

Metadata: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5Gn8ODvm_Ac

Now, we're looking at the idea of the top block as another excellent, mildly dominant position from close guard scenarios, which we can use prior to attacking, which is going to increase your chance of success in live situations against knowledgeable, resisting opponents to be more successful out there on the mat. We looked at the number one gripping strategy to get to the top block. I may start bringing in some more gripping strategies for you that are also very effective, but the one we just looked at, cross cuff with an overclasp and leading to a cross collar. That's the number one method of breaking our opponent's posture and getting to a top block. Now, as you've probably guessed, the number one attack out of a top block is always going to be an armbar, judo gitani. It's a fantastic way to control our opponent's head and shoulders and prevent most of the usual escapes to judo gitani that often occur when we just go straight from a close guard. So, for example, if I have Mateus here on my close guard, if I just try to go directly from a situation where my feet are around my opponent's lower back and then get some kind of control of my training partner's arm, put a foot on the hip and bring a leg up high and then bring my leg over my training partner's head, this is a kind of a jiu-jitsu 101 method. It's not a bad method in a beginner's class for attacking judo gitani, but it has some obvious problems associated with it. I have no real control of my opponent's shoulders and head, and as a result, my opponent can see the foot on the hip, feel the leg coming up the back, and he can start posturing up, pulling the elbow, et cetera, et cetera, and you feel now your armbar completely deteriorates and now you're in a compromised position. Contrast this with a top block. Once we get to a top block up here, the amount of distance that I have to cover to get into an armbar now is minimal. Just a tiny shift from one shoulder across to the other shoulder, and we're in business. As opposed to shifting all the way from the lower back, it's a big movement, a lot of space, and as a result, easy for my opponent to pull his arm free as I attempt to move. So the top block is a fine way of getting shoulder control prior to the actual lock. We've seen that in situations where my opponent is gripping up, we go over the top and take a cross cuff grip. We bring our elbow over his elbow, we pull in with our two legs, and then from this situation, we get a very strong cross collar grip all the way up behind our training partner's neck. When he tries to stiff arm me off, it's so difficult under these circumstances. I turn my body onto its side like so. If I'm squared up to my opponent and he pushes, I feel my arm getting extended. So we always want our body out here on its side, and as a result, we can now pull in with our arms, shimmy our hips, and we lock up, and we've got a very, very firm control of our opponent. As he goes to stand up, pull away, move out, do all those things that people do, standing up to his feet, yanking me up off the floor, my knees pull inwards, and the lock gets tighter and tighter. Now, if your opponent knows that Judy Gutami is about to come, they're all going to do the same thing. They're going to take their other arm, and they're going to lock into their bicep, and they're going to put a figure of four with their arms. This means that when I make a transition into the Judy Gutami, he's in the perfect position to defend himself. And now, with his arms locked like so, it's very, very hard for me to actually go out and extend my opponent's arm into a full arm lock, okay? You make your opponent's defensive job much easier when you allow him to lock the figure of four with his arms, okay? So what we want to do is prevent that. I don't care if my opponent locks his hands. That's fine. You can still break your opponent's arm with locked hands, but I do care if he locks figure four grips with his arms like so. So what are we going to do? We're going to come in, take our cross cuff grip. We're going to bring his hand to the center line. We're going to bring our hand all the way around, getting behind the collar and ear with our grip. And as a result, we're able to shimmy our hips out to the side and lock up a strong top lock like so. Now I'm going to take my hand that was the cuff grip, and I'm going to go wrist to wrist. I'm going to put my wrist on top of his. Now when my opponent goes to lock the figure four with the arms, he finds it significantly more difficult. He can't make that full figure of four that he wanted to. And as a result, I can shimmy around the corner and touch my foot to the back of his

head. Now from here, I pass my foot over the top and we lock. When he tries to achieve a solid figure of four, all he gets is his forearm. And from here, as my hips come up, the arm extends and we get very strong breaking pressure on our training partner's arm. I'll demonstrate it this time on a standing opponent. From here, we go over the top and we get that very, very useful cross collar grip. I take the cross cuff grip, I break my training partner's body down towards the floor, turn onto my side. And then from here, we lock up our feet. As Mateus goes into a standing situation and tries hard to pull away from me, et cetera, et cetera. Look how I take my foot to the back of Mateus' head. And then from here, we make that short transition from one shoulder across to the other shoulder. And lock over the top. Because I control his wrist, when he goes to lock the figure of four, it's physically impossible. All he can do is close his hands together. That will not stop me from this situation. As we tie up our training partner's inner wrist, our pelvis comes up and we find ourselves applying a very, very strong lock to our opponent. Such is the strength of the position with my two feet going down towards the mat that even as Mateus goes to yank out and I hit both hands, you'll see I won't lose control of the arm. If my legs start extending and he pulls, I lose the arm every time. So it's super important from here that our two feet point downwards. I'm not going to say it's 100% wrong to cross your feet in this situation. However, cross feet do typically lead to straightened legs. And as a result, Mateus can pull out much more easily than he ought to. So for this particular kind of armbar, there are other armbars where cross feet are a good idea. So from bottom position, I generally favor open feet with my two feet pointing towards each other, just like so. So I don't cross them. I want them sharply bent so that my feet point down and my knees are higher than my feet. Now when he goes to pull out, even with no hands, it's very, very difficult. Then we connect wrist to wrist. And as my feet go down and my knees go up, we get very, very strong breaking pressure. So once again, this time, Mateus on two knees, we go through, we take this incredibly useful grip coming up onto our side, and then we go through, we take the cross cuff grip as well. When Mateus goes to pull away from me, it's so difficult. And now this is what makes it possible for us to put the top lock in order. Now I go through and I control my training partner's wrist. As Mateus tries to yank his arm free, it's such a difficult thing. Now I touch my foot towards the back of his head, pass my leg over the top. My two feet go down low, my hips come up high. He tries to posture up and pull away and do posturing up, head coming up. And from here, we're in the perfect position to exert breaking pressure on our training partner's arm. The acid test is with no hands, can he pull out or not? Make a strong body, posturing up. From here, with my feet lower than my knees, when he goes to pull up, even with no hands, he can't do it. If your foot position fails you and you're in judokitami, and my feet are higher than my knees, crossed like so, look how easily from here, even when I pinch my knees, he pulls out so easily. It has much more to do, rather than squeezing knees together, with rather the back heel of my feet down low, pointing down towards the floor and my pelvis coming high. Now when he goes to pull free, even when my knees are apart, if the hips go high and the feet go, it's much, much harder for him to pull away. But knees together, pinching as hard as you want, mean nothing if the feet are in ball position. So one more time, we have a strong resisting opponent, we bring everything in and we fix up those grips on our training partner. Very often I'll go in here first and get this useful grip, then I come in, we lock up. The chance goes to yank away, pull away, et cetera, et cetera, and from here we go over the top and lock. From this position, he tries to yank out, look how I cover the wrist. My foot points to the back of his head, second leg goes over, and then two feet pulling back and inwards, a strong back heel. Both feet retract very, very strongly. Now as he goes to yank away, it's so damn difficult, and from here we easily go into a finishing position. So these are some of the key ideas involved in a strong judogitami arm lock attack out of a top lock. Understand that you could, on a naive opponent, just go directly from a closed guard into an arm bar. But also understand that I'm not interested in you arm barring naive opponents. I'm interested in your ability to build a fundamental structure to your jiu-jitsu that will last

you from white belt all the way through to advanced black belt. Start early with the right technique. Focus on controlling your opponent's shoulder first through the top lock, and then getting to the judogitami second. Don't just skip a step and go straight for it. Again, no one's interested in you tapping out white belts, they're interested in you one day tapping out world champion black belts. Start early with the right technique, and you'll find you have a lot more success out there on the mats.