

Metadata: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Jz4oLDOHxLM>

Okay guys, we are here today with John Danner, a huge honor for me. Guys, today John is going to show us here how to do the perfect half guard passing. So this is the new series of the Go For The Faster Fundamentals instructions that we are doing. And he is doing this entire series all about how to pass the half guard. And John, can you explain why you broke down guard passing and half guard passing? Guys, I've got some explaining to do. I just released a video on guard passing. And now another video on half guard passing. Now, a natural question for you guys to be asking is, why didn't you just film them together? They're all guard passing, right? Why did you separate conventional forms of guard passing from half guard passing? That's a great question. And the answer to that question is going to be most of this video that we shoot for you here today. It's my belief that half guard passing represents a radically different form or approach to passing an opponent's guard over conventional guard passes. When you think about over-under passes or long step passes, what these all focus on is some kind of preliminary control over your opponent's hips. Half guard passing is very unusual insofar as the first focus isn't the hips, it's the head. Now, if I'm in Bernardo's guard, we'll just take a step from a generic open guard, let's say a butterfly guard for example. As long as Bernardo has two knees in front of me, it's suicide for me to start reaching for Bernardo's hip. Two knees in front and I'm reaching for the head, I'm an idiot. From here I start reaching for Bernardo's head, I'm giving him easy submission holds. I'm making his life easy. All that changes if I get over one of Bernardo's knees. The moment you conquer one of your opponent's knees, now it's pretty safe to start reaching for the head. At least on one side. When you go to hit any form of conventional guard pass, your primary goal is not to go first for the head, rather it's to beat your opponent's hips. So for example, if we look at a basic toriando for example. I'm here in front of my training partner and I score. My training partner is Gi Pansy, he gets a hold of my sleeve cuffs and we're here battling away. When we get into a situation like this, we're always looking to get past our opponent's hips. If we can start doing that and pushing the hips down to the floor from situations like this, we're looking to get those hips beaten. If we can beat the hips, now we can start working our way up to the head. This is where things get interesting. When you beat your opponent's hips, then you have to start focusing your attention on the head. That's where things often come unstuck for most conventional forms of guard pass. Let's understand this because it's a very important point. There's a movement which I often refer to when I'm coaching my students called the cranial shift. That's the shift from the focus on my opponent's hips to our opponent's head. That cranial shift is probably the single weakest link in most conventional forms of guard passing. If I get into a situation where we're locked up and I beat my training partner's hips, it's at this point that you can expect your opponent to go into framing defenses. If he takes his two hands and frames over me, I've got to make a shift from the hips, which I've just beaten, to the head. But guess what? His frames are making that very, very difficult. As I try to reach for the head, the legs start coming back in. Then, I'm sure you've all been there a thousand times. You beat the hips, but when it was time to get to the head, the frames made it very, very difficult. Your opponent was able to recover his legs and put you back in guard. You had to start the whole sequence all over again. Getting to your opponent's hip line is one thing. But getting to control the head and actually pin the head and shoulders is quite a different thing. And there's no guarantee that having passed your opponent's hip line, that you're going to be able to battle through those defensive frames and get in and actually control someone's head. Now, that stands in contrast with half guard passing. Once I beat someone's knee, now it's perfectly safe for me to start reaching for and controlling my opponent's head. When I get control of my opponent's head through some variation of crossface, here I'm using a lapel crossface. When my opponent goes to frame in situations like this, his framing options are much more limited. We're chest to chest with our opponent, and you're already starting to exert considerable control over your opponent's head. When he tries to move and work from here, you

can use his jaw as a lever and put considerable pressure on your opponent and start flattening him out into situations where it's very, very hard for him to be effective. In fact, you get control of the head first and you pass your opponent's guard second. He still has my trail leg captured here at the knee, but because I'm over the lead knee, I'm able to safely attack my training partner's head in situations like this. Now, from here, we're in positions where we can start to extract the feet and start working into a pass. You see what's happened here. You've reversed the order of operations. Normally, in conventional guard passes, the order of operations is we go to beat our training partner's hips, and then the head is the final target. If we can get to the head successfully, then we complete the guard pass, and the referee counts us as scoring if we can control the situation for around three seconds. It's always a case in conventional guard passing of hips first and head last. It changes in half guard passing, where here it's head first, and when the head has been beaten in situations like this, we pass the hips last and go and control the hips. The order of operations completely changes between conventional forms of guard passing and half guard passing. That's why I divided them. I see them as such radically different topics, which operate in completely different ways, that it's worth dividing them and thinking of them as completely different ways to understand passing your opponent's guard. That was the logic behind dividing half guard passing from regular guard passing. Again, it's all about order of operations. Instead of hips to head, we go head to hips. That's why we made a division between the two. Manalo, we wanted to demonstrate today some elements of half guard passing. Show me some practical stuff here. That's the theory. Show me some practical elements here. I thought a very interesting form of guard pass, which I've always favoured a lot, it's probably not the most common form of guard pass in modern jiu-jitsu, but mechanically it's a very, very sound method of passing and can be an important addition to your game. It does figure in the half guard passing video and along with many other more established and known techniques. This is the idea of a reverse half guard set up into a three-quarter reverse position. We're going to start off here with our knee in a fairly conventional passing position, just like so. Our opponent's working from this position. I'm going to start by going over my training partner's knee and forcing our body down into a half guard position. We bring the camera around on this side. Initially, my interest is in flattening my opponent out. His interest is getting to an underhook and coming up here on the side and causing problems for me. Please understand that no amount of cross-face pressure will flatten your opponent out from this position. This is a common misunderstanding. People think it's the cross-face that flattens this guy out and puts his shoulder down on the mat. I've got bad news for you. You can put on the best cross-face you've ever had in your life. If Bernardo uses his underhook and I can put on as much cross-face pressure as I want, I will never flatten him out on this side and he will always have the advantage in any kind of battle over my cross-face versus his ability to come up. What flattens someone out in this position is never cross-face pressure. It's movement. In particular, movement across my opponent's hip line. When Bernardo comes up with that underhook in place, I can do whatever I want with this cross-face. I'm going to try and put you down with a cross-face, Bernardo. You try and come up towards me. He wins easily every time. But what if we change things and he goes to come up and I just walk across his body? Come up, Bernardo. Does that make sense? When I walk across his hips, it's the movement across the hips that flattens him out and puts this shoulder and this hip down towards the floor. Again, it's not cross-face pressure that puts him down. Again, it's movement. As Bernardo wins the battle for the underhook, I start a movement across his body. It's the movement that puts his hip down on the floor. Once his hip and shoulder touch the floor, now you can work with your cross-face. Now your cross-face feels effective. But the cross-face here does no good at all. With the shoulder and the hip off the mat, the cross-face is worthless. A simple movement across his body puts this shoulder down on the floor. I put my head on the mat. My cross-face now is very, very effective. Now I'm going to push on my training partner's knee. You have the option of the hand

or the elbow. I generally prefer the elbow because Bernardo is taller than me. If I start reaching, he can use his right hand to reach behind me and cause all kinds of problems. But if I use the elbow, that's almost impossible. Now I put my knee here on the floor and we straighten up. We've gotten to a position called the three-quarter mount. This is a great, great passing position from half guard. Now let's bring the camera around this way. From Bernardo's perspective, he obviously wants to get my right knee back inside his guard. That's what he wants. So what are we going to do? We're going to put on a scapular cross-face. That's where I take my hand and I grip right here. I put four fingers inside the flap of cloth behind his jacket. If we were going no-gi, I would just grip my training partner's lat muscle. Now I use my shoulder. I put my shoulder over my own hand. If we bring our camera around in this direction, from here, I'm going to put pressure on the cross-face. And from the three-quarter mount, I'm going to step across the body and grab here at my training partner's gi pants. Right here on the outside of the knee. If we bring the camera back in this direction, you'll see that my scapular cross-face works very effectively with my shoulder over my own hand. It looks like I'm in a rather precarious position. If we bring the camera behind me, it looks like Bernardo could just explode up on top and come up on top of me. But I promise you, that scapular cross-face will hold him in place. He cannot come up in this position. Now, let's bring the camera back over this side. From here, I'm going to walk Bernardo's knees up to his hip line. I don't want him to fall. his legs out here somewhere. So we walk up here. I point my toes along the mat, not up to the ceiling, along the mat. Now from here, I pull on the top leg. You see the tension in Bernardo's deep hands? There should be tension here. I put my foot on his bottom knee and I stick my foot out. Now, Bernardo's last chance is to try and explode up on top of me. But the scapular prostate makes it very, very difficult. Now I touch his knee to the mat. We come up on top, we pull the head underneath. We've got a beautiful pass and a controlled situation at the completion of that pass. Let's have a look at that again. We start off, let's come on up this way. Typically, one of the more common guard passing scenarios we start in the sport, we push the knee down and my knee comes over the top and we end up in a half guard type scenario. Bernardo does a good job of punching in, taking his underhook. I want this shoulder and this hip down to the mat. Common mistake here is people try and do it with the cross face and run into all kinds of problems. Remember, it's gotta be movement that puts this hip and this shoulder down to the mat. So we tuck in and we move across his body like so. Once I get the shoulder down to the mat, now we can start applying a good cross face. From here, look how I take my hand or my elbow and I push so that my knee comes down to the mat. We're in a three quarter mount position. From Bernardo's perspective, he wants to put my knee back between his legs. That's what he wants, okay? So we come in here and we take a scapular cross face. Let's bring the camera on this side. We come through, we take that scapular cross face. I bring my shoulder over my own hand. Apologies, Bernardo. Now I back step and I lock here onto my training partner's glute bands. I walk up to his shoulder line, which maximizes my cross face pressure. The closer I am to Bernardo's hip line, the less he feels the cross face, the more he can come up on top. Okay, that's not good. So I want my hips up here, okay? Now we put tension in the leg. I put my foot on my training partner's knee. I pull with my left hand and push with my right and out we go. Now from here, the last chance for Bernardo is to drive forward and come up. But that scapular cross face makes it so damn difficult. Now we touch the knee to the floor and we come up into a beautiful pin across our training partner's side. Now, Bernardo, you and I, we're big fans of the idea of insurance policies. No matter how good you get at a given move, there's always that guy who can explode out of position, you know, interrupt you in ways you never even anticipated. You know, it's a competitive game. The other guy's a tough dude and things can happen that you didn't anticipate. So it's always nice to have an insurance policy to know that you can recover from a situation that didn't go as planned. This form of half guard pass always has a beautiful insurance policy built into it. Okay, so from the three-quarter mount position, I'll take it from

here. Once I put my knee down on the floor and we get into that scapular cross face, look how when my hand comes here and grips at my training partner's deep hands and I start my movement up here towards the shoulder line. Let's say you had an opponent in bottom position who was just so damn explosive that despite you trying all your best, you ended up here in this position. Okay, and he's on top of me. As long as my knee is outside his hip, even when Bernardo comes all the way up on top, you'll always be able to return him to the mat. Okay? The key is that semi-gauge reaction that drives him over and gives us the position we're looking for. So, taking it from the three-quarter mount, from here, he's looking to get my knee back between his legs. We get our scapular cross face, we back step and we grip our training partner's deep hands. As Bernardo explodes up on top, we just use our foot to lift and drive him back to where he came from. And as a result, we end up with a beautiful pin. Okay? So even when the guy does have that explosive ability where no one likes to go with someone who's that explosive, they can just come out of a bad pin and find their way to the top. This is a nice way to use your feet to recover from what seemed like a bad situation. So this is an incredibly effective way to pass your opponent's half guard. What's interesting about it, Bernardo, is mechanically, when you're performing the move, you feel a little unstable. Like, you feel like you're kind of sitting back and kind of just being pushed back. You realize that scapular cross face and my shoulder comes over my own hand. I come up to the hip line and kick out. It's so hard for him to take the top position. And very easy for us to come up to our base and into a stable pin across the other side. Yeah. So I'll draw a few comments here. So coming back to the first part where you were explaining, like, the guard passing, the half guard passing, I love the concept of, because we do that so many times, but sometimes we don't stop to think about it. Yeah. But I love the concept of how, when we're passing the guard, not the half guard, we are focused on the hips and maybe on the legs, and we cannot focus on the head. And that makes a lot of sense. I was even thinking about that, for example, when you're in a closed guard, if I try to hold your head. Suicide. And then, when you get the half guard, it's the opposite. We don't have to worry as much about the head. Then it's all about the head. It's all about the head, yeah. Yeah, you actively want to go to the head. So the things which are the golden rules of being in someone's closed guard, you never reach for the head. It's like a golden rule. But then, from half guard, it's the exact opposite. Now it's all about getting to the head, getting to the shoulders, getting to underhooks, cross-faces, reverse cross-faces. And if we can do these things, you put an enormous amount of pressure on people. No, I love it. I think we'll both agree on this, but the idea that, when you talk about genuine pressure passing, pressure passing is a phrase that gets thrown around a lot. This guy's a pressure passer, that guy's a pressure passer. But the people who put the most physical pressure, when it's time to pass guard, are those who control the head. It's one thing to have pressure on the hips. It's a tough thing to deal with. But at least you can move your head around, you can think. But when someone has a truly intimidating cross-face, regardless of the type that they employ, it's so distracting when you're working from bottom half guard. You can almost feel like you're strangling with such a powerful cross-face. And you just feel, as the head gets completely immobilized and pinned to the mat, you feel your defensive options just become so limited. Of all the methods of passing, there's no greater pressure than pressure on the head. Half guard does a better job of setting this up than any other method. So when you talk about, I wanna be a pressure passer, well, you couldn't really do much better than becoming a half guard passer, that's where the most powerful form of pressure, pressure on the head and shoulders, comes to the fore. I agree. And Joe, just to finalize, I love this concept as well. Every time I'm on half guard, I love getting the underhook. So I love this concept that you showed about how to avoid the person getting the underhook, walking back, walking towards the direction of the- It feels so natural. Let me just flatten this guy out with a cross-face. And yet, it's a disaster. And because he has the underhook. Yeah. The cross-face becomes effective after you've put a shoulder down to the mat. And the key to that is

to understand it's lateral movement that crosses hips. So if you're on top of me, and working like so, I'll just take shoulder pressure. If I'm up here on my side, like so, even as you go to apply shoulder pressure, it's hard for you to be effective here. Yeah, I hear. But the minute you walk across my body, watch my knees. It's my knees, too. That's where everything comes in. Yes, and then I'm able to put pressure. Yeah, this concept was amazing. How, like, the same time that we gotta focus on our head, we always gotta worry about, we also gotta worry about the hip, but using my legs, right? Instead of using my arms than we would do in the regular guard passing. Oh, that was amazing. And guys, we just shot an entire structure with John, all about half guard passing. So instead of doing this together with the guard passing, we made two different structures because, as he just explained it, the guard passing, he focused more on the hip, and half guard passing, he focused on the head. So very soon, we're gonna launch that at bjjfanatics.com. So make sure to check that out. It's one of the part of the series that we are doing now is the Go For The Faster Fundamentals with Gi, and it came out really, really good. So thanks so much. Interestingly, when you look at my students, it's demonstrated in the Gi, but my students are often associated with half guard passing skills. Gordon Ryan, in his finals match in ADCC 2019, did all of his passing out of half guard. So you see the principal's work just as well. Yeah, same principle. Interestingly, George St. Pierre was one of the finest half guard passers in mixed martial arts history, and it shows that half guard passing is essentially a versatile tool. Works in grappling, works with a Gi, works without a Gi, and works in mixed martial arts. It's a powerful, powerful tool to have. There's many forms of guard pass, which I personally love, but I know have limited applicability without a Gi, like long-stepping, for example, almost impossible. No, but I love the idea that you broke down in two different structures, because I think sometimes we do instructions of guard passing, and half guard pass get lost, or they show like one or two moves. So now it's an entire structure all about half guard passing. So that was a really wise idea. It's been incredibly successful in every context for my students, and it can be successful for you too. You've gotta start thinking of this as like a, it's a radically different approach to passing your opponent's guard. I personally think it's the most, if I could only have one method of passing guard for the rest of my life, I would unquestionably choose forcing my way to half guard and passing from there. Okay, it's the most versatile, works best for both Gi and no Gi, works in mixed martial arts, works in grappling. It's just incredibly effective. If you look at some of the finest guard passers in history, many of them worked almost exclusively from the idea of just forcing half guard and passing from that position. It's an incredibly valuable part of the game. It also requires very little movement skill on your part. I've gone through my whole life with a crippled leg, and now I have a placement, but I can still pass half guard pretty effectively. It's just, it doesn't require any speed, any great movement skills, and since it's switching left and right, you can do it at a leisurely pace, you're controlling your opponent the whole time you do it. It's just, there's just so much going for it as a method of passing guard. It's gotta become part of your game. Yeah, so guys, it's gonna be at bjjfanatics.com soon, so maybe by the time you're watching the video, it's already there, so make sure to check that out. Thanks so much, John. That was fun. Thank you. Improve your jiu-jitsu faster.