

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

Why is Gordon Ryan so good?" Lex Friedman asked John Donaher this question in their recent conversation. And it's an interesting question because John has many students, but yet there's only one Gordon Ryan. And John points out Gordon's incredible ability to recall information and also his defensive expertise, which gives him the confidence to pull the trigger when opportunity arises. They also discuss the pride that Gordon has in his technical ability that does not allow him to be content with a satisfactory result and leaves him always searching for a more optimal outcome. Over the past week, I've spent a lot of time thinking about this question. And it's actually the first time in my YouTube career where I've made a video, but then deleted it and started from scratch. Because as I thought about it more and more, there seemed to be one principle that stood out among the rest. And I wanted to be sure to highlight that principle throughout the video. So I invite you to come down the rabbit hole with me as we dive into this question and compare Gordon Ryan to Hicks and Gracie and Floyd Mayweather in an attempt to answer the question, Why is Gordon Ryan so good? I'm going to keep this short and sweet, but I just wanted to let you guys know that next week's video is probably going to be about the EBI and PGF events. So if you want a bit more context headed into that video, be sure to check them out. And I wanted to give a quick shout out to my sponsors, which are Brandon and his BJJ365 platform, as well as Lachlan Giles and Submeta. There are discount codes in the description of the video if you're interested in checking out either of these platforms. And I feel like once we get our BJJ Fanatic sponsorship, we're going to have all of our bases covered between these three platforms. So I'm just going to keep knocking on that door. But for now, let's get into the video. The idea behind Jiu Jitsu is you start by bringing the fight to the ground. You then pass the guard and get to a more dominant position like the mount before getting to what is considered the most dominant position, which is the back and finishing the fight. And that is what Hicks and Gracie did beautifully throughout his career. He goes, we start at a neutral point. He goes, and then we go to one. And he goes, when I move to one, I'm not going back to zero. He goes, I'm moving to two and then to three. And then checkmate. So the basic idea is that there's no going backwards as we work our way up this pyramid. Once we take them down, they're not going to be able to get back up. And then once we pass the guard and progress to mount, we don't allow them to recover their guard. And in this way, we keep moving up the pyramid until we finally get the finish. And this is the perfect representation of Jiu Jitsu and what we're all trying to achieve. But the problem is, as we're trying to work our way up this pyramid, our opponent is going to be trying to press the reset button. And this could be as simple as saying, man, I'm getting smashed from half guard. So maybe if I can pummel in this butterfly hook, my opponent will respect it and disengage. And that will allow us to reset to a neutral position. Or kind of a popular reset button nowadays is as your opponent passes the guard, you throw up a buggy choke. And sure, you may actually get the choke. But if it doesn't work, it acts as a reset button to start in a neutral position. Another fairly common one is as someone is attacking your foot, you can attack their foot as well, which again, may work, may not. But the idea is it forces them to bail on the position and reset. And probably the most common form of reset is just to push away. And if the first push doesn't work, then just push again to reset to a neutral position. But as these resets get more advanced, they're going to involve some sort of off balance. Where if I'm stuck in the bottom of mount, I can try and off balance my opponent to initiate my escape and reset to a neutral position. Or if I find myself on the receiving end of a body lock pass, I can try a knee lever to off balance my opponent and then recover. Or if my opponent is beating me in the grip fighting game, I can try a foot sweep. And again, that foot sweep might work, it might not. But if it doesn't work, at least resets me to a neutral position. So you can see these resets are starting to get a lot more advanced than just pushing someone away or bench pressing them off of you. And we're going to need ways to effectively stop these resets as we're trying to progress up the pyramid. And a lot of times people develop little tricks to do this.

Where if you're trying to pass the guard, you find ways to do so very quickly and effectively. And it could be as simple as just doing a quick little knee cut to force your opponent to turtle and now you have their back. But on the BJJ Fanatics podcast, Travis Stevens explains why this is not the best thing for your development. It's hard to get athletes to grow to an extremely high level when you allow them to use tricks and they're rewarded for it. Because tricks only get you so far. Like you can catch anybody once with a trick, but can you do it twice? What about the third time? What about the fourth time? And probably the most classic jujitsu trick is the baseball bat choke. And it is rewarded because it does work sometimes and it's what people want to see. I've never gotten anywhere close to 530,000 views. And as you can tell, I'm a little bitter about it. And I think part of the reason why I haven't gotten this many views because my voice is extremely annoying. But another part of it is that most people are not jujitsu nerds like you and I. And they want to see some fast paced fireworks. And when people use tricks, it has the same effect as a one punch knockout in boxing. But when people pass the guard using checkpoints, it tends to be more slow paced. Now, an example of a checkpoint would be something like this weave position here or a body lock. And some checkpoints that Gordon Ryan likes to use a lot is this chest to chest half guard position. This kind of high tripod with your head on the far shoulder position and this over back grip. And I'm just going to make up numbers to make this easier to understand. But the idea behind a checkpoint is that from a standard open guard position, let's say the person on bottom has 10 options. But if we're able to get to a checkpoint like the weave position, now the bottom person only has five options, making them more predictable. And when your opponent starts to become predictable, that's how you make it look like you're always one step ahead of them. So an example could be we start in a neutral position, but then we progress to our first checkpoint of getting chest to chest in a low half guard. And now we work to get to our next checkpoint, which is to control the head and shoulders. And a third checkpoint could be to get double underhooks. And with each subsequent checkpoint, our opponent has fewer and fewer options to off balance us and hit that reset button to the point where their only option could be to try an Ezekiel choke. So instead of having a quick trick to pass the guard, there may be three or four checkpoints we use along the way to progress up the pyramid. But this is the part of the video where things start to get really interesting and is the primary reason I think you and I are not like Gordon Ryan. And shout out to my instructor Mike Morrell from the Cave Academy for giving me the inspiration to use this boxing analogy because I think it works perfectly to portray this point. If we look at the boxing match between Floyd Mayweather and Conor McGregor, Conor came out trying to punch Floyd in the face, which is similar to trying to do a quick knee cut and get to the top of the pyramid as fast as possible. And why wouldn't Conor do that, right? He's had a ton of success doing that in his past. But if you watch Floyd, he uses little short shots to the body and sometimes the head. But the most important thing is he's constantly putting pressure on Conor. And these punches are not intended to knock Conor out. He's just trying to touch him and keep Conor active. And eventually, Conor feels the weight of this pressure. And when that happens, it's over. Now, I know nothing about the finer techniques to make that work in boxing, but I think that is exactly what Gordon Ryan is doing in jiu-jitsu. And that is the reason why he's so good, especially in these longer matches. There are a lot of people out there trying little tricks to get those one punch knockouts and get to the top of the pyramid as fast as possible. And Gordon definitely has the ability to finish matches quickly. But primarily, and especially in longer matches, Gordon uses this idea of checkpoints. But he uses them differently than everyone else. If I do a leg drag, it's relatively predictable that you're going to want to bring your leg back across my body. And when you do, I can use a quick knee cut to pass the guard. So we're combining techniques similar to how a striker would combine a flurry of punching and kicking to overwhelm our opponent and pass the guard. And our previous checkpoint example is a great representation of Hicks and Gracie's idea that you go forward and not backwards. But it starts to get interesting once

the system breaks down and your opponent is able to hit that reset button. You always have the option to... Fuck it. Try a leg lock. But people are very insistent on finishing the guard pass. And as you invert to defend my knee cut, I'm trying to transition to a leg drag. And as you defend my leg drag, I transition to a knee cut. But if this flurry of attacks does not work, I just spent a lot of energy and we often end up back in a neutral position. Which gives our opponent the ability to catch their breath. Where Gordon uses checkpoints as a way to put constant pressure on his opponents. Recently, one of Gordon's favorite checkpoints is this high tripod with his head on the far shoulder. And he likes to progress to this overback grip. But as Andre hits the reset button, he is able to reset. But he resets back to that checkpoint. Gordon is able to achieve this by not committing so much to his techniques. And he basically says, okay, Andre, you can hit that reset button and I'll go backwards into my checkpoint. But Gordon's goal isn't to pass. It's to make Andre hit that reset button as many times as possible. So Andre literally doesn't have a second to breathe because Gordon is constantly coming forward and threatening him with attacks. Now these aren't knockout punches, but they're body shots. And that is what Gordon's doing differently than everyone else. One of the more dominant checkpoints that Gordon likes to get to is this chest to chest half guard position. And Gordon finds himself here against Andre and starts to initiate his pass. And Andre presses that reset button as hard as he can. And could Gordon go for the finish right now and progress up the pyramid? Sure, he probably could. But it could also lead to Andre resetting back to a neutral position. And again, these are not finishing punches. These are body shots. And if Andre didn't react and didn't press the reset button, sure, these body shots could finish him. But Andre does respect it. And Gordon willingly goes back into the guard, knowing that those body shots are starting to take their toll. And even as Gordon is so close to progressing up the pyramid, he is still not committing so much to his techniques and just making Andre respect them. And as I'm making this video, Gordon posted on Instagram talking about this sequence in his match with Felipe Pena. And he basically says, yeah, I mean, if Felipe Pena didn't do anything, I would have taken his back. But he did respect it and I didn't take his back, which is fine. I'm not expecting to knock anyone out with these body shots. I'm just trying to wear you out because I understand pacing better than anyone else in the game. So this post couldn't have come at a better time. And it fits in perfectly with what we've outlined throughout this video. And in a match where Andre most likely had a very tactical game plan, Gordon showed that he understands pacing better than anyone in the game. And I believe he's able to achieve this level of dominance in longer matches because of the principles we've outlined in this video. So in conclusion, there are levels to this game. Level one thinking is you're trying to look for little tricks to get up the pyramid as fast as possible. It's hard to get athletes to grow to an extremely high level when you allow them to use tricks and they're rewarded for it. Level two is you're trying to use checkpoints to develop combinations of techniques and deal with resistance to overwhelm your opponent and ultimately progress towards the finish. Level three thinking, which is the highest I can think of at this current moment, is when you use checkpoints as a way to keep constant pressure on your opponent. So when you do decide to open up and use your combinations, they're much more effective. And although I feel a bit mean doing it, I've had a decent amount of success in the gym marinating people with this mindset. So hopefully it resonates with you all and you find it helpful as well. And if you do, be sure to leave a fist bump in the comment section and remember to watch EBI and PGF in preparation for next week's video. And we will see you then.