think a lot of people, including myself, really underestimated Flípe's guard heading into this match. But if you watch him pass Pedro's guard, he's aggressively clearing frames and trying to get chest to chest. But for most of the early parts of the match, Gordon is just letting Flípe Pena carry his weight. And it's a bit delusional to think that this is Gordon trying to pass the guard. Because the match before, we saw Maragalli using beautiful foot pummeling, stuffing the knee, and smashing past the guard of Lovato Jr. And Gordon probably taught him that, and they've been working on it all camp. But in the beginning of the match, Gordon just sits in a split squat, where Flípe Pena seemed to enter at will into 50-50 and use it to transition to this bear trap position. Now I don't know much about this bear trap position, and it was fairly new to me. But it definitely wasn't new to Gordon, because Flípe Pena used it against him years ago in their match at ADCC. Now we're going to talk about the bear trap later on in the video, but just sticking with the theme of guard passing for now, you can see 5 years ago, Gordon is preventing entries into his legs while trying to hip switch past the guard. Now he wasn't successful at this guard pass in their previous match, but I think Gordon himself would tell you that his guard passing was pretty sloppy back then. You can see him here using a top pummel to set up a knee cut, but Gordon's knee goes to the ground, leaving his opponent a lot of space to insert their knee and retain their guard. Now a couple years later, Gordon uses that same top pummel to initiate the knee cut pass, but this time his knee remains off the ground and connected to his elbow, leaving no space for his opponent to insert their knee and Gordon successfully passes the guard. So Gordon has made drastic improvements in his guard passing since 2017. So it's very hard for me to believe that this is Gordon actually trying to pass the guard and this was level 1 guard passing, which eventually leads to Flípe Pena using 50-50 to stand back up and Gordon sits back down, leading to sweep number 2, where off this overback grip, Gordon uses a lot of energy to get on top. And now we get to see more level 1 guard passing, where Flípe Pena is very easily able to enter into the legs and use the 50-50 situation to stand back up. And this is where I think we start to see level 2 grip fighting. Gordon definitely picks up the intensity and Flípe Pena started to feel it and the announcer started to notice it. Once that like weight is coming into play, then we take a look back at our foot sweeps, take a look back at our arm drags. And once we start combining those things together, those can become a lot more effective. Gordon looked over and made that confirmation. Now one grip fighting position it looks like Gordon likes to get to is he takes a collar tie and off that collar tie, his opponent takes a cross shoulder post. And Gordon uses this against Pedro to hit a successful foot sweep and get to his back. And you can see in level 2 grip fighting, Gordon takes Flípe Pena's collar tie and puts it into that cross shoulder post. He's harassing the feet more to set up his collar ties. And earlier in the match, he kind of snapped Flípe Pena down and reached very nonchalantly with his right hand. This is level 1. Level 2 is I snap you down and my right hand's already grabbing your trap. And it leads to a very emphatic takedown. But again, Flípe Pena does a great job of recovering to 50-50 and using that to stand up. But this time, there's a little less gusto in his stand up and Gordon's able to keep him on the ground. And this is where we really start to see the fatigue setting in. Because for the first 30 minutes of the match, the story has been Flípe Pena pushing Gordon Ryan away, carrying his weight from bottom half guard, and using a lot of energy from 50-50 to stand back up to his feet. So of course it's going to start to take its toll. This is just the general strategy of Gordon Ryan, where from a fan's perspective, it's like, dude, the underhook from

mount is not working. Try something else. But if their escape requires the use of tons of energy, and there are no points or time constraints that incentivize the use of a different strategy, then it makes perfect sense why Gordon would basically just say, sure, let's see how many times you can stand up from 50-50 before you're completely exhausted. And Daniel left a comment on a previous video comparing this strategy to the way Gordon finishes chokes. And how when he sinks in a fully locked rear naked choke, he doesn't squeeze 100% right away. And his opponent wags the finger, feeling confident that the choke is not there. But the squeeze slowly gets tighter and tighter and tighter until eventually you can see that rotational finish in full effect, and Gordon gets the tap. And basically in a no time limit match, Gordon is exaggerating this strategy to a maximum effect. And I just wanted to take a quick second to say that I just really appreciate the community that we're building here on this YouTube channel. You all leave very insightful comments, and I just feel like we're attracting a lot of the BJJ nerds out there. And I just wanted to say I appreciate you all. Now after a little break, the match resumes. We see more level 1 guard passing, and Felipe using it to try to enter into the legs and just stand up. But again, Gordon chases him down, puts him back on the mat. And although Felipe is able to again recover his guard, you can see that guard starting to melt a little bit under the pressure. And this is where I think we start to see level 2 of Gordon's guard passing, where he tries to hit this little front step, but Felipe counters by hitting kind of this low reap. Gordon says, no problem, let me pull out of that, get back to my split squat. And 40 seconds later, Gordon tries the same thing again. But this time, when he ends up in that front step scenario, he makes sure to stay much lower, making it difficult for that reap leg to come around, and passes to a reverse knee on belly situation. But again, Pena does a great job of recovering to 50-50. And I think this is a good time to talk about the bear trap. Because from my perspective, it looks like Gordon is willingly going into this bear trap throughout the match. And if we look back on every time Felipe Pena stood up, it's come from a 50-50 scenario. And if our goal is to focus on keeping him down, it's going to be very hard for them to stand up from the bear trap scenario. So a lot of times, it's Felipe Pena who's exiting that position, to go back to 50-50 so he can stand up. But as the match progresses and Felipe's starting to fade, you start to see Gordon do things like grab Felipe's bottom foot, making it very difficult for him to stand up, and put forth a lot of effort to get back to that 50-50 position. And once he gets back to 50-50, Gordon goes straight back into the bear trap. And I think the second reason why Gordon is willingly going into this bear trap is because of hope. I don't want hope. Hope is killing me. I'm not too familiar on all of these types of submissions, but the bear trap seems awfully similar to the ham sandwich. And shoutout to Brandon, he has a few videos on the ham sandwich, and his channel in general is really good, especially lately I've been enjoying his content. But if you asked Brandon if this would be a legitimate strategy to beat Gordon Ryan, my bet is that his answer would be, I don't think so. But Pena gave it his best shot, just moments after he expended tons of energy to get back to 50-50. And that's because I think Gordon gave Felipe Pena the bear trap as hope, and Pena used his last bit of energy chasing that hope. And after it didn't work, it was clear that Pena was completely exhausted. But nonetheless, after a little break, the match continues, and I think this is where we get to see level 3 grip fighting from Gordon Ryan. Again, we see him forcing the position where he has a collar tie and his opponent has a cross shoulder post. And Pedro had a really good counter to this, where we saw him transition to a Russian arm. But Gordon took an underhook and tried to go knee pick, which is one of his favorite takedowns. When he's not able to get the underhook, Gordon likes to go arm drag foot sweep. And if his opponent runs from this cross shoulder post, Gordon pushes the hand down, where we've seen his teammates use that same arm drag foot sweep. But against Pena, Gordon ends up getting the underhook, tries to sweep the foot on the same side as that underhook, to set up the knee pick on the opposite side. And Pena does a great job of recovering to 50-50, but here I think we get another glimpse into guard passing level 2, where Gordon says, okay, I'm not playing your bear trap

game anymore, and I'm not going to try and do anything fancy like Maragalli did. Obviously, Gordon could have gone into leg locks there, but he wanted to prove a point and say, no, I'm not going to use leg locks in this situation. So Gordon just pulls himself out of the leg entanglement altogether. And this time he mixed up his footwork a little bit. And instead of stepping with his outside foot, he steps with his inside foot to Pena's hip, and then steps over his right leg to pass to neon belly. But again, Pena does a great job of recovering to 50-50 and uses it to stand up. But the amount of effort that takes is not sustainable. And eventually it gets to the point where you're just exhausted, and you look at the situation and realize that it's just not your day. And it's not worth dragging it out another 20 minutes. So let's just call it a night, pay your respects to one another, and you'll see each other down the road. I don't think there's anything shameful about that at all, especially after one of the legends of the sport, Leandro Lowe, who was good friends with Felipe Pena, passed away the night before. And it was awesome to see athletes showing their respect to Leandro throughout the event. But unfortunately, after the match ended, emotions were running high, and there was a lot of disrespect from both sides. So that kind of put a damper on the whole event. But as far as takeaways from the match, I think myself and a lot of other people underestimated Felipe Pena's guard and his ability to use 50-50. But don't get it twisted, because I think this was a result of Gordon playing a very tactical match, and other than the grip fighting, not really doing anything revolutionary technique-wise. But if they meet again at ADCC, I expect it to be a completely different match, with Gordon starting at around level 3 and working his way up from there, and show some of the techniques which we're able to get a slight glimpse of by watching his teammates. If you made it this far in the video, leave a fist bump in the comment section. I appreciate your support, I'm looking forward to ADCC, and we'll see you in the next video.