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Zen Jiu Jitsu - Kindle Bundle Version

Oliver Staark

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Zen Jiu Jitsu - 30 Day Protocol

Introduction

Struggle. That's the first word that comes to mind when I think about the transition from Blue Belt to Purple Belt. For reasons that I can't quite work out, when I came to the later stages of being a Blue belt I felt confused and lost in my game. Trying to put all the pieces together seemed like a task too far and quitting looked like an option, after all, most guys my age are hitting the golf course or surfing not rolling on the floor with sweat soaked people. This quitting idea seemed an option at least.

In an effort to review what I was doing and pushing through this plateau I developed a few habits that not only brought about a huge change in my game but by applying them on a consistent basis turned me into a respected player in my academy. From obscurity to recognition even from much higher ranked and established fighters.

So what happened?

Several things, which I will outline in the following pages. The most important being that I gave myself a deadline to get my game together or call it a day. That was significant in that I tried really hard in the period of time I gave myself, and then an injury kept me out for a short time to review. During this time a realization struck me that 30 days was an optimal time to develop this idea.

Since then I have experimented with longer and shorter periods but to make consistent gains while avoiding unnecessary injury it turns out that 30 days is ideal. If you are younger than forty then you might want to experiment with longer, more consistent, periods but for my age-range this worked very well.

Then I made a realization, more a remembrance. When I was younger I trained and competed in the National Freestyle Karate Championships each year. In 1987 I had my best tournament ever, I was in shape and ready to rock. I recalled the training I went through to get to that stage, dragged out all my old notebooks and then followed the steps with BJJ instead of Karate, overlaying the protocol used onto this new framework of grappling.

The system was simple and straightforward. It's actually stupid-simple. No need for fancy techniques or spinning flying anything. Just a modicum of dedication, correct attitude and your BJJ game will flourish. Simple right?

Follow the steps enclosed and you'll make progress. I guarantee it.

What's involved?

This is the book I wish I had when I first started Brazilian Jiu Jitsu quite a few years back. Just like all newbies I was obsessed with finding the next 'cool' technique on YouTube - a site where a few minutes can be lost into days.

As I recall, when I started my coaches taught me the closed guard, the half guard, open guard and various other guards but it was only much later in my development that I actually understood that the guard should be used to control distance and that's pretty much it, control the distance between you and your partner to set up a position. Position leads to transition which leads to submission.

This should have been so fundamental that my progress would have accelerated by months if not years had I made (or my coaches pointed out) this simple distinction. But the nature of BJJ is very visual. We have the techniques demonstrated, the details covered, we drill and then we roll. And mainly because rolling is such great fun we roll around in some kind of aimless human stew until we either improve or get injured and wash out the system.

This is what brought me to put these notes together that soon became a manual. In the last few of years I have developed a way of training that moved me from a mediocre blue belt to a

well rounded and accomplished purple belt with most of the improvements coming in the last year. Even as a brown belt I have used these concepts to great effect with some refinements that don't need to be discussed at this stage.

I would even go as far as to say that my current progress is getting even better. What's the big idea? What's the breakthrough? Three things:

- Philosophy
- Psychology
- Attitude

Notice that there's no mention of submissions and this is most certainly not a tap or snap instructional. There are some great books already available that cover that. In fact, there are no photos (or very few), it's all text ... and it's all the stuff that instructors, coaches and professors would love to impart to their students but don't have the time in a traditional 90 minute BJJ lesson.

Let's face it, if you showed up at the academy, kimono in hand and then realized that your professor had a few desks set up on the mat as he began telling you that 'today we are going to cover a few changes to your mind set that will improve your Jiu Jitsu game beyond measure' (see the Chapter on Psychology). You would probably be a selection of:

- A. Astounded by his progressive thinking and ready to learn, sharpie in hand.
- B. Disappointed, as you wanted a good sweaty workout.
- C. Really pissed off because you wanted to choke little Frank who you've disliked since you were a white belt.
- D. You hate this classroom garbage, even at high school. Let's go for a beer instead.
- E. A combination of the above.

... So, in essence, we actually lose out by learning and drilling. Sounds counter intuitive, right? But if we are learning and drilling so many different techniques that none of them

stick then we can never improve, at best we become mediocre and at worst we become confused. Imagine a golf coach teaching a student a new swing (or two) and drilling it then moving to a new swing style the following week!

This coach wouldn't be long for that clubhouse.

Don't misunderstand me, technique and drilling are essential and form a central pillar to my own training method but we cannot ignore the most important area of your game - your brain!

This is one of the reasons I decided to put this together. I am a scholar of Brazilian Jiu Jitsu and an accomplished writer. During the many hours on the mat and the diligence in researching the many topics contained herein I thought it appropriate to pass these ideas along to the BJJ community. If this helps just one person stay on the jiu jitsu path then it's mission accomplished as far as I'm concerned.

Listening to an interview with the Mendes Brothers recently, a question was posed: "Does a coach have to be a World Champion to be a good coach?" Their answer was interesting. They are multiple times world champions so it's important to them and their coaching abilities to agree (being BJJ geniuses doesn't hurt either) but they also stated that their own coach does not compete because 'he doesn't like the feeling'. This was an interesting point and one I completely understand.

I am one of "those guys" ... an 'I don't like the feeling' guy.

Do I compete? Yes. Have I won? Yes. In fact I have pretty much placed in all the various disciplines that I have endeavored to compete in. BJJ though felt very different to me.

I was a competitive Karate player when I was younger, sure I got nervous but I shrugged it off and plowed on. Walking onto the mat at a BJJ event felt much worse. It was a crushing pressure and was so alien to me it freaked me out, 'I just didn't like the feeling'! I wanted to say to my opponent 'sorry my friend, I've made a huge mistake, I'm leaving now, enjoy the rest of the tournament' but I didn't.

Regardless of your hours of sparring and however many teammates you tapped last week, walking into the unknown fills most of us with dread. This is a feeling that may never leave... there are techniques though that can alleviate the pressure a little (see the chapter on Zoning) and these have changed my perspective at a tournament level and even more so in the academy.

Follow the Path

Consistency and Attitude create Ability. These are not, generally speaking, areas we spend too much time on. The three 'A's:

- Attitude, plus
- Attendance, equals
- Ability

I know that some are born with ability, which goes without saying, and I'm not one of them. With the right attitude and an attendance card to be proud of, a good Jiu Jitsu player you can become. (That sounded a bit like Yoda).

So follow my journey young padawan. I will outline in detail the mental techniques that have helped me improve beyond measure ... and some of the tools I used along the way. I am not in any way affiliated with any of these products and do not push any particular association or style of BJJ. This stuff works regardless of your Helio or Carlos following, which finally leads me to why this was written under a pseudonym.

As a practicing BJJ student and coach, my affiliation is with a certain association (try saying that when you've had a couple of shots). Some of the ideas outlined in this manual are very much contrary to what my association prescribes, and are frowned upon by my own professor and the association I am very much part of.

This has more to do with the political system in which these elements exist. Considering the culture that Brazilian Jiu Jitsu was born in: a crucible of brothers, fathers, mothers, politics and factions make it very difficult for the culture not to seep through into the art form.

The country in which I was born was very much a partisan place with deep-rooted attitudes from religion to which was your favorite football team. I personally feel that this type of thought process no longer belongs on the mat. You may feel different. All the protocols will still work although you may

feel uncomfortable with a couple of them, more specifically, training at another academy that allows drop-in students. So as a sign of respect for my professors and teammates I will remain sincerely yours ... anonymous.

How to Use this Manual

Pretty much however you like. If you have the paperback version you might like it so much that you use it to dip into on a regular basis as a reminder of the ideas. You might also hate it so much that you keep it handy in the bathroom in case of emergency. Either way I hope you give the theories due consideration. They are not carved in stone, I do not promote myself as any kind of expert or guru, these are just concepts that you can use and/or adapt for your own purposes. My only goal is only that you improve your game. End of sermon.

It is worth mentioning here that it is probably a good idea to read the book all the way through and then get the tools necessary to implement it (not necessary to have all of them but some of them will help for sure) and then start. Just do it.

It is also my recommendation that you begin on the first of the month and have a boxed calendar (I got a free one from a Chinese restaurant) posted on a wall somewhere visible. After every session - drilling, rolling or at the academy - put a large red 'X' through that date. As you see the X's build this will encourage you to continue, a bit like marathon runners mile markers. They show progress and the distance to the finish line.



It is my hope that when this work is done you will have a short break and take some time to reflect and then come back to this system again and again. Brazilian Jiu Jitsu once it's in your blood is hard to give up and hard to ignore.

Ask yourself this question: If you were offered a million dollars today and in exchange you would be stripped of your rank and all your skills, plus you would never be permitted to train in Jiu Jitsu or anything similar for the rest of your life, would you accept the million dollars?

The answer to this question will tell you more about your future BJJ journey than any other question I could have asked you.

Chapter One: White Belt Mindset

I'm an avid learner. This always puts me in a White Belt mindset even if I know a ton about a particular subject. Researching this book was a great experience for a review of the system I had developed and to get down and dirty into some of the nooks and crannies of each individual area. Not only did I find out what made such leaps and bounds in my BJJ game but I also delved deep enough to find out why.

Empty your teacup

“Empty your mind, be formless, shapeless - like water. Now you put water into a cup, it becomes the cup, you put water into a bottle, it becomes the bottle, you put it in a teapot, it becomes the teapot. Now water can flow or it can crash. Be water, my friend.”

~ Bruce Lee

Bruce got it right. You need to hit the mat (and just about every learning experience) as if it was the first time you ever rolled. It's a sad part of Jiu Jitsu and many martial arts that ego is a part of paying to play. There is always someone at the school that is a pain in the ass and wants to smash everyone on the mat. If they don't get a sub or two by the end of the session then they've had a bad roll.

This is sad. Just make sure it isn't you doing this.

Hurting your training partners is a bums game and very short sighted. If you've ever played around with a bunch of kids you don't smash pass them and then from side control, jump knee to stomach. Do you?

So why blast though a couple of white belts and feel great about it? This is just operating from a place of fear and insecurity.

When we step on the mat we need to be attentive to our professors and our coach. Don't bring preconceived notions or preconceived elements of yourself into the academy. You might be the next Roger Gracie but until you lift a few golds at the World Championships keep your pie-hole shut, your mind open and learn something.

This is also the mindset you need with this program. This is a thirty-day solution and working in private sessions and coaching at my school I have duplicated amazing results repeatedly using that timeline. When I coach a student one-on-one I ask for an empty mind, some ask 'Why? Shouldn't I know what I'm aiming to do?' It's good to be curious, and it is, but not right now.

Give up the ego and the mind for just thirty days and allow a transformation to take place. Be water, my friend.

Learning

In most coaching systems the adaptation or use of the four learning styles is usually mentioned. They were originally developed in an organized fashion by Noel Burch of the Gordon Training System in the seventies but have always been attributed to the social psychologist Abraham Maslow.

The Four Learning States provide a model for skill learning and that's a major element in studying any martial art. Starting with the unconscious competence phase. This is the 'we don't even know that we don't know much' stage of development and then the realization that we need to learn that skill. Think about your own very first steps onto the mat.

Eventually the skill can be brought about so that you understand that you don't know too much and finally you process that into a reflex action. This is the final stage called unconscious competence and probably what your professor displays. He will roll into a position he has been in so many times that the escape or submission is purely a reflexive action.

This process as outlined in the next section can help you develop blind spots that you miss and deal with your self

awareness in the four stages. It's important that you are aware of your current state of development and then we will look at how three of these four apply to your BJJ progress.

The Four Stages

1. **Unconscious incompetence** The student does not understand or know how to do something and does not necessarily recognize the deficit. They may deny the usefulness of the skill. The individual must recognize their own incompetence, and the value of the new skill before moving on to the next stage. The length of time an individual spends in this stage depends on the strength of the stimulus to learn. The 'Why' of learning.
2. **Conscious incompetence** Though the individual does not understand or know how to do something, he or she does recognize the deficit, as well as the value of a new skill in addressing the deficit. The making of mistakes can be integral to the learning process at this stage.
3. **Conscious competence** The individual understands or knows how to do something. However, demonstrating the skill or knowledge requires concentration. It may be broken down into steps, and there is heavy conscious involvement in executing the new skill.
4. **Unconscious competence** The individual has had so much practice with a skill that it has become "second nature" and can be performed easily. As a result, the skill can be performed while executing another task. The individual may be able to teach it to others, depending upon how and when it was learned.

¹.Reference Wikipedia: [^ a b c](#) "Conscious competence learning model matrix - unconscious incompetence to unconscious competence". Business Balls.

The Stages Adapted for Jiu Jitsu

Keep forgetting techniques? Not grappling as well as you should? Maybe you just don't know what you don't know as

mentioned above in the first stage: ‘unconscious incompetence’.

Below is an adaptation on how we apply the data above so that it makes sense in a Jiu Jitsu context or drilling session.

To win in a match or sparring session then you need to get from Point A (usually a standing or kneeling position) to Point B, this could be a submission or you could break things down further and consider a transition, sweep, pass or move to a dominant position as success. This seems straightforward but do you have the links clear in your mind that get you from A to B to C...?

I am going to use an adapted version of the four learning stages for our purposes in Jiu Jitsu. Ignoring the unconscious competence area, as you already know that some part of your game is lacking (or you are a white belt and have no real concept of the techniques yet), we move on to phase one:

1. The Cognitive Phase. This is the process where you see the parts of a technique. Consider the armbar. It takes several stages to get from the closed guard to the armbar as an example:

- A. Secure the arm you want to attack
- B. Place the foot on the hip
- C. Swivel your own hips to create angle
- D. Throw leg over face
- E. Lift hips for tap

This is a (very) simplified version but you get the drift. Most beginners see this process and try to speed through it. This is a mistake. At the cognitive phase the opposite should be true. Slow down. Understand each step, when your professor or coach mentions a detail then concentrate on the detail, this will be important - I guarantee it. Make it slow enough that you understand how the pieces fit together.

This advice applies to all levels. When Marcelo Garcia samples some new position he doesn't just watch it on YouTube then start flying into it in the academy. He will study

the chain of events that comprise the technique, link them together in his mind and then drill it possibly adding his own flavor (but he's a genius so don't do the flavor bit when you are drilling a new technique). Which leads us to:

2. The Associative Phase. This is where you can visualize yourself flowing through the entire technique. WITH NO PARTS MISSING. Once you know physically how the pieces fit together, stop and see in your mind how that process works. If you can visualize yourself moving through the whole process that means that you understand the technique. If you get brainfog or amnesia half way through, drill it again - slowly - in steps and realize which part you left out. Once you start rolling you can try the technique and if it doesn't come off check in and see what happened. This is covered in more depth in the section on Observation.

It's important to recognize that some people stop here. They learn the steps, they can see it in their minds, they sample it in sparring - it works. No need for further exploration. They are short changing themselves. They need to continue to:

3. The Autonomous Phase. This is where the stimulus automatically produces response. Let me offer a real world example. One of my favorite stances (starting positions) in sparring is the Butterfly Guard. So I sit with my knees splayed and am very conscious of the distance between my training partner and myself. I then hunt for the cross-collar and elbow grip, I can get this most times as it can be very non-threatening to my opponent. Once hooked in my partner only has a few options. I have drilled every possible option at least a hundred times each.

Doesn't matter to me if they grab my pants at the knee, below the knee, break my grip, posture up, scoot to the right, scoot to the left, or push their weight forward. I pretty much have a set piece response. Now this isn't to say that I cannot be passed or my partner won't have a counter to my attack but I do know that I don't have to think too much so that I can counter his counter if necessary or worry more about the pass if it looks like he has broken my technique.

If an arm is presented I will have an attack for the arm. If my partner slips up in anyway I am pretty much prepared. This was a revelation to me. For the first couple of years I was just rolling around getting very sweaty and sore in the process. Then something clicked, this usually only happens after tons of reps and a roadmap of what I should be repping.

Think about it. If you learn to drive stick shift, you know: control the clutch, change gears with your hand, etc. You take stick shift driving test and pass. Congrats!

Then you put the car away and three years later think, let's take her for a spin. How do you imagine you would handle the controls? You might pull it off but you've dropped back to the Cognitive Phase. Nice and slow and going through the steps consciously hoping you don't stall it at a traffic signal on the highway.

Now if you've been driving stick for three years every day I bet sometimes you arrive at your destination and can't even remember the journey?? That's how automatic your sense of process has been. You are in phase four, the Autonomous Phase. No thought, just action. And this is where we want to (eventually) aim.

This is much harder to accomplish in the striking arts. For example, how many hooks does a boxer have to slip before it becomes reflex? Probably thousands, so we need to count our blessings that the gentle art does afford us some time to adapt. Things move at a much slower pace in grappling and this should make our drilling efforts much more efficient.

Ultimately it boils down to taking things one step at a time, or gradient learning. The mindset of 'gotta have it now' won't work with most proficiencies and Jiu Jitsu is no different. Get to a point where you can just complete the move or technique then set about drilling it.

A final note on 'drilling' or 'repping' a technique. Make sure you understand it and that all the various points are in place **before** you drill. A bodybuilder would not carry out thousands of reps on a body part that was already well developed. And you should not be repping a technique badly.

This is where your road map comes in. Stick to the plan. Rest when you need (or should) and keep moving forward when you are assigned to do so. Don't start straying off the path, the overall result will be less powerful.

Confrontation

1. the act or an instance of confronting
2. a situation of mutual hostility between two powers or nations without open warfare
3. a state of conflict between two antagonistic forces, creeds, or ideas etc.

Pretty much everything you encounter on your Jiu Jitsu path will boil down to the ability to confront things or ideas. In fact, that's pretty much life in general. Your ability to confront the stages of gradient learning in the Jiu Jitsu process will have the greatest impact here.

When you are having a hard time learning a particular technique or just struggling in sparring etc. this is generally that you are lacking the ability to confront and engage that particular area.

For example: If I notice a student is tough at sparring and strong but does not think their game through then they will keep getting caught and submitted. The best thing to do with this student is to pull them back onto the learning path:

Plan out a series of attacks from start to completion. Slowly.

Get them to look at their opponents' habit patterns and strengths in their game. And then cover each step drilling the technique until they achieve a visible combination of toughness, strength plus good technique.

The ability to engage when your whole physiology and psychology is telling you otherwise is a huge part of breaking through levels in everything you do. Anything you are good at, anything you can do with a great proficiency is because you have the ability to engage it. And with a big smile on your face. Some students have a great natural ability and I enjoy tough rolls as much as the next man but tapping out is never easy. If I get tapped I always walk away from the academy and try to deconstruct the attack or position so that I can confront this situation with more confidence next time.

If you feel trepidation about a particular position, then you will need to confront and engage that position more frequently and when you start your map in the thirty-day protocol build that in at the beginning, when energy is the highest.

Break things back into steps. Say you are having trouble with side control top. Start with controlling your partners' hips. Get familiar hand positions (grips) that work well to keep the hips controlled. Add more pressure using shoulders or grips. Ask your professor where you start. But break it down. It makes the ability to confront and engage much easier than sparring with someone who you just can't hold down when you've passed into a great position.

This is how I deal with new students when I'm coaching. Thanks to the UFC and various MMA shows on TV new students come to Jiu Jitsu with a mixture of notions from a monastic retreat for people who like wearing Karate pajamas to a Brad Pitt style Fight Club. They start to see people roll and they tense up, stomachs knotting in the process. Everything is so close now, so real and they think they are up next for a good old choking session.

This is why it's best to start them off easy. Even if they want to just jump in and have a 'rassle'. We cover closed guard, distance, breaking the guard, a simple submission. Then we will drill for a while. If I feel comfortable I'll even introduce them to a short specific training session. Closed guard rotation, for example, but I tell them if they are in the guard their only objective is to break the guard, I don't even want them to pass yet.

After a while they are breaking, passing and moving into position. Suddenly the thing that made blood drain from their faces (or in some cases shot them into a bugged eyed frenzy) looks like they've been doing it quite a while. They are comfortable, and this is how you confront and engage the positions you are having trouble with: break everything down into steps (cognitive phase) then see yourself doing it (associative phase) then drill it until it's comfortable (autonomous phase).

Anything, and I mean anything, you are having trouble with, break it down into steps first. Then work on it until you feel comfortable. You'll be gaining ground in no time.

Observation

Any system of learning needs a method of recognition, or reflection. I often use the phrase with students ‘Know where you are first’. This doesn’t refer to the schools location and zip code. It means when someone has you in half guard top with an under-hook and head control, you should recognize this.

In any system of defense there has to be a recognition of the attack type, and I have found that many Jiu Jitsu schools are very vague on this point, asking the student to rely on their rolling intuition. Going back to the previous learning phases though, for the most part the student doesn’t realize that he has to recognize what position his opponent is in. This seems crazy to me. Most students understand their own position: closed guard, deep half guard, butterfly, X-guard, etc. but what is happening to the organism on the other end of this transaction - your partner or opponent?

There is a definite instruction protocol for pretty much every aspect of teaching martial arts, with the exception of recognizing what your opponent seemed to be doing at every stage of training.

Until Dan Anderson (the famed American Freestyle Karate Instructor) developed what he calls ‘Monitoring’. It applies to both attacking and defending, but the easiest way to understand it is via defense or transitioning from an unfavorable position to a better one, which is essential to improving your game. For the sake of this BJJ manual I will refer to this as ‘Observation’ or ‘Knowing where you are’ and ‘What is happening.’

General Concept

Observation of your partner then is the effective ability to consciously be aware of opponents’ movements as he begins to do them. Most students use strength to cover up this process. Grabbing onto your opponent as if your life depended on it isn’t a long-term strategy for success. For the most part it will be seen as stalling and your gas tank will run dry before you even work out what’s happening. By the same rule ‘the

scramble' is another example. You're not sure what your opponent is doing (and neither do you) but if you keep moving then you might just recover and end up on your knees facing your opponent, well done, you've escaped. Neither of these are cognitive processes, they are knee-jerk reactions and this is what we need to stop.

Easier said than done.

Bottom line: The decision to confront and handle the position comes too late, this then leads to survival instincts: wild, dangerous, injurious and haphazard techniques developing.

When you use Observation you are **conscious** of your opponents movements at all times. You monitor all his attacking units (grips, foot position) as well as his balance (hips, knees, weight distribution). When Observing the attacking units you know where these are at all times, you can see them and then take action accordingly. These may change as you begin to observe again. It's like an internal Satellite Observation System.

You want to spot the way your opponent distributes his weight. This is his base-point. He will have some form of starting position (standing or kneeling) and you should be able to clearly see from his weight and stance where he will aim his attack. You can see this and intercept it by working your own game first, imposing your game. This throws Observation back to him. In short, there should be no surprises.

This is not easy. It requires being **awake** and **aware** of your opponent in every sparring session. As you progress, you should be able to monitor your opponent and then move him into a position that suits your game but makes him feel comfortable, or non-threatened. Most Jiu Jitsu practitioners are 70% asleep when they spar and I've come across plenty of 90 to 100% in total snooze mode. They are hardly aware of their own movements, just going through motions, never mind the positions I'm trying to impose. This is how the same technique or sucker move constantly catches the same training partners time after time.

When you generate a higher level of awareness of yourself and your opponent, you do not tend get suckered. Period.

Concentrate by staying awake and speaking to yourself internally (he has a grip on my knee and my collar, his hips are high though, I can get the under-hook from here...) and you'll have this down pat in no time.

Technical Approach

It's worth mentioning that there are specific and general Observation conditions. General Observations are strength and size considerations. We've all heard the Helio stories of the art being developed for 'men with bodies like dead chickens' and this was cool when no one knew what BJJ was. These days, someone steps on the mat with a college wrestling background and muscles in his spit then you had better have a strategy to consider. What if your sparring partner is three hundred pounds? You can see from a general Observation standpoint that you do not want to be on bottom ... unless you're four fifty in which case - you da man!

You cannot get grips unless you lean forward or extend your arms. You cannot launch on top without the use of the legs. These are general trigger points that you should be aware of.

If you are starting on your knees, imagine a line drawn on the mat between you and your opponent horizontally, like you are sat in front of a mirror. If either you or your opponent can cross this line and you can reach (touch) each other. Then this is the critical distance line (CDL). This is the area of no mans land which tells you a lot about general Observation. You should be able to devise your strategy from here, as soon as a hand or foot crosses that line you need to know what the next move will be ... **regardless of whose hand or foot crosses that line.**

Specific Observations are the understanding of the attacking units themselves, namely: grips, foot position (which develops the stance). This is where 95% of your concentration should be focused. If you mentally divide your opponents body down the center as soon as he takes his stance and you monitor his hands he will either get a grip closer to himself (on a pant leg or the collar closest to him) he may go deeper and come for a

deep collar or sleeve grip then he will move the second hand. The exception to this would be simultaneous grips, which is rare as most practitioners prefer to get a sense of balance or create tension before latching the next grip.

Each attack will have three parts (1) grips, (2) transition, and (3) position. You want to change the path of the attack at the second phase the transition. This is the easiest way to counter. If you need to change your strategy or have more time - release (break) the grips - no one attacks without some form of grip. If you are attacking first then you will work your protocol, but the process will more than likely be the same: grips, transition, position (and if you've drilled it well enough), submission.

You will need to intercept their transition at the beginning of the phase - certainly not at the end. This can lead to your guard being passed and then you will need another counter. To do this you will need to (a) monitor the baseline of your opponent closely so you can see which side his weight shifts, and (b) install your strategy as soon as he begins his attack. These you can drill once you get into the thirty-day program.

Most students don't even think about the counter until the attack is well on its way. This is a folly. They sleep through the grips and foot position and don't even realize that an attack is happening until they land in side control or a scramble. Proper Observation and good execution and grip control should cut this down quite a bit.

To make Observation even easier to work with, use the technique known as 'side-tracking'. You form a grip structure or stance you are happy with. Until you get the grips you want break your opponents grips all the time. You then assign a technique that covers any position if your opponent moves to the left, you have a left side counter. If he moves to the right then you have a right side counter (from the stance and grips you have). If he breaks your grip, you have a counter and if he leans backward or forward you have attacks.

There are four positional strategies you would need to learn: left side, right side, grip break, leaning (forward or backward).

There should be no crossover techniques. This will expose quickly if you are awake or not.

I drilled this for a couple of weeks then found that when my opponent moved right I did the left hand technique and was handily passed because I confused myself by being asleep and not drilling enough. It didn't matter though. The fact that I thought about it, saw the move coming and had a strategy made me feel pretty good. Another week later and no one passed the stance I was starting with and I was moving into great positions time after time. The drilling side of things in steps worked wonders.

Most students' positions are less than spectacular usually because (1) they went into full on sparring too soon, (2) they have been taught only technique positions and are unaware of transitions, (3) they have not been taught how to spot an attacking grip, and/or (4) they have failed to confront and engage the attack.

Number (4) is the most common.

Now you have a method for creating awareness, spotting an attack and countering. Enough practice and these should become natural movements. Now it just needs the accompanying physical work and the rest will follow.

Recap: Creating awareness while sparring, you have to, in this order:

1. Monitor the attacking units. Concentrate and focus. Mentally move forward with the attack until you recognize what your opponent plans to do. Reaching out and crossing the critical distance line means you are ready to confront and engage your opponent.
2. Spot the attack and counter the transition as soon as it begins
3. Counter and move into a position of control
4. Counter failed, break grips and reset

Focus intently on the hips at all times, as this is the balance of power and know **at all times** where your own hips are.

If you are having trouble and still getting suckered from time to time then try this. Observe the attacking units 100% even your own when attacking. You will still need to move and pass or submit but keep these areas in your periphery. It's a little weird at first as we are so intent on reaching our target but a few things can happen.

When you are intently focused on hands and feet of your opponent you are better prepared for counter attacks. After a while just focus on hands and your own hips, you'll find adjustments in range and pressure easier to handle. The strange phenomenon with this technique is that it helps tremendously with passing the guard, just keep the pass in the periphery and stay focused on the hands, feet and hips and you'll just slip by your opponent.

Principles

You have a sensory radius around your body that is constantly on alert. We like to think of this as our 'personal space'. Someone gets too close in the line at Starbucks and we get that uncomfortable feeling. Something or someone can only get to a certain distance before it enters into your Observation Sphere.

The main principle behind Observation is to expand that personal space so that it includes your opponent. He twitches and you feel it. Your opponents' very presence warrants Observation.

Phase two of this process is to feel fine about him being in your space. It's strange that you need to get even more personal when you're involved in a martial art that involves sweaty wrestling. Total acceptance of this opponent in your space will make you more relaxed where as resistance can only make you more nervous and rigid.

The calming effect makes your overall perception even greater: the world seems to expand. Please don't confuse calm with laziness; this will only get you submitted quicker. The essence of calm is being devoid of nervous constricting tension while staying on full alert. Be aware but not frozen by the actions of your opponent, you will be amazed by what you

can feel and see when you reach this level of relaxed alert condition.

Combine this technique with the mechanics of the thirty-day program and you will have the entire ethos for Jiu Jitsu success.

Chapter Two: A 30 Day Protocol

The Process: In a nutshell.

Putting the protocol together in a nutshell:

- Develop a plan that concentrates on one position for the next 30 days
- You will train in BJJ (a lesson in the academy or drilling at home) for one hour minimum every day for 30 days
- On drilling sessions you will follow one position only
- You will record each session in a journal or Jiu Jitsu Log
- Before every lesson or drilling session you will review your Log
- In every sparring session you will practice the techniques you have drilled
- At the end of the 30 days you will rest for four days.

And that's it. Simple right? Let's break those ideas apart and look at some tools that will help with the process.

The Idea Behind the Idea

The successful entrepreneur Benny Lewis, the guy behind the *Fluent in 3 Months* program, put it much better than me. He has a story of his own and this was how his business was formed.

Benny, an Irish Engineering student, ended up stationed in Spain after his graduation. This was a dream position for him but he couldn't speak Spanish. He thought he would arrive on the job and then learn it as he went along. This became increasingly frustrating for him, not that he couldn't

communicate, as it turned out most of his dealings were with British people or well-meaning English speaking Spaniards, but his linguistics did not improve as he expected.

Six months into his new position he was disappointed that he still could not speak Spanish well. He set himself a task; he would only speak Spanish (even in it's rudimentary form) for the next thirty days - no exceptions. Thirty days can't hurt.

At first it was a little embarrassing as lots of hand signals were required to get his point across, but it also created an amazing side effect: You pick up another language extremely quick if you don't have your native language to fall back on. Within even a few short weeks he was speaking the language comfortably. The one-month immersion was far more effective than the previous six months of just giving it a try. He was impressed with progress but now he really wanted to see if this could work with other languages. He moved to Berlin, learned German, moved to France learned French and then really went for it - moved to Prague and learned Czech, which is an extremely difficult language to learn.

He then put his career on hiatus and traveled the world; within two years he could speak seven languages fluently. The method worked. Language hacking was born.

We can apply similar principles to Brazilian Jiu Jitsu. It's technical and uses leverage to produce a result. Why not use an immersion system for thirty days that works to produce amazing results. What do you say...fluent in BJJ in thirty days!

Like Benny though there has to be a commitment - 30 days, no exceptions. The work will be tough and unyielding but if you can put partying or family on the back burner (or use a workaround, there is a chapter on Workarounds) then the results can be nothing short of spectacular.

Can you commit to thirty days? That's the only homework you'll have from this section: Finding that commitment.

The Map

You will need an objective; a goal to reach during the next 30 days or you'll feel lost.

Getting lost? You need a map. Not necessarily a physical map but a list of positions that you will want to drill and become comfortable with.

It's beyond the scope of this short manual to layout hundreds (if not thousands) of plans as a lot has to do with your stage of development. This is covered in more detail in the next section 'Progression'.

So how do you develop a personalized map in the first place? You need to start at the place you least want to start at (remember confront and engage), which is your weakest position. Only you will know this. For a lot of starting students side-control-bottom and mount-top cause them a lot of problems. This is usually compounded when a higher-ranking student mauls you in one of these positions.

It's not unusual to go through the fundamental curriculum in around three to four months depending on your school. This involves self defense techniques as well as foundational Jiu Jitsu instruction and you may have been sparring or doing some specific training at this time.

Which position makes you uncomfortable? Go there first that's where the gold is. Can't submit anyone? Go there first. It is also my recommendation that if you are going to focus on submissions then work to move to the back and sub from there.

Some recent data has been compiled due to the amazing efforts of Tyler Bishop at BishopBjj.com and the most effective submission area, as of the 2012 world championships, is the submission from the back. It's a dominant position and a good place to start with submission drills.

Whatever frustrates you on the mat decide to master that area in the next thirty days.

For example, if side control bottom is a weak point then you will use that as your focus. I can almost hear the taunts from the back of the room. There's not a lot to side control bottom ... How do I drill that for 30 days? I'll be bored senseless!! That's where the list comes in. Let's break it backward:

Side control (SC) bottom when opponent has head and arm control (headlock version)

Standard side control bottom when opponent has head and hip blocked.

Standard SC Bottom with head and arm blocked

SC Bottom when opponent flattens the hip shield (sea shell)

SC Bottom when opponent moves north/south

SC Bottom ...

The positions and variables are almost infinite. Write a list, maybe use a BJJ Book or website. A good source of technical data is the BJJ Technique Catalog by Dave Thomas and is available for the crazy price of 'free' (as of this writing) online at <http://bjjtech.com/tech/>

If you want to pay for a similar service but with a more comprehensive video representation of each technique you might want to consider Bob Dorris' excellent BJJ Database known as iGrapple (<http://www.igrapple.com>)

Once you have a list, you have a plan of attack. Move the most difficult position you are having trouble with to the top of the list - remember energy is highest at the beginning. This is technique one, then the next, that's two and so on.

If you want more submissions, then you need to follow the principle: position, transition then submission. Concentrate on getting to a position that you can submit your opponent from, like the back.

Let's come back to side control again by way of example. Let's say you would like to be effective in subbing an opponent from side control. The map might look something like this.

1. Move to half guard

2. Old School Sweep to side control
3. Fake knee on belly
4. Switch to Kimura, or baseball choke, or ... you get the idea.

You can see this begins with step one of the gradient learning process outlined in the previous chapter. Let's break it down some more. Step one was - move to half guard.

Research the various entry methods to half guard, where it acts as a guard and has the options of sweeping or maybe uses the knee shield. It would be a good idea to review half guard with head controlled, half guard with under-hook, and deep half guard. You have a short list, it could be a lot longer if you really delve into the half guard. Caio Terra demonstrates 111 half guard variations in his DVD set and I'm sure that's just the tip of the iceberg.

Bolt onto this: half guard sweeps from standard half guard and deep half guard, especially the ones where you finish in side control.

Look into three submissions from side control. You will more than likely have to feign one attack forcing your opponent to defend then apply an attack of your own. All of these techniques can be found in some really good books that are readily available and pretty much every variation of every BJJ technique is now on YouTube so you can review the ideas there too.

Ask your Professor or coaches for ideas based on what you are trying to do IN EACH STAGE. Don't just research the sub, you have to work the entry, move to the position then the submission. There are no shortcuts. Sure, there are some fancy moves that come off, but leave that to the other guy while you work to becoming consistently spectacular.

Write the map down. My map now consists of 112 techniques right now. I drill the ones I'm working on then rediscover the first few so I don't get sloppy. It takes me an hour or so to drill four or five techniques effectively and every time I review the details before I drill. We'll cover this more in the section on Drilling.

Progression

In the excellent book 'Jiu Jitsu University', by Saulo Ribeiro with Kevin Howell, they describe the progress of a student through the belts by demonstrating the phases a student should develop. This is an interesting concept and one that I actually believe works. When developing your map you may want to consider these stages as your phase of development and concentrate on that particular area.

White Belt - Survival

Blue Belt - Escapes

Purple Belt - Guard

Brown Belt - Guard Passing

Black Belt - Submissions

This is quite an interesting path to take and shows a clear route to Black Belt. Don't be too rigid and think, I'm a Blue Belt so I can only work on escapes. That's not true. As I outlined in the previous section there are so many individual paths to follow that there are no hard and fast rules.

This is just a concept, a guide. If you want to put a map together and feel that you aren't sure of any real holes in your game right now then I would suggest playing up to the next level. If you are Blue then put a map together based on creating an effective guard you to feel comfortable playing from.

Bottom line you need to have the ability to draw a line from point A to point B. If you fail to plan, you plan to fail.

Orientation

When armies march they need good map-readers, or they tend to get lost. These map-readers and route leaders they follow are usually members of the Signals Regiment. This is the team that puts the signals in position ahead or they have small units to lead the signal and these are called Orienteers.

It's amazing that orienteering is now a leisure pursuit of it's own. Teams are given ordnance maps and coordinates to

various zones plus a compass and that's it, whoever gets to the final destination point (the focus goal) first wins. Pretty simple. But without the map and compass it's almost impossible, especially over very long distances.

This particular section isn't just about the map of techniques that you are following but about the orientation of your sparring - when you get to that stage.

A lot of mistakes and confusion in sparring comes from lack of orientation. As an example, have you ever noticed how much easier a roll becomes when you decide on a single approach to the session. You say, I'm going to work my half guard sweep, and bam everything revolves around it and it works for the most part. But if you just roll then you just have a great workout because it was harder to attack. If you have a position of focus (an orientation) you automatically reduce the number of options you present to your training partner (and yourself) so the roll in its essence becomes simpler.

If we look at the orientation as a filter then all techniques have to pass through that position and it narrows all other techniques. Just like the filter on the lens of a camera, if the filter is set to blue then everything the camera sees is varying shades of blue. A small blob of orange doesn't just pop up in a photo, it cannot, as it is filtered away with all the other frequencies in the spectrum.

With orientation you work with one orientation filter until you feel good with it, then you move on to the next one.

When you are starting out it is good to get a handle on orientation filters because it gives you some sense of direction. Your map should contain at least one of these orientation filters, and should be an ideal position you feel comfortable to operate from.

If you are a white belt consider the closed guard attacks and defenses as a good orientation filter. This is a good position to present and receive feedback. As you grow and learn more techniques at the academy you have to give up the more comfortable orientation filters, if you feel safe in a particular orientation filter (like the closed guard) then it's time to move

to a new one. There are no Jiu Jitsu champions (or black belts) who are just good at closed guard and have low-grade open guards.

Once you feel safe, move onto the next, then when you are sparring move forwards and backwards between the orientation modes.

Most BJJ students don't work this way. They don't have several operational filters and get stuck in one or two. The problem with this approach is that most of your opponents are different: body shapes, weights, experience levels, etc. You must have room to adapt.

If you are aware that the only reason you are staying in one operational filter is that you feel safe. This in essence is just fear of the tap that stops you experimenting with a new filter. We have a guy at our academy who has a killer guillotine and another with a killer triangle. This is great for the team as it keeps our guillotine and triangle defenses real sharp. Once you defend these two techniques though against these guys, they've really got nothing else to offer, they just fall apart, get passed then flop about trying to recover and usually get subbed. They are both gold medalists though, so having killer submissions is essential, but becoming a fully rounded black belt? Both these guys are way off the pace.

Get good at one guard, or one submission then move on. This doesn't mean that you are no longer allowed to use that approach but try something new. Have a new starting focus, a new orientation filter. Pull the killer moves out from under the bed every so often, dust them off and treat someone to a tap out, just don't get stuck into thinking this your only option.

I used to hate side control top. For some reason I could not get good control or an acceptable submission. My Map changed to this: use my killer A-Sweep to get them on their back, instead of going for the back or the mount, I would pull back and fall into side control. This forced me to work on the new orientation filter I was drilling. At first it was frustrating as my mount submissions felt great and really worked, I got a real handle on the Roger Gracie cross collar choke from the mount,

but I didn't go safe, I pushed into territory that exhausted me and made me feel lame.

Then something weird happened. My orientation filter fell into place. All the details were there, with a couple of slight adjustments my opponent fell right into place and a kimura fell right into my hands ... with virtually no effort. Okay. It's worked one time.

I went again, it worked again, little more effort than last time but it came off, then I got my groove on and it became pretty consistent. Black belts defended it well, but by then I was working on transition from that orientation filter so the sparring sessions just went on and on ... with me on the attack and my team mates with something to think about.

Aside from guard positions you can also work other orientation filters. Work a specific sub, as in the example above, work your transitions, work your balance and posting, work your Observation, work your breathing ... there are a lot of options for orientation filters.

On a slow night, I like to move through three or four mode changes so I can tell if I'm getting rusty in a particular technique/guard. But I am aware of the operational modes I am changing through.

The best way to start with an operational filter is to "have a great guard" a Go-To Guard. I will never forget my Professor telling us all in class (and this was an advanced Black Belt class) that our guards all stank! Literally, just like that "Your guards suck!" He wasn't playing around and he didn't call out any individuals but as far as I was concerned he was talking to me.

At home later, I went back to the drawing board. Read all I could on guards, watched the videos and placed a notice in the garage near my mats - Guard! Then drilled a lot of guard game and passes. These days I have a pretty good open and closed guard. There's no magic, it was my orientation filter, I had a map and I knew where I was going. Did my guard get passed? Sure, but nowhere near as often until none of the other guys the same rank as me could pass. It was pretty solid. The side

effect, it's easier to spar and roll when your guard is tough to pass and it also gave me time to think and work my game.

One of the main reasons starting with a good guard is important is because most of your partners will have a couple of good guard passes, then they might fall asleep if they don't get it. They didn't approach the roll with an orientation filter; they just wanted to pass your guard. It's automatic, and when it doesn't work they get frustrated, try something they are ill equipped to attempt and then get swept.

When you set up your guard you are doing so through an orientation filter, you await the pass then attack, or go straight into the attack if there is no pass coming. Most important of all though, it keeps you awake, keeps you focused.

Don't forget to sample different guards. Different strokes for different folks. You need the most appropriate guard for the most appropriate opponent. If you face off with Big Dave at the academy and he's three hundred pounds, use your head; closed guard is probably not an option because you can't close your guard unless you are six feet six with ultra long legs?? You are going to need some open and half guard options in play before you feel safe and complete.

Drilling

drill [dril]

noun

1. Machinery, Building Trade.

a. a shaft-like tool with two or more cutting edges for making holes in firm materials, especially by rotation.

b. a tool, especially a hand tool, for holding and operating such a tool.

2. Military .

a. training in formal marching or other precise military or naval movements.

b. an exercise in such training: gun drill.

3. Any strict, methodical, repetitive, or mechanical training, instruction, or exercise: a spelling drill.

The effective use of drilling cannot be underestimated in this program. In fact, I would go as far as to say that if you took only one thing away from this manual it was this: Drill Everything.

In the bestselling book ‘Outliers’ Malcolm Gladwell points us to research that proves without doubt that practice time is the defining factor between most athletes and artists. The psychologists in the book were trying to debate if talent existed, the findings were amazing and the bottom line was talent or no talent, the artist or athlete that put in the most practice time ended up becoming the most talented.

“The emerging picture from such studies is that ten thousand hours of practice is required to achieve the level of mastery associated with being a world class expert - in anything,” writes the neurologist Daniel Levitin. “In study after study, of composers, basketball players, fiction writers, ice skaters, concert pianists, chess players, master criminals, and what have you, this number comes up again and again. Of course, this doesn’t address why some people get more out of their

practice sessions than others do. But no one has yet found a case in which true world class expertise was accomplished in less time. It seems that it takes the brain this long to assimilate all that it needs to know to achieve true mastery.”

10,000 hours of practice.

Let’s break it down (you’ll have gathered that I like breaking things down to simple steps by now). That’s 416 days in full 24 hours stages, but if we only train three times per week for one hour per session, that’s 3,333 days to achieve excellence. That’s nine years. Let’s round it up and say to become a proficient Black Belt and you train consistently three times per week on average then it will probably take ten years to reach your goal. This is according to the 10K rule, which I agree with wholeheartedly. Read the book, the evidence is overwhelming.

To shorten this period of time to world class, the easiest way is to take this data on face value and apply it. Train six days per week. Drill three and train three (or more if you like). The drills you carry out should be no shorter than one hour, your training sessions should be a mixture of advanced and fundamental. Training with lower ranking players helps consolidate your progress and gives your body a rest ... but it’s an hour on the clock - no excuses.

Do this and you can be *world class* in only 4.5 years.

Drilling consists of repeating a chosen technique in perfect form for fifty repetitions. That’s a workout, believe me. Break it down into two sets of twenty with a final set of ten. You can drill more but change the technique after the fifty are complete.

Before you drill, review your log (see the section on Recording), and concentrate on the task at hand. It’s easy to go off track especially if the Internet is handy and you are drilling something from YouTube. It’s an informative tool, don’t get lost looking up cool flying triangles or Berimbolo sweeps (unless that’s what you are planning to drill.)

This falls into the Attendance corner of the three A’s triangle from the introduction. You have to show up to get better, that’s

true, but showing up and doing the right stuff can make a huge difference.

Don't take my word for it. Here are a couple of quotes from people who are training and winning:

"I drill techniques - my main techniques, my A-move, my A-game sweep, the guard pass and sub I hit the most, over and over again." This is from Keenan Cornelius, the purple belt (now brown belt) phenomenon to win every title he attempted in 2012. He continued, "I've drilled them so many times, my body just reacts now. I can go out and let instinct take over. Most of our training [at Lloyd Irvin] is drilling based on our individual games, and this is what we do best. Before a big tournament I stick to the stuff I've been doing and drill it to death. I used to try and think too much in the past. My master Lloyd [Irvin], told me that's a weakness. If you're thinking what to do next, your opponent is already moving to his next move. It's best to just react and let your body take over."

Obviously Keenan has moved from the Associative Phase of learning to the Autonomous Phase. His body has taken over and this has a massive impact on his composure in tournaments. His haul of gold in 2012 has been nothing short of miraculous. He looks to be a future champion to watch.

"Rolling is the only way to get good at Jiu Jitsu is a myth!" So says Rafael Lovato Jnr in his excellent course on Pressure Passing. "Rolling is a lot of FUN! And you should never stop rolling, but drilling is an AWESOME way to tighten up your game. So make sure you are rolling AND drilling together ... because this combo will take your game to another level when you really focus on both these things."

Beating a dead horse here but drilling is KEY. Most BJJ studios don't allow enough time (if any at all) to drill the techniques that are successful. There is a telling truth in a lot of the research regarding drilling, and that is "Play to your Strengths". Let's recap for a second: the map is a series of techniques that you plan to drill, and the map has been developed to introduce new skills or work on escapes from positions you are having trouble with. This is all valid. When

you come to the drilling session though by way of warm up you can take two options or preferably employ both:

1. Have a light flow drill with a partner. This could be in the form of a light roll where neither of you stop in any position; just keep moving for five minutes straight. When you move to a position allow your partner to escape and maybe get into a better position, then you escape and move ... you do this for five minutes and you should be nice and loose.

2. Drill your favorite move for fifty repetitions. Personally I do two, I recover half guard to full guard, both sides for fifty reps. Then I drill closed guard to triangle for fifty reps, this is a great Ab workout. Does this improve my ability to recover from half guard and trap triangles from lots of different angles? What do you think?

The Pareto principle (80/20 rule) tells us that eighty percent of our results come from twenty percent of our efforts and we can lay this principle over most activities. This doesn't really prove much but one thing that has become evident over time is that most of our efforts in life are not distributed evenly in terms of outcome. Sometimes we can work really hard on something and receive very little recognition; sometimes we can hardly put in any input and come out smelling of roses.

Applying this concept to your BJJ Drilling. Let's say you have a killer armbar-triangle combo. For the first five minutes you will include this as your warm up. It's your A-game sub - this will be the first part of the system to fall into the Autonomous Phase. You will become so effective at the armbar-triangle that you will find you slap this on opponents or training partners without thinking. This is important for creating that groove in your brain that allows techniques to drop in automatically.

Don't think you just have to drill your weakest parts because you will find that as you improve you won't need to drill them, and this is a fundamental mistake. You need to drill your entire arsenal all the time. When you roll then you can try some new risky move, if it doesn't come off, you roll into a position you feel safe, then whap! you hammer home the killer move that you were pretty good at but now have gone on instinct. This is

where the art comes into martial art. It's a sublime meditation and BJJ Nirvana.

NOTE: Do not go hard for the next thirty days. You will see in future sections that this is also a myth. Train smarter, not harder. And as another side note when I say 'hard' I am referring to full on sparring at 100% capacity. Hard as opposed to light rolling. It's important that you have full-on rolling in the next thirty days, you need to be challenged but not every time you roll.

Circuit Patterns

Another thing with drilling you need to be aware of is the Circuit Pattern. A circuit is an automated response, one that happens that you are not aware of. This is the ideal we are searching for as described in the Autonomous phase, but what if your circuit patterns put you in a worse position!

The amount of awareness (or lack of) varies from position to position and in intensity of awareness. A circuit in electronics creates a pattern of moving electricity from one place to another in a repeatable manner - until the circuit breaks it will not vary from its path. And this is the same for habit patterns good or bad.

Let's say your brain is like a computer CPU circuit board.

When you are in the white belt phase you think about each position and learn them, as per Phase One of the learning cycle. Put a grip here, place your weight there, your partner gets away - oops! Forgot to block his hip, reset.

You go back and correct constantly giving the computer circuit feedback with what to do next and what not to do again. Then, as your skills improve and you move into the blue belt phase there is less conscious effort to learn the techniques. You have probably moved into the Advanced classes and gone beyond the fundamentals, sparring is easier and you have more of a handle on your own game and positions you prefer. This is a very delicate part of your development as this is where the position circuits begin to form. A solid circuit pattern is usually linked to emotion.

As soon as you feel elated that a particular sweep worked then the circuit locks down further, this happens more and more with each feeling of accomplishment. As you rely on each position to attack or counter there is a tendency to start applying this technique in most situations, especially emergency positions - instead of the more appropriate techniques that should be applied to that situation. You then start to fit the positions you have had success with into various guards and scrambles ... even when it's not the right technique

in that position and clearly won't work? You can't stop yourself.

Let's say you get a great sweep to mount with the pendulum (or flower sweep) from closed guard and you score a lot with it. Each time you have 'success' this is lodged into the computer circuit 'score card'. The more plus deposits on the score card with the technique the more you use it. The more you use it the more muscle memory gets involved and the autonomous phase ingrains itself into the circuit pattern. It is now becoming more natural, more automatic. When the technique is fully embedded on automatic it scores itself and gets double plus points into the 'score card' column. And this is when you start to get stuck. You have now stored a fact in your brain: This technique will work all the time on automatic and until the circuit is broken the computation will not be changed.

This also happens when a technique or position comes to you naturally or is easy to do. Students tend to be lazy when this occurs and whenever they get in a tight spot they fall back to this position or technique as a way of just defending or attacking without awareness.

This also means that many techniques and positions have not passed from the Cognitive Phase to the Associative Phase - this is due mainly to lack of drilling or practice. And usually they are not practiced or drilled because they can be difficult or complex to achieve. There is something wrong with this picture!

When you transition through a position into another position or submission attempt without awareness, without any thought for the pattern then that is a formed circuit. If it was the appropriate response for that situation and you were successful then give yourself a pat on the back, but if you were operating in a position and just went automatically to your Go-To move and it failed then this is a destructive circuit.

The way to overcome destructive circuits is first to become consciously aware of them, then also be aware of when you fall into the circuit. Then you can consciously work to break it. If you use your Go-To move and it fails then you have

discovered a negative circuit, this is a great starting point for your map. Look for options when you get into this position and drill them as alternatives to your circuit.

What positions do you like best? What submissions come easiest to you? Which guard positions do you use the most? These are the first places to look for negative circuits.

When you discover a negative circuit, you'll know. You will feel bad that a technique you have success with didn't come off. It will amaze you that this technique just did not work. Ask your training partner why it didn't work and he'll tell you how he countered it - this is a negative circuit pattern beginning to form. Don't throw it away, take the technique to your coach or Professor and demonstrate what happened. They will usually point out some details you missed, it usually something that happened at the beginning of the technique and you might need to trace it all the way back. You will then need to drill this new technique ... it is not the same as the old one that came easy. Break its components down.

The hardest negative circuits to break are the ones that work really, really well.

Circuits can be found everywhere in your sparring sessions: positions, submissions, guards, sweeps - they are everywhere. Watch your opponents and training partners for patterns and then check yourself out. It's a base human condition.

You may be questioning this section, "But you said get to the auto-pilot phase! Isn't it best to just have an 'instinctive reaction'?"

Until you are very well accomplished then 'No'. You need to be aware of your body position and your opponents position at all times. The circuits I'm describing here are based upon lazy Jiu Jitsu and a more effective technique or position might have been a better option. Your Go-To techniques can be a lifesaver or they can just blow up at the wrong time, which makes your A-move pretty much useless and leaves you with no further options. No options is no good, trust me.

Don't make excuses for sleeping through a rolling session. It's better to be awake and engaged.

The Training Dummy

What if you don't have an academy to train at? What if you train at a school but it's hard to make it every night of the week without divorce papers being filed? The easiest and in my opinion one of the most effective ways to drill is with a training dummy.

Training without a partner is still an excellent way to train. It's virtually impossible to train and have your partner available at all times, plus with a dummy your injury rate reduces dramatically. You can rep techniques and drill your A-moves concentrating on all the small details that make the difference. Even if you only have five or ten minutes spare, with a dummy you can drill for a short time and still feel an improvement.

There are many training dummies out there and I am not going to favor one over the other as I have not trained with them all. It's important that you can train effectively with a dummy and you can afford it. This is the criterion I used when selecting my own:

- Needs to be able to sit up so that closed guard drills work: armbars, omoplatas, triangles, etc.
- Keeps its legs up as a guard defense to practice guard passes.
- Returns its arms back to position so that you don't have to reset it after every rep.
- Keeps its posture in turtle position to practice back techniques, north/south and spinning to the back.
 - Has a reasonable weight-ratio to simulate a real opponent. Too light doesn't work too well.
 - Knees are positioned up so that stacking drills still work.

My dummy is so important to me that if I moved from one country to another I would make sure that I imported 'Burt' (that's what I call my dummy) with me. My personal choice was the Submission Master. This is not an inexpensive

purchase but I believe it is the best of the submission dummies I tested and it met the entire criterion mentioned above.

You may think that a submission dummy is a huge investment and it's true that most dummies are not cheap, but when I compare Jiu Jitsu to most sports it's a pretty reasonable expense. Think about it, if you wanted to be a really good cyclist - the cost of a good bike? Say you wanted to be good at tennis or golf. Even if we take equipment off the table (which in golf terms is substantial) then the dues at the local tennis or golf clubs would make most BJJ players burst into tears. We get a great service from our academies for a pretty reasonable cost, adding to your tool kit is just a wise choice. I guarantee it.

The only time I see buying a dummy to be a waste is if it never gets used. Make sure when you decide to get a serious drilling aid like this that you build into your program time to drill with the dummy. What you should do is aim for one night per week (at least) when the academy has a time that doesn't suit your schedule and add that night in for 'Burt' night.

Take you laptop or iPad into the garage, lounge or wherever you store him and drill those techniques you've been struggling with. Keep the drilling format the same - the first five minutes should be your A-game submission or sweep and then when you're warm start using the visuals on YouTube, iPad or videos to practice. Not many real training partners will be this accommodating? ... Burt will.

When I first started using a dummy and drilling as I've described above I was accused of all kinds of nefarious activities it helped so much. I kept Burt under wraps mainly due to being self-conscious than anything else, I didn't want the guys to know I had a dummy or own up to using one. I'm pretty sure it would have been easier to admit taking steroids - which was one of the many accusations for the rapid improvement in technique.

My game literally went from zero to hero using the dummy and staying with the thirty-day program. At this time the thirty day program was just an idea and I had not formulated it as a system or measured its effectiveness. The dummy still paid off

though as I started to make ground on good guys who I was always level with or slightly worse than. It's just 'Jiu Jitsu with Dummies'.

Can you imagine a boxer training without a heavy bag? What if a boxer turned to his coach and said, 'Sorry boss, not hitting the heavy bag tonight, seems like it might give me an advantage over my opponent.' Sure you'll agree this boxer sounds a bit punchy? So why do we look down on grappling dummies so much. I think this ties back to drilling. We never drill enough even though all the evidence points to the fact that drilling creates champions. The problem is that rolling is just a ton of fun. There is no getting away from the fact that Jiu Jitsu provides such a fun process of improvement due to the sparring aspect of the overall sport.

Still, boxers spar, boxers hit the bag and speedball because if they spent all their time sparring then they would be wondering where they were and what day it was by the time they hit their forties. Jiu Jitsu is much more forgiving in this aspect, so we roll, but that's not where the gold is. We need to drill effectively with or without a partner. No one bats an eyelid that we use training aids in the strength and conditioning portion of our training? Why not keep your game sharp using BJJ training aids? Let the gym membership go for a couple of months and grab a more productive tool.

As a warning make sure you don't purchase a throwing dummy thinking it will do the job and it's cheaper than its counterpart. Chances are it won't do the job at all (don't try to knock nails in wood with a pair of pliers, that's the wrong tool for the job) and you will have thrown your money down the drain. Your dummy needs to be Gi friendly and fit the bill outlined at the beginning of this section. When I say Gi friendly I mean a Gi needs to fit onto it so that you can still practice your grips. If you are more tenth planet than Nova Uniao then don't worry about the Gi so much but still make sure a rash-guard or tee-shirt will fit your dummy. Nothing worse than sweating all over a four hundred dollar investment and finding out there's no way to clean it! They tend not to fit in washing machines.

A grappling dummy is an excellent aid to your development. There is no other method of training - human or otherwise that can let you hit one hundred techniques in fifteen minutes. And you can include that as a cardio workout!

FAQ's from Submission Master on a Grappling Dummy by Bob Dorris

As you know, Bob sells the Submission Master grappling dummy. This is the dummy that I have but I have no affiliation to Bob or his organization and receive no commission or remuneration in any way for discussing his products. Please check different dummies out for yourself something new might be on the market that is just as effective.

Read what Bob has to say though, he knows his stuff on the training aid front, over to you Bob:

I'm always getting questions from readers about grappling dummy training, so I thought I'd share the Top 4 most frequently asked questions and my responses here with you.

1. What's the purpose of a grappling dummy?
2. Why train with a grappling dummy at all? Why not just use a live partner?
3. Is training "in class" enough?

FAQ #1: What's the purpose of a grappling dummy?

For getting HIGH REPETITIONS WITHOUT A PARTNER. That's it. End of story. Repetitions create muscle memory. Muscle memory allows you to complete movements (techniques) quickly and in a coordinated way without having to consciously think about the action. Of all the things you can do to improve your skill, creating muscle memory is undoubtedly the #1 thing you should focus on.

I like to say repetitions are like "rolling a marble through the dirt..." The more times you roll the marble the same way, the deeper the groove in the dirt becomes and the EASIER, FASTER and more EXACT the marble rolls down that path. Reps create a "groove" in your nervous system, causing your techniques to come out "easier, faster and more exact" each

time. And, just like riding a bike, you learn them so well it's hard to forget them.

FAQ #2: Why train with a grappling dummy at all? Why not just a live partner?

Although training partners are important for specific techniques and for “rolling”, they aren't the most effective way to get high reps of many techniques. Here are 5 good reasons why:

1. You can only train when your partners are available. Grappling dummies are available 24/7. You can even get some decent reps in when you have just 5 minutes of spare time.
2. Partners can bring your training down to “slow motion”. Partners want to talk about the techniques, “the fights on TV”, etc. that's not the most effective use of your time and decreases the number of reps you get during the training session.
3. Partners have to do their reps. Right off the bat, this means you get only half the number of reps that you would if you were training on the grappling dummy.
4. The more reps your partner does on you, the more abuse to your joints. What do you think is the main reason people stop training? Injuries. It's a no brainer.
5. When was the last time your training partner let you do 50 triangle chokes on him, followed by 50 heel hooks, then 50 arm bars? Nuff said!

FAQ #3: Is training “in class” enough?

Have you ever taken music lessons? You had to have your instrument at home and practice between lessons, didn't you? And you couldn't practice just when you had someone over to practice with... otherwise it would have taken forever to get good. When you think of it like that, you really can't expect to become very good if you only practice in class, can you? It's only common sense. And a grappling dummy is your “instrument” that allows you to practice between lessons. It's like a boxer having a punching bag to train on in between sparring sessions.



© image courtesy of www.grapplingdummy.net

Reminder: Please be aware that I have no affiliation or interest in the businesses of Submission Master or Bob Dorris. Please review various dummies that you feel might work best for you. This is only one perspective, but so happens it's a perspective I agree with and I've tested a few dummies over the years.

Recording

“If you can not measure it, you can not improve it.” & “To measure is to know.”

~ Lord Kelvin

The Lord was a little on the ‘out there’ side of things but to be honest with these two statements he was pretty much on the money. During the journey you will take over the next thirty days you will need to record a lot of the action. Not just for historical reasons so you can look back and see how well you did but also to keep you on track of the task at hand.

Let’s go back to the map. We need to get from A to B. ‘A’ being where you are now in your BJJ Progression and ‘B’ being where you want to be - which should be better or much improved. Don’t forget we need to make this improvement in a thirty-day period of time period or the subtitle for this book makes no sense!

The only way to see if progress is being made is via three things:

- Log or Journal
- Video
- Competition

We could put belt promotions in here but they vary so much from academy to academy that it cannot be held as a benchmark standard. I know the IBJJF would probably disagree but from what I’ve seen at tournaments not all blue belts (or any other belt for that matter) are created equal, so in the interests of a 30-day process let’s keep promotions out as a measuring marker.

One thing I will say for promotions is that we grow into them. I heard the excellent black belt Shawn Williams speaking recently and he used this analogy: That most students sit (and fit) themselves into their rank, but when they are promoted they lift themselves to the new rank. Much like a plant being grown in a small pot, as the plant grows and expands it is

transferred to a larger pot and this gives it the room to grow even more. If we view belt rankings as the pots then we grow into each pot through each phase of our development (promotion).

This came with the caveat that we also have to train; there is no avoiding training whichever way you slice it.

When it comes to recording your progress, you will notice more weak points than you could have held in your head. Also your Map will become an integral part of the Log. At the beginning of each week you will have a Preview and Review period. On Sunday (or pick a day that you won't forget) you can review your log and video content write some notes about what happened and the details you recorded and this then sets up the Preview. The Preview is a description of what you have planned coming up for the next week, your new goal (and orientation filter) for the coming period.

In this program you only have to do this P&R process four times. But you need to complete your journal after every session - no excuses. This will also become important when you get those, 'I don't think I can make it' days, the will to keep the progress and the cycle moving adds momentum. Don't break the chain!

If you don't complete your journal after each session then you will forget what happened in that session. Period. It's better to have a short pencil than a long memory. Also things change in your mind, maybe you notice a negative circuit pattern but you didn't get round to making a record of it then you need to go back and remember how you discovered the negative circuit. It will be hard to pin down exactly how the circuit played out as there are too many variable factors. When the technique and position are fresh in your mind it's easy to put it down on paper.

Be aware of this as you move forward in recording your progress.

I will cover the recording of Competition in the following section.

Journals and Logs

Keeping a track of your progress is paramount if you are to improve in your jiu jitsu training. My professor recommends that if you improve by only 1% each day then the compounding effect will make you highly proficient in no time.

I have been keeping a training log for many years now and write down my efforts from the class just before I get into bed, this a little routine that now makes for interesting reading years later. I laugh at some of my goals and ambitions as a white and blue belt and laugh even more at some of the complex techniques I thought I might be able to manage - no kidding, there's a flying triangle in there.

Keeping a series of techniques in your head is a complex matter. This is human chess, for every attack there is a defense, for every sweep, takedown, pass, submission there is a counter and counter to that counter. It makes much more sense to keep taking notes than trying to remember what you did. Also, when you review (as you should periodically), some techniques you will identify as being easy to perform and fit your body-type. These techniques I put a star in the corner of the page and come back to drill some more. Then the techniques that present a challenge I put an X in the corner of the page, meaning I need to revisit that move and try and work out what detail I am missing that is making it so hard. The neutral techniques that I don't have a feeling of either way then I let them slide until I come back to them. These are my so-so techniques, I can do them but they don't fill me with joy.

This art form is a process and systems driven. One thing leads logically to another. It's the same position-transition-submission. Simple?

The logic though is lightning in a bottle. It needs to be grasped and placed into the correct place in the puzzle or the puzzle cannot be unlocked. Remember how a move was working really well and you were catching everyone or passing everyone, then a couple of weeks later it stopped working?

What happened?? Probably, a detail you were applying has now been forgotten, wouldn't it be great if you could go back and retrieve the detail. You can. It's in your training log or journal.

Here's the cycle I discipline myself to implement:

Visualize - This is usually a demo from the coach or professor, or DVD or whatever. Then I see myself doing it, from my own perspective.

Practice - Try the technique out with a partner or grappling dummy. Go through the steps in meticulous detail.

Drill - If it works and 'no parts are missing' then I drill it up to 50-60 times.

Live Training / Test - Once it's working in my head I push myself into a sparring or specific training situation where I can test it. Usually the first couple of times out the gate it fails. Then it clicks and I test it as much as I can.

At the practice stage it enters the training log including the details that made it work so I can move to the drilling stage. If it doesn't work at the drilling stage, go back to the Practice stage and get the training journal out.

Sparring goes in the journal too. I don't spar without a goal in mind, so it's like a convoluted specific training. Convoluted in that, say my goal is back attacks then I have to go through the process of getting to the back before I can even begin to work my game.

Each element is important and should not be excluded. Once something works well in my game, I go back to cycle one - Visualize.

Here are some of the other benefits of using a training journal:

Memory - It's hard to remember all the techniques that you will be picking up in BJJ. This is a sport that is almost completely technique driven, yes, athleticism is a factor but you need the techniques regardless of your athletic prowess. At first the techniques can be a little overwhelming, and then you get the hang of it. As you move to more advanced techniques, again, it becomes a real battle of wits. Your journal

is your memory backup. You drop your computer or spill coffee on it and the long-term data is a problem. With your journal or training log, you can drop it and then drop coffee all over and your jiu jitsu brain is safe.

Review - Goal setting is not one of my favorite things, I'm not a big 'goal guy'. I think this may be my aversion to the word and not necessarily what it means. You see, I feel it is imperative to have a point of focus for each session. In the early stages your professor and coach will provide this but as time wears on you'll need to motivate yourself to select techniques that fit your age, physical condition, body shape, weight, and many other factors. This is where you need to start getting creative.

Now if you set the focus of your training you need to check in and see how far along you've come. You can't just reminisce; it's got to be more solid than that. You need review sections in your training log that checks-in and keeps score. How's that half guard sweep coming along? You said you would have it mastered a month ago? Things like this accelerate your progress.

Trackback - Tracing your steps can be an important part of moving forward, especially if you are hitting a plateau. This re-visiting of your previous techniques and the times when your game felt really good can be a reminder that this could happen again in the future. Hitting a plateau can be very disheartening, a real slump pushed me to question whether to continue or not. Using my journal I decided to go back to basics and forget all the fancy techniques that were confusing me. This saved my BJJ career.

Here are some guidelines to keeping a good journal:

- Use symbols and marks that mean something to you. In the [Zen Jiu Jitsu Training Log](#) there is a box at the outside edge of the page. This is for you to add a star or check mark or cross to indicate this page is important in some way. That's the way I use the box, you might do something different. You might be creative enough to color the box a shade that reminds you how that training session went.

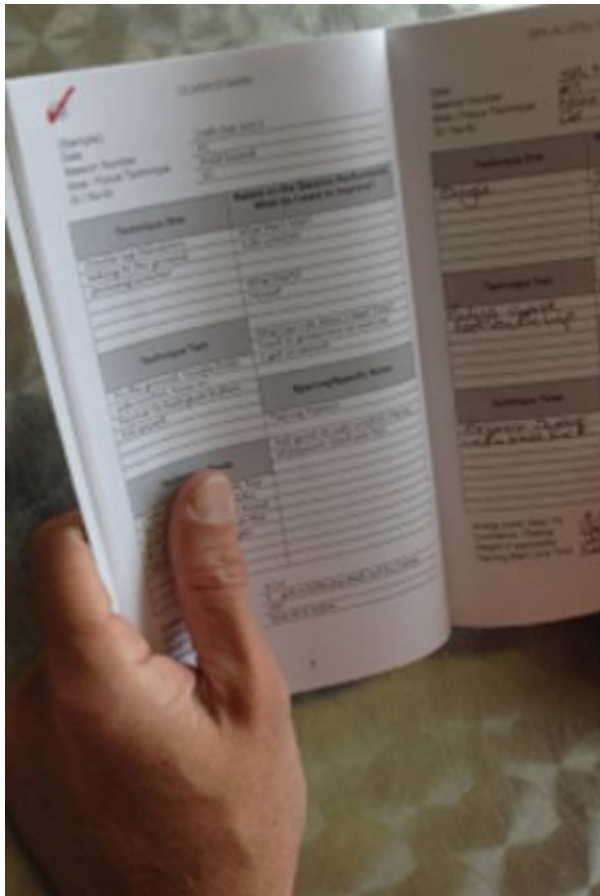
□ Use shorthand. I use RNC in my notes that's an acronym for the Rear Naked Choke. It's a good idea to use TLA's (Three letter acronyms) in your journals, there's not a lot of space most of the time and when you don't feel like writing up the session due to exhaustion or other sweat-filled factors writing in shorthand really helps. Use TLA's or shorthand to describe your training partners and techniques, this makes for quicker entries.

□ Make sure you get into a routine of adding the entries. Like I mentioned earlier I make sure I update my Training Log before I get into bed - on the night I trained. I don't try and remember the next day what I got up to. I try and write it down while it's fresh in my mind. You need to find a routine that works. One of the guys at my school gets his notebook out before he leaves the academy. It's covered in sweat that makes the ink blotchy. That's another tip: Use a pencil, I use a mechanical pencil and it works great, I do use the erasing department too.

□ Keep a track on time. In the Zen Training Log we added a start and finish time. This records the overall time you committed to the class. But it also records when you had that class too, Wednesday evening from seven until nine. Great. And if you notice a pattern of stars in the box at the head of the page, then you might find that this is an optimal training time for you.

□ Date the entries.

□ I know this is repeating myself but it's important. Make sure each class has a goal or focus. Doesn't matter if it was set by the coach or professor or by you. Just make sure there is a focus and you're not just rolling around for the sake of it.



Video Recording

Another great way of using technology to help you record your actions is the Video format. Next time you roll take your smart phone along or if you have the resources take your Flip video camera along. When you are going to spar and others are waiting or resting, ask one of your training partners to video your roll when he's having a rest between rounds.

This sounds a little silly when you first consider it but once you see yourself roll you'll be amazed. Have you ever played chess and one of the spectators seemed bemused by a move you made? Have you ever watched one of your teammates at a tournament and saw him do something that seemed totally random, or out of character? Or missed a sub that was staring him in the face? Or let himself get subbed when the escape was right there!?

Of course we have, because we have a wider perspective from the outside.

One of the reasons you get caught in an obvious sub or miss an opportunity is that you are in the thick of the action. It's much easier to assess things from a third party objective perspective.

This is how this video system works, only you are your own coach and own critic. The last words of the Buddha went something like this 'shine a light onto yourself'. What he meant was be your own advocate, be your own coach, analyze and watch your own actions ... wake up! Don't just accept the advice of others ... look deeper. It's okay for a coach to tell you where you went wrong when you get caught or miss a position, but when you see it ... a picture is literally worth a thousand words.

This was a real eye opener for me the first time I did it. Actually I went around the houses a little and started off by getting one of my training buddies to take some stills with my phone. The technology was not as good then even with the iPhone, you could only just about take photos, but it did give me a little more insight into my game. Then when video became available I started to film some of my rolling sessions

(well not really me filming but a colleague or one of the moms who had come to pick up a kid, basically anyone not rolling) this was a big help.

It's my recommendation that you start to video some of your drilling sessions first. This will help you with some details and positions plus it's much more non-threatening. Take this into consideration. If you hand your phone to someone on the sideline and say can you video this, your opponent will feel slightly threatened plus you will probably want to be the star of the video. You need to explain its part of a BJJ improvement program you are trying out, but be aware the ego is a strong and powerful beast.

Now, if you just start by filming your drilling (non-threatening) and then just upgrade to rolling no one will hardly notice. This is just a tip from the top. If you go to a new school and tell some sideliner 'Hey, video me rolling with this kid.' Then 'this kid' will more than likely try to smash you big time. Be aware that it's polite to ask someone to be filmed or recorded in any way.

Also don't think this a green light to beat up on the White Belts so you have a video collection of 'Beatdowns', this is a purely a training aid ... and a very good one if not abused.

In fact, the video format works better when you roll with people much better than you. If you keep getting caught and broke apart by one of your teammates catch it next time on your Flip or iPhone and then dismantle your game to see where you went wrong. Also see how your teammate plays, what are his strengths and weaknesses. I bet the next time you roll, you'll show some technical abilities that surprise him. Next thing you know all your training partners are videoing their progress ... and you are the trendsetter.

Attention to Self

Zen students study for many years before they are allowed to teach themselves. It's a long road to become a Zen coach. A monk who had recently become a teacher was traveling and stumbled across a monastery in the countryside. As it turned

out it was the monastery of a master he had studied under many years before. He went in and set up tea with the old master, hoping to impress him with how far he come in his studies, and he now was also a Zen master.

It was the rainy season, so as he traveled he wore rain shoes and carried an umbrella. He left them in the hallway and went though to see his old master. They exchanged greetings, the master asked “In the hallway, did you leave your umbrella on the left or on the right of your rain shoes?”

The new teacher was unaware of how he had left his umbrella, and then realized he had much further to travel in his journey of self realization.

How is it that so many people get countered in Jiu Jitsu? In fact not just Jiu Jitsu but just about every martial art has a plethora of counter attacks, we can include chess in this maxim too. A simple guard pass counter seems to be one of the most effective counters there is. In many a match I don't do anything, I know my counter, set up the guard I know will suck the opponent in and bam! I'm working my game. One of the main reasons this happens is due to the overload of attention units.

Assume that your mind can only hold a specific number of attention units before your mind starts to wander and you lose concentration altogether. These are actual units in number and the number is individual to each person.

When you move to pass guard your attention is on the guard pass. And usually the majority of your attention units are absorbed by grips, pressure and balance assigned to that pass. This usually means that you are not ‘Observing’ your opponent with all that much attention. When your pass gets blocked or is foiled, you adapt quickly to the situation and try to recover back to your starting position (scramble).

How many times have you had to post from a sweep? If your opponent had only gripped that arm or leg you would have flipped through the air with ease. This is lack of Observation due to the absorption of attention units. Your attention is still on the guard pass even after it failed.

When you move to pass don't place ALL your attention units on the pass from your side, get a feel for their (your opponents) position too, especially the hips. In fact you should place as little attention as possible on the passing technique and keep all other attention units free, this will prevent any surprise attacks.

This creates the atmosphere of good split focus. You direct your attention at your partner looking for good attacking possibilities and setting up your guard game while Observing for counter responses. This is hard to do, but will put you light years ahead your competition. (Review the section on Observation).

Don't forget when you are sparring you have to monitor yourself as much as you have to monitor your opponent. Don't fall asleep. How many times have you asked a training partner who has a great sweep, "That was a cool sweep, how did you position for that?" and they reply "Not sure." I've had that happen so many times it's hard to believe. Also you can tell when an opponent is grunting and using all the strength they have. Their attention units have collapsed and they have no other options. This style of sparring is based in fear. Their ego is based on the 'W'!

This also applies to why you get swept or triangled from the same technique over and over again. If you realized and were self aware enough to recognize the opening you created you just wouldn't do it again.

Being self-aware is the state of knowing what you are doing at all times without having a rigid control of yourself. Awareness not rigidity.

Rigidity is the basis for the fear mode. You never make a mistake because you never make anything. If you finish a sparring session without being tapped or improving your position on at least one of your training partners you might as well as not bothered sparring. There is no improvement in the rigid mind set. Get tapped, improve a position, or its just a workout. Rolling is the time to be risky, just be mindful that you are being risky.

When you create a certain amount of awareness, you can see the mistakes you make, you know why those mistakes happened and then you can find out how to correct them. Go back to your maps, video journals and logs. Watch yourself and watch your opponent, you'll get the hang of this on no time.

Please, please, please, do not focus on strength, or focus on how much strength you use in each technique. Muscle is the opposite of mindfulness. How many Buddhist monks arm wrestle? Stay cool, and if you screw up, Tap, say to yourself 'Relax', touch knuckles and go again.

Rolling

This is the fun part right! After all what's the use of drilling, mastering technique if you never get a chance to sample the goods on anyone? This is true but as with all parts of this text I have a few suggestions.

Next time you roll decide your game plan before you actually play. Think about your weekly preview, what have you been working on? What's the Go-To move that you would like to improve and see if it works? This is a better system than what I see at most academies. A lot of BJJ students seem to roll aimlessly! Next time you are going to roll ask these two questions of your partner, "Do you have any injuries, anything I need to watch?" and "What are you working on? You want to work toward a position?"

I always ask these before every roll, the first question is respectful, this is my training partner, if he has sore ribs from a prior roll then I don't go in for side smash passes. If his fingers are swollen then I'm easy on grip breaks. The second question is more telling. Virtually 90% of all the team members you roll with will answer "Nah, nothing much, let's just roll."

Now they are either guarding their game plan, they might not want you to know they have a killer Berimbolo move ready to strike, but the chances are that your partner is just 'rolling' around. This is ineffective training. The whole ethos of BJJ was based on minimum effort equals maximum result, using leverage to create a favorable position or as described in most business situations this is described as: Efficiency.

Rolling around on the ground with sweaty guys is not a statement I could find in any books on efficiency. Believe me, I've looked. A valid game plan before you begin is efficient.

There is nothing to say your game plan will prove to be efficient. Especially if it's your first outing for a particular technique, it's bound to be fraught with missed details, poor leverage, timid execution, but as you drill and become more confident then this situation will change. Time on the mats is a

huge part of this equation to become one thousand percent improved in thirty days and that's the goal. The end result.

Make sure that when you roll you keep it technical at all times. If you hit the mat for the sparring session and feel tension in your body then it is not a good sign that you will be loose enough to get technical. If your face feels tense and you can't crack a smile with your training partner, no matter what, then you need to slow down. You'll never get through thirty days of rolling if every training session is a World Championship, life or death, bout.

Being technical helps you relax. It's much easier to roll when you have an idea of what you are doing or plan to do. If you are a white belt you may still be in the 'I don't know what I don't know' phase, and this is good, enjoy it. You will need to tap ten thousand times before you reach your black belt ... so start now, get a few taps under your belt. Some students don't want to tap regardless of the position they are in. They hold out, they have horrendous injuries, and then they stop training. This is a totally inefficient system in my book (and this is my book).

In Jiu Jitsu we have a perfect system for stopping the action when your partner pulls off a great technique – you tap. You should celebrate your mat buddy having the smarts to pull off this move ... shake hands, touch knuckles and go again ... get tapped again. It's all good.

Do I get tapped with my game plan, my excessive drilling, my technical moves like a chess master? All the time ... and I like it.

Why? Consider the alternative. You take up a more concussive martial art, let's say Muay Thai. There is no tap. You'll take some lumps and dish some out but if your opponent is more advanced than you then be prepared to take a considerable thumping. Jiu Jitsu has a more elegant stop process. It's well determined and defined, two taps, verbal inclusive as well as foot taps stop the process and we can begin again.

Try going all out Muay Thai seven nights a week without getting some serious injuries and maybe a little brain damage. Most striking art schools would not permit full contact between teammates for this very reason, so see yourself in a very fortunate position, leave your ego at the door and tap when it necessitates it.

Thinking Processes while Sparring

Let's go back to the brain-as-computer analogy. We take in bits and pieces of data and file them in their appropriate places in our brains. The problem with most BJJ students is that they file a lot of the information under 'miscellaneous', or it gets lost.

Okay, so let's see if we can make better use of the computer filing system.

1. Observe your Opponent. Most fighters have styles that they like, roll with someone long enough and you'll get a handle on his or her circuits and that will leave you the option to counter. Most of your sparring partners will have 'a game' and it will become obvious. Unfortunately most practitioners don't even consider this, even if they were told what was going to happen beforehand.
2. What does your opponent do when you attack? Does he pull guard, put up a knee shield, roll out, hip out, etc? What does he do the most often? Most fighters have five or less defensive patterns that they are comfortable with. Jiu Jitsu is infinite so everyone needs a comfort zone, it's not like Boxing or Karate where there a set number of options (jab, cross, kick, block) this is a whirling series of connected events, so humans need patterns until the number perplexes them, this is usually four or five and then maybe another eight they can scrape by with but don't have command over.
3. Do this exercise. Pick four or five of your classmates and watch them spar; see if you can see which guard they prefer. See if you can see whether they prefer top or bottom or to sweep, watch in real detail. Which foot did they use for the sweep? Which hand was the influential grip? Did they have good balance? Did they shake (muscle tremor style) as if they

were trying to balance or out-muscling their opponent? Try and notice everything. Style habits are easy to spot.

4. If they go straight on the attack, which side did they attack with first? What pass were they aiming at? Knee cutter, standing pass, etc. How close/near were they for the attack?

This is a lot to remember, but once you get into the habit it gets really (really) easy. Use the protocol outlined in 'Objective Analysis', which should make this process easier.

This is one of the hardest things for a fighter to do. Look at a match with a detached introspection - no emotional additives. Keep an eye what you get scored on plus the factors involved and what you score with. This is the process that leads to excellence.

Technique

Technical ability in Jiu Jitsu, to me at least, is the pinnacle. I've seen small technical Jiu Jitsu practitioners with little or no athletic ability absolutely murder younger, larger opponents who depend on strength too much.

'Technique conquers all' to quote the BJJ phenom Caio Terra. This is a guy winning Absolutes at one hundred and thirty pounds. Which, regardless of whether you like Caio or not, is nothing short of impressive.

Having a technical base is important to your game, and to your future in Jiu Jitsu. If you have a couple of Go-To moves, have a good gas tank and hold a little muscle this is a great start to making positive waves in your academy. But if that is where it stays, the picture will surely change with the passing of time. As your team bypass your technical ability and have an answer to your Go-To moves you'll find that you can spar all night due to your athleticism but you'll also get subbed a ton. That blue belt doesn't hang too well now and if you don't get your brain in the game then you'll more than likely wash out of the BJJ system before purple hits your waistline.

If you are athletic don't let that be you. If you are not athletic (like me) then you need to be technical, there is no other way!

Results will take care of themselves if the technique (Process) is put in correctly. The famous motivational speaker Jim Rohn said *"Success is nothing more than a few simple disciplines, practiced every day; while failure is simply a few errors in judgment, repeated every day."*

I am convinced after the varying amounts of research I've had to wade through to get this manual in shape that focusing on process (technique) is the key. The alternative is focusing on the result, the win. But the problem is that the win, the end result is often times out of our control and this is never a good thing whereas processes are always within our grasp. Focus on processes (technique) and the result will come.

Masters and PGA Golf Champion Jackie Burke, Jr., used two equations to represent the relationship between process [P] and results [R]. He said that $P \text{ over } R = \$$, and that $R \text{ over } P = \text{Zero}$. A simple formula, which basically meant that if you put results (submissions, say, at all cost) over process (the drilling of techniques) then you'll end up nowhere. If you reverse the formula you'll hit gold.

This process is one that I think fits nicely into the ethos behind Zen Jiu Jitsu, it's the principle behind the attitude and protocol I'm suggesting here.

Objective Analysis

Try this. An objective analysis of a BJJ Match. Go to YouTube (there are thousands) pick one of your favorites and then view the match from one side. Pick your player, like a video game; you are him for this match. Write down your thoughts as the match unfolds.

Next, look at the match as a detached observer. Think strategy and what could have been done to improve. You can have no subjective input at all; you have to leave any support or ego for your player at the door. You are like his coach, your opinions have nothing to do with the outcome of the match. Write down every technique, sweep and submission attempt or sub that happened - keep it all mechanical.

Got it? Good.

Now use the same exercise but with one of the videos you shot of yourself in the Recording section of the manual.

No emotion can come into it. It has to be purely mechanics. Watch the video footage as if it is not you but your video game buddy. See how emotional you and your opponent are on the mat but do not react in your run down of the mechanics (what happened), again write down every technique, sweep, transition, position and result.

Got it? Good.

First order of business, “Where are you?” (It’s the old Observation routine again.)

As I mentioned in the first chapter, the most important factor you have to be aware of in any sparring situation is where you are. Are you in half guard? Are you on top, bottom, in side control? Where are your grips?

Second in line is, “What’s going on?”

Are you winning or losing? What’s going well and not so well? You have to be accurate when you are recording this, you can easily spot how you didn’t post your hand, your

balance was off, your hips were too high, you didn't have grips etc.,

Let's get specific.

What happens to you in each position? Are you moving into different positions or favoring one position? Which guard did you start with? What is the pattern of the match from starting guard to submission or time-out?

Once you have these two in order, the next question is "How?" How did you get into this position? How did your opponent score or fall into your counter? How did he set you up, does he stand to pass, is his right or left leg forward. Remember: be meticulous. How are you taking advantage of his guard position? Which side do you present forward, do you pull guard or do you go for the top? Are you comfortable?

We've covered, where, what and how. Let's look at the "When" of the session. What is the timing involved? Slow, Fast, Easy, Hard?

From the beginning of the crossing exchange (Critical Distance Line), where grips are established 1) Does he break your grip and move forward, or 2) Do you initiate the first attack? In the middle of the action, 3) Do you sweep to move on top, 4) Are you reversed to the bottom position? Did you hesitate? Are there periods of a lull because you are not sure how to respond to his position? Is the hesitation or pause long or short? Is this due to resting, are you tired? How is your balance throughout?

Look for general overarching factors, what position does everyone get you in? And then work on the specifics. What move did you fall for? What position were you in when you knew the counter but didn't use it, or just plain forgot the technique? What is proving the most successful pattern in your sparring?

When you put all this together, the Where, What, How and When you will begin to see patterns emerge, the good and bad.

Example: Your opponent attempts to pass your butterfly guard and you pull to half guard (Where) he pushes his weight on

top of you and takes head control, you still feel pretty comfortable and in control (What). You take advantage of the weight and slide your right side hip underneath to recover full guard (How). He presses his weight forward again resisting the sweep but allows your knee to slide through and you complete the recovery by switching your hips back and forth to full guard (When).

It's easy to do with a little practice and a keen eye - to recap:

1. Watch a good match on YouTube, or record some footage in the Academy.
2. Record your own match
3. Roll slow and Analyze the positions generally
4. Review the recording and Analyze the positions specifically
5. Rotate 2 and 3 speeding up the roll as you go
6. Do not explore new positions you until you feel comfortable in the ones you just analyzed (see Drilling)

When students roll they get caught up in a lot of emotion and reaction to their surroundings for most of the time. Getting caught by a stupid sweep you never normally get caught with and you might hear yourself say, "Just not concentrating tonight..." or "A little tired from the previous roll...took my eye off the ball."

The real skill here is being able to analyze and roll in the full heat of the battle with detached calmness. This is when you see World Champions who are several moves ahead of their competitors. If you follow the above processes of analysis before and after sparring then this will speed up this process no end. You need the ability to spot circuit patterns in yourself and your opponent and then to adjust those patterns to the match you are in. It's simple: You analyze and adapt. Adapt or Die!

What if your opponent doesn't play ball and won't fit into the pattern of your favorite position? How many times have you seen the killer guard player falter because he gets guard pulled on him!?

You have to customize your approach to his greatest number of weaknesses. Nullify his defense and exploit his weakness. It's simple warfare.

How do you do this? Just ask: Where, What, How and When.

Start looking at what you are doing. Start looking at what your training partner is doing. Use the strongest muscle in your body - your brain - to become fully engaged in this process. When you have a good roll with no objective and you just roll around getting a good sweat then that's all this session could ever be ... a good workout. You cannot gain any understanding.

When you start to apply logic and have a goal before each session you will jump to a level you did not expect (or your teammates expect) in short order.

Do not roll on instinct. Not in the early stages - and that's all the way up to Brown Belt.

Do not pull a particular guard, do not sweep or counter or recover guard unless *you decide* to do any of those things. The trick to winning an exchange is to get your opponent to play *your* game, not the other way around. If you control *your* own actions then ostensibly you control the match.

Chapter Three: Development

Now you have all the components to jump your game to the next level and improve 1000%, we need to consider the long term. Staying in the BJJ game is easier said than done, maybe one of the reasons to drop out is due to injury or lack of conditioning or motivation. These are the most common elements that make people wash out of the system.

Here are some pointers to help you keep moving to the next level and beyond.

The 365 Day Challenge

This was how this 30 day system developed. I saw an article in the local newspaper that reported a girl had been surfing for 365 straight days in a year. That's 365 straight, not massaging the figures so it was 365 surf sessions in a year ... every day ... no crying, no bailouts. Straight.

Could this be possible within Jiu Jitsu? This is where my mind went as soon as I read the article. Would it possible to roll every day for a whole year, that would take some real commitment and I thought I might be the man to test it!

Was I successful? Yes and No.

For some reason, I felt it would be useful to start this exercise on my Birthday. I had to manage several other factors too, like my academy was not open seven days a week and working out at other academies was not allowed. That's where Burt (my submission dummy) came in. Fit and well, I could embark on this journey and see where the wind took me.

The program was great and I was flying along for the first month. Regardless of other commitments I made sure that I had a Jiu Jitsu session every day. Then the second month came along, I had decided to work harder on this protocol and seriously included drilling in my program as well as visiting other schools regardless of my own association rules. By the third month there were whispers around my own academy that

I had been traveling North for private lessons with another Professor ... no one improves so much in such a short time, right?

My skills in psychology improved and I got my roadmap in real shape. From being a very mediocre Blue Belt I accelerated into my Purple Belt without even looking back. I honed the technique even further, still rolling or drilling every day.

My rules to qualify for a BJJ session every day: it had to be for a minimum of one hour. I followed the thirteen year old girl from the newspaper ... no excuses ... every day.

Then I made a couple of small errors, not in my method but in new techniques I tested. I had not drilled them enough and my confidence was at an all time high, I picked up a small injury, then another. It was my hand but serious enough to affect my grip. This didn't faze me I adapted and carried on, then a rib injury due to a white belt losing his balance and dropping his weight when we were practicing. He didn't even realize it wasn't his fault. His 250 pound knee fell on me while I wasn't even looking never mind concentrating.

Undeterred I rallied on, reducing my sparring time and concentrating on more of the psychology. I managed my training partners to lighter guys, felt like I could roll when Bam!! My back called it quits. The program was over ... for a short while at least.

This was a very difficult time. Long periods of inactivity don't work very well with my stress levels. My day job is moderately active and involves long periods of driving, but getting in and out of the driving seat proved almost impossible.

I had been using my journal effectively so I went back and reviewed the previous six months. What a ride, and that's when I decided to document this work. As a lifetime Buddhist I thought it would be cool for someone to consider the mind and psychology of Jiu Jitsu and that's when Zen Jiu Jitsu was born.

All the lessons I learned in the improving of my game I broke down, used my background in the sciences to cover the

learning steps and put them together in a structured fashion. This manual was a long time in the making and that back injury was a long time ago but the lessons are as vivid today as they were then.

So what did I learn from a marathon Jiu Jitsu session? It is possible to train forever.

If someone had written this text and I had read it beforehand I could have lasted the year. It is doable, and I want someone to do it and prove it can be done. I'm not that man anymore, not because I couldn't do it, now I have the tools but my motivation has changed and although BJJ is a massive part of my life, to complete the 365 day challenge you have to recognize beforehand that your life will be out of balance for quite some time.

For younger people, balance isn't such a big deal. But if you have a family, a mortgage, a day job, this kind of undertaking (if taken seriously) can be damaging. And nothing is worth that.

That's why the 30 day program is ideal. You will get maximum benefit from a limited effort. In other words it is a maximally efficient program.

If you are young, don't need the balance, and want to kill the competition then try it for a year. Your progress will be astonishing. But please ensure you read the whole manual first, then maybe read it again before you make the commitment public. There are pitfalls as well as the potential for huge gains in your game.

It's 30 days minimum then break. If you complete the 30 days and want to go on then you will need to understand, digest and absorb the information that follows.

Injury Management

You need to be respectful of your body at all times. Without this amazing device that we take for granted most of the time, you have no game, you have no BJJ, you are just an inactive lump of fat and muscle tissue taking in daytime TV.

WARNING!

Do Not knowingly damage this device (no not your Kindle or iPad, your body). That means be careful what you put in it from food to drugs. Your game and your life depend on it - literally.

This Jiu Jitsu thing is a long-term proposition. We only have to look at the founders Helio and Carlos to know this can be practiced into a ripe old age. Not only that, but as we practice when we're older we can still be effective and vibrant as older people. This is a wonderful sport for staying young.

With the above statement in mind, and a protocol in your hand that encourages a contact sport on a daily basis for a whole month, you need to manage any injuries that may flare or are pre-existing.

ICE is your friend.

Icing an injured body part is an important part of treatment. Icing injuries can be effective for sprains, strains, overuse injuries and bruises. Learn how to properly ice your injury.

Using ice to recover from an injury is nothing new. You just need to learn how to use the ice properly.

Get the ice on as soon as the injury presents itself. Most schools have ice packs waiting for any flare-ups or joint pops. Don't be macho and don't wait. The benefits of icing being effective reduce significantly over a 48-hour period.

Ice Massage. Move the ice around, do not allow it to sit in one place.

Elevate. If the body part can be raised, make sure it's higher than the heart during the ice massage. This should further

reduce any swelling. If it's a lower back injury, to alleviate pressure when you lie down make sure you have a pillow beneath your knees and you feet up at 90 degrees (if possible). Like being sat on a chair but with your back on the ground.

Timing. 15 minutes is the ideal time to massage. No longer. The results are diminishing from there and can even cause more damage if this is not respected. Frostbite can also be an issue.

Rest. Also you need to have a good rest period between massages. Once you have massaged the area leave it 45 minutes to an hour before the next ice massage.

Repeat. Keep going through this process but do not ice massage if the area still feels cold. The area must have returned to normal body temperature before the next icing is initiated.

Helpful Ideas:

1. Use a plastic bag with crushed ice for the massage or to rest ice on a knee for example. The crushed ice will mold around body parts. You can also use a bag of frozen peas or corn, this also works.
2. Buy some paper cups filled with water and a peel off lid then freeze them. These are ideal ice massage devices. Peel the top off and massage the muscle area with circular motions, this will induce a nice even cool area in no time.
3. Don't allow the ice to just sit on the skin as this can induce frostbite. If it's more ligament based like a knee or finger/thumb injury (which are common) then apply the ice massage and then rest it for a few seconds then remove then massage then rest and repeat but DO NOT leave any form of ice just resting on the skin, always put a towel or cloth between ice and skin.
4. The reason why ice is so effective especially for soft tissue injuries is that it reduces swelling and inflammation by reducing blood flow to the injured area. It can also reduce pain a little if the injury is quite serious.

When to get help?

If your injury is not showing any signs of improvement or even feeling worse within a few days then please go to see a physician. If the pain in the injury is acute and regardless of icing the pain does not subside then go to see your physician right away.

Tapping 10,000 Times

One of the aims of this program is to get you tapped 10,000 times. If you can achieve this then I promise you (absolutely guarantee it) that you will be an A1 Jiu Jitsu player – and probably a Black Belt as that would take quite some time. The trick is staying in the game long enough to get tapped 10K times. This needs management and watching how you train and the injuries you sustain from small easy fixes to potential surgery.

At all costs avoid surgery. I don't know one player who came back from surgery better than they were previously. My physician explained this to me and it's pretty simple: The body is a sealed container, it's like the black box computer on board a BMW or Porsche, it's not meant for the owner or even some Joe Blow mechanic to come along and open it up.

Once opened the seal can never be truly put back. There is so much bacteria and energy in the world, even in an operating theatre that a hundred years from now civilization will look back and consider the current mode of surgery as barbaric. Avoid this at all costs. Rest, recover. If it looks like you need major surgery then consider that Jiu Jitsu will more than likely become a hobby for you in the future. Keep it simple and enjoy rolling ... and please don't incur another injury that would need surgical help.

Patience, History, Philosophy

One of the things that makes Brazilian Jiu Jitsu different from many other martial arts is the length of time it takes to achieve the exalted status of black belt.

It makes the belt seem iconic and a very worthy journey, it shows that there is value in the time invested to achieve such a high level of proficiency, especially with the significant drop out rate that comes with BJJ.

In Japan they do not have a belt system equivalent to the western ideal. They have two belts, black and white, that's it. The colors were introduced to keep Westerners motivated, and maybe make a few dollars for the McDojo's of this world. When I see ten year old Taekwondo black belts I wonder about the motivation of the school? I'm not diminishing the talent of the child but if this kid started training when they were five (we hardly have the motor skills to ride a bike at five) then it only took five years to get a black belt. Did each grading come with a price tag, how much did the school and association make from this kids parents. Cynical? Yes. Realistic assumption? I still think: Yes.

In fact, the history of the belt system in Japan is ever more interesting. When the Okinawans were developing a system to defend themselves from the tyranny of the Japanese invaders there was nothing really very structured. It just developed as a necessity and was passed from farmer to farmer via word of mouth. Once they could work and live in peace in their own country then there was almost no need for a system of martial art.

Some of the mainlanders who practiced this system of self-defense disagreed and Jigaro Kano decided to formalize a system we know today as Judo (Gentle Way). Gichin Funakoshi developed the modern system of Karate (Empty Hand). They all wore kimonos that were adapted to become the Gi we use today, specially reinforced to bear the brunt of combat and only white belts were worn by everyone keeping the suit jacket wrapped.

Over time with all these guys practicing it became clear that some of the students were becoming very capable, but the side shoot was that the capable ones were the ones that spent a lot of time on the mat (as discussed in the section on Drilling). As much as hygiene allowed their kimonos were washed and dried and then they would hit the mats again. New students began to join the workout and throwing practice but the guys who had been on the mat a while bore a huge difference to their new counterparts. Their belts (and even uniforms) had become frayed and dirty, no longer the bright white belt or kimono of the beginner.

After some thought Kano and his elder student body decided that once a level of proficiency was earned then you were allowed to dye your frayed and tattered belt black so it didn't look so unseemly. Anyone could put on a new Gi but the belt always remained with the student for the duration of their time training.

This then was seen as a badge of honor but Kano was very clear in the message the black belt communicated to new and old students, it only meant 'you have mastered the basics'. He was trying to instill in the new black belts that their journey was just beginning. Understand this, even at black belt Jigaro Kano more or less said 'the learning starts here'.

In western society most baby boomers would probably not handle this concept too well. You are a white belt for (approximately) ten years and then one day you show up and you get your black belt, which I think would have been an awesome process, but most students want to see some traction, some progress marker, before the end of ten years.

This demonstrates the difference in patience levels between the Japanese and the western world. In Japan it's not unusual for a large business (say Sony) to have a one hundred or two hundred year business plan. They observe that even though technology will change over this period but this document is dynamic, it will change. They expect it to change - adapt or die. And for the last one hundred years they seem to have adapted pretty well.

Don't chase the black belt or any belt for that matter. Your Professor will know when you need to be promoted and will credit you accordingly. Just keep moving forward, remember the old adage 'a black belt is just a white belt that didn't give up,' I believe that to be true.

Krishna told Arjuna that you have the right to your labor, but not the fruits of that labor. What he meant was keep practicing - that is reward enough. If you get a fancy belt in the future then so be it, but if you don't, it makes no difference to anyone including you.

When it comes to age and adapting to the situation I will leave you with this folk tale:

A self-important college freshman was walking along the beach philosophizing to anyone who would listen when he came across an old guy minding his own business in the shade. He made it clear to the old man that it was impossible for old man's generation to understand the new regime, the new generation, the young Turks.

"You grew up in a different world," the student said, "and a pretty primitive one. The youth of today grew up with television, jet speed travel, space travel, man walked on the moon. We have nuclear energy, super tankers and smart phones, broadband internet systems and so much more."

The old man thought for a second and then responded, "You're right son, we didn't have those things when we were young ... that's why we invented them, for arrogant little shits like you. What have you got planned for the next generation?"

The black belts that go before you have paved the way. You may experiment with various guards and new positions but don't be in any rush to get to the next promotion. It will come with time, just exercise some patience and keep rolling.

Periodization

In tennis this is a standard term. One that if you decide to go for the 365 day route will need to be aware of:

This technique involves dividing training periods of up to a year (the macrocycle) into smaller periods (mesocycles), which are then divided further into microcycles.

Each period or cycle might be a mini training program in and of itself lasting 6 weeks or more.

This approach is intended to avoid overtraining and result in a peak in performance at tournament time.

Each has its own goal and one cycle follows sequentially on from the other. Like in many other sports, tennis demands many different types of strength ... in particular muscular endurance/resistance and explosive execution of power. A foundation is needed to achieve loftier goals.

To read more on periodization try:

<http://www.tenniscruz.com/periodization-in-tennis/#ixzz22tMtY41D>

In Jiu Jitsu this is even harder as injuries play such a high factor. You need to build breaks, rest periods into your schedule ahead of time. You also need to break training down into smaller components of higher intensity mixed in with lower intensity. You cannot roll hard for thirty days, it will kill you if you don't get injured and fall by the wayside before the thirty days are up.

Get your thirty-day schedule and then look at the first week. You should be able to see when you can train and you can probably work out the advanced classes, competition classes and fundamentals (beginners classes). So let's say that your schedule looks like this:

Mon - Advanced

Tues - Fundamental

Wed - Advanced

Thurs - School Closed

Fri - Lunchtime No-Gi

Sat - Competition Class

Sun - No-Gi Comp Class

This is a heavy week. I would say that there is only Tuesday and Thursday that look low intensity. The others could work out hard or easy depending who shows up to roll. Also on Thursday you will be drilling, so even though I have considered that low-intensity, it's still a tough workout.

Sticking to this plan for thirty days will leave you exhausted and sore at the end of the period. In fact even with some periodization locked in you will still be pretty sore at the end of the process regardless. I always tell students that regardless of the process build in rest at the end of the thirty-day protocol. If you are going beyond that, days thirty-one to thirty five, should be drilling and fundamentals only. No heavy rolling activity in this time, this should allow your body to recover a little.

It might be worth looking at the schedule above and building in more drilling. I would move Sunday to another drilling session, this will prime the pump and allow review time for a heavy roll on Monday, then you have low-Intensity (LI) class on Tuesday with the Fundamentals (lots of white belt action). Some students who are higher grades think that dropping to a fundamentals class is a waste of time, but I (and my own Professor) believe the opposite. It can be helpful and really sharpen your game to review and revisit all the fundamental techniques that you probably still use in your more advanced BJJ sessions.

Remember the section on Drilling (how could you forget), constantly repeating techniques is the KEY to improving your Jiu Jitsu. This is a double scoop in the instance of a regular practitioner with lower ranking belts, the rolling is more technical for you, it has to be and the competition not as stiff as there are plenty of lower belts trying to work out their own game. If you keep super technical then these lower belts should have a lot of trouble with your position. It's a real eye opener when you get a little sloppy or use strength and a real strong guy gives you a hard time. Time for a re-think.*

This is considered a LI session for the sake of this part of the manual.

When you move to an advanced class, work your game and work it full on. Even if you roll with a good buddy who you don't want to smash, that's fine, this is the gentle art - keep it technical. This is the watchword for the whole system - technique. If you sweep and submit someone, use his or her balance as a weapon and keep the submission clean (as in not jaw breaking, or applying a face bar as opposed to a RNC) then you and he/she both improve ... and enjoy the process. If he gets the better of you - excellent! This is now an escape you need to work as part of your map.

When I was initially developing the system I got caught in a foot lock, twice, by the same person during a round. Twice?

This made me think and then add it to my map. I built it into my drilling session, found the YouTube video that had the solution and spent one hour on nothing but this escape. I happened across my buddy at another sparring session a couple of weeks later, he went for the foot lock again and boom I was free. He tried to counter; I was ready and came on top. Not only did he give me props and laugh about it but also it totally moved him out of his rhythm. If we had been in a competition situation, he had screwed himself by falling asleep with the foot lock so confident was he that he could pull it off.

We discussed the technique afterwards and he had been drilling the technique many times, but hadn't drilled the counter to my escape. He added it to his map for the next time.

Periodization, using LI and HI techniques are the best way to get the most out of your sparring and drilling sessions. Use the time wisely.

*: This happened to me last night. I got sloppy and a bodybuilder type just bench-pressed me out of position. I thought the process through. Arrogance and hubris paid me a visit - a nice little reminder.

Rest and Recovery

Within the periodization section I mentioned that if you plan to extend your program beyond thirty days then when you get to

day thirty, days thirty-one to thirty-five should only be drilling and fundamentals classes, essentially low intensity (LI) classes. This is important.

If you are not extending the program have two days off completely, have dinner with a loved one, savor the achievement of the last thirty days, read a good book, have fun, go to the gym but don't go to the academy. We only have a short break to re-stoke the fire before we get back to our BJJ addiction.

Then the next three days should be a reintroduction to training: drilling and fundamentals so go back to your more intense workouts on day six. You can transition back into your regular training set whatever it is, three or four days per week or one day on / one day off. However you train that works for you.

Or you can go back to another thirty-day challenge.

The R & R period though prevents two things:

1. Injuries
2. Burnout

We talked about Injuries in the section on Injury Management; the next phase goes into more depth on what Burnout is.

The Opposite of Burnout

The opposite of burnout is peak performance. It's true that a lot of athletes aim to hit peak performance around a particular event or competition but what if there is no deadline ... No Olympics, No Pans, No World Champs, No Nationals? Maybe you just want to be a strong BJJ player, you enjoy the camaraderie and workout. But you still want to be good at the game ... and that means playing it smart.

This is the definition of burnout according to Dr Robert Neff from his excellent book 'Roadmap to the Zone'

Athletic Burnout (the opposite of being in the zone!)

Physical Signs: Feelings of exhaustion, a lingering cold, frequent gastrointestinal problems (stomach aches), frequent headaches, sleeplessness, shortness of breath and/or strange weight loss.

Behavioral Signs: Quick temper, instantaneous frustration, feeling overburdened (first thought of the day is "Oh, no!"), inability to hold feelings in, yelling and screaming, feelings of helplessness, giving up easily, loss of caring for loved ones, greater risk taking behavior and consistently decreased performances.

Sport Related Signs: Reduced feel for the skill or movement, never happy with performance, start to expect bad performances, slower reactions, increased unforced errors over many competitions, difficulty focusing (poor concentration/eye control), treat coach and team mates like strangers and with general impatience.

Ideal Candidate for Burnout: A dedicated, overachiever with an external focus of control (does things for other people or for extrinsic rewards) or a person with extreme role conflict or role ambiguity (doesn't understand herself or how she fits into a variety of situations) [Fender (1989), Athlete burnout, The Sport Psychologist, 3 (1), pp. 63-71].

Burnout Avoidance

- 1) Become more aware of the symptoms and underlying causes of each
- 2) Cross training (use other related sports to help accomplish your fitness goals)
- 3) Day(s) off (proper “periodization training” should include days off)
- 4) Change of scenery (different practice location, inside vs. outside, road trips)
- 5) Support from others (friends, family, coach)
- 6) Work directly with a sport psychologist
- 7) Tournament scheduling (allow time to rest and recover)
- 8) Practice scheduling (quality not just quantity)
- 9) Proper goal setting (focus only on things you can control)

As you can see Athletic Burnout can happen to anyone. You don't have to be a high level player of any sport; you could be just busting your hump to be the best you can be. But you need balance, and you need to sometimes be aware that you are out of balance. Look out for these signs and you should be in a position to look after yourself and remedy it.

Human Chess

“The great world chess champion Emmanuel Lasker once said that it is not so much playing the objectively best move that is important as playing the move that is most undesirable for a particular opponent.” David Levy, International Chess Grand Champion, Omni, April 1979.

Thinking about the Jiu Jitsu sparring process I cannot imagine a better analogy than human chess. There are many variables for the human element, like strength and cardio. These are elements that most chess grand masters don't need to worry about, but as BJJ practitioners we do. Then there are the technical aspects. Just like the quote above from David Levy the process of winning a match in chess and winning a match in Jiu Jitsu is the same.

Attack, defend, counter, counter to the counter, and so on.

Patterns begin to form which we have discussed ad-nausea in earlier sections. As the patterns begin to form we have a plan (a pattern, a circuit) to combat them. In chess they have really cool names, names for openings, names for middle game patterns and then end-game patterns. Things like the nimzo-indian defense and other cool names that I wished BJJ patterns had.

If you take a match that you have analyzed and it demonstrates the pattern:

Pull half-guard, push for old school, opponent pushes back with weight, under-sweep, move to side-control.

We could call this the ‘half-old-school-defense’ or some other name that doesn't just describe a technique but a definitive pattern. This might sound a little hokey, it did to me, but as we worked on various patterns and linked them together as more than just techniques or positions, the patterns became easier to remember.

This is what happens in chess schools. At first the students have to learn how all the pieces move (the techniques, or fundamentals in the cognitive phase) and then they learn how

to open a match properly, middle game strategies (usually scrambles at this phase) and then the end-game (in BJJ these are positions, transitions and submissions) and then they link them all together depending on how the game is flowing they choose different strategies. In Jiu Jitsu we call this ... er ... we don't have a name for it, so random rolling becomes the norm.

In boxing the coaches are constantly encouraging their fighters to put combinations together. They want their boxers to think in terms of 3,4,5 and not just the good ol' 1,2, jab cross combo. In Jiu Jitsu a lot of the time we are left to our own devices but maybe we should think beyond the guard-break, pass to side control, and then what ... stall for a little. Then again, if that is super successful maybe you should go with it.

It worked for Roger Gracie for years: sweep to half guard to mount to cross-choke – game over. Worked like a charm year in year out, yet I've never seen anyone else repeat the process. That's why it's important to take the phenoms and freaks (in the nice sense of the word) out of the bell curve. If you're a genius, just roll with it, if you're like me - a normal human being - then think beyond the basics. Once you have the core fundamentals under control then come up with a chain of events that will take you all the way to the submission.

What we can learn from Fight Club?

Honestly. Not much. But if we look at Jiu Jitsu as a more expressive art form then we can combine some philosophy and expression into the fighting art. This is where Fight Club comes in. Tyler Durden really wanted the space monkeys to express themselves and free themselves by using fighting as a natural component of expression. I know that's a little deep but the film was quite explicit in some of its ideas and some of the ideas are valid and pertain to your training. Maybe not directly, but as you become more experienced some of them may resonate with you. Here are some of Tyler's gems. I know this because Tyler knows this:

- ☐ First rule of fight club, don't talk about fight club.*
- ☐ No fear. No distractions. The ability to let that, which does not matter, truly slide.
- ☐ I say never be complete, I say stop being perfect, I say let's evolve, let the chips fall where they may.
- ☐ It's only after we have lost everything that we're free to do anything.
- ☐ You're not your job. You are not how much money you have in the bank. You are not the car you drive. You are not the contents of your wallet. You are not your fucking khakis.
- ☐ People do it every day, they talk to themselves ... they see themselves as they'd like to be, they don't have the courage you have to just run with it.
- ☐ Sticking feathers up your butt does not make you a chicken.

And most importantly...

- ☐ This is your life, and it's ending one minute at a time.

*: This has no relationship to Jiu Jitsu at all but I think it's pretty cool.

The Anti-You

Keith Owen gives a great talk about the Anti-You on YouTube, the link is in the reference section. This was the first time I was exposed to this idea but thought it was an important addition to this text, this idea that there is someone with a key to your game is interesting.

The Anti-You theory can be summed up like this. You've just arrived at the academy and you are getting changed or taking your sandals off when that gnawing feeling starts in your gut. You hope Big Dave doesn't show up, then you can have a few easy rolls and a few hard but technical rolls but if Dave shows up then you know crushing defeat beckons. It will be in the form of a guard pass and high-pressure side control or horror-of-horrors a submission. The fact that Dave is a lower rank (sometimes he's the same rank but rarely higher ranked) is beside the point. No matter what you do he has your game book in his pocket. He is your personal kryptonite.

You walk out of changing and ... crap, there's Dave just walked in, shaking hands with everyone and smiling. That mofo knows he has me already. You know you'll try but Dave will apply some pressure and pass as sure as you just showed up for your beat down.

Of course, Big Dave is fictitious, and a metaphorical representation of your own Dave - the Anti-You. We all have them. I have one (even two) that were the same rank as me and no matter what I did I could not get the upper hand. If the 'upper hand' is what we are calling working our game. The opportunity to submit these guys was laughable, and these guys knew it. Once Keith explained the principle of the Anti-You and that BJJ was a great way to break this stupid pattern then I felt liberated. Only slightly but now I knew I wasn't alone, I thought it was just me that had an Anti-You.

I bet even your Professor has an Anti-You. If he competes, I dare say he goes for team training before a big tournament. There will be someone there that is his Anti-You. It will be

someone who has his game; I've even seen Black Belts with Brown Belt Anti-You versions. The brown belts looks like phenoms, they are fearless against these black belts and then when you get a chance to roll with them and start wondering when you'll need to tap and you find they aren't exactly special? What's that all about?

With me, it was about confidence. I had given my power to my Anti-You, Big Dave had my number, his Gi was woven with the finest kryptonite to sap my super powers. Once I embarked on the thirty-day program though I took Keith's advice and rolled with Big Dave whenever I got the chance. At first, within the first couple of weeks, no change. He ate me for breakfast, yet lesser players subbed him with no issue. Sooooo frustrating.

Then a break appeared, a chink in the armor. We were doing specific training and I was on bottom but the technique we were working just so happened to be part of my map and I had drilled this technique heavily. Oops! I swept him and took his back. This was going against the grain and even Dave realized it. He thrashed but I was in a real comfortable position. I didn't get the sub though.

None of that mattered ... the spell was broken. It's like a fighter who is invincible; they have an unbeaten record - undefeated. Undefeated does not mean undefeatable. Once the armor cracks nothing is the same after that. I can work my game with confidence and it's effective against him, since then I think he might have achieved his goal maybe once and I've got a 99% success rate. I planned the work then worked the plan. I now have a different Anti-You, but he's a much higher rank ... a higher target to reach.

The Anti-You is healthy, don't be intimidated by your Anti-You. In fact, the opposite should be true, seek him (or her) out. They are the mirror that you need to break, this will break your game to a different level, remember Big Dave is essential to your growth.

The Door Opens Both Ways

This is one of the more controversial subjects regarding BJJ and one that I feel strongly about. You must consider this information for what it is: Information. I have no opinion either way regarding the history and roots of Brazilian Jiu Jitsu and how this affects the way you train. I personally believe that if you consider this idea and have the kahunas to try it then your confidence and your game will improve.

The concept behind the 'Door Swings' is that you should train at another academy at least once per month. If you can, make it a non-local school. If you are on vacation then train where you are, if you are local then find another school that has drop-in fees or allows drop-in workouts and then go train there. The door to your academy allows you to walk in but it also allows you to walk out.

To me this is a very freeing concept. A lot of BJJ professors will probably be horrified, I know some of the older ones (usually Brazilian) really dislike this idea while some of the younger more forward thinking professors (still Brazilian) encourage it. In fact, if your school is part of a larger association like Alliance or Gracie Barra then why not train at another one of those schools in the network that is out of town, even if it's just once a month?

Why is this important? I first came across this mode of training when I was traveling through Europe. Looking for a BJJ school I found one on the Internet and then tracked down the schedule, saw they had Gi Jiu Jitsu so I grabbed my stuff and went along.

It was a shambles. The school owner turned up half an hour late; I was still in the parking lot in the rain. He told me there's no fee but that it's not Gi training anymore. He runs a stable of MMA fighters who have fights coming up in a couple of weeks, but I was okay to train with them if that was okay with me. I agreed and went in. The place was a toilet, rain was coming in, the mat was damp, mold everywhere and the stench

of body odor was almost visible. Along one wall hung a few Gi jackets, with accompanying white belts alongside. The instructor (who looked like a wrestling coach) told me that due to their affiliation outside of the IBJJF that they didn't have promotions and most of the guys had been training for years. Great, I now had no idea of the rank of the guys I would be rolling with. There was half a cage set up in a corner and I was told to warm up over there, inside the half cage, out of the way.

While I'm doing jumping jacks, pushups, etc. some of the squad started coming in. All I saw was over-muscled Vee-shapes, mohawks, tattoos and giant thick necks. Not one of them acknowledged me, preferring to vent their shitty day by raging against the hanging bags dotted around the periphery of the room. I just carried on with the jumping jacks, surrounded by these white Mr. T.'s all laughing at each others 'in' stories and giving me sideways glances.

The instructor called them into a huddle where he announced what the order of training was going to be, then he told them "This guy just got here from America, he wants to roll with you all, so give him a good time." I held up my hand in a 'Hi' kind of gesture. I could have sworn I heard someone growl.

No one came near me. They started to roll light with each other to warm up, within the first ten minutes the nurse needed to be called for one guys snapped fingers. Then one of the Mr. T's came over, "You wanna roll?" What could I say, I was there to roll. Bearing in mind that I had not trained any No-Gi in a number of years I still told him, "Sure."

He told me to remove my Gi jacket, he was purely a No-Gi type of guy, so I duly obliged. We touched knuckles and away we went, and this is why it is important to train at other establishments.

The energy is different and you also get a feel for other styles of Jiu Jitsu. Unlike most other martial arts that have distinct styles, BJJ is supposed to be a similar format regardless of the school, as all roads ultimately lead back to Carlos or Helio. But different schools teach different ways and on my travels I have come across some BJJ schools that teach only self

defense and don't engage in any type of competitive techniques and vice versa. This is good and expands your sense of where you are in your Jiu Jitsu game. The energy is different in different schools and academies, and you need to feel that.

Back to my 'fish-out-of-water' roll. He pushed me into a position where I was very comfortable, he tried to pass and I swept him. This was okay, he told me, "I'm super-comfortable on my back." He held me in half guard, I escaped then he went for a kimura. Whoopsie! I spun and got the armbar and the tap.

He grinned, rubbed inside his elbow, we touched knuckles and off we went again. I assumed he had just made a mistake. We went through this dance for ten minutes, he had around twenty pounds on me in muscle weight and I had only been off a sixteen hour flight a couple of hours. I tapped him four times and pushed him into positions at will. The reality did not match my imagination, I thought I was about to be ritually murdered, but it just didn't happen, the fundamentals of my Jiu Jitsu did not allow it to happen.

We stopped, he was really happy and asked me how I passed a particular guard move he had, we discussed it and I showed him how I did it. He was stoked that he had learned a new technique. I was exhausted though and felt like I was about to pass out when another one of the guys much smaller came over grinning and asked if we could go. Again I said 'Sure', and off we went, this time with the Gi.

He was much more technical and more challenging and it was a good enjoyable roll with some good sweeps and positions on both sides, no subs. He wore a white belt but clearly wasn't. Again the energy was different, the style was different, but it proved in both cases that 'my' Jiu Jitsu worked here as well as anywhere else. This was a massive confidence boost to me.

We rolled some more and the instructor asked about a couple of the sweeps I had caught his students with and we discussed them, then we drilled a couple of the moves. When the class came to a close I had ten new best friends. This is how Jiu

Jitsu works. Don't come in with an ego; leave that somewhere else, and you will leave with new knowledge and newfound friends.

I saw a cool quote on a poster recently: Your opponent is your best professor and your ego is your worst enemy.

Training at other schools really puts that to the test. This is how I see it. If you are consistently subbing the other students in your academy and just rolling with white belts for a rest you are not being challenged. It improves your technical ability, there is a downside to over-exposure of this kind though.

As it continues your ego becomes more fragile with each win, you feel good and the taste of defeat is an all but distant memory. Why put yourself in a position where you could be submitted or even have your guard passed when it's all cool right here in the comfort of your own academy?

You need to tap. It's that simple. Maybe when you are a third degree black belt and in the process of evolving techniques that other BJJ players want to emulate you might not need it. But if you are student looking to progress then the aim of the game is to tap 10,000 times. If you are the Big Fish then I bet it's a small pond. Swim out into the ocean, look for the whales, and get eaten alive. After a while this kind of training takes you back to the beginning, the origin of why you adopted BJJ as your sport of choice in the first place. Your True Home.

Finally, I want to mention why this seems such a big deal and has to do with the controversial topics of Teams and the expression Creonte. It's not unusual for an academy to belong to a team, some do, some don't, but the general consensus is the affiliation with one team or another. They are many and varied, always having a large presence at the various tournaments throughout the world especially the big ones like the Worlds, Pan Ams and Mundial.

To a degree being part of an association or a team is a good thing. The being part of a larger family than just your academy-family can bring a sense of belonging and bonding, also the chance to learn new techniques and share ideas with other team members. There is no escaping the reality though

that Brazilian Jiu Jitsu is an individual sport. It's as individual as boxing or solo gymnastics, when the time comes to compete you can't call on your teammates to join in and help out. This isn't soccer or football, this is a one-on-one activity, when the ship sails you're the captain. Period.

The Team idea I think comes from the Brazilian culture it was born in. Just like the affiliation and association to soccer teams where people would die rather than support another team and this ideal has slid into Jiu Jitsu - it didn't slip into Japanese Jiu Jitsu.

This is very different than most other martial arts cultures. Sure, you see Karate/Taekwondo/Judo schools cheering on their teammates from their own school but you won't see such a deep affiliation or identity with a team. You seldom see banners flying and large blocks of cheering individuals wearing the same tee-shirt. It just doesn't occur to them, and then again it's not usual even in Eastern culture for teams to be cheered anyway.

If you go and train at another school that is not part of your team you might want to have a travel Gi (a nondescript Gi from a general manufacturer with no team patches on), this is what I do. Then when I show up, I use my regular belt so I'm not sand bagging anyone and I usually tell the professor or coach my affiliation but outside of that no one would know which team or association/school I belong to. Why? Because I'm looking to roll and test my skills, not get assassinated. A lot of BJJ student identify so strongly with their team that a member of another team coming along to 'play' would be an affront to their identity and ego.

This leads to some pretty tough rolls if you wear your team Gi, it took a whisper in my ear from an older and wiser team mate to let me know that it's not cool to train at other schools while flying the flag of your own team. I got his point. Training at one school while traveling one of the students punched me in the eye as soon as we touched knuckles then laughed, as did his 'teammates'. This to me is complete bullshit. In a sport where we are trying to stop bullying, we do this by bullying other students because they are not part of our team? It stinks!

Training at another academy does not make you a Creonte (the Brazilian expression for traitor). I'm sure that's not the literal meaning, though it could be, but that's what I have always believed it to be when I've heard it mentioned. If you are Brazilian and this is part of your culture then it is totally understandable. If you are not Brazilian then what the hell are you thinking?!

This is about as cultural to a non-Brazilian as asking the manager of 24 Hour Fitness if it's okay if you train at Big Box Fitness down the street. It just wouldn't happen, and if the manager at 24 Hour confronted you about your disloyalty to his gym after working out at Big Box, you would tell him where to get off. This doesn't appear to be the case with a lot of students who are worried that they will be labeled 'Creonte'.

Go and train elsewhere. You pay your membership fee to your academy, you are their customer and not the other way round. Test your skills. See if your brown, purple or blue belt stands up to the pressure of another academy, you'll find out pretty quick. I promise.



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Freestyle Zen Jiu Jitsu

This chapter title is probably as controversial as the Team / Creonte issue. It's a philosophy that has come to fruition due to competitors like Jeff Glover, Caio Terra, the Mendes Bros., Braulio Estima, Ribeiro Bros., to name only a few. They are all parts of teams but they believe Jiu Jitsu to be an open-ended education, they are evolving in this endless supply of technique opportunities. In fact recently I heard that Glover doesn't call his style Brazilian Jiu Jitsu anymore but 'Fun Jiu Jitsu'. That to me sounds like a training session I would enjoy. I have nothing against the Brazilian word per se, and they are instrumental in the development of the Japanese art, but I also feel that we can call it Jiu Jitsu now and people will know what you do. You could argue that the layman could become confused and think that we practice the Japanese form of the art, and my answer to that is 'So What?' The original art form is as valid as the BJJ School that only practices self-defense.

The type of student I see reading this manual is more the sport-based combatant than self-defense oriented, as the book does make the claim to improve your game in 30 days and not maim someone in 30 days. Let's face, we could maim someone in 30 seconds regardless of whether we are a sport or self defense practitioner.

The point of this chapter is to ask the student to open his mind. I suppose that means you.

This is from the Blog of Joe Lewis, the Karate phenom in the 60's, 70's and 80's. He trained with Bruce Lee and people always ask him about the experience, here is one answer: "Bruce [Lee] was working in 1968 and '69 an attempt to avoid all the excessive "trapping" his practitioners were using as an attribute of that system. This was many of the changes Bruce was working on; remember, he was still young and in his twenties. Imagine what changes he would advocate today had he remained alive."

You might ask, if Bruce Lee had lived where would martial arts be today ... including BJJ? As a side note, Chuck Norris is

a Brown Belt in BJJ from the Machado brothers? The legacy still lives.

Don't limit yourself. Your Professor is your original source, ask him questions, and take some privates. Ask his advice about your Map and the positions you are planning to make your own, he may think it's a little early for the tornado guard. He may also think that it would suit your game to perfection. But don't limit yourself.

This is the Ethos of American Freestyle Jiu Jitsu. This is what happens when you get your Jiu Jitsu, add in some wrestling, find a cool Aikido technique and drill the hell out of the combination. You think Eddie Bravo cares what you (or any Gracie's) think of his moves? He doesn't seem to care from the *Truck* to the *Electric Chair*! You need to open your mind and try new stuff; this is only possible though when you spend a lot of time on the mat. You can't come up with a tornado guard combo when you only train twice a week, and I don't care if you are a black belt training twice a week: the expansive positions and techniques will evade you.

Workarounds

Can't get to the studio or academy at your regular time?

If you can't get to your academy as part of your regular program then plan your day beforehand with class built in as an appointment. If you know you are going to be working late then see if you can grab a lunchtime session. This is only usually necessary within the 30-day process. If you are traveling, look to see which schools are in that area, and don't forget your Travel Gi.

Going on Vacation?

Look for local academies where you finally land. Remember the earlier story about traveling through Europe, I facebooked academies and schools as my itinerary suggested and found that I could pretty much find a school to train at while being constantly on the move. Some schools will be very different and only practice self-defense and some schools will only practice drilling or competition class. Try and adapt. It's good for your BJJ.

What if I'm sick?

Rest. But don't fall apart. One of the important things to know is that you can start and restart the 30-day process at any time. The fact that you didn't get all the 30-day process down first time out the gate doesn't matter. I guarantee if that all you managed to get through was 14 days before the flu hit or whatever, that you will be better than you were at the beginning. You just need to periodize your training.

If you are resting I strongly recommend buying some DVD's and reviewing techniques then visualizing them. This is a very powerful process to improvement. Can you stand another story?

When I was a new blue belt I loved training so much I couldn't keep away from the academy. We had a new professor from Brazil come to train and coach at our place, a current World Champ and a great technician. I couldn't get enough of his classes. Then after a roll I showed a medical

surgeon who was part of the class that I had this rash forming on my collarbone that wouldn't heal. He took a look, made a face then gave me a business card for a skin doctor. I'm thinking staph, I was wrong it was cancer! Two different forms and I needed two surgeries right away.

The first surgery left me with a nine-inch stitch line that went from my collarbone to my breastbone. It was horrible too, real gnarly. The next one scooped a series of lumps of skin from the base of my neck. All was good; I was recovering well but with wounds that could bust open at any minute, training was out. In fact, I was out for sixteen weeks! That's right - four months.

As soon as I didn't need the pain meds so much, I began walking on a treadmill. I felt very weak and looked pale and thin. Bed rest was important as so much skin had been removed the flesh on my pectorals was extremely tight, reaching for something without it feeling like my skin would tear open was a very real experience. Plus the painkillers were super strong, for the first four weeks I was in a constant stupor.

When I felt well enough, I would sit up in bed and watch a couple of YouTube videos. Then a friend of mine grabbed me a copy of the Jeff Glover Deep Half Guard DVD to lift my spirits.

At my stage of development I had never really used a Deep Half so it was really interesting. I began to watch it a lot and study it over and over. Fed up with daytime TV, there was nothing else to watch. As part of the treadmill work I would try and slowly move into some of the positions Jeff Demonstrated. He also did some moves with a huge inflatable ball as a drilling practice. I tried those too.

But the real breakthrough came when I visualized myself back at training and sweeping people with the moves I was watching. I had this daydream over and over.

The day finally came when I could go back to training. Naturally I was a little concerned I was out of shape (which I was, my cardio was non-existent) my training partners were

sympathetic and took it easy with me. What amazed them though was I was moving into the Deep Half position with ease, and then pulling off the sweeps. One of my teammates said, "Sure you even had time out? You seem to better than before you left." This was interesting to say the least. Now if I have any downtime or I'm periodizing I make sure to watch videos last thing at night just before I go to sleep, this somehow sinks the technique into my subconscious. Give it a try.

I can't afford a Submission Dummy ... or mats!

These aren't essential. They are just easier and more convenient. Especially if you must periodize your training between white belt classes and advanced classes. If you are a white belt then practice the moves on the carpet in the lounge: shrimping, half guard and guard positions, etc.

If you can get yourself a training-partner, even better. I'm very motivated and earn a good living so having a dummy is very convenient for me and I can afford it. This is the best option if you want to practice and drill techniques at home. If it's out of your reach though, see if one of your team members wants to drill techniques for an hour once a week. I asked my Professor (before Burt the dummy arrived) if a friend and me could practice some techniques on a Saturday morning before the kids' class. He was fine with it, so my buddy drilled what he wanted and I drilled what I wanted. It worked; you've just got to get creative.

If you can't afford mats then stick to the mats at the academy. If you have a dummy, you don't necessarily need mats you can still drill in the lounge on carpet or a rug like a lot of people do.

My advice though is don't use grass. It's unsanitary and if you wear a Gi it will be ruined in no time with grass stains and crap. If you have a limited budget and still want mats, but on the cheap, then go online and look up gymnastic tumbling mats. You can get them really low-cost, as gymnastics and kids practicing at home is big, whereas Jiu Jitsu is a little more niche and the online stores know it. You won't be able to do shoulder throws, take downs, etc. as gym mats are little thinner

at 1-1/2" rather than 2" for most BJJ mats but they do the job admirably. You can probably cover a 10' x 10' area for a couple hundred bucks and they store really easy, as they are lightweight.

As a side note, if you don't have a dummy, don't practice on your kids or the dog. Mine get pissed off real quick if I just want to 'try' something on them.

Forgot my BJJ journal?

Use your phone. Most smartphones come with a notebook, jot your roll down there and then transfer it when you get to your journal. And don't forget to use some video recording while you are at it.

Chapter Four: Competition Psychology in Brief

It's not the point of this text to provide complete competition psychology. It is an important part of the whole psyche of BJJ training. There are better books more suited to handling the 'head case' side of competing. I strongly recommend 'Roadmap to the Zone' by Robert S.Neff, Ph.D. And Michael K. Garza, Ed.D.

This covers the various elements that go into mental preparation for a tournament, and includes but is not limited to:

- Creating a Map
- Visualization
- Positive Self Talk
- Emotions and Zoning
- The Emotion Wheel

I will cover the Zoning technique that I use next:

Zoning

To keep in the Zone while you are training you can often use a technique called the Refocus Ritual (RR). I use this usually when my game isn't working for some reason. If I am trying to get into positions and getting stuffed or my timing is off then I need to refocus and get my game back together.

If you are competing this is an excellent way to refocus between matches too. For the most part I force the game to stop and then refocus during the roll, if I am in the academy. In a tournament I use this RR when the ref returns us to a position, for example, if we are rolling out of bounds or need to redress, *especially if we need to redress*.

In the academy, I will purposefully roll towards other rolling partners, so the coach stops us, or into a wall, off the mat, anything to pause the action. This gives me just enough time to regroup and fix what's going on. If my game is plugged in, then I still use the RR to reinforce this feeling but I don't force the pause in the action. I only do it when I get the sub or my opponent needs to stop due to the usual pause practices mentioned above.

Here is my RR.

As soon as a pause is effected:

1. Turn my back to my opponent.
2. Untie my belt (unless its already off) - focus on my hands being soft doing this to relax my grips and forearms.
3. Control my eyes, I dangle the belt to the ground to get it even before retying it.
4. As I tie it I breathe and relax, I even internally say to myself 'Relax and Breathe'.
5. I mentally prepare for how I want to pick the game up. Which guard I plan to use or which reversal, escape, etc.

These days this isn't even a conscious thought process, I have done it so many times. The only thing I am now consciously

aware of is the internal sounding of the word 'relax' and preparing in my mind for the next position. If you want to give it a try use this rhyme to remember the process.

'Untie the belt, Control the eyes, Breathe, Relax and Visualize.'

Chapter Five: Why Zen?

This is Zen Buddhism as described by David Tuffley in his treatise on Buddhism: *The Essence of Buddhism*. I think that it encapsulates this manual on Zen Jiu Jitsu and the ethos behind it very well:

‘Buddhism is not a religion as such; and does not propose an external God. It does not seek to replace any persons existing religious beliefs, only to supplement them. The Buddha, in all likelihood, would rather his followers describe themselves simply as *Followers of the Way*.’

This is how I feel and Jiu Jitsu is the Way.

Chapter Six: Follow Through

‘It is one thing to study war and another to live a warriors life.’

~ Telamon of Arcadia, Mercenary of the fifth century B.C.

Motivation & Plateaus

Staying motivated for the long haul in any sport is one of the most challenging areas. There are times when your exuberance just isn't as high as it once was, it's hard to keep the excitement and hunger chugging along.

I understand. These are usually very personal times when we can't seem to get No Satisfaction whatever we try and training seems like a chore. You get a down or a low feeling when training time comes around and anything from walking the dog to doing the dishes seems like a better option. This can be caused due to a multitude of reasons and there are many ways in which you can be over-trained, these are discussed in the section on Burnout, but staying Motivated is highly important ... if not essential in your progression to Black Belt.

Using your journal to track progress and keep you on track can be helpful. Using goals to move you into better positions and learning new positions can keep you motivated too.

One of the best motivational devices in my opinion is the opportunity to learn. We all like to learn cool moves. If you don't like to learn cool moves then I would question what attracted you to BJJ in the first place. If you are feeling a little on the low side and are maybe using the Overtraining Avoidance techniques from the Burnout section then it can be a good idea to look for a couple of techniques or guard plays that you like the look of. Analyze the techniques and then find a way to apply them to your own game. If you have a sub dummy take a couple of classes off and just play with the dummy for twenty to thirty minutes. Don't push it, just play.

The timing here is important. Some students' try and blast through this period thinking that more is better, actually it's

the other way around. Dial everything back and make the process manageable, but don't stop.

This is a story I heard about a great tennis coach and how he rehabilitated one of his students back from serious health problems all the way to state champion. The kid was bed ridden but the coach went along anyway and talked to him each day, then one day he said, okay let's pull the covers back and take a look at those legs. The student obliged. The next day he did the same but lifted one leg slightly, the next day much of the same but lifted the other leg. Over time he moved the kid around and got him to swing his legs off the bed, always returning him to his bed ridden state. Eventually, he could stand then walk then run then run fast and play tennis.

You'll notice that the coach didn't turn up, throw the blankets back and say 'come on son, let's get jogging, the State Champs are coming up.' It's funny though, that's the way a lot of BJJ students look at a funk: pile it on; push through it, like a seasoned Marine. Even Marines know when to dial it back and live to fight another day and even if they don't their commanders do.

But don't stop. The idea of taking a break from training is very appealing but remember the old workouts at the gym. You don't feel like it one night and then you tell yourself you'll catch up tomorrow. How did that work out? It doesn't matter if you drag yourself to the academy and get tapped by a ton of white belts. Show up.

You'll slide out of the plateau when your mind adjusts to the new techniques and level you are at. The mind and body connection are important in BJJ and a lot of students misunderstand this. There is a direct connection. Sometimes this connection gets out of sync and we get the impression that we are getting worse. It's happened to me a few times when I wanted to call it quits. On reassessment the 30-day program became a reality and I now enjoy my Jiu Jitsu more than ever.

I forget to reassess from time to time. It's very important, more important than you can imagine, that your training log and journal act as motivational tools for future development. If you feel your fire for training dropping in temperature then get

your journal out and reassess. There will be some high notes in there, and some positions that really got you excited, revisit them. See what blows your hair back, and then drill some of those techniques.

Keep looking for new techniques that suit your game too. Do not drill or practice every technique that comes along that will only lead to some form of confusion. You need to think, my side control could be tighter/better/stronger, then go seek the antidote to this. As part of the Zen Jiu Jitsu program we will be developing maps for various positions, but until they are ready you will have to figure out where you want your game to be.

A friend of mine is a crazy competitor. I reckon if there were a tournament locally every week, he would compete every week. He goes into tournaments too that are way past his pay-grade and he gets murdered in the first round. Still, I can't help but admire his grit and spunk. Lately though, I've seen the 'look' on his face. This is the look of disillusionment, the look of burnout. This has happened before, I've seen the 'look' on many students faces, most of the time these guys change academies (literally changing teams) thinking that this is going to change their results in the tournament standings. For the most part they wash out of Jiu Jitsu, which is a crying shame. They would have been better served to take a short break, ease back into training by drilling some techniques that could ignite the spark again.

If you feel like you are giving the 'look' to your fellow training partners. Go into the 30-day program as prescribed here. If you feel low on energy or weak, the adjustment to make is to install the first two-week (at least) as all LI training sessions. A mixture of fundamentals and drilling with some light sparring that should do the trick. Regroup. Come back stronger. This strategy is a winner.

In Conclusion

What does this all mean?

It's not rocket science. It's a thirty-day program that asks you to make Jiu Jitsu part of your every day life for a month. It asks you to mix the plan between hi-intensity and low-intensity and drill specific moves related to the game you want to improve upon then record it.

Hope you can handle another Bruce Lee quote:

“In building a statue, a sculptor doesn't keep adding clay to his subject. Actually, he keeps chiseling away at the inessentials until the truth of its creation is revealed without obstructions. Thus, contrary to other styles, being wise in Jeet Kune-Do doesn't mean adding more; it means to minimize, in other words to hack away the unessential. It is not daily increase but daily decrease; hack away the unessential.”

You have to take from this manual what you need. Don't just keep adding techniques or positions for the sake of adding. In fact, listen to Bruce: subtract. Take away the mistakes; keep the details that work for you. Drill your A-Game.

Too much emphasis these days is placed on tournament wins. Tournaments should be a part of every BJJ player to enhance and expand their game, to test the process and technique. This is not the end, only the means.

A good BJJ player should be balanced; the perfect state of mind is mentally controlled precision. The 'calm in the midst of the storm' this is the pinnacle of Jiu Jitsu technique. A coach of mine always says if you get into a street situation and it continues, the longer it carries on; the odds improve in your favor. Why is this? Because Jiu Jitsu is based totally on the virtue of patience. You must turn up for training, and learn as much on the mats as you can. It doesn't get much more complex than that.

If you have enjoyed this book then go back to the beginning and re-read it, or just dip into sections that we covered that piqued your interest, especially the thirty-day protocol. I hope

you enjoyed this journey as much I did putting it together. It was an education for me too. If you have any comments, additions or ideas, please get in touch via my website at:

<http://jiujitsubuddha.com>

I would love to hear from you and your thoughts on the concepts and ideas discussed. Maybe we'll meet on the mat some day, I very much look forward to it.

Be water, my friend.

Chapter Seven: Resources and Reference

More Books

Zen Jiu Jitsu - Beyond Rolling

Zen Jiu Jitsu Training Log

Zen Jiu Jitsu - White to Blue

Zen Jiu Jitsu - Over 40

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BishopBjj.com

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The X Guard. Marcelo Garcia with Eric Krauss and Glen
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Recommended Watching:

Jeff Glovers Deep Half Guard. Cryo Productions 2009

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Robson Moura. Fusion 1 and 2.

111 Half Guard Techniques with Caio Terra. Cryo Productions 2011

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Fight Club. 20th Century Fox. 2002.

Recommended Websites:

<http://bjjtech.com/tech/>

<http://bishopbjj.com>

<http://fightlogmedia.com>

<http://www.igrapple.com>

<http://www.grapplingdummy.net>

<http://armbarsoap.com>

http://youtu.be/CWgke2m_6Y

<http://youtu.be/4JsEOI5sLRM>

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<http://www.joelewisfightingsystems.com>

<http://tapordiecompany.com>

Zen Jiu Jitsu - White to Blue

Foreword

“I am a shark. The floor is my ocean and most people don’t know how to swim.”

~ Rickson Gracie - Vale Tudo and BJJ Legend

As a white belt this may come as a surprise, but I’m envious of your position. I’m sure the opposite is true. I remember that time when I was a white belt and would walk into the academy and see those higher belts lining up for the advanced class, they seemed to exist in some rarified atmosphere. Sometimes I would hang around after the fundamentals class and watch the more advanced students roll, they seemed to be doing stuff I couldn’t even comprehend. They were the cool kids, submitting each other, laughing it off, discussing something that was a little more technical. I had no clue what was going on for the most part. Enthusiasm was all I had.

This might sound familiar dependent upon the stage you are at right now. So why am I envious?

You are at the entrance to a wondrous forest that is open to exploration. To you this is virgin soil it is an amazing feeling to stand at those gates. When you have been rolling for many years, things change. They are still great but that feeling of learning something basic that clicks and blows your mind gets less and less. The more advanced a student becomes the more he concerns himself with developing a particular game, this usually comes from experience and many hours of mat time.

Towards the end of his Blue Belt a fighter is aware of how his body type, flexibility, strength, cardio fitness within a particular guard game, this then forms the foundation for the later belts. According to my own professor it’s at Black Belt that the next real true learning curve begins, this is where it all comes together and everything starts again. Can’t wait.

As a White Belt you need to remember one thing: All black belts stood where you are standing right now. They all began as a White Belt and moved through the ranks just like you are about to. This is a journey that is not to be rushed, it's a journey to be savored and contemplated. Will there be times when you get frustrated? Sure. Will there be injuries along the way? Sure, what sport can you become excellent at that won't incur an injury or two along the way. Will you feel like giving up after a particularly horrible practice? I'm sure you are reading this and going 'Not me!' well you might think that now, but once that Blue Belt gets tied around your waist, look back and there might have been one or two nights you were ready to throw in the towel.

Like I said at the beginning of this section, I am envious. You are about to be given a gift that few people have the ability to appreciate and enjoy. My heart and mind encourages you to stay on this path. Believe me, you won't regret it.

Best Wishes. Oss.

How to Use this Manual

“Knowledge grows with time, work and dedicated effort. It cannot come by any other means.”

~ Ed Parker - Father of Modern Kempo Karate

Just like the previous text (Zen and the Art of Jiu Jitsu) this is a conceptual manual. Don't expect techniques, this is purely to help you understand and get better with the concepts of Brazilian Jiu Jitsu from White Belt to Blue Belt.

So if you are a Purple Belt you might think, “Huh? This is all obvious information”. Yes, it may be obvious after five years plus of training but if you are only six months (or six weeks) into this art form then this information can accelerate your understanding so much that it could put you light years ahead of your teammates.

One of the most frustrating areas of Jiu Jitsu when I started was I didn't know how to put it all together. By the time I had decided to do this jiu jitsu thing and joined in a regular class, the curriculum (the positions being instructed at that time) was on say 'side control' but I had only just learned what the closed guard was. By the time closed guard training came back around in the rotation I had forgotten everything about the closed guard and had to start again.

Also, high school wrestlers were giving me a beating and I just could not figure out why. This book explains the 'Why'. You need to understand core concepts that your professor would love to explain to you but probably doesn't have the time in a fundamental sixty-minute class. He's demonstrating the core techniques, and you should stay present and in the zone when he is demonstrating these techniques. Especially The Details! I'll say that again: Especially The Details!

Once you have the physical side of the core principles in place you need to understand the reason 'Why' you are doing it that way. This not only makes the techniques easier to remember

but actually helps you attain the goal faster, even if it's not using the traditional method taught by your coach or professor.

This manual is the 'brain' side of Jiu Jitsu. If you are looking for techniques and refreshers on moves in your curriculum then this isn't for you. Please seek out the various excellent Manuals, Apps, DVD's and YouTube videos that can help.

Towards the end of the book is a section that covers some miscellaneous elements that could still affect the way you train. I've called this area Tactical Considerations, if they do crop up you'll know why I named it that.

The first section is Core Principles. These are concepts that I use to this day and make explaining how important these elements are very easy. If you get nothing else from this program then please read and re-read the Core Principles. You won't regret it. Just note that some times you may also disagree with my interpretation of a Principle. This is natural if that happens. Once you get to Blue Belt please come back and read them again...this time I bet you agree with me at least on some level.

The next section covers Technique Concepts. Like I mentioned earlier, this is not a technique demonstration manual. There are very few images in this volume, but the understanding of 'Why' you are doing what you are doing in side-control, closed-guard, attacking, defending is as important as the moves themselves. Once these concepts are understood and absorbed your game will take on a new dimension. Do not skate over the Technique principles contained within, it's taken me years to understand and distill them so you can easily understand what this whole ball of wax is all about.

Another question I get is: Why concepts? Why not show techniques? Because concepts will take you further than any single technique, they are like principles, they will last you your entire BJJ career.

Finally, the last section has some ideas on where to start if you are struggling trying to get ahead of (or in line with) your academy's curriculum. This is a plan that should give you a firm foundation in the principle techniques of BJJ. It doesn't

show the techniques or moves but demonstrates a 'chain-link' plan that if you follow it methodically will give you a great understanding and foundation of the basics of Jiu Jitsu. Keep drilling these techniques and you will become a solid Blue Belt - 100% guarantee with that. Please Note: This is not intended to replace your own academies curriculum; it is intended to support your practice and training of BJJ.

If you feel your academy does not have any structure at White Belt level and this bothers you then you seriously need to consider training at another academy. Enough said on that subject.

Choosing the Right School

Although in the last section I said ‘Enough Said on that Subject’ I thought I may as well expand - just a little.

When it comes to the academy you train at then many factors will decide on how you arrived there. It could be you knew what you were looking for and tried several academies in your area arriving at one that felt the best, or you enjoyed the most.

Could be a friend, family member or colleague invited you to train with them. This is very common, and is more than likely the highest percentage of how jiu jitsu schools get most of their students - referral.

Also, if there is no introduction made, another common denominator is principal location. This is the strategy used by a lot of health and fitness centers across the world, they place their buildings where it’s easy to get to. It appears that people don’t want to drive past one fitness center to get to another across town. So the health clubs set up on busy streets and the membership grows. The same is true (to a degree) of BJJ academies; a lot of students join the one nearest to where they live. There is nothing wrong with this by the way, that’s how I started.

The best method though in my opinion is to look around at local schools and try them out. Most schools offer an intro lesson, this should be taken advantage of. Watch how the new white belts integrate with each other, ask about cost and how often you can train as part of the white belt program. Some schools are very limited whereas some are available seven days a week, make sure you know and it fits with your schedule regarding the various aspects of your life. If you get the bug then you’ll be spending a lot of time there.

Once you’ve decided and you are working well with the school, then this becomes more of a ‘team’ issue. I discuss training at different academies in Zen and the Art of Jiu Jitsu. I won’t expand here as it’s not that important, you need to work

closely with your coaches and professors at the academy of your choice. Integrating into the school you have selected needs to be your primary goal.

If you are feeling: small, slightly alienated, intimidated due to your skill level, embarrassed about training with complete strangers or even made to feel slightly unwelcome then check this link: <http://breakingmuscle.com/martial-arts/surviving-socially-beginner-phase-bjj>

This is a great blog post by Valerie Worthington who really struggled to integrate socially with her academy at the beginning of her BJJ Journey. It's worth a read even if you get along with everyone at your school.

Don't think that the level of instruction at your school will make you into the next Rodolfo Viera or Buchecha, it won't. Only years of dedication and hard work can do that - with a generous helping of talent.

I see students leave our academy from time to time and find them training across town. They use excuses (as far as I can see) that the instruction level wasn't up to the standard they expected. That's fine, expectations vary, but you need to be realistic when it comes to the level of instruction you will receive: some schools are less adept at coaching than others, some are more structured than others, some very competition oriented, some self defense oriented. These various styles may suit what you need or may not. If the school doesn't emphasize the style you need, then switch schools. It's much easier at the white belt level than when you are years into being part of a particular team.

If competition training and success is what you are looking for from your BJJ academy then that should be apparent fairly quickly. If the professor or head coach doesn't have a proven track record of competition success, or if the school doesn't contain a lot of successful competitors then chances are this is not the school for you, seek one out that does have a group of hungry competition oriented students. This way you'll get what you need.

Core Principles

The Tap

“Cry in the Dojo. Laugh on the Battlefield.”

~ Unknown - But Makes Perfect Sense.

There is one thing that makes Brazilian Jiu Jitsu unique compared to other martial arts and that is the Tap or Tap-Out. I don't want to get into any MMA or branding issues about the use of the word TapOut so we'll refer to it here as the Tap.

When you find yourself in a position that you feel (if you continued) may cause you harm then the simple tap-tap on your partners arm, anywhere on his body, the mat or even a verbal tab (sometimes required when you are bent into a position that makes a hand or foot tap impossible) the match or sparring session stops. This is used mostly in sparring and is the greatest advantage over any other martial art.

And what an advantage...

This gives all BJJ practitioners the opportunity to spar full contact, going hard and still not hurting each other. How many other contact sports can boast such a claim. The Tap is the most powerful element in Jiu Jitsu and should not be considered a weakness, as my own professor tells me, “You have to tap a thousand times before you can consider yourself a black belt.” He actually uses the mechanism of tapping to keep score of his level of improvement.

Only last week I was rolling with a very good black belt. I was a lot heavier and moved myself into a dominant position. He was telling me not to be so nice and get moving into the submission position. Heeding his words I moved and after a long (and patient) process I eventually managed a tap. When we reset he fixed his Gi and asked me why I was being so nice. I sort of shrugged, I didn't have an answer, maybe I am too nice, maybe I am too respectful of higher ranking belts. Who knows? This is when he hit me with the thunderbolt that

made a great connection. “You cannot hurt me. All I need to do is tap.” And he tapped me twice on the shoulder to prove his point. This was him giving me permission to go on the attack. In this sport whether you are attacking or defending you are learning something. It does not benefit you or your partner to go easy, unless it’s a light roll by mutual consent or there is a huge disparity in weight, age or rank.

Don’t imagine that because a new white belt on his third class at the academy knows how to tap then he’s open season. That’s not why we’re here. But if you put the newbie in pressure positions and help him to look for escapes while trying to submit, then you BOTH improve. If you get in a tough spot with a higher ranking belt or heavier opponent know this: There is no disgrace in tapping.

In fact, if you are just rolling with a buddy (same, weight, age and rank) and he catches you with a clean arm lock and you tap. How do you feel? Do you want to go kick the dog? Scream obscenities at him/her? Or are you proud that your buddy is coming along?

If it’s kick the dog or scream then I fear your days as a long term BJJ fighter are truly numbered. This is part of the game and I’m super happy when one of my training partners catches me. If it keeps happening every session then I would talk to my professor or coach for an appropriate escape and the survival options. We’ll talk more about those in a later section.

This is one of the reasons that Royce Gracie proved BJJ to be so effective in the original UFC 1. Don’t forget this was a very different version of the UFC than what is represented today. This was when it was a game of styles, so Karate would go against Boxing, or Taekwondo against Sumo. Weights and ages etc. were of no consequence, it was all about styles. So little one hundred and seventy five pound Royce would be put against two hundred and fifty pound beasts. And not just for three rounds, this was as long as it took and then after each round he would fight a different opponent until there was one winner. It was true gladiator style back then - bloody and brutal.

Royce though had a secret weapon though...the tap.

He had been training full on sparring all his life. He used leverage to his advantage in real life situations and no-holds-barred matches. The other styles didn't have this capability. Think about it, how could a boxer, taekwondo fighter, muay thai guy or karate stylist go 100 % each sparring session without getting brain damage?

Even if they were strikers that went hard they were always padded up to some degree with gloves, headgear, body armor so when the time came to go all out against an opponent then it was a different experience. They could not spar for real.

Not so for Royce. He had been rolling in the Gi and tapping (and being tapped) since he was kid. He went into the Octagon pulled these poor unsuspecting souls to the canvas and submitted them, to him it was just playing around. This is all seems so matter-of-fact today, but before the world had become exposed to Jiu Jitsu no one had ever seen anything like this.

At the time, this must have been a shocking realization for a lot of the other styles who believed that they were the deadliest men on the planet. The original line-up (and many others in years to come) would tell anyone who would listen that they were real bad-asses. Then they hit Royce Gracie and came up short.

This wasn't achieved because Jiu Jitsu had some secret techniques passed down from Shaolin Monks in a remote Tibetan cave. It was all because Royce could train full contact all the time, and that was only because of the tap.

Creating the Training Habit

“A body at rest tends to stay at rest whereas a body in motion tends to stay in motion.”

~ Sir Isaac Newton - Very Smart Physicist

I agree with Sir Isaac here. If you don't get into some kind of routine to keep you in motion then the hypnotic lure of the Tube will break your will. It just about kills everyone's dreams of being good at anything.

Just like any organized training protocol there will come a time when you either:

- Just don't feel like it tonight
- Are looking for excuses to get out of training
- Feel tempted to sit and watch American Idol (or some other mind numbing tripe)
- Clash with another new Sport/Hobby/Pastime
- Feel like doing something else

This malady tends to apply to any kind of fitness program or anything connected with the improvement of the abdominal muscles. Diet programs fall under this umbrella too and BJJ Training is no different.

When it comes time to engage in training you have to have some kind of failsafe in place to make sure you get there. You must have heard the saying “A black belt is a white belt that didn't quit!” You understand that it means actually ‘training’ on the mat and not just being a BJJ ‘member’ of the school? You've got to go.

This is an important distinction. I'm sure you will see these guys at your school - don't become one of them. They show up every now and then, sometimes just enough to get a stripe promotion. Usually get to the stage of blue belt and then just trickle along. They wear the tee-shirts, the tattoos declaring

their commitment to Jiu Jitsu but they don't seem to train a lot. You'll see them at tournaments and this is where they declare: They got an injury and get can't back into it, they are busy at work/home, they will be back full time next week, they love it.

This is talking...not training. The only way and I mean the ONLY way to get good at Jiu Jitsu is to train. I don't mean you need to be at the academy all the time but you will need to work out with your partners, work on techniques, drill the moves, roll on the mats, spar, etc.

You will notice that during any discussion on the subject of Jiu Jitsu advancement the wearing of a really cool Shoyoroll* tee-shirt is not a pre-requisite.

To a certain degree everyone goes through this stage in some form. When you start to feel like this please understand it is natural. The longer you leave it though, the harder it gets to recover from this condition, and it is a condition. Look at the following statements:

"I'll just have one more slice of cheesecake. Back to healthy eating tomorrow."

"One more Bud won't hurt, I'll be fine for rolling tomorrow morning."

"Shoes off. I'll grab an hour of TV. No need to roll tonight, it's been a long day."

"Watch that Tornado guard DVD later. Real Housewives is on in twenty minutes."

None of these 'excuses' are bad, none of them are life and death decisions. They all relate to time and the time is usually short, it's an hour here and there, or a day at most because then you'll be back on track, right?

That must be the biggest reason that virtually all Home Gym equipment is on Craig's List. The inner voice who I refer to as the 'Terminator' is very powerful. If you need somewhere to hang clothes by the way use the closet, it's a better idea than a piece of home gym equipment.

The reason that I use the expression the Terminator is because it gives a face to that inner voice. It's the devil on my shoulder.

He doesn't care if I'm tired, had a long day, need to keep in shape, his only objective is to stop me achieving anything... literally ANYTHING.

The Terminator would have me sit in front of the TV and spoil like old cabbage if it could. But I won't allow that...here's my solution.

On training days, I DO NOT think about training in the evening. I ignore it like I am not even going, as if I don't even do Jiu Jitsu. If I start wondering what section of the curriculum we will be covering or who might be training tonight, it gives the Terminator an opportunity to chime in. And we don't need anyone chiming in thanks.

I don't eat before training or at least three hours before. I don't want to feel heavy or like I'm going to puke when I roll. Furthermore if I do eat late I don't need the Terminator telling me that I will fail because I ate too late. If I know that I am not going to eat until after training there is no play on time to consider whether I should eat or not. My wife knows I'm going to be eating later so she doesn't need to tempt me with anything thirty minutes before I am about to leave. It's a done deal. Terminator squashed at this point.

About one hour before I'm due to leave I take a shower and get into my Gi. This may not be practical for everyone as some guys train straight from work. That's fine, the system works either way, just ignore this paragraph. Take a shower and get in your Gi.

I can hear a question from the back of the room. "What? An HOUR before? Isn't that a little early for getting ready?"

Not especially. First off this is a contact sport. A close contact sport. I'm sure people don't like my B.O. as much as I don't enjoy theirs, so the shower helps keep me fresh. Getting in my Gi alerts my brain that I will be leaving for BJJ any time soon. This keeps the Terminator and any human versions of the Terminator (kids, wife, drinking buddy) from wondering if I fancy just checking out the game. It's a huge visual cue: I am going to train BJJ don't even ask. I'm not stood here in my

Karate pajamas because I am ready for bed at 5:30pm. I am going training. Get over it.

Maybe that's the rant I play in my mind when my wife asks me about a drawer that needs fixing. During the hour before I am about to leave, I prepare for Jiu Jitsu, nothing else.

When I say nothing else, I talk to the kids and do homework and all that kind of stuff (in my Gi) without the jacket and a sweatshirt on so I only have short legged pants on display. But I don't do anything that could start up a project and make me late or delay me in any way.

This is my regime, my Training Habit and I do not veer from it. You might come up with a better one, but it has to be a ritual you perform without fail. If there is an opening for failure, guess what, it will fail. I stick to the:

- Not thinking about BJJ until work or my work day is over
- Eating early at least three hours before training time
- Showering
- Getting in my Gi an hour before I leave

This is my Process. And now everyone else is on notice that this is a training day. When I drill techniques at Home in the garage, I don't do any of that. I roll around with the dog pestering me on the mat and neighbors waving as I'm choking my submission dummy.

This process is reserved only for training days. This is how you make sure you stay on the path and keep improving. If you don't need this level of motivation then just keep doing what you're doing and keep improving. If and When you hit a plateau this chapter might come in handy.

The takeaway is this: **You Must Train to Improve. That's it!**

*And Shoyoroll do very COOL tee-shirts and Gi's. Check them out here: <http://shoyoroll.com>

Jiu Jitsu will make you Happy

This is another reason to make sure you get to that training session, Jiu Jitsu will make you happy and that's a fact. Researchers and scientists who have been looking into the science of Happiness and have come to the conclusion that the Happiness Hormone is something called Dopamine. Dopamine is technically a neurotransmitter and makes sure the signals in your brain fire at the appropriate times, the more you can get the Dopamine to light your brain up the more happiness we tend to feel.

So what makes the Dopamine get excited and fire up? Well, real happiness isn't the short term smiley feeling we feel when someone buys us something like a gift. That is a more a fleeting bliss or euphoria. This study looks at something more permanent – Long-term Happiness.

The Scientists have realized that to get that Dopamine moving we can do several things:

- ☐ Engage in a physical activity that raises the heart rate
- ☐ Learn new skills that test us and keep our brain active
- ☐ Spend time with friends and family (a sense of community)

Those are the main three that can help us live a long and happy life. Did you notice that all those elements fit perfectly into Brazilian Jiu Jitsu. It's totally cardio-centric, Point (1). We need to keep learning new skills or everyone gets a handle on our game and we get passed, Point (2). The academy is a great place to have a good time and enjoy yourself, Point (3). Even in a tournament environment, once the war is over, all I see are people hugging and shaking hands. It's the safest cure for depression this side of a Prozac infusion.

The Buddhists refer to happiness as inner peace. This is what Jiu Jitsu creates through the testament of the body. Steel sharpens steel.

And what if you can't train. This happens when you get an injury, or are sick or just miss the class due to traffic and you feel bad. It's a genuine low feeling - lack of Dopamine. When this happens (unless I'm sick with flu or some other noxious virus) I still go along to the academy from time to time and check on my teammates. Even that term: Team Mates, makes us close and the BJJ community as a whole could not be closer, I've never engaged in another sport where everyone gets together competes and celebrates. It's unique...and it makes you happy :)

Observation

“Any Technique, however worthy or desirable, becomes a disease when the mind is obsessed with it.”

~ Bruce Lee - Creator of Jeet Kune Do

In Zen Jiu Jitsu I talked extensively about Observation. This covered a lot of ground and if you need to consider this principal with more depth then I suggest you grab that manual too.

The idea of Observation is to keep alert and awake while you are training. If you are fully engaged when you are sparring then you should know (minimum) where all your limbs are. Here we go again, eyes rolling at the back of the room, “But my limbs are there all the time, I know where they are! Left, right, got it.”

Next time you spar and find yourself in, say, half guard. I bet you do have some idea where your arms and legs are but I bet they are not active, unless you are just hanging onto your training partner for dear life like a limpet and running the clock down. Whenever you are in a position even side-control or mount where it seems obvious, do a quick body scan. Is everything where it's supposed to be, is it active? If you have a loose hand or arm, or leg then make it tight and get your balance or your grips back in position. This is Observation.

If you are working on a guard position (we'll talk more guard later) then you need to be aware of your feet and grips. Even in closed guard you need to have an awareness. If you don't know why you have your grips in a particular position then you need to clarify that with your coach or professor.

This is one of the most important ideas that I know can help accelerate your progress: Clarity. If something is unclear then don't just press on in an ocean of arms, legs and sweat. Stop, ask your training partner if he can help you. If he can't then ask a coach or your professor after the class is over. Maybe

take some private lessons. If you do then make sure you (a) get clarity on any areas that you feel you are lacking, and (b) write it down. In a later section we cover the importance of a training log or training journal but for now a simple notepad will do. Don't misunderstand me here, it's not that you will use the notebook as a reference (you can if you want) but the act of writing things down tends to make more of an impression on the mind.

When I think back to my early private lessons I can still remember a lot of the details not because I have a great memory but because I made a lot of notes. Where my hips and grips should be, where my balance should be, good foot or hook positioning.

When you get these details down and someone counters the move easily, you feel a little disheartened. If you are observing properly though you will soon realize that you had a weak hook, or your grip was on the wrong sleeve leaving an opening. Be vigilant when you train. This is a very important principle to understand, but not at all easy to practice.

Using a Technical Approach

It's worth mentioning that there are specific and general Observation conditions. General Observations are strength and size considerations. We've all heard the Helio stories of the art being developed for 'men with bodies like dead chickens' and this was cool when no one knew what BJJ was. These days, someone steps onto the mat with a college wrestling background and muscles in his spit then you had better have a sound strategy to consider. What if your sparring partner is three hundred pounds? You can see from a general Observation standpoint that you do not want to be on bottom ... unless you're four fifty in which case - you da man!

You cannot get grips unless you lean forward or extend your arms. You cannot launch on top without the use of the legs. These are general trigger points that you should be aware of.

If you are starting on your knees, imagine a line drawn on the mat between you and your opponent horizontally between you, like you are sat in front of a mirror. If your opponent or you cross this line then you can reach (touch) each other. This is the critical distance line (CDL). This is the area of no mans land which tells you a lot about general Observation. You should be able to devise your strategy from here, as soon as a hand or foot crosses that line you need to know what the next move will be ... regardless of whose hand or foot crosses that line.

Specific Observations are the understanding of the attacking units themselves, namely: grips, foot position (which develops the stance) and hips. This is where 95% of your concentration should be focused. If you mentally divide your opponents body down the center as soon as he takes his stance and you monitor his hands he will either get a grip closer to himself (on a pant leg or the collar closest to him) he may go deeper and come for a deep collar or sleeve grip then he will move the second hand. The exception to this would be simultaneous grips, which is rare as most practitioners prefer to get a sense of balance or create tension before latching the next grip.

Each starting attack will have three parts (1) grips, (2) transition, and (3) position. You want to change the path of the attack at the second phase of the transition. This is the easiest way to counter. If you need to change your strategy or have more time - release their grips - no one attacks without some form of grip. If you are attacking first then you will work your protocol, but the process will more than likely be the same: grip, transition, position (and if you've drilled it well enough), submission.

You will need to intercept their transition at the beginning of the phase - certainly not at the end. This can lead to your guard being passed and then you will need another counter. To do this you will need to (a) monitor the baseline of your opponent closely so you can see which side his weight shifts, and (b) install your strategy as soon as he begins his attack. These you can drill once you get into the Zen JJ thirty-day program.

Most students don't even think about the counter until the attack is well on its way. This is a folly. They sleep through the grips and foot positions and don't even realize that an attack is happening until they land in side control or a scramble. Proper Observation and good execution and grip control should cut this down quite a bit.

To make Observation even easier to work with, use the technique known as 'side-tracking'. You form a grip structure or stance you are happy with. Until you get the grips you want, then you break your opponents grips all the time. Next assign a technique that covers any position if your opponent moves to the left, you have a left side counter. If he moves to the right then you have a right side counter (from the stance and grips you have). If he breaks your grip, you have a counter and if he leans backward or forward you have attacks.

Only four techniques to learn: left side, right side, grip break, leaning (forward or backward). There should be no crossover techniques. This will expose quickly if you are awake or not.

I drilled this for a couple of weeks and found that when my opponent moved right I did the left hand technique and was

handily passed because I confused myself by being asleep and not drilling enough. It didn't matter though. The fact that I thought about it, saw the move coming and had a strategy made me feel pretty good. Another week later and no one passed the stance I was starting with and I was moving into good positions time after time (and against some pretty tough opponents too).

Most newbie students positions are less than spectacular usually because (1) they went into full-on sparring too soon, (2) they have been taught only technique positions and are unaware of transitions, (3) they have not been taught how to spot an attacking grip, or (4) they have failed to confront and engage the attack.

Now you have a method for creating awareness, spotting an attack and countering. Enough practice and these should become natural movements. Now it just needs the accompanying physical work and the rest will follow.

Creating awareness while sparring, you have to, in this order:

Monitor the attacking units. Concentrate and focus. Mentally move forward with the attack until you recognize what your opponent plans to do. Reaching out and crossing the critical distance line means you are ready to confront and engage your opponent.

- Spot the attack and counter the transition as soon as it begins
- Counter and move into a position of control
- Counter failed, break grips and reset
- Focus intently on the hips at all times, as this is the balance of power and know at all times where your own hips are.

If you are having trouble and still getting suckered from time to time then try this. Monitor the attacking units 100% even when attacking. You will still need to move and pass or submit but keep these areas in your periphery. It's a little weird at first as we are so intent on reaching our target but a few things can happen.

When you are intently focused on the hands and feet of your opponent you are better prepared for counter attacks. After a while just focus on hands and your own hips, you'll find adjustments in range and the pressure easier to handle. The strange phenomenon with this technique is that it helps tremendously with passing the guard, just keep the pass in the periphery and stay focused on the hands, feet and hips and you'll eventually slip by your opponent almost unnoticed.

Time on the Mat

“Great things are possible when one man’s wisdom and an hour’s effort are combined.”

~ Choi Hong Hi - Founder of Taekwondo

Regardless of your motivations to start training in Brazilian Jiu Jitsu, the surest way to improve is spending time on the mat. Mat time is one of the biggest factors that will determine your speed with which you will progress.

When you first start to train and there are no white bars on your belt only that black strip of fabric there will probably be other people stood beside you. They are in the same position or maybe a little more advanced, maybe one white stripe on the black fabric. Now, I want you to imagine that these people (your teammates) are your speedometers on your journey from white to blue.

Look around. I don’t mean this to become a competition with your teammates, they are just a reflection of where you are. Right now, you are in what I call the first condition of the learning cycle: You don’t even know what you don’t know yet. Don’t worry that will change, it gets even scarier when you realize actually how much you don’t know!

When your teammates turn up to train, check your progress against them. Keep in mind all the other salient factors of being in a contact sport: physical condition, age, weight, etc. There is no point in comparing yourself to a twenty one year old ex-high-school wrestler who weighs two hundred pounds when you are forty, have a wife and two kids and haven’t done any kind of physical activity for ten years. But still, keep an eye on the kid. If he is accelerating in pace and you are struggling with concepts, ask his advice. You’ll probably find that he is spending more time on the mat than you.

This can also translate into ‘be on the mat all the time’. That’s not the message. Consistency is the message. Avoiding

injuries, learning and most of all enjoying yourself while you are doing it. Time on the mat is an important factor in all of this. But don't become the academy pest who gets injured due to overtraining then can't train for two months.

To keep consistent get a copy of your academies schedule, choose the classes that you would like to train on. These will usually be the most suitable times and classes that fit your rank. So don't think you are ready to jump into the advanced classes when your white belt is new and shiny. Pick the classes where you can learn the basic and the fundamentals the most. Get in good drilling time, improve your conditioning and get a handle on the details in techniques. This would be a perfect class for a white belt.

Now draw a block around each class in red pen and pin it somewhere you will see often. I go one step further and just slot those classes into my online schedule. It beeps my iPhone one hour before class so I know I had better start getting ready.

This beats the inner demon again - The Terminator. You have an appointment to make. This makes the hour or ninety minutes a carved in stone block of time that is not to be missed. If you have other people in your life: wife, kids, girlfriend, boyfriend, etc. Then let them also have a look at the schedule and see if it fits in with everything else you've got on. When I first did this, my wife booked herself in for a fitness boot camp at the same time, so it worked really well. It kept her in line with her fitness goals and it made it easier for me to go train BJJ. No point in sitting around in an empty house waiting for her to get home from boot camp.

My initial training program was just three times per week. I would book in two sessions during the week and one on the weekend. This worked. Then as I improved in technique and my conditioning improved so that I could do specific training for longer (our academy doesn't allow white belts to spar until they have been through the sixteen week fundamental curriculum) I upped my training to four days. Now it's five.

You'll notice I didn't go from three times per week to six days per week. There were some guys that did that. They don't train anymore. Some come back from time to time but then they

can't cope with the mental trauma of the guys who started with them (or later) giving them a hard time on the mat. This is BJJ so there are no real smash-sessions but to be easily handled and dominated by someone who is older, more unfit and sporting a knee brace isn't the best for the ego or moral.

That's what consistency breeds. To a degree that is one thing that jiu jitsu has in common with golf. It's the swing, the technique that makes the ball go for miles not the muscle. The way to a great swing is to consistently swing in a great way. It's no secret, for the most part its common sense - use it.

Drilling

“Practice until you are exhausted...then practice some more.”

~ Norman Harris - Sensei

Can you handle two quotes in this section?

“Learning Jiu Jitsu is something for the sub-conscious, not for consciousness.”

~ Helio Gracie - Co-Creator of Gracie Jiu Jitsu

This is probably the greatest game changer in this manual. This is the one thing that made all the difference to my game and it will to yours.

Time on the mat sometimes doesn't mean time on the actual mat, it means time working on your Jiu Jitsu and this can be Drilling technique, at the academy or elsewhere. Think carefully about this.

Would you go to a Golf tournament, or even play a round with your friends if you hadn't bothered to hit the driving range first?

How many Tennis players play without hours of practice on the basics?

How many Baseball players don't bother with that pesky batting cage?

How many boxers think the heavy bag is a total waste of time and that they would perform equally as well without it?

How many...

Okay, you get the drift.

But seriously, think about your BJJ training. How much time do you put aside to drill armbars, side-control to mount, triangles... anyone? Yet, we expect to perform like we have been drilling when it comes to specific training or sparring!

Most BJJ Academies don't have time to fit in teaching a technique, drilling it (adequately) and then running through specific training. In a ninety minute training session it would be difficult for your professor or coach to build in a long enough drilling session. Therefore, you must find time to drill technique yourself.

When you complete a fundamentals session with your professor or coach and you get home, spend five to ten minutes on the rug in the lounge covering what you just did. You don't need a training partner just go through the moves. If you are motivated to really build a drilling session into your program then set an hour aside to drill techniques between classes.

Personally, I use several training aids and my garage looks like a small academy. Right now, at the white belt stage I wouldn't encourage you to go that far. Once you feel like you are committed to BJJ, maybe when you hit Blue Belt, then you might want to take the leap. At white belt level just mentally cover the steps to deliver a good armbar, a good triangle, keep the details in place.

It helps to have a focus when you are drilling or it just ends up a bit of a sea of moves but feels like a workout. When I was beginning I even went a step further and completed the same warm up we did at the school before my drilling session. As my body became accustomed to the routine I didn't feel as uncoordinated or gassed as some of my fellow trainees. It showed me right away that drilling paid off.

If you don't have an idea of what to focus on then jump to the Maps and Systems section towards the end of the manual. This will give you some ideas. As you get more organized and your drilling becomes part of your weekly workout, get a white board in the garage and start to add some specific exercise that help with your training.

I have a tight groin and have had several groin strains (super painful) over the years. Now I warm up and then do some specific Ginastica Natural techniques and some physio moves to help with my groin stretches and strengthening.

Here are some suggestions to work on with your drilling program (there are more in the Maps section):

- ☐ Attack: Armbar from the closed guard
- ☐ Defense: Side Control Escape
- ☐ Sweep: Scissor Sweep
- ☐ Mount: Cross Choke
- ☐ Back: Rear Naked Choke
- ☐ Half Guard: Escape from someone's half guard. (I drill this every time I have a drilling session as one of my Go-To moves. This is because landing in half-guard is very common when you train on your knees.)

All of these techniques can be practiced without a partner if you move your hips. The armbar is somewhat difficult as you are raising your hips off the ground and using your partner to swivel and pivot. But the mechanics can be covered. Do these ten times each. It should feel like you have had a mini-workout when you're done. You will have covered the basic moves to get you through a closed guard specific training session. This will give you a massive advantage on your training partners if you only do one hour per week. Just imagine what you can accomplish if you take that up that to two hours per week!!

When you have more experience and want to upgrade your drilling then you should really upgrade to some training aids. There is a section at the back with some recommendations.

Gradient Learning

This is a recap from the original Zen and the Art of Jiu Jitsu Manual:

Keep forgetting techniques? Not learning to roll as well as you should? Maybe you just don't know what you don't know!

This is the first stage: 'unconscious incompetence'.

Below is an adaptation on how we apply the data on learning styles so that it makes sense in a Jiu Jitsu lesson or a drilling session.

To win a match or sparring session then you need to get from Point A (usually a standing or kneeling position) to Point B, this could be a submission or you could break things down further and consider a sweep, pass or move to side control or dominant position as success. This seems straightforward but do you have the links clear in your mind that get you from A to B to C...?

I am going to use an adapted version of the four learning stages for our purposes in Jiu Jitsu. Ignoring the unconscious competence area, as you already know that some part of your game is lacking (or you are a white belt and have no real concept of the techniques yet), we move on to phase one:

1. The Cognitive Phase. This is the process where you see the parts of a technique. Consider the armbar. It takes several steps to get from the closed guard to the armbar as an example:

- Secure the arm
- Place the foot on the hip
- Swivel your own hips to create angle
- Throw leg over face
- Lift hips for tap

This is a (very) simplified version but you get the drift. Most beginners see this process and try to speed through it, this is a

mistake. At the cognitive phase the opposite should be true. Slow down. Understand each step, when your professor or coach mentions a detail then concentrate on the detail, this will be important - I guarantee it. Make it slow enough that you understand how the pieces fit together.

This advice applies to all levels. When Marcelo Garcia samples some new position he doesn't just watch it on YouTube then start flying into it in the academy. He will study the chain of events that comprise the technique, link them together in his mind and then drill it possibly adding his own flavor (but he's a genius so don't do the flavor bit when you are drilling a new technique). Which leads us to:

2. The Associative Phase. This is where you can visualize yourself flowing through the entire technique. **WITH NO PARTS MISSING.** Once you know physically how the pieces fit together stop and see in your mind how that process works. If you can visualize yourself moving through the whole process that means that you understand the technique. If you get brain fog half way through, drill it again - slowly - in steps and realize which part you left out. Once you start rolling you can try the technique and if it doesn't come off check in and see what happened. This is covered in more depth in the section on Observation.

It's important to recognize that some people stop here. They learn the steps, they can see it in their minds, they sample it in sparring - it works. No need for further exploration. They are short changing themselves. They need to continue to:

3. The Autonomous Phase. This is where the stimulus automatically produces response. Let me offer a real world example. One of my favorite stances (starting positions) in sparring is the Butterfly Guard. So I sit with my knees splayed and am very conscious of the distance between myself and my partner. I then hunt for the cross-collar and elbow grip, I can get this most times as it can be very non-threatening to my opponent. Once I'm latched onto my partner he only has a few options available to pass my guard. I have drilled every possible option at least two hundred times.

Doesn't matter to me if they grab my pants at the knee, below the knee, break my grip, posture up, scoot to the right, scoot to the left, push their weight forward. I pretty much have a set piece response. Now this isn't to say that I cannot be passed or my partner won't have a counter to my attack but I do know that I don't have to think too much so that I can counter his counter if necessary or worry more about the pass if it looks like he has broken my technique.

If an arm is presented I will have an attack for the arm. If my partner slips up in anyway I am pretty much prepared. This was a revelation to me. For the first couple of years I was just rolling around getting very sweaty in the process. Then something clicked, and this only happens after tons of reps and a roadmap of what I should be repping.

Think about it. If you learn to drive stick shift, you know: control the clutch, change gears with your hand, etc. took a driving test and passed. Congrats! Then you put the car away and then three years later you think let's take it for a spin. How do you imagine you would handle the controls? You might pull it off but you've dropped back to the Cognitive Phase. Nice and slow and going through the steps hoping you don't stall it at a traffic signal on the highway.

Now if you've been driving stick for three years every day I bet sometimes you'll arrive at your destination and can't even remember the journey?? That's how automatic your sense of process has been. You are in phase four, the Autonomous Phase. No thought, just action. And this is where we want to aim.

This is much harder to accomplish in the striking arts. For example, how many hooks does a boxer have to slip before it becomes reflex? Probably thousands, so we need to count our blessings that the gentle art does afford us some time to adapt to this process. Things move at a much slower pace in grappling and this should make our drilling efforts much more efficient.

Ultimately it boils down to taking things one step at a time, or gradient learning. The mindset of ‘gotta have now’ won’t work with most proficiencies and Jiu Jitsu is no different. Get to a point where you can just do the move or technique then set about drilling it.

A final note on ‘drilling’ or ‘repping’ a technique. Make sure you understand it and that all the various points are in place before you drill. A bodybuilder would not carry out thousands of reps on a body part that was already well developed. And you should not be repping a technique badly.

This is where your road map comes in. Stick to the plan. Rest when you should and keep going forward when you are assigned to do so. Don’t start straying off the path, the overall result will be less powerful.

Hip Control

“If nothing within you stays rigid, then outward things will disclose themselves.”

~ Bruce Lee - Creator of Jeet Kune Do

I can still hear Chubs, Happy Gilmore's golf coach, telling Happy, “It's all in the hips...it's all in the hips.” He was talking about golf of course, but the same applies to Jiu Jitsu. If you don't know who Happy Gilmore is, he is a comedic creation of Adam Sandler. The character who turned from hockey player to golf pro...with laughs of course.

But the “It's all in the hips” line stuck with me. So many sports depend upon the hip yet it's often overlooked. When kids, or even adults, want to demonstrate their athletic prowess they make a bicep or puff out their chest. It's not very common for someone to swing a hula hoop move and say check out how athletic I am. Maybe in the adult movie business? But we're getting off topic.

George Foreman was one of the hardest hitting heavyweights in history. He was renowned for breaking guys ribs with body punches, and when interviewed about how come he hit so hard, what do you reckon his answer was: “It all comes from the hips.”

Now in Jiu Jitsu we don't strike or swing a club for that matter but still, the hips are where all the action takes place. To move into any position we need to be in constant communication with the hip, both your own and your opponents.

If you are in a top position with your weight bearing down, you would need to lock your opponents hip. So, if you manage to pass and get into side-control-top then you would concern yourself with locking the hip. Yes, head control is super-important, but locking the hip is the best habit to get into. If you are stuck inside your opponents closed guard, then you

must use your knees and grips to lock his hip in position so you can break the guard.

You will often hear in the academy things like ‘he has heavy hips.’ This is what they are referring to. When someone is on top and they transfer their weight down on you through the hip, it is just a matter of time before gravity does the rest and you are in a tough spot.

Let’s look at bottom positions. Your opponent passes and bears his weight down on you, the opposite of the previous scenario. You need to hip escape and then get a knee back in there to prevent him from gaining control again. Don’t forget, in a competition setting, passing the guard is not enough, you need to maintain control for three seconds then you get three points for the pass. Don’t give up if someone passes, just use your hips and escape.

In closed-guard-bottom, this is a key position for attacks. To attack and have an active guard you need your hips to be free, hence, break the posture of your opponent.

Just like the example of heavy hips above for the top position, consider the bottom position to be a fortress that no one can pass. Using your feet to move your hips or control your posture will create a sturdy enough guard to take your game higher.

A lot of white belts don’t think about posture unless they are in a top position. That closed guard samurai kind of seated position, which looks and feels noble. On the bottom though, the white belt thinks attack-attack-attack, which is good. But for now I would like you to think posture, top and bottom. On top, keep your posture good and your hips solid, on bottom break your opponents posture using your legs this will free the hips for the attack.

As Master Carlos Gracie jnr put it, “Your legs are your hips. Take the way a snake moves. It doesn’t walk; it zig-zags. Jiu Jitsu fighters playing guard look like snakes [only] with their bellies up.” If you are to become proficient in any ground fighting game then you need your hips to be active, and to

neutralize your opponent you need to disable his hips so he can't move them.

This is a groundbreaking realization for a white belt to understand. By the time you get to Blue or Purple then this will seem clear, but try to keep your hips on the move and if you pass your opponents guard: Lock those suckers down.

Hip Escape

This is the signature move of a Brazilian Jiu Jitsu player. This is why it is incorporated into our warm ups and most new students look like they are having seizure when trying to understand it. Not a natural move...but an essential move.

In all the techniques I have thought about, considered and become competent with over the years, the hip escape is still something I drill fifty times each day. When I go to my drilling session I lay on my back and hip out twenty-five to each side. Then I pull in the grappling dummy, and hip-out into the scissor sweep position. I don't sweep the dummy just hip out to each side.

This is a pretty good warm up and it prepares the body to move automatically to very defined defensive positions. If it even looks close to someone passing my guard, my body just moves, bam, auto-responsive into a knee shield.

The other day this became clear when one of the professors at my academy was demonstrating a technique and chose me as the demonstration dummy. I lay down and he was pushing me into shape and speaking to the class about each position step along the way. I was listening too as I knew I would be training it with my partner, then he pushed my knee down to pass and my hips scooted out as my knee came in and blocked him. Obviously, this wasn't part of the technique, he laughed and pushed my knee back then said, "You see what happens when you've done a thousand hip escapes." Automation. Unconscious competence.

Not all automation is good as we discussed in the section on Observation, it's good to be awake and aware for the most part and in control of yourself and your opponent. But when it comes to defenses, the pure speed of reaction is what can save you. It would be difficult to see a strike coming in at you full force to the face and your brain say, 'hey, let's duck right'. Too

late. Whammo! The right hand clipped you and you're down. That's why boxers spend so much time on slipping drills.

One of the main goals of the hip escape is Guard Replacement and that's where you need to start when a white belt. Don't concern yourself with hip escaping to slide a cool hook inside the thigh of your partner, that can come later, after your guard replacement has become automated.

As a funny little side note, I always get a laugh out of white belt student when I ask them 'how do they know when the hip-escape is truly engrained in the brain?' Most aren't sure or think it's a matter of reps. Not so...it's when you hip escape out of bed, or hip escape to roll over IN bed! Then you know you've truly got the hip-escape in your blood, now it's just on auto-pilot.

Training Diary

“The way of martial arts starts with 1,000 days of training and is truly commanded after 10,000 days of training.”

~ Masutatsu Oyama - Founder of Kyokushin Karate

Ever noticed those guys in the gym that write all their weights and reps down. I used to think they were gym nerds, as though they would go home and plot their weight training progression. And that may have been true...because they were a lot smarter than me!

When I was into weight training, many years ago, I would go and workout at the gym, lifting as heavy as I could for as many reps as I could. It was aimless and I worked out that once I reached a plateau on the weight front I didn't really progress in strength or conditioning for around six months. I was a little frustrated and asked a trainer what I might do to improve and he asked me a couple of questions about my poundages and my sets/reps and the protocol of training I was using. For most of the questions I just shrugged. I didn't have an answer because I couldn't remember the weights/reps or programs I had been using. This made me look like the gym dork, now I wished I were a nerd.

He sort of laughed at me and in a nice way told me to run along until I could answer the questions. I gave up soon after and probably took up some other hobby that didn't require the power to write stuff down.

Today is different. In the gym I workout and record everything in my smart phone. I have an App that tracks my sets, weights and programs and measures results...even has the ability to print charts with my improvements showing and clear plateaus. Pretty cool, please don't tell the nerds.

Now the same is true of your BJJ Training. Grab a small notepad and stick it in your gym bag or leave it at home if you

go to the academy changed but as soon as you get home write down the following:

- The Date
- Who the Coach was for the session
- What you learned the most from that lesson
- First Technique
- Second Technique
- Training Partners
- What was the position for Specific Training
- How did Specific Training (or Sparring) go?
- Session start and finish time.

Let me cover the thought process behind these remarks. The date is obvious, the name of the coach too. But I have had coaches that I really enjoyed their class and some coaches I didn't. This was duly noted.

What you learned most. This is a more expansive question and not a mechanical question. The answer is not Guillotine Escape or Triangle. The answer would be something like: I really like side control from the top, I feel real comfortable and have a killer choke that seems to get everyone. That's the correct answer, it's more of a personal feeling than a direct quote from the curriculum.

First and Second Technique. Now you can go to the curriculum. This is a memory jogger. You can even add a detail or two. For example, Don't forget to grab my wrist instead of my fingers when pulling the guillotine into position.

The position for Specific Training. Again, this is pretty much a solid position: side control, mount, closed guard, etc. Writing this down gets you used to the terminology and the positions pretty quickly. Also you will relish some positions and groan when others present themselves. As time wears on you will soon come to relish the positions that cause you problems, trust me.

How did it go? Did you crush your training partners like flies or did you get crushed. Was it a mixed bag? More accurately, what worked and what didn't, especially what didn't. Write it down, you'll need to come back to it. If training went well then writing it down and acknowledging it is a form of positive feedback. It increases your confidence in positions using mental self-talk, sounds a bit 'out there' but it seems to work.

Also make a note of your energy levels. Was it all cool and you felt relaxed? Did you gas out after the first round? Did you have a heavy dinner too close to training? Were you full of energy and could have sparred all night? The notes don't have to be negative, just make a note.

Start time and Finish time. This is worth noting as a pattern can sometimes present itself. When you look back on your notes you might see that you felt better and trained better on certain days of the week and times. This could be related to circadian rhythms or it could be as simple as your body is warmer and more ready for combat at one time as opposed to another. I tried training first thing in the morning for a while and it just did not agree with me. Talking to a doctor he mentioned that some people have a core body temperature that just doesn't get revved up until they have been out of the sack a couple of hours. It appears I suffer from this condition so training times do matter. I just hope no one attacks me first thing in the morning.

And why write all this down? Why not just memorize it? I'm sure you won't be pulling your notebooks out to reminisce with the grandkids anytime soon, but you will commit some things to memory far more effectively than just thinking 'I got that move down' or 'I was on fire tonight'. Keeping your thoughts written down in an organized manner helps keep the filing cabinet of the brain in an orderly fashion. It commits the techniques that matter to memory much better than just 'trying' to remember. An old school teacher of mine used to say 'a short pencil is better than a long memory' and over time I have come to agree with him.

Another item I use to keep a handle on my training commitment is a calendar. I use one of those blotter kind of calendars that sits under my computer keyboard for most of the year and I can make notes and doodles on. Each month has a box to represent each day, this is supposed to be used as some kind of schedule I assume. When the month is over I tear off the page and a new month is revealed.

After each training session, and just before I hit the hay, I just note down the amount of time I trained in the box for that day. It's as simple as 1 HR, which means one hour or 1.5 HR, which is one and a half hours. If something eventful happened I put a little Asterisk * next to the time.

When the end of the month comes around I can see if I put the hours in or if I was a lazy ass. I total up the time and then write that number in the first square of the next month. This is the training time I will not drop below. It's a semi-goal number though I don't check during the month how well I'm doing, I just train.

As for the Asterisk's I check the date then go back to my notebook at the beginning of the new month. This will reveal what happened in that training session and why it was eventful. This might be important in my plan for the next month.

Negative Space

“For the choke, there are no ‘tough guys’. With an armlock he can resist the pain. With the choke he just passes out and goes to sleep.”

~ Helio Gracie - Co-Creator of Gracie Jiu Jitsu

This is a principal I wish I had been aware of when I began Jiu Jitsu: The concept of Space and Negative Space.

Have you ever thought when you roll with some of your teammates that their game is tight? It seems as if a boa constrictor is wrapped around you somehow, even though they are not muscling you or using strength. This is what negative space means and this is how they are achieving this effect.

Instead of really pulling and pushing your partner around on the mat, or trying to leap over them with some flamboyant move try to imagine that once your grips are in place you will leave no gaps, no holes, for them to move around. You will impose your game on them.

Let's take closed guard bottom as an example. As mentioned in a previous section the idea of the guard is to control the distance between you and your opponent. When they are in your guard, you are in control*, they can only open your guard and pass, or that's what they should be trying to do.

On bottom, you should be thinking attack (that can be a sweep or submission). Now which attack should be choose? Let's go for the cross collar choke, nice and simple to discuss here, but entrenched with details.

You slip your right hand into his right collar (cross collar), adjust until it's deep, fight for the next collar grip. Pull twist, grunt, groan...and still no tap. Why?

Too much space. Think negative space. How can this be achieved?

One word: **Posture**.

To reduce the space (and therefore control the space) you will need to break your opponents posture. I am sure you will have heard your professors or coaches say this many times, but as happened with me you might be thinking ‘sure’ but how?

They might show you a technique on breaking posture but as soon as you are in an open sparring situation you default right back to trying to sweep the guy, he blocks it and passes and then (sigh) it’s all about escaping side control - again!

Let’s look at this again from the perspective of Negative Space.

If the guy on top has strong grips and can pin you to the mat immobilizing your hips so he can move his knees into position try this. Get the best grip you can on both his elbows, flare them out while pulling with your own knees toward your chest. The guys arms buckle and he will fall right on top of you. Now get an under-hook (that’s getting your arm under his armpit) and pull him further into you. I bet he’ll look surprised. It’s the sensation of falling forward flat on your face without your arms to protect you from the fall - face plant style. The space is now ... closed.

Go back to the cross choke, slide the right hand in deep. If he starts resetting his grips, use your left hand on his elbow and pull him in with your thighs again. This time as he slides upright, keep the tension down with the right hand grip and using your left pull the collar further down so that hand is DEEP in his collar. If you can feel the thumb joint of your right hand touching the back of his neck, that’s deep enough.

Now allow him to erect himself as if going for the posture up again. Slide the left hand underneath and into the collar while controlling him with your thighs. Go deep as you can. The trap is already set by the right hand, then using your whole body to curl inward go for the tap.

Go to YouTube and search “cross collar choke from the guard” I was going to add a link here, but there are so many good examples that you could spend the next hour checking this out. Just keep an eye on the negative space - there is no room (or shouldn’t be) the guy on bottom is totally pulling his opponent

into a position that is difficult for him to recover. Don't forget, the guy on top has only one goal: to break the guard, his next step would be to pass. If you are on the attack and there is no space to move his hips so that he can't break your guard - he's a sitting duck!

*Believe it or not, the closed guard has a very close resemblance to the mount. This is a VERY dominant position learn to use it well.

Space

As the section previously stated, negative space keeps your game tight. It makes everything come together in one element. Ever had that feeling when someone was glued to you; that's negative space.

The opposite is, well, space. And as with all things jiu jitsu there is a vice versa to each concept. When you are on the wrong end of a smash pass, what do you think you need? No, not a Berimbolo slide out, you just need a little space.

Most white belts try to stop the pass with a hand, which is quite correct as this will buy you enough time to create space...and that's where the system fails.

How many times have you moved into side control (or even been on bottom and been guilty of this yourself) and the guy on bottom tries to bench press you away. Not down towards his hips as a release but as in a regular bench press, up in the air, away from his chest. He's just trying to create space just doing it in the wrong direction.

This is especially true when bigger guys get passed by smaller guys. If you're a big guy, don't do this, it's not cool on the little guys and doesn't work on the bigger guys.

Some of you may disagree. That's fine, no need to disagree with me, just disagree with gravity and unless you can bench press two hundred pounds for five minutes continuous, guess what, the bigger guy will pass as your chest and arms fail.

Then you are super screwed. No strength to create more space and now you have been passed with possible head and arm control and the other guys shoulder under your chin and stuck in your throat.

It's better to use leverage to create some space so your hips can move. This is what the fundamentals program teaches us, but as a white belt you are probably still using strength and some tension, this is natural. Try and relax on bottom. I know

it's hard to do, but your potential to escape will increase dramatically if you go all loosey-goosey on bottom and just slink right out of there.

A lot of sports are determined by the amount of space they create. Most team sports like football, basketball and soccer can be decided on the team that creates the most space for their team to work. This is true of BJJ. If you are in a tight spot and looking to create opportunities, space must be created, this is a path to victory.

So it's a combination, if you are on the attack utilize negative space, if you are on the defense or looking to counter: create space. It's that simple, though not easy, you need to work at it.

Balance

“The wise man wins before the fight, the ignorant man fights to win.”

~ Morihei Ueshiba - Creator of Aikido

Of course when performing any kind of stand up part of your game, balance is essential. If you have a hankering to experience why this is so then go to a couple of judo classes, you'll soon pick it up. Balance and the distribution of weight through feel (and especially the balls of the feet) is imperative.

Now, Brazilian jiu jitsu is a ground game, so a majority of our time is spent on our back, side, shoulders, even our heads on occasion. How should balance be distributed?

This was a concept I struggled with as a white belt. I felt it was okay to go with the flow, so if someone came in with a sweep I would usually get swept and then start to work from the bottom. I wasn't a very successful or effective white belt, not sure if I mentioned that. This is not a strategy for success, believe me, I really gave it a go but beatings on beatings proved that having an effective base is important.

Again, let's revisit this word: Base. I am sure you will have heard it in class, 'keep a strong base' it's much akin to Posture. One of those words that coach's say and white belts seldom understand, so here's my interpretation to help you better keep your balance and base.

Base, according to the dictionary is:

1. the lowest part or edge of something, esp. the part on which it rests or is supported:
2. a conceptual structure or entity on which something draws or depends:
3. the main place where a person works or stays:
4. a main or important element or ingredient to which other things are added:

5. Chemistry: a substance capable of reacting with an acid to form a salt and water, or (more broadly) of accepting or neutralizing hydrogen ions. Compare with alkali.

6. Electronics: the middle part of a bipolar transistor, separating the emitter from the collector.

7. Linguistics: the root or stem of a word or a derivative.

8. Mathematics: a number used as the basis of a numeration scale.

9. Baseball: one of the four stations that must be reached in turn to score a run.

verb

1. have as the foundation for (something); use as a point from which (something) can develop:

2. situate as the center of operations: (-based)

The best comparative I can glean from this is ‘the lowest part or edge of something, esp. The part on which it rests or is supported’, I also like ‘the main place someone works’ but the first is a better comparison for this section. When you kneel in front of your opponent and you touch knuckles, this is what you should be representing: an obelisk, a statue of granite that cannot be moved never mind swept aside.

Try this exercise. When another white belt pulls guard or you are specific training in a closed guard capacity, don’t try to break or pass. Just think Base, just think posture and do not allow your training partner to break your posture or disturb your base. You are a rock, molding yourself to the mat, you are made of granite.

Now, this is super frustrating to the guy on bottom as he tries to attack and fails (he needs to break your Posture) or tries to pull a sweep that fails (Base) and for you it gives you a sense that you can do this. You are surviving and safe.

Okay, but say he breaks your posture and sweeps you. Great. You just found something out, you learned that you do not have a good base, or you have a poor posture when in guard.

Before you start developing your game - fix this! It's that important.

One time I was working my base and posture with a guy. I spread my knees nice and wide, his legs locked around my waist. My weight slumped down low onto my heels like I had a lead belly, my spine erect, my right arm locked on his collars over his breastbone and my left pushing down on his hip. I was locked in position and I was not going to move. I wanted to see if there was a weakness in my base or posture.

This guy had his girlfriend on the sidelines videoing him, like he was going to kick everyone's ass on the mat and record it for giggles. I just bedded down deep, and he was trying to come at me but he was pinned like a butterfly with a needle through it. He tried and tried and I just locked him down for four minutes then broke his guard and passed. When the coach called Time this guy flipped out, he was calling me all kinds of bullshit moves, I just laughed.

He pulled off his belt and told his chick 'let's go' then they stormed off. She gave me a withering look before she followed him. I call this the walk of shame. If you feel the need to storm off because you've been frustrated while rolling, or just plain beat then shame on you. Don't do it. That's the real bullshit move, not the keeping of a good posture and fine base.

If you decide to stand to break guard then you need to be aware that the number of sweeping options just increased incrementally. Standing to break guard is a great option (the best actually), but keep your base low as soon as you have broken the guard, elbows tucked inside the knees, hips low and feet nice and wide apart. You don't want to get suckered with a double ankle sweep, and I see brown belts getting caught with this on occasion.

Standing is all part of the game. When you are preparing for a tournament you will have to get used to starting standing.

There is a famous jiu jitsu statistic, I'm not sure if it's true or not (and if it is then I'm totally confused how it could have possibly been calculated): Around 80% percent of all street fights end up on the ground. This is valuable data if you are

ground fighting specialist but please consider this: 100% of all street fights start standing up.

It's important to start from standing, you need will cover this a little more when you are starting to build your game before blue belt sinks in. Just be aware of your balance if you decide to stand while sparring.

Insist vs Persist

One of the things I used to hear my professor say when I was back in my white belt days was ‘insist’. This is an interesting concept to consider as I think he got the terminology wrong even though I hear it over and over from both American and Brazilian coaches.

It’s usually used in the context of a scramble. For the purposes of this text we will define a scramble as a neutral position where either opponent could come out on top with neither in a clearly defined position. It’s more of a wrestle than a technical display, but it does happen. When two opponents get caught in a scramble then grips will be in odd positions and a single leg might present itself so one of the players grabs it and goes for the single. His opposite number doesn’t want to get swept so he posts and lots of shoving and grabbing ensues, usually with a coach on the side screaming ‘insist, insist...’

Now, if the guy holding the single keeps pushing he is either going to get the sweep or they are going hit something, like a wall or spectators or other fighters rolling. The guy getting swept who is posting is getting forced back but he is also supporting his weight and pressing back against his opponent. One of them will give up eventually. That’s just gravity. Simple physics.

What does the word ‘insist’ mean in this context? I used to hear it and think I can’t insist he fall on his ass because I have a single leg. That’s like insisting he let me win, it just wouldn’t happen.

This confused me. Until I replaced it in my head with a better word: Persist.

This now meant ‘don’t give up,’ keep going. So if I am sweeping I will be persistent in my manner. As soon as this concept changed and dropped into my brain some of my training partners started noticing that when I got in to a scramble and grabbed something I would not give up, we

slammed into walls, steamrolled team mates, fell off the mat onto watching beginners but I would not stop.

If someone thought this wasn't cool, then I just told them to give it up and give me the sweep. They had to make a decision, it worked out best for both training partners if there was persistence and resistance. If everyone were persistent it would become pretty much a matter of conditioning.

Don't get me wrong, I have been on the opposite end of this too. When my partner was 'insisting' he win and I was persisting in pushing back (resisting). Ultimately my muscle failed or my gas tank ran dry and they passed, or swept or got grips, whatever I didn't want to happen happened! But I persisted in keeping the faith and tried not only to win but also to not-lose. I would recommend you do the same.

Attitude

Remember the story I mentioned earlier in the section on balance, and I mentioned the ‘walk of shame’ that is the epitome of a bad attitude. Don’t let the events on the mat change your attitude, and I know how hard this can be. Ready for another tale of woe?

When I was a three stripe white belt I used to train between two academies. They were part of the same association under the same professor but had different members training there as they were in distinct parts of town. My schedule was pretty flexible so I could train at both and this gave me a variety of training partners, which I still enjoy to this day.

While getting involved in a sparring session, I got partnered with a guy who had aggression issues. He’s the guy at the academy who is super-cool in the changing room but as soon as sparring begins it’s like you’ve just kidnapped his wife and children and unless he taps you out they won’t be released. He goes nuts!

As per game plan he came at me like this was a life and death situation. We got into a scramble and I came out on his back and both hooks in position. Total accident with virtually no skill on my part, aside from an opportunity coming my way.

Wandering around the mat weaving in between the various fighters was another student from the academy, another white belt just ensuring that we didn’t crack heads or steamroll the smaller guys. He was the overseer of safety.

I was working my game and looking to get a lapel choke, I had the guy on the right side when I noticed him glance up at the safety-guy wandering around who had stopped to watch us. The white belt who was standing looked down at my opponent nodded slightly as if agreeing to something. Unfortunately I had no clue what this meant, but it was a clear signal something was up. Before I had a chance to react the guy

who's back I was controlling hooked his foot over my ankle and popped it. No warning. No tapping. Slam! Pop!

The sound was so loud that a guy near the entrance of the school ran over to check if it was broken, and we were in the middle of the mat. My foot didn't feel too bad, but went immediately white.

The professor teaching came over and told me to take a seat on the sidelines. I told him I was okay, it was just one of those things, but as soon as I stood to walk back to the bench I knew my ankle wasn't right. This didn't deter me and I kept a brave face. The guy who cracked it was very apologetic, I told him no need, its part of the game. He's a super nice guy just an all or nothing training partner.

But the event of it happening, with the subtle cue from the wandering white belt and the sudden smashing of my foot somehow irked me.

Next day, my foot had blown up to twice it's size and I spent the morning throwing up as my body went into shock, I should have predicted that.

No more training for me...for eight weeks.

This is not to impress you with my benevolence and immense sense of patience but to impress upon you that I could have taken another path and said 'Screw Jiu Jitsu it's not worth it'. My work suffered, I couldn't do things with my kids, my wife was pissed and wanted me to quit...but I didn't.

Understand this if you can:

This BJJ thing is important to your mental fortitude equally as much as your physical fortitude. You will get injuries and they will come from sometimes stupid scenarios. If this is an issue you can't accept then jiu jitsu may not be for you. Consider ping pong, that's much less stress on the joints.

Your attitude determines your altitude, according to those Success posters anyway and I believe that to be true.

Technique Concepts

Attack

“I am the greatest, I said that even before I knew I was.”

~ Muhammad Ali - Boxing Legend

When in the white belt phase I think it is extremely important that you get a good grasp on the survival and escape tactics before you embark on the attack aspects. This doesn't mean you shouldn't attack but it means that you will be pushed into more survival aspects of the game by higher ranking fighters than you are going to steamroll lower belts. Let's face it, you are on the bottom rung trying to learn the basics, still, open sparring or specific training will be a reality.

I think it's important to cover some of the elements on attacks so that even while you are getting to grips with the fundamentals you can still get into the groove of some good habits and take them further into your training.

The following sections cover (not again, groan) Hip Control, Sweeps and Closed Guard Bottom. Of course having a guard game offers the ability to attack. One of the things I have tried to focus on with this volume is to keep things as straightforward and simple as possible so as not to confuse you.

I hope you don't think that this was going to be more in-depth as there are much better resources to delve deeper than this volume, as mentioned in the intro this is conceptual, not detail or technique driven. But, get a handle on the core concepts, and you can even start to develop your own details that work for you. This is what puts the 'art' in Martial Art and I don't feel there is a better way to express yourself than Brazilian jiu jitsu.

Position then Submission:

Don't try and submit your opponent from just anywhere. You must get yourself into a position of control first. This is referred to as Position, so things like side-control, mount, back-mount these are positions. Before position is usually Transition, this isn't the manual to discuss transition. That will come later. But get used to Position then Submission.

Once in a tournament I tried to submit a guy with a cross collar choke that I had no business attempting as I was totally out of position. I had been drilling the cross collar choke with my professor and had it dialed in, yet for some reason I thought this meant that I could do it whenever I felt like. Listen up: You can't. You need to move into the correct position first, then the transition to the submission. There are no shortcuts here, so it's worth committing to memory. Position:Transition:Submission.

Hip Control & Grip Control

I appreciate we have covered hip movement and nomenclature but we haven't much discussed grips and how they impact attack and defense. As we are in the attack section we can cover grips as they are applied to positions. The positions we will look at:

- Closed Guard
- Side Control
- Half Guard
- Mount
- Back

Of course there are many other positions you will be dealing with at a fundamental level but these will be the main ones, so don't start rushing off to master the reverse De La Riva just yet. Keep focused on these five. In this section we can take them apart one by one.

Before we do that, just note that they are all attack positions. So the closed guard is bottom. The mount is top and the back is back-control with hooks in. If you are not clear on these positions please talk to your coach, professor or refer to a reference manual like Saulo Ribiero's excellent primer Jiu Jitsu University.

Grip control is also covered in this area on attacking. Maybe there should have been an independent section on grips, they are that important, but for now let us not get bogged down in too much detail. We will cover grips in the various guard positions too.

Closed Guard

On bottom and facing your opponent your hips need to be mobile. It's okay for your opponent to even lean forward placing all his weight through his hands onto your chest, but it's not okay if that weight transfers through the hips and locks you in place.

If weight transfers through your hip and pins you, the first action needs to be to break your opponents posture so he has to re-group. While he is re-grouping look to attack.

Has he dropped a hand to the mat? Go Kimura.

Has he raised his based away from his heels leaning forward? Scissor Sweep.

Has he pushed back keeping away from you with his balance moving away? Hip bump or sit-up sweep.

What about if his head comes forward and he tries to bury it in your stomach? Push one of his hands between your legs and go triangle or try a collar choke.

The options and outcomes are infinite, this is what makes it so interesting. Now, just go back and review those techniques (provided you know what they are), every one of the attacks needs the hips to be available to move and oftentimes move quickly.

It is impossible to attack from your back without free hips. Always keep that in mind when you are using the closed guard.

Also keep your grips in position. Try to make it a habit that neither of your hands should be empty at any time. It's just a good habit to get into and when breaking your opponents posture, breaking grips is also a key element in that.

Marcelo Garcia never lets anyone get grips on him, even if he is in mid transition and his technique is coming together, he will stop, break grips and then continue. This demonstrates how important the grip is in achieving victory.

For you as a white belt, victory is in controlling the action. Again, this is a good habit to get into, if you control the action

you will have a good chance of controlling the outcome. If you feel your opponent is imposing his game on you and you have the attacking posture then you need to move the action back to you controlling. How do you do this? Break his posture and start moving your hips. Again, simple, but not easy.

Half Guard

Half guard bottom has a very similar prescription to the closed guard with the exception that it is a far more aggressive attacking guard. There are many more sweeps and half guard variations as you get more advanced.

If you want to take your half guard to a whole new level then there are two DVD sets that come to mind: 111 Half Guard Techniques with Caio Terra and Jeff Glovers' Deep Half Guard. Both available on Amazon.

Grips with a half guard are not as important as the closed guard. For me, the main focus of my hands when I am in half guard is to ensure my opponent doesn't get head control and I keep an underhook. If he gets head control and flattens me out then I have to recover full guard or go for a sweep...which is duplicating work and effort so I would rather not, and I would rather you not too.

Once you move into an attacking position, taking the underhook initiative for example, then having grips becomes essential. Again, try to fill your hands once you decide to attack.

If you are not quite sure what the 'underhook initiative' is then ask a coach or your professor how you get the underhook when in half guard and I am sure they will be happy to demonstrate.

Mount

This is one of the most difficult attacking positions that a white belt can handle. The Upa (or hip bump) seems to be a technique that is very effective. Most white belts managing the feat of getting into top mount don't seem to stay on top long before they get bumped.

Why is this?

Usually their base and their hips are in the wrong position. Have you ever noticed that when a black belt gets in the mount they are eager to climb higher and get their knees under their opponent's armpits. This is the correct position for the hip, as the opponent's hips can raise now and there is no contact with the black belts hip. Whereas, if you mount and in effect you are hip to hip he can bump you.

Most white belts look to attack right away, this makes them rise up in the air so their head is high vertically and their hips are low. The base is compromised here, and that's what makes the Upa so effective.

Landing in mount, first, stabilize your position. Get head control and then lock your feet under (behind) your opponents knees (as if getting closed guard from the top mount), keep your hands out wide, spread wide open. This should bring the position under control while your opponent thrashes around underneath you. The hips are still connected but the arms and locked feet will clamp with great effectiveness. You should look like 'Y' shape on top.

Once they are growing weary of bumping and looking for options, bring a hand in quickly and wrap it around your opponents' neck gaining head control. Simultaneously shift your weight (chest) to the side with the outstretched arm.

This usually gets the reaction that the Upa is now available, he will clamp the arm that just wrapped and try to bump to that side, but due to the mechanics of you moving your weight (chest) to the opposite side, a cantilever is formed and you cannot be bumped in that direction. He can't bump you the

other way, your arm is still extended as a post. So he drops back again trying to come up with plan C.

This is now is the ideal time to hoist a knee under the armpit of his arm that is planted against your head-control arm. Stay low and plant your foot into his ribs pushing your groin almost onto his neck. That's how high up you want to be.

Do the same on the other side and keep your head low, not upright, you should be sliding over him. You should now be in a safe position regardless of how much he tries to push you off. If he extends an arm, it's yours. Personally in such a dominant position I try a couple of arm attacks to distract him enough to go straight for the neck.

The hips need to be high on your opponent though, so they are not connected.

There is an alternative to this. There is an alternative to everything in jiu jitsu and that is to keep the hips connected and ride out the upa with a free flowing movement. I have seen this work very effectively but it never worked as well as getting the hips into a heavier more controlling position.

You may have noticed that grips do not really form a part of the position here as the hands are used mostly to base. This is correct, the grips only work once you are on the attack and even then they are more like hooks than grips for the most part.

The hip is far more important in the mount position, and using the feet as grips is an even better example. If you can lock your feet or grapevine as soon as you mount then this will allow some precious seconds for that stabilization process to take place. The grips in the mount are your hips and your feet. Use them in that order.



Image courtesy of qwertyjutsu.com

Back Control

When you have back control, hooks in, then your hip should naturally be on the same alignment as your opponents. This is where you start and keeping that level is important to you keeping in control.

You can try this: If you are specific training on back control and your partner starts on your back with hooks in, then as soon as you go, just scoot down so your hips move away from him. This is a great back defense starting position. Conversely you can push back against him so he is on his back with your weight is on top of him, this again makes it difficult for him to get any kind of collar grips, position or choose the side he will need to drop you to in order to get the choke.

Notice all it takes is to move the hips in a direction that doesn't suit him and he will run out of ideas real quick.

If you have back control keep the hips in line, this should provide a nice alignment for a choke too. If he scoots down as mentioned above then you will need to move more toward an arm attack as the angle for the choke will be compromised.

The seat belt grip is a perfect starting position for back control with hooks. This is the position where you have one arm over the shoulder and one arm beneath the armpit of the opposite arm with the hands clasped together pulling your opponent in tight - elbows back and down. Your chest and his back should be glued together, this will enable masterful control and make it very difficult to escape.

Also with the seat belt, collar grips and wrist control are right there. You don't need to be peeking over your opponents shoulder to see what's happening at the front, with the seatbelt everything becomes much more tactile. As he moves you can sense it and counter, if he tries to scoot and the seatbelt is tight, no way, he'll choke himself or present an arm attack. Learn the seatbelt and keep the hips aligned, they go hand in hand.

Sweeps

Sweeping your opponent is essential to gaining top attacking positions. Let's take a quick look at the dominant top positions:

- Side Control
- Mount
- Back
- Knee on Belly

When you pass someone's guard and land in side control, in competition you will be awarded three points. Four points for the mount or the back, and sometimes one leads to the other. You could also pick up a quick two points for knee-on-belly facing your opponent, oddly enough you get no points for knee-on-belly facing away from your opponent (as of this writing).

Why is it that if we land in our opponents closed guard, half guard or get to his back with no hooks that we don't get points or advantages? They are not dominant positions because you can't control the attack from there, all you can do is break guard or try and get hooks. These are considered to be 'neutral positions'.

This boils down to the fact then that we need a method, regardless of our position, to get to one of those dominant positions as effectively as possible: Enter the sweep.

Let's just say your opponent breaks your guard and starts to pass. One of the first techniques you will learn is to get to half-guard at all costs, in an attempt to stop or at least delay the pass. This is good advice. Especially as the half guard bottom, in my opinion, is as effective as the closed guard and is a very offensive position. The half guard as an attack position is littered with sweep opportunities. Once the sweep begins then you should control your opponent in a way so as to land in one of the dominant positions. Two points for the sweep and you now have attacking options.

The hips and grips, yet again, play a part in all sweeps. In fact I would say that if you have a deft hip then a bottom guard, sweep game might be a winner for you. A teammate of mine has been getting away with the bottom guard, sweep to a dominant position and then racking up points for years, and been successful with it. Doesn't submit many opponents but can train long and hard gaining dominant position one after the other. It works.

Closed Guard Bottom (again)

Closed Guard bottom is going to be your bread and butter attacking position at white belt that's why I covered it twice here. Almost all positions stem from your CG Bottom. Think about it. Mount if you wrapped your legs around your opponent or locked ankles is very similar in nature, so is Back Mount hooks in. It's an incredibly dominant attacking position.

Your hips engaged at the same level and this gives you the element of control, so try to get your closed guard game together as this is possibly the most important 'stance' in Jiu Jitsu. It also comes into play much more in No-Gi jiu jitsu, which you may enjoy as you advance.

Being able to flow from one technique to another is the mark of a quality jiu jitsu player. This comes with time as each position begins to feel comfortable. In the previous manual Zen Jiu Jitsu I discussed how there are many parallels to Human chess with BJJ, this is especially true when it comes to linking techniques together. If you are on bottom in the closed guard you have the major advantage of knowing that your opponent only has one objective: break your guard. Some people will call out passing as being the objective, but one cannot happen without the other one first.

Your opponent, on the other hand, has no idea what you plan to do to attack. There is obviously the stumbling block in the bottom game of there being so many ways to break guard, but this is at least finite. And although the techniques from the bottom are also finite they are far more expansive, with counters to counters to various guard games evolving into different guards. Trust me, get a good solid closed guard bottom and you will always have a solid attacking position to fall back on (pun intended).

Defense

In this section on defense I want you to consider what defense is. It is moving from an inferior position to an improved position or a position of transition to a dominant position - hope that makes sense. We discussed the dominant positions in the section on Sweeps, in this section it means you need to defend against each of those positions. Quick recap:

- Side Control
- Mount
- Back
- Knee on Belly

If you remain under the pressure of one of these positions for too long you will only create more opportunities for your opponent that will ultimately lead to your submission. Your ability to defend in jiu jitsu is essential at white belt, as the time will come when you move up to blue and start sparring with purple and brown belts the number of submission attempts can be relentless so learning to have a solid defense is a priority at this stage in your development.

The first step in Defense is Survival (we will cover that next).

Survival

“Adopt the Survival mindset. Stop trying to beat anyone and everyone. Just don’t lose anymore.”

~ Helio Gracie - Co-Creator of Gracie Jiu Jitsu

When you are studying at the white belt level the most important factor is the act of survival. This is pretty much a given, on your first day you probably aren’t sure what’s going on and the only option is sink or swim, I would be very surprised if you started beating people on your first day on the mat.

Even though you got involved with jiu jitsu to learn submissions. The key issue as a white belt is to survive first, and then you can move into more favorable positions. This is also a good test of your attitude towards training and training partners. The process of being patient and letting your ego get a good stomping are real tests at this stage. I have seen many students who were very successful off the mat get into trouble on their first training session and crumble. As time wears on and they realize that they don’t know very much their insecurities of being on the mat subside and they accept that surviving a training session is of the utmost importance.

Learning to survive is probably the most valuable lesson jiu jitsu has to offer.

As time goes on don’t forget that you will be learning more than just survival tactics, you will learn attacks as well as defenses, just remember as a white belt the defense element is more valuable right now. It teaches patience and the ability to leave your ego at the studio door. Very valuable lessons I’m sure you agree.

Learn to tap as mentioned earlier, and learn to tap often. It’s okay to tap, it just means your partner won that point, now we can reset and go again. It is the ultimate learning tool.

Some people think that this concept is ridiculous and that survival cannot be the foundation of jiu jitsu. All you need to

do is analyze the origins of jiu jitsu and it's obvious that survival techniques were the cornerstone of the all the original Gracie wins. As a student ages he no longer has the will to compete at a younger level as time takes a toll. This is when their earlier survival foundation comes into play. The use of space and negative space are even more apparent and the older students can frustrate the younger more athletic fighters using these two principles. Using defense strategies age becomes less of a factor in any match.

Breaking the Guard and Passing

One of the key principles that a lot of white belts misunderstand in the concept of guard breaking and passing is that it isn't a fair fight. It's you and gravity against the guy in the guard. When passing always bear this in mind, and don't bother to use muscle, your old friend gravity will do the work. This is the theory and if I am able to drive my weight forward toward your body then I should be able to pass your guard. That's a fact.

Progression

This again is a progression from the original concepts mentioned earlier: position, transition, submission. You still need all these elements to get gravity on your side and make the maximum impact with the minimum effort. If you set up the pass properly and are in the right position with the right angle (hips and grips in place) then you can start to move into a more dominant position (transition) this is usually where most white belts either get caught out and the opponent escapes or they don't pass, give up and return to the guard - reset.

If you track back I'll bet it was down to the original position (angle, hips, grips) being wrong that prevented you from passing. The first step in the set up for the pass is to stop your opponent being where he wants to be at any time. Make him uncomfortable. If he imposes his guard on you then you need to play his game, you need to measure and anticipate his next moves. You won't need your defense techniques if you don't allow your opponent to get into an attacking position. You won't need to solve that issue if it doesn't even crop up, and that's where your initial position will come in.

If something is happening to you on the mat that you don't like and your opponent is getting his grips and hips in place. Get out of there and reset. There is no rule in jiu jitsu that you have to allow your opponent or training partner to work his game on you. It's the opposite – you should be working your game. If you allow your partner to take his moves too far and

he pushes you into a position that you are swept or you need to tap, then tap or accept the sweep. He deserves the 'W'.

Learn to move into a position of control first. Make it difficult for your opponent to put you into his game – don't forget, it's all grips and hips at this point.

Pace

As with all the other elements mentioned above you need to control the pace and rate at which you pass. A lot of white belts tend to rush the pass at the transition phase and this leads to holes being created (space) and then an escape. You must be the one dictating the pace and then putting on the controls.

Side control isn't called side mount, it's named control for a reason. When you pass, stabilize. If you fail to do this then you fall back into your opponents' game.

Other Guards

As your game develops you will begin to see other guards in play, even if you are a four stripe white belt, your handle on an open guard game will invariably be limited.

It may not, but as we discussed earlier having a killer closed guard game should be your first port of call. Don't run into the dreaded guard-accumulation game, this is a dead-end, I promise you.

At the academy you'll see some guys, I call them 'technique accumulators', they are the guys with all the books, DVD's and enough YouTube subscriptions to give a regular person a migraine. If you have some open-mat time they are usually trying some technique way above their pay-grade. This is not the way to naturally develop into a good BJJ player. Focusing on the fundamentals at white belt is key, though the tractor beam of fancy-shmancy moves is very potent.

And with that in mind, I still want to briefly touch on the other guards. What they are, how they work and how they can improve your game...in the future. For now as you move towards blue belt focus on the closed guard and maybe some basic half guard escapes to full guard. That's a solid plan.

Half Guard (Zee Guard)

This is very much a go to move for most players as it has a lot of possibilities and the opportunity to get into it in a sparring session is good. At the white belt level the most common method of getting into the half guard is when your opponent tries to pass your guard and you use your legs to defend snatching one of his legs into your half. You use your thighs to grab onto one of his legs, so one of your thighs will be in between his legs and one of your thighs will be against his outer thigh or over his hip creating space between you.

Note: It doesn't matter if you cross your ankles, leave them open or figure four your legs, if one of your thighs is in the middle of your opponents thighs: you are in half guard.

I feel this is a good guard to focus on all the way through to brown belt as there are a lot of options for attacks, defenses and counters. Plus it is an easy guard to get into if this is the game you plan to work.

For now, I would like you to focus on two things. If you are in half guard and your opponent flattens you on to your back then you **MUST** have a strategy to recover to full guard and/or back to a spacious half guard (Zee Guard). This depends too on whether they have you flattened with head control or not. But you need to have that recovery mechanism in place before you get to blue belt.

Also, it is important that you have a killer half guard pass. Think about the comments above, you will often find yourself in half guard top or half guard bottom. Half guard bottom you have lots of possibilities (sweeps, back-takes, submissions, etc.) but Half guard top is not in one of the dominant position classifications (although you can submit from here) so you need to improve your position to mount, back, side-control or knee-on-belly, and you can only do this if you release the leg that's trapped. So, you need a good half guard escape in your toolkit.

I like the half guard escapes demonstrated by Caio Terra in the excellent DVD set Modern Jiu Jitsu. It's worth the cost and is available from Amazon.

Open Guard

If you don't have your ankles locked around your opponents waist but are still facing him then you have an open guard. At white belt it's more a case of stopping your opponent passing by moving to half guard or back to full guard. You don't want to start building an open guard game unless it is a transition to a closed guard position.

This may sound like it's holding you back but let's not encourage confusion before you start working on your super-duper tornado guard. I just want to use this section to clarify the open guard as you move to Blue, then you can start working on some open guard strategies.

Let's look at a couple of open guard options merely as an introduction then if a higher ranking student pulls one of these on you at least you will know what it is.

Spider Guard

Probably the most common open guard used in BJJ. This is best described as gripping both sleeves (or a sleeve and collar) while pressing both feet on the hips or the biceps, causing your opponents posture to break and balance to shift into a precarious position. It's a natural position to move into from the closed guard and very popular due to its range of sweeps and attack positions.

When your guard starts to become more open and flexible the spider-guard will more than likely be your first go-to open guard. You can then get more creative from there. Ask your coaches and professors to maybe show you an attack or two from the spider guard as this can sometimes be a position you might fall into if your guard breaks.



Image courtesy of grapplearts.com

DLR (De La Riva)

This is a far more advanced guard system. And it truly is a system. There are a great number of options and derivatives here, from the Reverse De La Riva to the Berimbolo, which have been spawned by this guard. Originally invented by Ricardo De La Riva to help him train against an academy full of much larger training partners it is now a staple in the advanced BJJ curriculum.

The position is to lasso your leg around your opponents' leg so that your foot hooks from the outside into their groin or inner thigh. The opposite foot can rest on their inner thigh, hip or even on the floor, the controlling element is the foot active in the lasso's as this creates many of the attacking options or sweeps. The hands are gripping a sleeve or collar and a hand will be gripping the ankle of the leg inside the lasso. See the image below:



Image courtesy of Wikipedia.com

You will note that this is an incredibly complex guard and an extremely difficult one to pass if the guard player is accomplished in using it. The thing that makes it so difficult are the number of blocking elements: each grip is on a collar, sleeve or ankle, each foot is wrapped tightly around a leg or pressing the balance to move the opponent into danger. To make an effective pass against this guard each one of these roadblocks needs to be disabled or deflected and neutralized in some way and this can be very hard work when your posture is bent so badly.

Let's not get too deep in to the DLR from here, there will be plenty of time to look at that when you are working through to purple belt.

Side Control

This, like the mount, is a difficult position for a white belt to decipher and maintain. The retention of this position becomes more a feat of strength than a feat of technique and this is where most white belts go wrong.

Again, we need to prepare and consider the bio-mechanical action of the side control.

- It is one of the most dominant positions, so you should be able to attack from here.
- Your opponent should not easily be able to replace his guard.
- You should be able to control this position as you transition to something more favorable, e.g. the back or the mount.

So, how do we achieve the items above? Let's look at physiology:

1. You have your weight on top and are pressing into your opponent.
2. The hips of your opponent are controlled. Achieved by 'caging' the hips or using a hand or knee to block. Recovery back to full guard is prevented.
3. In an ideal situation you have head and arm control. This is usually a secondary consideration to controlling the hips.

When moving to side control make sure you are pressing horizontally and get one of your knees beneath their knees, so that their kneecaps face away from you. This puts a lot of pressure on your opponents' hips and spine making it very difficult to recover back to half or full closed guard.

If (once you have the hips isolated) you press on to the head and arm control. This is the makings of good side control. Control is the operative word here. This is not a position that you can afford to have loose in any way as your opponent knows this is a dominant position and nothing good can come

from staying in this position, so they will buck and hip escape until their energy levels become too low.

Most white belts don't take enough time to stabilize this (or any) position. Remember we talked about this in Core Principles (a lot) - Position, Transition, Submission. Well, the position element is important to gain that level of control BEFORE you move to the transition. What happens often with new players is that they are happy with the fact they have passed successfully that they move to the transition too soon and then their opponent escapes easily. Stabilize the position first before moving.

Hip Control on Top

There are two main methods of controlling the hip in side control top, one is using the knee and the other is using the hand as a blocking mechanism.

Using the knee to block the hips is essential as sometimes you will need both hands at head level to attack or provide head control, especially if the opponent is stronger. The hand to block the hip is also a pre-requisite in side control as this prevents guard recovery and also allows you to spin north/south or switch your base with out landing yourself in full or half guard.

Concentrate on keeping your opponent controlled when you pass to side.

As a side note there is another type of hip control that is usually referred to as 'caging the hips'. This is a very effective method of controlling the hips and can be used to stall the action if you feel you are tiring or gassing out. This is a combination of the knee and arm.

This time your knee would slide underneath the back of the knee of your opponent and your upper body would clamp down over his hips with your arm pushing into the opposite side of his hip. This basically causes the hips to be neutralized between your elbow and your knee as you trap his knees between, effectively caging the hips with your mid-section. This can work extremely well and even now as a more experienced fighter I usually cage the hips first before moving to the more attacking form of side control.

Head Control

Head Control. One of the first things I like to see white belts do is get comfortable with head control. This is more a question of making your opponent look away from you using your shoulder. This is not a strength thing. I see it a lot with white belts coming from a wrestling background, they tend to just get a headlock and hang on as if their lives depended on it. This makes it easier to escape believe it or not. Okay, it might put a little more cauliflower on the ear of their training partner but they will more than likely get out.

Now if you use the shoulder to push the jaw away from the person on bottom this causes a spinal twist that transfers down the body and thereby begins the isolation of the hips (there's the hip again, you didn't think I would leave it out?!). This doesn't use as much strength but feels like a ton of pressure if applied correctly.

This makes for effective head control and is an important part of maintaining side control.

Tactical Considerations

“Do not fear the man who has thrown 10,000 kicks. Fear the man who has thrown one kick 10,000 times.”

~ Bruce Lee - Creator of Jeet Kune Do

Promotions

Promotions are merely milestones, don't become too attached to them. Quick anecdote. I was invited to a large promotional ceremony when I was a much junior belt and it was going to be a big event. End of year awards were to be given out, citations and promotions with some senior belts being promoted even higher.

I was long overdue a stripe but was told by one of the coaches that it would be best to delay it for the big event. Sounded pretty cool. The promotion I had been told was late due to the professors at the school being away on business. Again, I was cool with that as it meant by the time the ceremony came around I was due to get two stripes, which would have made it quite an occasion for me.

The day rolled around and the academy was packed. There was a mini-seminar and then some sparring before we broke up and got settled for the promotions.

One of my training buddies had started around the same time as me, but couldn't dedicate as much time so I had surpassed him a little in terms of technique but he was still really good, we were both doing well. The difference was he turned up for class just before the professor left for his business trip so he got the stripe I was missing. He's a super cool guy, good friend and great training partner, we both knew that we were the same rank in theory. And with the ceremony the balance would be put right.

I'm sure you can guess what happened. The event went well but when I stepped up for my promotion, only one stripe managed it's way onto my belt, with my training buddy getting another, so he was now a stripe ahead and I felt left way behind.

To add insult to injury, some of my teammates who had begun training much later than me also got promoted as a surprise. So not only were my peers moving further ahead, the guys I was past in terms of time had almost caught up to me in rank!

I was pissed off.

Why though? Had my game changed? Was I suddenly worse than when I walked on to the mat that day? Had my training partners suddenly become much better than me?

Obviously none of that was true, so why did I feel so hard done by? We, as westerners, become too attached to our status and the perception of belt color is no exception to our ego driven society.

In reality we need to get some perspective and not even look at the color of our belts...or other students.

If you are a white belt, don't feel intimidated when you roll with a blue belt, just imagine he's a white belt like you - he was once.

With my own professor when we roll, sometimes we both try really hard and it's tough (he kills me often and I've never come even close to improving on him) but even when I sweep him or move into a dominant position he smiles and tells me that it's good. He doesn't pull on his game-face and turn it into the world championships, its not about level or colors to him, it's about improvement.

Since my promotional epiphany I don't even think about promotions any more. If they come then I am grateful, if they don't ... I am still grateful for BJJ being in my life. I can't lose.

There is another element to consider about promotions that you won't even think about yet. When you get promoted to a higher rank there is a weird sense of responsibility. When you move up to blue its like you can longer accept being subbed by a white belt, or even having your guard passed. If it does happen then that feels like some kind of personal defeat.

We strut our stuff. And then eventually get promoted to purple and the same happens, those pesky blue belts better not even TRY to pass our guard. It's okay if a brown or black belt passes though. This is complete B.S. and we should stop it.

This ego trip stopped around purple, or it did with me. The responsibility I feel now is only with myself to improve and at the very least try and stop plateaus...though that's almost

impossible. You need to be able to pace your progress and forget the belt rankings.

Honestly, they are not that important.

Injuries

Unfortunately, one of the biggest reasons that students wash out of Brazilian Jiu Jitsu is due to injuries. Injury management will be part of your long-term game plan and needs to be managed.

The most common injuries:

- Shoulders
- Knees
- Ribs
- Fingers

It seems joints get the roughest ride from BJJ, or cartilage related body parts.

In all cases try to keep the ice on them for a period of twenty-four hours after the injury. Don't go for too much heat at this point until the inflammation is under control. This would be in a cycle of ice for five minutes, then remove the ice and allow recovery for fifteen minutes followed by ice for five. Keep this going. Before bed have something to eat and then load up the ibuprofen (do not exceed the prescribed dose on the container - need I add I am not a doctor).

This should reduce inflammation, which is a good and bad thing. You need the inflammation to heal but you need to reduce it to manage the pain.

The odd thing is that the injuries mentioned above are pretty much all self inflicted or not normally damaged by an external force. Most submissions come by neck or arm, so you would expect that neck, bicep and elbow injuries be predominant due to the stress applied, but it doesn't seem to be the case. We push out of mount too hard and a shoulder pops. We try to scissor sweep a guy two hundred pounds heavier than us and a knee pops. My last rib injury happened when I was trying a De La Riva sweep and pushed my body into a weird angle - pop! Super painful.

Of course there are times when opponents (usually accidentally) do cause a little damage. One of the times an ankle popped was due to a footballer tackling me while kneeling, I fell backwards and my feet stayed put. Not cool. But I recovered, and you will too.

All my injuries sustained over the years have recovered to full or better condition than before, and I have never had surgery for any injuries (touch wood). I would encourage you to resist surgery as much as possible, I appreciate that this is sometimes unavoidable, but one thing I have noticed over the years with all the various training partners I have had. Once the surgeries begin they never train the same way again, even after full recovery. It's as if they are always aware that another surgery could happen and they don't press as hard or train as hard as they did.

Rest and Recuperation is always an alternative. I appreciate that this can be difficult, if not excruciating, to see your training partners rolling and having a great time while you feel sidelined and they are improving. But this jiu jitsu thing is a long-term proposition. It's not a shot at the title and then go do something else. This is something that I hope to be doing into my seventies and eighties, and I hope you will too.

Of all the injuries I have sustained my back has been the worst. This was a herniated disc and not actually down to BJJ but down to deadlifting in an attempt to improve my top game. I (mistakenly) thought deadlifting would build my back and make it stronger.

Although this wasn't caused by jiu jitsu, the point I am making is that to this day I have adapted my game to ensure that my back is protected. My double leg looks a little odd and is certainly not text book, but it's effective and I feel no pressure on my lower back. You may need to adapt too if an injury is long term or is painful to complete the technique the traditional way.

If you have an injury that is long term and could knock you out of training if a flare up occurs then you need to adapt the technique. Talk to your coaches and professor about any injuries that you may have and what you can do about it.

When I did my ribs, the best advice I could get was to rub barbecue sauce on them. Apparently its good on ribs - kidding - don't rub barbecue sauce on your body unless you're into that kind of thing. The point being made was, there are some body parts that when injured don't have adaptations. They are an essential part of the BJJ game, unavoidable. You need to rest - no discussion necessary.

And don't forget, you can quickly escape from any technique applied to you...just two small taps and you're out.

Competition

“Those skilled in combat do not become angered, those who are skilled at winning do not become afraid.”

Morihei Ueshiba - Father of Aikido

Remember, you don't have to compete, it's not essential but it can be a good test of many skills not just your jiu jitsu. As I mentioned in Zen Jiu Jitsu Volume One, I'm not a 'feelin' it' kind of competitor.

In fact nerves really take a toll on me and I feel pretty awful from the minute I sign up until the final match is over. I've taken steps to quell this as best I can, and even though I am prepared much better these days I still feel nerves until I engage with my opponent.

When I was younger I boxed quite a bit and was also very active in the Karate scene with competitions. It was the same then, nerves overtook. Then one year I decided to really pick one tournament and train hard for it, really focus on this one tournament. It was a national junior championship, so I dedicated myself to technique and fitness. Over the next three months my game and confidence grew, I felt amazing, then the day of the competition came.

We drove the one hundred and fifty miles to the venue and set up camp, several members of my team were also competing, which is great to work in a team atmosphere but, to me at least, increases the pressure. When my time finally came to step on the mat, my opponent looked ready and although I felt the nerves there was a strange side effect from all the hard work. I was also equally confident. This seemed to be the realization that I could not have prepared or trained any harder, everything led to this moment.

Did I win? No. I was disqualified in the quarterfinals for excessive contact. This was tournament Karate and not boxing, but when I got back my team were really impressed with my event performance. Everyone clapped and cheered as I reached the stand, even some of our competitive teams came

over and shook my hand. I felt vindicated for my previous nervous endeavors.

The moral of the story is this, if you are fully prepared and you have practiced, and drilled technique to the best of your ability then it doesn't matter whether you win or lose. You have already won. It is impossible not to be a better BJJ practitioner after the match...win or lose.

One year I snagged a really odd injury to my groin about a week before the Pan Ams. It wasn't serious but the pain was one of the worst I had felt when my leg rotated in the socket so any kind of guard game - even closed guard - was out. I had to concede that this was not going to be my year, and dropped out forgoing my entry fee.

When my groin healed (it takes several months to even walk normally) I was in much better condition technique-wise. All the training leading up to the Pans was not forgotten, it was all still in my brain. My timing was a little rusty but within two or three weeks I was pretty much back and giving everyone a run for their money again.

Your First Tournament

“In fighting and in everyday life you should be determined though calm.”

Miyamoto Musashi - Swordsman and Samurai Master

Be wise. Don't rush in.

Are you ready for another short story of woe? Here is a rundown of my first tournament experience.

I was a white belt (like you are) and was training fairly steadily. Still new to the school but really enjoying it, full of positive energy and keen to learn. Over a period of weeks I met another guy who grew up not far from my hometown, so we trained a little together and then decided to take some privates and split the bill. The privates were pretty pricey back then, I was on a budget, so this partnership worked for me.

The private classes went really well and my game was clicking into place for my level. We sparred at the end of every private and much to the professors and coaches amusement we always started sparring standing up. Being about the same weight helped, and we both grew up in tough part of town so it was no problem.

My training partner was real aggressive (still is) but my technique was getting better and I kept coming out on top with a sub or a points win. Either way I got the 'W' and he got a good workout.

On the school notice board a sign went up declaring that there would be a BJJ tournament at a college close by. It was a short drive to a small college so I thought maybe this would be a good testing ground for my new techniques. Get my feet wet, so to speak.

My training partner told me he fancied this tournament, I told him the same that I was 'up for it.' So we both registered and paid our entry fees. We carried on training and were excited about the upcoming tournament that was about six weeks

away. I had been training about two months at this point in time, and was pretty impressed with my progress. Hubris!

We also kept the privates and sparring sessions going, which was great training for the tournament. Then tournament day swung around.

Let me qualify this. About two days before the tournament I decided to cut some weight, it wasn't too successful either. I don't have any wrestling background or experience of weight cutting, so the day before the tournament I felt a little weak and sick. But I was good to go, no way I was backing out. My training partner called and told me he was ready to rock, I agreed (though a little queasy) that I felt the same.

Nerves started kicking in the night before the big day causing me to sleep poorly. The next morning was worse. My bracket was scheduled for three in the afternoon, so I had all the morning and lunchtime to brood over the impending battle and my confidence began to slide.

I drove to the college where the competition was being held, a banner emblazoned above the doorway read 'Grapplers Quest' that should have been some kind of omen. Regardless I checked in and grabbed my free Competitor tee-shirt. Inside I tried to find my training buddy but there was no sign of him, not only that, there was no sign of anyone else from my academy. I wasn't sure why, but it seemed unpopular with the more experienced students. I found out why a little later.

Then the really bad news came in, I got a text from my training partner that he wouldn't be able to make it, something had cropped up. Totally on my own at this point, unsure on how a BJJ competition worked, I got changed and started warming up.

I was called to the administration table and told that my bracket was empty, there was no one in my age range available to compete. In fact, there was no one in the bracket below that one either so I dropped down two age groups to get a match or else it was a waste of time. I told them I was a Go. They dropped me the two brackets and I was the oldest man in my bracket now by around twenty years.

We were pulled into the corral, our names called so we had to step onto the scales. I was just under the mark. Then led like men to the gallows to mat number five. I was making a little conversation with the kid beside me who just kept scowling and grunting. Totally unaware that we would be fighting in three minutes time.

We both had our names called, I shook hands, he pretty much pulled away and took his grappler stance (at this point in time I didn't even know what a grappler stance was). Referee called for us to fight and this guy rushed me, I danced back and he pulled guard.

Locked in his closed guard, I was confident I could pass. Broke his guard, he flipped into a triangle I escaped, he pursued it and swept me then mounted me. He eventually got the tap with a triangle from mount.

Walking off the mat I felt like I had been fucked by a hurricane. Bewildered and shocked by the whole ordeal I just wanted to go home and lick my wounds. Not so fast. This was a double elimination gig, I had to fight one more time.

I kept massaging my forearms, which now felt like they should belong to Popeye then sat at the side of the mat waiting for the next executioners call, I tried (quite desperately) to pull my shit together. Watching the other matches intently I attempted to compose myself. A game plan formed in my mind, I would jump guard this time. That was it. Nothing else came. But I knew in my next match I would jump guard.

Sure enough, my name was called, and then my opponent stepped out. Young Japanese guy, very respectful, we shook and the ref called 'fight'. We circled for a second, then I jumped guard. I really looked like I knew what I was doing at this point, my legs clamped tight, I fell in for a sweep but he dropped to his knees. Slipping my right hand in deep I tried the cross-collar choke, and although I thought I had him, it was too loose. He broke my guard and started to pass (my bottom game was really crap), he made it to half guard my grips broke and he attacked. I sort of escaped then he took my back submitting me with a bow and arrow choke.

I didn't mind tapping.

Glad it was over, the sensation of relief was amazing, truly amazing. The sense of comradeship when the tournament was over was also an enlightening experience. I had been summarily beaten - twice, and yet walked out of the hall feeling like a superstar. It was tough, it was rough, but it was fantastic.

On speaking to other competitors over the years I have asked about nerves and controlling the body. Even in an interview Caio Terra he told me that the nerves never go away, they are better on some days than others but they never evaporate completely. I find this very interesting.

What other elements did I glean from this experience:

1. Not all ranks are the same. On talking to the other competitors who by now, mainly due to my age and lack of experience, felt sorry for me and chatted quite openly. Every white belt I spoke to had been training at least a year and one had been training almost two years. Just because they wear a white belt doesn't mean that their professor uses the same promotional system as your own school.

Personally, I feel this is a little like sandbagging, but it's not regulated so be on the lookout for people who look a little too good. When I was a purple belt I fought a guy who had been purple for ten years. I got the upper hand in that battle but still, it was an interesting few minutes of combat. The guy was just too good, he made a simple error due to over-confidence maybe, and that cost him. That was all I needed. I was terrified, the guys stand up game was judo black belt level.

2. All tournaments are not created equal. The reason that the more advanced guys at the gym avoided this competition was that the Grapplers Quest circuit is pretty high level. It's more advanced and runs a bunch of excellent Gi and No-Gi tournaments. They are always well turned out with real competitors, who are looking to test their skills, even at white belt. This is the kind of competition that is not for the faint hearted.

The biggest problem with any tournament outside of the IBJJF is that the rankings are not in anyway standardized. You are thinking that you are going to compete against someone of a similar age, rank and weight. The age and weight are fairly binary considerations. But rank, that becomes a little more subjective. Some academies have seven year blue belts, some academies have five year black belts. I'm not sure what the actual process is supposed to be or if the Gracie family wanted to use a standard. As far as I am aware the only federation putting any kind of information on belt promotions out there is the IBJJF. My academy uses these guidelines, so technically if they are followed to the letter and based on time and attendance you could achieve a black belt in eight years. This seems appropriate to me. It could take some students longer but the time period could be no shorter.

The fact remains that you should have the basics mastered by continual attendance and improvement on the mat for a minimum of eight years. In effect you should be at a black belt level in BJJ. Okay, not world champ level but black belt, yes, the math works.

So if someone has been a blue belt for say five years and a purple for two then (according to the IBJJF promotion regulation) you have a black belt competitor fighting in a purple belt division. Just my take on the current competition situation. Food for thought.

Failure is an Option

I know this is counter to confidence building but I heard Chael Sonnen say this on a recent Ultimate Fighter show. He was making the statement that the term 'Failure is not an option' was plenty gung-ho but not realistic. You need to be aware that you are entering into a fight, you need to be prepared that the guy (or girl) you are up against is also trying to win equally, with the same amount of intensity and fury that you are bringing to the table. This is not table tennis!

This is **REAL**.

You don't need the platitudes of self-talk because when you are in the fray they will not and cannot come to your aid. This is what you need to concentrate on as you fill in the registration form for your tournament: Have I prepared for this as well as I could have done?

If the answer to that question is Yes, then go ahead and sign up. If there is a nagging voice at the back of your mind telling you that you had flu for two weeks, then that ankle injury kept you off the mat plus that heavy duty project at work was a real slog so no wonder you missed a few competition classes. Then pass. No shame in that. There will be another tournament, next week, next month, even next year.

Visualizing yourself on the podium will not take you past the lack of training no matter how many times you play that winning show reel. If you have the time on the mat, and you have been training consistently, feel good, feel confident then go for it. It's scary when you feel prepared and that fear never really falls away (I discuss this more in Zen Jiu Jitsu) but it can be a whole lot worse when you don't feel the fear and have some confidence that you can win but haven't put the time in on the mat. This can get real scary, real quick as the realization of your lack of preparation sets in.

There is no rush, take your time. You can do this and do it well.

Training Aids

Unlike a lot of other manuals on jiu jitsu I do think that training aids can really help. There are only a couple that work really well in my opinion and they don't need to be purchased at the white belt level with the exception of the training journal. Whether you use a fully fledged training system journal or just a regular notebook from the supermarket, this is an essential part of your development as a fighter.

The three items that I know have worked well for me over the years are:

- Calendar
- Training Journal (Notebook)
- Training Dummy

With these three you can do really well, and really boost how you perform at the academy as well as speed the growth process. Let's look at the value of each individually.

Calendar

Using a simple desktop calendar to track progress is a very simple and effective visual motivator. I use a blotter style calendar on my desk, it's right beside me as I'm writing this. If you use one of the calendars that you can hang in the kitchen or bathroom then check off the dates as you train so it shows you at a glance how much time you are putting into your jiu jitsu.

As I've mentioned earlier, the aptitude to add time on the mat is the biggest factor in improving your jiu jitsu, but make sure that you are periodizing your training. If you train too hard for 30 days then it's only a matter of time before the injury management section of this manual will come in real handy.

Listen to your body. Even if you feel fit and strong and ready to go, then still mix light workouts, rest days along with hard workouts.

At the white belt level it should be more about learning the techniques and allowing your body to adapt to the style of training that BJJ imposes. There is nothing like specific training or live sparring when it comes to a cardio workout or physical challenge. Many of my training partners and myself have sampled different types of training in an attempt to bolster our training on the mat: CrossFit, Weight Training, Hill Sprints, Fartlek training and much more...but nothing beats live training with a partner who is resisting 50-100%.

Be smart. Log your training days in a visual way and make sure there are some blank spaces in there.

Another method of monitoring your progress is an idea I have stolen from Jerry Seinfeld - 'Don't Break the Chain'. He came up with a system of tracking his progress for writing comedy much like what we discussed above. He used a calendar with no dates just numbered boxes from 1 to 365. As he wrote new sketches each day he would put an X in the box, then the next day he would do the same. This continued until a commitment

or some other problem broke the chain of X's. He tried to not break the chain of X's.

He discussed this method with a writing school and told them that his creative output and quality improved so long as he didn't break the chain - a habit formed. Once the chain breaks, you need to get another X back in the box as soon as possible. It's an interesting concept and one I support. For more information on Don't Break the Chain, check this link out: <http://lifehacker.com/281626/jerry-seinfelds-productivity-secret>

Notebook Notes

Keeping a track of your progress is paramount if you are to improve in your jiu jitsu training. My professor recommends that if you improve by only 1% each day then the compounding effect will make you highly proficient in no time.

I have been keeping a training log for many years now and write down my efforts in the class just before I get into bed, this a little routine that now makes for interesting reading years later. I laugh at some of my goals and ambitions as a white and blue belt and laugh even more at some of the complex techniques I thought I might be able to manage - no kidding, there's a flying triangle in there.

Keeping a series of techniques in your head is a complex matter. This is human chess, for every attack there is a defense, for every sweep, takedown, pass, submission there is a counter and counter to that counter. It makes much more sense to keep taking notes than trying to remember what you did. Also, when you review (as you should periodically), some techniques you will identify as being easy to perform and fit your body-type. These techniques I put a star in the corner of the page and come back to drill some more. Then the techniques that present a challenge I put an X in the corner of the page, meaning I need to revisit the move and try and work out what detail I am missing that is making it so hard. The neutral techniques that I don't have a feeling of either way then I let them slide until I come back to them. These are my so-so techniques, I can do them but they don't fill me with joy.

This art form is a process and systems driven. One thing leads logically to another. It's the same position-transition-submission. Simple, right?

The logic though is lightning in a bottle. It needs to be grasped and placed into the correct place in the puzzle or the puzzle cannot be unlocked. Remember how a move was working really well and you were catching everyone or passing everyone, then a couple of weeks later it stopped working?

What happened?? Probably, a detail you were applying has now been forgotten, wouldn't it be great if you could go back and retrieve the detail. You can. It's in your training log.

Here's the cycle I discipline myself to implement:

Visualize - This is usually a demo from the coach or professor, or DVD or whatever. Then I see myself doing it, from my own perspective.

Practice - Try the technique out with a partner or grappling dummy. Go through the steps in meticulous detail.

Drill - If it works and 'no parts are missing' then I drill it up to 50-60 times.

Live Training / Test - Once it's working I push myself into a sparring or specific training situation where I can test it. Usually the first couple of times out the gate it fails. Then it clicks and I test it as much as I can.

At the practice stage it enters the training log including the details that made it work so I can move to the drilling stage. If it doesn't work at the drilling stage, go back to Practice and get the training journal out.

Sparring goes in the journal too. I don't spar without a goal in mind, so it's like a convoluted specific training. Convoluted in that, say my goal is back attacks, then I have to go through the process of getting to the back before I can even begin to work my game.

Each element is important and should not be excluded. Once something works well in my game, I go back to cycle one - Visualize.

Here are some of the benefits of using a training journal:

Memory - It's hard to remember all the techniques that you will be picking up in BJJ. This is a sport that is almost completely technique driven, yes, athleticism is a factor but you need the techniques regardless of your athletic prowess. At first the techniques can be a little overwhelming, but then you get the hang of it. As you move to more advanced techniques, again, it becomes a real battle of wits. Your journal is your memory backup. You drop your computer or spill

coffee on it and the long-term data is a problem. With your journal or training log, you can drop it and then drop coffee all over and your jiu jitsu brain is safe.

Review - Goal setting is not one of my favorite things, I'm not a big goal guy. I think this may be my aversion to the word and not necessarily what it means. You see, I feel it is imperative to have a point of focus for each session. In the early stages your professor and coach will provide this but as time wears on you'll need to motivate yourself to select techniques that fit your age, physical condition, body shape, weight, and many other factors. This is where you need to start getting creative.

Now if you set the focus of your training you need to check in and see how far along you've come. You can't just reminisce; it's got to be more solid than that. You need review sections in your training log that checks-in and keeps score. How's that half guard sweep coming along? You said you would have it mastered a month ago? Things like this accelerate your progress.

Trackback - Tracing your steps can be an important part of moving forward, especially if you are hitting a plateau. This re-visiting of your previous techniques and the times when your game felt really good can be a reminder that this could happen again in the future. Hitting a plateau can be very disheartening, a real slump pushed me to question whether to continue or not. Using my journal I decided to go back to basics and forget all the fancy techniques that were confusing me. This saved my BJJ career.

Here are some guidelines to keeping a good journal:

- Use symbols and marks that mean something to you. In the [Zen Jiu Jitsu Training Log](#) there is a box at the head of the page. This is for you to add a star or check mark or cross to indicate this page is important in some way. That's the way I use the box, you might do something different. You might be creative enough to color the box a shade that reminds you how that training session went.

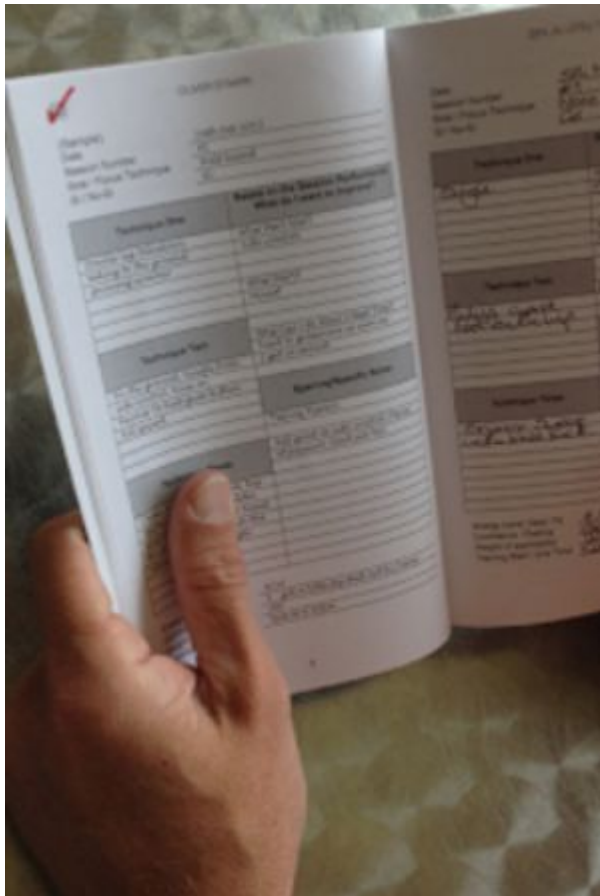
□ Use shorthand when recording your session. For example if you are working a submission from the closed guard, just write 'CG sub'. It makes the whole system easier to manage. No one wants to write an essay after a tough workout.

□ Make sure you get into a routine of adding the entries. Like I mentioned earlier I make sure I update the Training Log before I get into bed - on the night I trained. I don't try and remember the next day what I got up to. I try and write it down while it's fresh in my mind. You need to find a routine that works. One of the guys at my school gets his notebook out before he leaves the academy. It's covered in sweat that makes the ink blotchy. That's another tip: Use a pencil, I use a mechanical pencil and it works great, I do use the erasing department too.

□ Keep a track on time. In the Zen Training Log we added a start and finish time. This records the overall time you committed to the class. But it also records when you had that class too, Wednesday evening from seven until nine. Great. And if you notice a pattern of stars in the box at the head of the page, then you might find that this is an optimal training time for you.

□ Date the entries.

□ I know this is repeating myself but it's important. Make sure each class has a goal or focus. Doesn't matter if it was set by the coach or professor or by you. Just make sure there is a focus and you're not just rolling around for the sake of it.



Training Dummy

The Training Dummy - An Excerpt from the Zen Jiu Jitsu Program

Please Note: This is not a plug for this or any other dummy. I have no links to this product nor do I receive any compensation for discussing this product here. In fact I don't get any form of sponsorship from any products discussed within this manual. Want to make that clear as it has been mentioned in the past that I'm on the payroll somewhere!?

What if you don't have an academy to train at? Also, what if you train at a school but it's hard to make it every night of the week without divorce papers being filed. The easiest and in my opinion one of the most effective ways to drill is with a training dummy.

Training without a partner is still an excellent way to train. It's virtually impossible to train and have your partner available at all times, plus with a dummy your injury rate reduces dramatically. You can rep techniques and drill your A-moves concentrating on all the small details that make a difference. Even if you only have five or ten minutes spare, with a dummy you can drill for a short time and still feel an improvement.

There are many training dummies out there and I am not going to favor one over the other as I have not trained with them all. It's important that you can train effectively with a dummy and you can afford it. This is the criterion I used when selecting my own:

- Needs to be able to sit up so that closed guard drills work: armbars, omoplatas, triangles, etc.
- Keeps its legs up as a guard defense to practice guard passes.
- Returns its arms back to position so that you don't have to reset it after every rep.

- Keeps its posture in turtle position to practice back techniques, north/south and spinning to back.
- Has a reasonable weight-ratio to simulate a real opponent.
- Knees are positioned up so that stacking drills still work.

My dummy is so important to me that if I moved from one country to another I would make sure that I imported 'Burt' (that's what I call my dummy) with me. My personal choice was the Submission Master. This is not an inexpensive purchase but I believe it is the Rolls Royce of submission dummies.

You may think that a submission dummy is a huge investment and it's true that most dummies are not cheap, but when I compare Jiu Jitsu to most sports it's a pretty reasonable expense. Think about if you wanted to be a really good cyclist - the cost of a good bike? Say you wanted to be good at tennis or golf. Even if we take equipment off the table (which in golf terms is substantial) then the dues at the local tennis or golf clubs would make most BJJ players burst into tears. We get a great service from our academies for a pretty reasonable cost, adding to your tool kit is just a wise choice. I guarantee it.

The only time I see buying a dummy to be a waste is if it never gets used. Make sure when you decide to get a serious drilling aid like this that you build into your program time to drill with the dummy. What you should do is aim for one night per week (at least) maybe when going to the academy doesn't suit your schedule and add that night in for 'Burt' night. Take your laptop or iPad into the garage, spare room or wherever you store him and drill those techniques you've been struggling with. Keep the drilling format the same - the first five minutes should be your A-game submission or sweep and then when you're warm start using the visuals on YouTube, iPad or DVD's to practice. Not many real training partners will be this accommodating? Burt will.

When I first started using a dummy and drilling as I've described above I was accused of all kinds of nefarious

activities. I kept Burt under wraps mainly due to embarrassment than anything else, I didn't want the guys to know I had a dummy. I'm pretty sure it would have been easier to admit taking steroids - which was one of the many accusations for the rapid improvement in my technique. My game went from zero to hero using the dummy and staying with the thirty-day Zen program. At this time the thirty day program was just an idea and I had not formulated it as a system or measured its effectiveness. The dummy still paid off though as I started to make ground on guys who I was always level with or slightly worse than. Those guys I can make real progress on now and not worry about getting smashed. It's just 'Jiu Jitsu with Dummies'.

Can you imagine a boxer training without a heavy bag? What if a boxer turned to his coach and said, 'Sorry boss, not hitting the heavy bag tonight, seems like it might give me an advantage over my opponent.' Sure you'll agree this boxer would sound a bit punch drunk? So why do we look down on grappling dummies so much. I think this ties back to drilling. We never drill enough even though all the evidence points to the fact that drilling creates champions. The problem is that rolling is just a ton of fun. There is no getting away from the fact that Jiu Jitsu provides such a fun process of improvement due to the sparring aspect of the overall sport.

Still, boxers spar, boxers hit the bag and speedball because if they spent all their time sparring then they would be wondering where they were and what day it was by the time they hit their forties. Jiu Jitsu is much more forgiving in this aspect so we roll, but that's not where the gold is. We need to drill effectively with or without a partner.

No one bats an eyelid that we use training aids in the strength and conditioning portion of our training to keep your game sharp. Let the gym membership go for a couple of months and grab a more productive tool.

As a warning make sure you don't purchase a throwing dummy thinking it will do and it's cheap. Chances are it won't do the job at all (don't try to knock nails in wood with a pair of pliers, that's the wrong tool for the job) and you will have

thrown your money down the drain. Your dummy needs to be Gi friendly and fit the bill outlined at the beginning of this section. When I say Gi friendly I mean a Gi needs to fit onto it so that you can still practice your grips. If you are more Tenth Planet than Nova Uniao then don't worry about the Gi so much but still make sure a rash-guard will fit your dummy. Nothing worse than sweating all over a four hundred dollar investment and finding out there's no way to clean it! They tend not to fit in washing machines.

A grappling dummy is an excellent aid in your development. There is no other method of training - human or otherwise that can let you hit one hundred techniques in fifteen minutes. And you can include that as a cardio workout!

FAQ's from the Submission Master Website on a Grappling Dummy by Bob Dorris

As you may know, Bob sells the Submission Master grappling dummy. This is the dummy that I have but I have no affiliation with Bob and receive no commissions or remuneration in any way for suggesting his products. Please check different dummies out for yourself something new might be on the market that is just as effective. Read what Bob has to say though as the logic is good and applies to any dummy purchase, over to you Bob:

I'm always getting questions from readers about grappling dummy training, so I thought I'd share the Top 3 most frequently asked questions and my responses here with you.

FAQ #1 What is the main purpose of a grappling dummy?

For getting HIGH REPETITIONS WITHOUT A PARTNER. That's it. End of story. Repetitions create muscle memory. Muscle memory allows you to do movements (techniques) quickly and in a coordinated way without having to consciously think about the action. Of all the things you can do to improve your skill, creating muscle memory is undoubtedly the #1 thing you should focus on.

I like to say repetitions are like "rolling a marble through the dirt..." The more times you roll the marble the same way, the deeper the groove in the dirt becomes and the EASIER,

FASTER and more EXACT the marble rolls down that path. Reps create a “groove” in your nervous system, causing your techniques to come out “easier, faster and more exact” each time. And, just like riding a bike, you learn them so well it’s hard to forget them.

FAQ #2 Why train with a grappling dummy at all? Why not just a live partner?

Although training partners are important for specific techniques and for “rolling”, they aren’t the most effective way to get high reps of many techniques. Here are 5 good reasons why...

1. You can only train when your partners are available. Grappling dummies are available 24/7. You can even get some decent reps when you have just 5 minutes spare time.
2. Partners can bring your training down to “slow motion”. Partners want to talk about the techniques, “the fights on TV”, etc. that’s not the most effective use of your time and decreases the number of reps you get during your training session.
3. Partners have to do their reps. Right off the bat, this means you get only half the number of reps that you would if you were training on the grappling dummy.
4. The more reps your partner does on you, the more abuse to your joints. What do you think is the main reason people stop training? Injuries. It’s a no brainer.
5. When was the last time your training partner let you do 50 triangle chokes on him, followed by 50 heel hooks, then 50 arm bars? Nuff said!

FAQ #3 Is training “in class” enough?

Have you ever taken music lessons? You had to have an instrument at home and practice between lessons, didn’t you? And you couldn’t practice just when you had someone over to practice with... otherwise it would have taken forever to get good. When you think of it like that, you really can’t expect to become very good if you only practice in class, can you? It’s only common sense. And a grappling dummy is your

“instrument” that allows you to practice between lessons. It’s like a boxer having a punching bag to train on in between sparring sessions.



© image courtesy of www.grapplingdummy.net

Sparring

Here are some tips on Sparring that I think you will find useful:

- Use Observation and monitoring. Size up your opponent before you engage - Use the Observation Strategies outlined earlier. If he makes grips first then you know he is an Attacking player. If he waits for you to get your grips in place then you know he is a Defensive or Counter-Attacking player and will more than likely pull you into his guard.
- Find out what technique your opponent is good at by offering a fake. If your opponent pulls half guard or some other defensive play for a sweep then you know he will want to stay on bottom, he is a guard player. If you fall into a guard position with a view to coming up but your opponent comes on top, then he probably has a top passing game and will look to make side control as soon as he can.
- Try to get your opponent to attack first, either by a fake or just waiting, which frustrates most players. You will quickly learn what technique your opponent relies on, (every player has a favorite technique) then plan a counter for that attack.
- Do not telegraph your attack. Keep it hidden until the last minute.
- Never show wariness when sparring. Play with your game, feel confident. Your opponent will sense if you are wary and go on the attack, however, the image of a low gas tank and uncertainty in attacks can be used as a fake.
- When you and your opponent are close make sure your base is solid. Never be flat on your back always look for angles.
- Always set up your opponent before you sweep. Set up your grips and base then sweep. Don't go early and try

to use muscle. Most experienced fighters will never let you sweep them unless you set them up.

□ Always relax your body before you sweep. Tension slows down the movement of the hip. Visualize a snake attacking its prey. Uses its hips to move. Calm, relaxed, then BAM, lightening speed.

□ Close the gap between your thought and action. Don't think too long or the opportunity will fade. Go for it when the timing feels right. This is sparring, not the World Champs, now is the time to take risks.

□ The moment to set up an attack is when he is about to launch an attack or as he is settling into his base after an attack.

□ Always remember when your opponent attacks part of their balance will usually be exposed for a counter attack or sweep. This applies to your counter as well, keep that mind.

□ If you are constantly clashing with your opponent then you must work on timing.

□ Focus on the technique in your mind without looking at your opponent as a person. Just play the technique out. Your opponent is actually you.

□ Don't try a sweep to be just sweeping. Don't try an arm bar just for the sake of trying it. Make each technique have a purpose in the context of the roll.

□ Don't feel the need to spend time on escapes when there is no danger. If it doesn't feel like you are threatened maintain an attacking position.

□ Pace your energy. No one has an infinite gas tank and muscle sweeps burn up energy like nothing else. Burst. Rest. Burst. Rest.

□ If your opponent has a great bottom game, pull guard first. If he has a great top game try and pass.

□ If your game is not working disengage. Take the time to go back to Step 1: Observe, what are you missing?

- Watch your opponents balance and base. Is he solid or does he look off balance, if so isolate his posting arm and sweep to that side. Sometimes it's as easy as a simple pushing action.
- Use lapels to wrap arms. If he only has three limbs at his disposal you are in a greater advantageous position.
- Never offer your back unless you have a killer turtle escape.
- Don't try to score with the first sweep. Statistically you need to score first to win, but the first attack doesn't have to be the scoring move. Have your mind in position to attack number two and number three.
- The most common position used in BJJ is the half guard. Learn various escapes and counters, including if your head is controlled or if you have the top position and need to get out of it.
- When all else fails have a guard position that you can rely on. Default back to that guard regardless of what happens - this is your reset.
- Every attack has a counter, don't forget this is human chess. Learn the counters.
- If you get swept or submitted never lose your cool and go after your opponent. This just creates more openings for counters and you will probably get subbed.
- When up against a counter attacker, offer plenty of fake attacking opportunities. This will expose his game, allowing you to attack.
- Control the space. Always.
- Don't try that flying arm bar triangle combo when sparring unless you are really high level, then it's okay.
- If you get caught with a counter disengage and re-group right away. Don't wait for the sub before you come back to the game.

- When you decide to attack for the submission there should be no doubt or hesitation. You need to commit, or the counter is wide open.
- Sometimes it's wise to just defend early in the game, especially if your opponent is much bigger. Keep a good guard, roll to turtle if you can, escape and make them move. Once they begin to tire start to work your game.
- Attacking is as exhausting as defending.
- Never underestimate any of your opponents, and never underestimate your own abilities.
- No two opponents are the same. Nullify his defense and exploit his weakness.
- Sparring has three phases of energy: Release Energy, Reserve Energy and Regeneration Energy.

Maps and Systems

Pulling it all together

At a recent seminar with Caio Terra a question was asked in the Q&A section, which was enlightening. “Do you have a game plan as soon as you step onto the mat in a competition?”

Caio smiled, laughed a little, “No. That wouldn’t make sense. If I had a pre-defined game plan and my opponent moved away from that game plan then I would be screwed. The techniques have to be responsive due to the amount of time I spent preparing and training, I then react to whatever my opponent does. This strategy works best.”

This is a very interesting idea and also tells us that Caio is a counter-attacking fighter. Every fighter needs to counter attack at some point so having counters is a very high level concept. While in the white belt phase this is a good habit to attain but can also lead to frustration if neither training partner is willing to commit to anything.

Following are a series of chain-link systems that can help a white belt get into better positions. I’ve structured the “Maps” from the perspective of a position. This will give you a decent starting point with regard to what you should do next should you arrive in this position. Don’t forget, this manual is not expansive enough to cover every eventuality and will not cover the transition to a dominant position; this can only develop as your game develops. Once you can survive for a period of time without getting submitted by a higher-ranking belt then you will need to start to move into better positions and this map system will help.

You may not be totally familiar with all the techniques outlined. Use the Internet, YouTube or the Resources section at the back of this manual to help with clarity. Don’t forget to seek advice from your professor and coaches.

I use the expression chain-link because one thing links to the next as you will see in the tables below:

Closed Guard Bottom (Attacking)

Series One

Cross Grips (your right hand in your opponents right collar across)

Armbar attack

Armbar defended

Armbar to Triangle

Triangle Defended

Flower Sweep to Mount

Series Two

Cross Grips

X Choke (Palms up/down)

Choke defended

Hip Bump (Sit Up) Sweep to Mount

Hip Bump Blocked with Base

Kimura

Kimura Defended

Reverse Armbar

Series Three

Cross Grips

Opponent Stands to Break Guard

Ankle Sweep to Mount

Side Control Top (Attacking)

Series One

Control Hips Blocked

Keylock

Keylock defended

Spinning Armbar

Armbar defended

Move back to North South Choke

Series Two

Control Hips Blocked

Move up to Knee on Belly

Knee on Belly defended

Spinning Armbar

Series Three

Control Hips Blocked

Knee on Belly

Knee on Belly defended

Remove defense move to Mount

Mount Top (Attacking)

Series One

Low mount, position stabilized

X-Choke

Defended by Upa

Trap Arm to S-Mount Armbar

Series Two

High Mount, position stabilized

Keylock

Keylock defended

Trap Arm to S-Mount Armbar

Armbar defended

Armbar Switch

Back Mount Attacking

Series One

Back Control, position stabilized, shoulders level

Rear Naked Choke

RNC Defended

Bow and Arrow Choke

Series Two

Back Control, position stabilized, shoulders not-level,
opponent scooted down

Basic lapel choke (get reaction)

Lapel defended

Armbar from Back

Series Three

Turtle Control

Escape Attempt

Clock choke

Combination Drills

Armbar - Triangle - Omoplata from Closed Guard

Armbar - Triangle - Armbar from Closed Guard

Cross Knee Pass to Cross Collar Choke

Sit Up Sweep - Triangle - Omoplata

X-Choke - Armbar - Switch Armbar from Closed Guard

Flower Sweep - Triangle - Omoplata

From Back Mount - Lapel Choke - Bow and Arrow - Armbar

Zen Jiu Jitsu - Over 40

Foreword

Starting Brazilian Jiu Jitsu after the age of forty is never an easy decision. It looks pretty tough, it's a hard workout, we have responsibilities, family, a mortgage, a job!

That said, I saw a poster at an academy the other day, it went something like this: "There are two times in your life that are best to start BJJ, ten years old and now." It had a photo of a guy walking on to the mat at a tournament with white hair and a white belt. Amazing.

Rather than take the attitude that this is a young mans game I'm inspired on a regular basis by the number of training partners I play with who are over forty. They are engaged, motivated and energetic. There's no fear of a crappy attitude or bad behavior, this is more like a fishing trip than a martial arts training session.

There are limitations though. It's not all plane sailing once we hit that forty marker. This is due to many years of alternative sports, injuries from those sports, surgeries, arthritic conditions, wear and tear...plain old age. Things that life brings, things that cannot be avoided then a chance to do this jiu jitsu thing crops up and boom, a new passion begins.

Some people will look at us older guys, especially the ones more grizzled, cauliflower ears, bulbous joints and wonder what we're playing at. And that's the point they are missing. When I train, I feel alive. I have no hankering to be back in the office, I don't feel the need to watch mindless garbage on the TV or to spend hours on a treadmill just so I can enjoy an ice cream cone at the weekend. Hell, I don't even feel like the ice cream cone anymore, it might interfere with my training.

Chapter 1 - Training Life

One of the hardest parts of BJJ and just about any sport as your life progresses is keeping going. Making a start for a mature student is no longer an issue, we know who we are, we're secure in our life and new things cross our paths daily. No, that's not the issue, it's the keeping on keeping on that's the killer.

As a writer this is nice segue into the problems of the artist. It's easy to begin a novel, it's grinding out the 80,000 words to finish and finish strong that presents problems. The same is true of martial arts. The black belt is the coveted final position, though when speaking to a lot of BJJ black belts they claim that this is when the real learning begins!

When the white belt lines up for the first time and looks across the mat to the professor there is a voice inside telling him that the black belt is the goal: get to where that guy is standing and it's 'mission accomplished'.

If we imagined for a second what we would have to do and the 10,000+ hours of training time it would take not to mention the toll on family, friends and joints then most over forties would walk out never to return. They would possibly be found giving the new Margarita bar a try out.

It's easy to walk away and keep on walking when we begin. Let's face it, we don't need BJJ in reality. What are the chances of a forty two year old real estate executive getting into a fistfight on the street? Or a fifty year old car mechanic wanting to win the Worlds Absolute in a few years? Slim... very slim.

So why bother?

This is a good question. And not an easy one to answer as the answer is different for all of us O.G.'s (Old Guys and Gals).

My story is typical so I'll start with that. I had seen a few UFC bouts and thought the whole deal to be pretty barbaric, it was a

new sport and at a glance not my thing. Still, the attraction to watching a bout continued and as I watched I listened to Joe Rogan discuss various aspects of the fights. He mentioned positions and techniques and they all seemed to center around this thing called jiu jitsu. Now as a newbie I didn't even know there was such a thing as 'Brazilian' Jiu Jitsu as I was only familiar with the Japanese version and that was pretty limited to what I learned as a kid.

To put the record straight I did have some experience of Boxing and Muay Thai when I was younger so the martial way was nothing new to me. It was people smashing each other and then slapping on an armbar that was new. I kept picking up on the Brazilian mentions though and another watchword sounded: 'Gracie' Jiu Jitsu.

A little research and suddenly I was exposed to BJJ. It was a total eye opener, but still I didn't feel impressed enough that I had to search somewhere out. It looked like a lot of sweaty guys and seemed a bit like Judo - big deal.

Down at my local gym where I was training (with no sense of purpose and basically boring myself to death) they put on a 'Support Your Local Business' table. On my way out after another mind-crushing boredom-work-out I spotted a card on the corner - Gracie Jiu Jitsu Opening Soon. Intrigued I picked up the card and put it in the side pocket of my truck.

It didn't get to see light again for many months. Coming up to the Christmas holidays I was clearing some things out and found the card. Like we all do these days, I went online and checked the location, what a surprise, walking distance from my house. I thought I might as well check it out on my way home from work. Why not? What have I got to lose?

But could I find the place!?! No way. The next day I called them and they cleared up where I went wrong, it was down the back of beyond, how they expected to get customers so far of the beaten track I had no idea. Anyway, I went along and was introduced to the professor and a couple of the coaches, the lady I spoke to told me I could have a free lesson, cool, I booked in.

The intro lesson was really easy, bit of a warm up then a few simple self-defense techniques. To be honest I was a little disappointed, not understanding that the coach didn't want to put me in a position where I could maybe hurt myself. I felt a little babied, but I did get the chance to see the other students roll, and that's when things clicked.

This didn't look like the self-defense stuff I had just been doing. This looked real for want of a better word. I could see the exhaustive workout that was ensuing, and when the professor broke the group and started to demonstrate techniques in stages that was it. I was in. I walked straight to the reception area and signed up right away.

Wasn't really sure what I had gotten myself into but I knew this would get me fit if nothing else. This turned out to be true and I dropped around thirty pounds in my first three months of training. My cardio was terrible and I thought I was pretty fit. Jiu jitsu puts a different type of stress on the heart and lungs.

Within a few months and couple of stripes later my life was very different. Looking back it's almost ridiculous to me to think that I wasn't even going to bother with jiu jitsu. Now it's such an important part of my life that I don't think I could live without it.

Let's go back to that important question then: So why bother?

The answer is 'it doesn't matter'. What matters is the Why... there must be a Why in it for you that is so strong it pulls you to each class like a tractor beam. That is what Keeps You Going!

Now I have a ton of Why's answered for myself:

- Stress Relief
- Camaraderie
- Socializing
- Fitness
- Mental Sanity and Mental Workout
- Just makes me Feel Alive

These are just a few. And none of them contain competition or self defense. Though I do think my confidence levels have changed dramatically since I became more proficient in BJJ. There are very few social situations that I walk into and feel intimidated, regardless of how physically aggressive things become.

A side effect of BJJ that I think is priceless at this age is that I look great (I know arrogance is a poor quality, but at my age I'll take what I can). When I compare today how my body has shaped with jiu jitsu as opposed to just working out I have to say that stood beside my counterparts I look good for my age. Okay, bit of a cauliflower ear and my fingers look a little tricky but outside of that - looking pretty good over here.



This isn't so much a method of generating motivation as some ideas that could help you see that we need to be motivated in our forties much more than when we were in our twenties. Let's face it, it's easy when you are twenty to want to be a ripped up bad-ass or gold medal winner. That's what we're hard wired to be. But when we're in the mid range, we need a little more of a push.

Another good question: Why do we need that push? For many reasons, but one of the more philosophical reasons is Resistance.

This is a malevolent force that prevents us from moving closer to a worthy goal. It's the devil on our shoulder, an idea developed by the author Steven Pressfield in his excellent book 'The War of Art.'

Let's take a short rudimentary look at how Resistance works against our Jiu Jitsu goals.

- A. Resistance is invisible, so you don't even notice it's killing your will.
- B. Resistance is internal. It's inside, it's not out there in excuse land. It's not your mother, brother, wife, dog that's stopping you training...it's you.

- C. Resistance is implacable and impersonal. It doesn't care who you are and will not stop. It's objective is to prevent you from doing something positive in your life.
- D. Resistance never sleeps. As soon as you complete one workout and beats it's ass, it's already setting up shop to kick your ass back to the TV the next day.
- E. Resistance is fueled by fear.
- F. Resistance only opposes in one direction. If you want to fart around playing Halo on your X-Box then you get a free pass, you want to drill that half guard sweep - it rallies the troops.
- G. Resistance is most powerful at the finish line. Just as you are about to head out the door for the academy, or driving there after a hard day at the office, that's when it really turns on.

With the above taken into consideration, motivation then doesn't seem to be so much of an issue. Its more a case of get up and go rather than breaking the grip of some invisible force we can call resistance.

In essence, he's saying, you need to get to the academy and train regardless of how you feel. If you don't then Resistance has crushed you and won the day...a day you can never get back.

When I was a young bodybuilder, back in the eighties, I trained in the gym like an animal. Even on Christmas day the owner of the gym would leave the key under a rock and myself and three buddies would turn up and go ape shit in there. It was so cold when we opened up that there was ice 'inside' the windows and my fingers stuck to the bars they were that cold. It felt great, I felt like a pro. The motivation though that made me do this sort of thing wasn't that I wanted to be a great bodybuilder, it was the fear that another kid somewhere else in the country would be in the gym when I was home eating turkey and eating cake. He would be the one who won the day, he was the one I feared most.

The reality of course is that maybe there might be a couple of other people in the whole nation who went and trained that day, and when I say trained, I mean trained heavy. The chances of someone who would have been in my bracket doing the same thing was really slim but that didn't matter. The risk was just too high.

The point of the story is that the motivation has to come from within and we are far more motivated by fear than desire.

Have you ever been on a treadmill and worked long enough that you know you're tired, it's the end and you have maybe another minute to go. You press on, you start to feel deep fatigue, muscle and sinew are starting to scream: 'Please Stop!'

It's now only thirty seconds, you know you can make it.

This is what I do, I imagine that a kidnapper has one of my kids and if I don't get to the end of the workout, the final thirty, then blam! It's over, curtains, roll the credits. You want to see me pick up my pace and give it everything.

It's a mental construct, there are no kidnappers (at least I hope not, the kids are always fine when I get home) but the mere thought that failing at the end would cause such harm then pushes the body to make strides it would have normally passed on.

Fear over desire again.

If I had (mentally) said to myself, if I do the last thirty seconds then I can grab a cup cake (please add some favorite treat that you might want in place of a cup cake) then the power is so much less. Many motivational speakers and NLP specialists refer to this concept, often citing the example that if someone walks into a movie theatre and shouts "Free cash"; no one responds. If they walk in and shout, "The place is on fire" then the audience get into sprint mode real quick.

This I suppose relates back to the opening remarks on the Why of jiu jitsu for you. It's personal, it's important and brings something close from deep inside. It's okay to start with the idea that you just want to lose weight or feel more confident.

But as time wears on especially when you're in your forties and your rank demands that you perform at a higher level then you need something more, you need something to lose.

We can look at this pessimistically, but as we get older we know that making these kinds of choices is a daily occurrence. We just don't have time to waste. If you don't have a reason strong enough to motivate you into action then you might want to consider another pursuit.



This is one of those sections that we know the answer to, but seem to forget, so it does no harm to remind ourselves every now and then.

At our time of life we tend to understand that practicing anything makes you better at it. And although we know this we also realize that we have responsibilities beyond whatever it is that we feel like practicing. This is nothing new.

Recently I decided to learn some guitar. It was more a challenge from a friend, he was going to learn jiu jitsu but I had to learn guitar and be able to play a tune in public. He had to become competent enough to be able to roll with me in open sparring. This was all set to a sixteen-week schedule.

I'm not a guitar player and have nothing musical about me but I found the challenge intriguing enough to give it a go. This is when I thought, man, I have no talent for the guitar. I bought all the gear and sat down to practice and follow my online tutors instructions. But this was way harder than I imagined.

Still my buddy was training down at the academy and I was strumming (shredding) my fingers into oblivion. He was struggling, and so was I but neither of us even thought about giving up. We went through the same obstacles. The parallels between learning guitar and BJJ are amazing. His fingers hurt from grips, mine from frets. He had a hard time with a particular technique, I had a hard time with a particular chord. He struggled to link the techniques together, I had the same problem linking the chords into a song.

Then, for both of us, something clicked and the next lesson got a little easier. Right before the 'click' it seemed the more I practiced the worse I got. My fingertips were killing me and my chord changes were clumsy so that it sounded bad...really bad. My wife thought I was murdering some animal in the spare room.

Still, I always (and I do mean always) did an hour of practice, good or bad, the hour got put in. As things started to feel bad, a sound strummed from the guitar that amazed me. I recognized it. It sounded like a tune - a real chord. What was going on?

Don't forget it's always darkest just before dawn, as things were about to fall apart they fell together.

Me and my buddy discussed this and he had a similar BJJ experience. Then I mentioned that you do get people that are talented on the guitar. The Jimi Hendrix and Eric Clapton types. Bearing in mind that I'm trying to learn guitar in my late forties I'm way off the pace and closer to the oldest swinger in town.

He disagreed, and bet that BJJ was no different. The ones that make it look easy and seem the most 'talented' usually turn out to be the ones putting in the most practice. These are the ones who are drilling at home as well as on the mat. These are the ones visualizing techniques and hip escaping or technical lifting their way through their day-to-day life. The BJJ equivalent of Jimi Hendrix.

Then we talked about age and the impact this has on our development, he thought it made no difference. On this point I disagree, we just don't recover as fast as someone younger, but that said, we are not going to compete with someone younger. Sure, we may roll with younger people in our academy but that can't be used as the measure. And even if we did try to compare then provided we put in the practice our talent would (should) be revealed. It's only 'not fair' on the age element when we don't put the hours in.

This is when it becomes clear that because we are over forty that we need to practice more than if we are twenty. This

might not push us into the stratosphere of the BJJ competitive world, but I do know this much, without excessive practice it's hard to even be a club player.

Chapter 2 - Rolling and Specific Training

It doesn't need to be pointed out so much but this is the area where injuries are waiting for you. When we hit that 'certain age' where recovery rates aren't as keen as they once were then pushing ourselves in sparring is usually where we pick up a strain or sprain.

Most injuries you'll notice are usually caused by ourselves. It happens that a training partner can crank something a little hard every now and then but for the most part it's overextending our own bodies that creates the tension then the twang.

Here's a piece of advice I now follow religiously: When sparring or even light rolling for your first round go a little easier than you normally would. This is what my professor prescribes and he's in his thirties. Go the first round in a more defensive mode of training, this is much safer than attacking postures. While in the first roll, please ensure your ego is firmly out the door of the academy and allow your partner to try some techniques on you. You defend the pass and if you get caught in something that requires it, defend the position. This will still increase your heart rate and give you a workout while sharpening your escapes and survival drills.

The next stage is to see how you feel at the end of the roll. If all is well, then stay on for another round. This time attack and defend like a regular sparring session, the previous roll was simply a warm up with purpose. This time you should be warm and be able to feel your body much better.

If after the warm up roll you feel a little stiff or a body part is giving you some cause for concern then sit the next round out. When the third round comes back, go back in and stick to the defensive process I described in the warm up round. If this still

feels wrong, or a body part is causing some concern - do not go the next round. Wait and live to fight another day.

Yes, you will get less sparring time in but your body is sending a signal, loud and clear. The biggest problem for most jiu jitsu students is that we don't listen to our bodies.

Last year I had some plans to compete, it was January and my buddies and me were looking at the annual IBJJF calendar trying to work out what would work for us in terms of our schedule. I had been on an extended trip and still felt a little out of shape. This made me push my first tournament back to May so it would give me plenty of time to train and get my body in tune plus work on my game.

Once I had made my mind up where I was going to compete I put my training plan together using the calendar system described in Zen Jiu Jitsu, plus the Don't Break the Chain system.

First training session was pretty light, light warm up, drill some techniques then roll. Before we went into the roll we did a little specific training, I was in competition mode even though it was months away. My ego flared up and my chest puffed out. Not hard to work out what happened next. Moving into top mount I slid into the S-mount and popped my groin. Ouch!

Initially there was no pain just a weird sense that I couldn't use my adductors, my thighs just wouldn't come together, closed guard was off the map completely. The next day I've never experienced pain like it. Walking was difficult. This was lack of warming up and too much hot ego sauce on the session pushed me back by eight weeks. Once I began training hard again the sense of danger in this area made all my positions weak. I began an intensive (read: super painful) physio program. This improved things but I didn't recover fully until the June. The tournament that I was so crazed to compete in had been and gone. All my buddies went, not me. And it was the right thing to do.

At our time of life we have a sense that we can power through things. That's how we do it. That's how we roll - it's true. But

when the body shouts ‘STOP’ please listen, listen acutely, it will save you months of frustration.

Also, this goes without saying but it’s another thing that bears repeating: This sport has no place for massive egos. I’ve seen them all come and go. The brazens, the bullies, the bullshitters. Sure, they train, some are really nice people when they let their guard down, but they never last. Never.



Roger Gracie often discusses the importance of specific training in his prep for the world championships. He believes that specific training is the most valuable style of rolling as it confines the partners to ‘specific’ positions that you will end up in at some time during a match. Good point Roger. And for the forty plus trainees this has never been more true.

In case you’re not sure what Specific Training is or you have a different name for it at your academy, I will clarify it as:

The opportunity to train with a partner in a standard position (mount, side control, back, etc.) while one person is in the attacking mode and the other in a defensive mode and applying 50-100% resistance.

Regardless of how we describe it, as older members of the group, it is often more useful than rolling. Why? I hear you ask. The system as described above involves two elements - attack and defense. This means that if you are on top or bottom you have an opportunity to learn something in a limited space and time. When we roll in a sparring setting the permutations and opportunities are infinite, this is worse than having none at all because until you gain a lot more experience this can just be a hot stew of grips and hips.

You might be thinking that you have a game plan and it seems to work. This may be the case but someone will always unlock that eventually, and then when they have your back you’ll wish that you spent more time on the defensive techniques and drilled them with specific training.

Like Mike Tyson said, “Everyone has a plan until they get punched in the mouth”. Obviously we’re not getting punched

anywhere but we can get mounted, have our backs taken, etc.

When we train specifically it's usually in a position that at some point will (or should) present itself. That is just the nature of jiu jitsu, we move with an aim in mind whether it's to pass, submit or sweep into a better position. This is why specific is such a neat way to work, it has a more refined approach whereas rolling can get a little chaotic. And although this is still important as the scramble can change the way a match is determined it is still better to work in specific positions when drilling.

Do you have any weak areas? If you answered 'No' then please close this book and go do your thing, you don't need it. In reality we all have weak points, even Marcelo Garcia and Buchecha have weak points. This again is where specific training can save the day. You start in the position that needs the most help.

Now this isn't to say you should be starting in a weaker or defensive position, for example, you may be having trouble submitting your opponents from the top mount. Start in mount top and see where you are going wrong. This becomes apparent very quickly when your training partner is defending 100%.

Once the issues are identified, then talk to your professor or coach and ask them what needs to be addressed, you'll tend to find it will be something fundamental or a detail you are missing.

When you are putting combinations together in specific training and the combo doesn't work you will probably track it back to some small detail at the very beginning of the combination. It will be some small detail that has a domino effect making the coup de gras almost impossible and once the detail is cleared up then you move into the submission position with ease.

This method of using specific training is basically how most high-level chess players improve their game and weak areas. They set the board up in a way that patterns an area where their opponent has them in a defensive position or they have

problems moving to check or check mate. Then they can play and see where the mistakes are being made, ninety percent of the time it's a much earlier move when treated differently makes all the difference.

Trying to Win?

Next time you get a chance to train specific try to make sure you give it your best 'technical' display.

This trying to win at all costs style of training is a folly or at least a younger persons gambit. We need to use specific training to hone higher level technical skills, save the explosions for the scramble and remember more injuries are caused by ourselves than any external opponent. Take it easy. Even go slow. Break it down, see where you are going wrong or going right and make that mental connection.

When I specific train now and if I have a technique that is working I will try it on every partner I get to in the rotation. So if my goal is to get from being mounted into a more favorable position and I have a technique that is working well, I try it on everyone. Boring? A little. Does it test the technique against all different body types and ability levels? Of course.

So long as my training partners can see the move coming and still find it hard to prevent then I know I'm onto something and I will keep it in my repertoire. If the technique works so-so and has maybe a fifty percent success rate then I know that there is a part missing or I am executing the technique differently each time. A little like a golfer whose swing changes slightly during a game. This is when you need someone to look at what's happening and correct it.

This is scientific jiu jitsu, this is the style of jiu jitsu that makes the game so interesting to people in their forties, fifties and sixties. It's more mental than physical while still combining both.

Next time you train specific give it a try.

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## **Drilling**

“The key to pursuing excellence is to embrace an organic, long-term learning process, and not to live in a shell of static, safe mediocrity.”

~ Josh Waitzkin - Marcelo Garcia Black Belt from his book  
The Art of Learning

This is another area where most jiu jitsu practitioners lack. Doesn't matter what age you are, drilling is just not as popular as it should be. It's a subject I find interesting, as it has to be one of the areas that most impacts how you improve and can be really enjoyable.

It's not a secret that the way to improve anything from the piano to your hoop shot is that repetition creates reflex and reflex creates memory. This is why so many pro athletes and pro performers at all levels spend so much time practicing, they need to make the groove in their heads that can re-create genius. Its not easy and drilling technique is the only way to make it happen.

Now, we have families, mortgages, jobs so it's not quite as simple for the working Joe to train jiu jitsu and then drill when we're not. I understand that it's okay for Pro's to get the time in on the field, but we have limitations imposed on us from external life forces - like kids!

This is how I try and make it work for me. I look at my schedule and see if there is an open mat class on the timetable that I might get time to work with a partner. At my academy we have two slots per week, you may have none, I'll get to that.

I then talk to one of my training partners about drilling some techniques and, if they are amenable, I arrange to meet them at the open mat and then discuss the drilling with the coach. This session is at the academy and works in with the other classes I usually attend so I don't get any resistance from the family as it's a regular class and I would have been training at some point this week anyway. Due to it being open mat, everyone is doing their own thing so it fits in with the school too.

My partner drills technique for thirty minutes, I do the same and then we call it quits. Nice and easy, no rolling, maybe a little specific training towards the end of the session to check that all the covered techniques are working well.

This is so valuable, just one hour per week, that I would forgo a regular class in exchange for my drilling session. That's right, I might miss out on learning something but at least I can get straight in my mind the techniques I learned last week. This is especially true as we age because, as I'm sure you'll agree, our powers of mental retention just ain't what they used to be. I bet you never forget where you parked your car, right?

Drilling I feel is a great game leveler too. As we are the older members of the team the younglings have many advantages over us in terms of athletic ability, but when we drill technique and depend on technique then we have a slight edge. The younger members can always depend on strength or cardio if the session isn't going their way, we can too, but only for so long then that old jiu jitsu statement hits us: 'fatigue makes cowards of us all.'

Whereas, if we drill, our techniques can only get sharper. Drilling sessions don't have too much in the way of resistance so injury rates are low, if not non-existent. Just be careful to warm up properly I got a weird rib injury once while drilling because I was pushing my body beyond where it should have gone. Technically I was out of position and then it was too late, something popped and it took a while for it to heal properly. It didn't put me out of training but it made things uncomfortable for quite some time. Remember: Warming up is still part of the training session.

A friend of mine does some spider guard drills that he uses as the warm up. That works really well as he warms up and drills at the same time and this is why he was such a killer spider guard sweep.

Now, what if you don't have an Open Mat at your academy. This is another little trick I pull on the family from time to time. I have a couple of mats in the garage and I use this for drilling some techniques especially if they are complex and I can't quite remember everything. When I get home I go



through the technique in steps and this helps make the connection between the various synapses that are blinking on and off these days.

I take the kids and the dog in the garage and have a little roll around drilling techniques even though the dog and the kids are on the mat. Sure, I have to stop from time to time but this ends up a pretty fun thirty minutes for everyone.

We get to 'rattle' a little, the dog loves it and I get to drill. This wouldn't work for everyone, they might take this stuff more seriously than I do, which is fine. Just remember drilling is about creating the 'groove' in your brain not pushing it so you feel like you've just had a cardio workout. Don't get me wrong, you drill fifty arm bars and triangles (I use a submission dummy for this) and you feel like you've worked out for sure. But it's the groove that's created that will make the difference at the academy.

No mats in the garage? Ask your coaches or professor if it would be beneficial to have a drilling class once per week. When I asked about this they were very open and we ended up having the open mats and now even a study hall class, which has no structure but has a black belt there to answer any questions the students have. It's like a cheap group private lesson. They have become really popular.

Drilling, I would have to say, has been the biggest revelation to me and is the single most important element to my training. Even if you don't drill the more advanced moves and stick to the fundamentals I bet your game improves 100% and that triangle or armbar will become your signature move.

## Chapter 3 - Promotions

This can be a contentious subject and I've discussed it in the other volumes of the Zen Jiu Jitsu series. I suppose as we are in the older age range then this takes a different perspective than if we were younger.

The question really needs to be: Do promotions really matter to the over 40's?

And the answer like every other answer in BJJ is 'it depends'. It ultimately depends on what your goals are in the art form. If you are looking to compete and are very athletic for your age range then promotions and rank can be very important. If your ultimate goal is to coach then promotions '*can*' be important yet they are not essential. And if you're in it for giggles and to lose a couple of pounds, stay fit, then rank doesn't really matter at all.

Looking at the competition scene, the thing that makes promotions seem so important is that not all rankings are created equal. I won't belabor this point as I discuss this in much more depth in the other volumes. In essence though, if you compete in a non-IBJJF tournament then the rank you are facing could be anything. It could be a purple belt whose been training for ten years and his professor just doesn't promote often. It could be a guy who got his brown belt in only three years and is either a phenom (highly unlikely at the over 40 range) or his professor loves promotions so much he gives out stripes like they might go out of style. Either way this playing field is not level.

Now this is not to say that if you attend a sanctioned IBJJF tournament that everything is hunky dory. That's not accurate either and can usually be witnessed at the white belt level when some white belt somehow throws in a flying triangle! But you have a better chance of things being square than some random sub-grappling event where rank isn't as important.

To be honest in the Over 40 brackets, the Seniors, we don't really fall prey to this. You might get some guy who has been training a long time but it's seldom I've seen it where the skill level gap is huge. In the younger and adult classes these kinds of distinctions are clearly obvious. It's a kind of sandbagging that we don't really see in the Senior brackets.

If you are aiming at the coaching level of development in your BJJ then obviously having a reasonable rank does make a difference. And it makes a difference in two ways: respect and confidence.

When you start along the coaching path (I was a one stripe blue belt when I started training to become a coach) then you feel that you need to have the respect of the students you are coaching. This is incredibly important as it maintains control of the group. It's okay to go through the program and get to the graduation and get the patch or belt or however your academy recognizes their coaches but unless the students who are facing you feel that you know what you are doing - you're dead.

This is where the second element comes in: Confidence. Regardless of your rank you need to project confidence if you are going to coach a class. You need to have the will to command the room, even if there are students that are higher ranking than you in the class.

Technically, the rank of the coach leading the class doesn't matter. If the professor at the academy believes that they are good enough to coach that particular class then they are good enough. Some of the best classes I have attended and one of the best coaches I know first instructed me when he was a blue belt. I can hear gasps at the back of the room. It's the truth, he was (and still is, though he's a black belt now) a great communicator and that's the skill you need for that task.

Confidence comes with great communication skills. You need it. There is no way around becoming a great coach without having the confidence to control the class, which leads to the respect that must be commanded. If I wore a blue belt and coached a class that had never met me before then I'm still convinced that I would have their respect by the end.

This is just a confidence thing, but it also informs me that because I have been training for a long time and do know my stuff technically then that translates. If you are a blue belt now and want to coach I would encourage you to go through your association training program, you learn so much more than you ever do in class, especially at the fundamental level. Even if you don't go on to coach, your game will improve a great deal. Teach once, learn twice.

Personally, I didn't start to run my own class until I was purple, I felt ready then. I never felt comfortable (or confident) at blue. You might feel differently or even wait until brown, either way, becoming a coach in BJJ is a noble pursuit regardless of your rank.

If you are training for laughs, or to get fit, then promotions probably don't play too much of an important role in your overall goals. If you get promoted great, if not, no worries. Or that's what I would like to think.

There does tend to be a little ego that gets involved as the promotions get bigger. Say you're in this to lose weight and as time goes on the weight drops off and you make it to purple belt. If the stripes stop coming for some reason I'm pretty sure you'll want to know why. At purple belt you'll have been training around five or six years consistently and the reality is your goals have probably changed.

Your eye might even be on attaining black belt now. You more than likely feel that you'll train BJJ for the rest of your life, you might even start to wonder if a little competition would be a good idea. Again, like coaching, these are all noble goals.

We all start as white belts. No real aspirations and no idea where the BJJ journey will take us, especially as we're over 40. Learning to play the guitar might be next on the agenda for all we know. But as time wears on whether we actively choose one or not as those stripes get added and the colors change the goals change too. Think about where you are now and what you plan to get from jiu jitsu, I bet you'll surprise yourself.

**Footnotes:** To gain an insight into the IBJJF grading system and understand how this 'should' work then go here:

<http://www.ibjjf.org/graduation.htm>

The brackets in IBJJF tournaments are divided so:

- Masters (30-35)
- Seniors 1 (36-40)
- Seniors 2 (41-45)
- Seniors 3 (46-50)
- Seniors 4 (51-55)
- Seniors 5 (over 55)

# Chapter 4 - Staying Injury Free

One of the biggest issues in BJJ today, especially for the over 40's is staying injury free. Of course this never really happens on a long-term basis, there will always (and I do mean always) be something that aches, pops or cracks as you move.

When you wake up in the morning do a little body scan if you trained the night before. Your fingers probably feel like they have arthritis and your joints creak like a ninety year old. This is the way until your body adapts and even then you still have slight feelings or creaking.

There is no real or permanent solution to this. On occasion I will take ibuprofen after a particularly tough roll as it reduces the inflammation in my joints, I always ensure I eat before I take them and limit the amount I take. I find that when I do this just before bedtime it really helps me sleep. In the morning the effect is also encouraging. The amount of pain in my fingers and joints is radically reduced. Needless to say I'm not a doctor and before taking 'anything' prescription or otherwise you should consult with a doctor first.

I feel more comfortable with the ibuprofen infusion at night as I have a friend who suffers from MS and the one thing he can take without any real issue is ibuprofen so long as food is taken at the same time. This is the biggest issue with this anti-inflammatory, it attacks the stomach wall and if you take a bunch on an empty stomach especially for a prolonged period then you may start to suffer from ulcers. Finger pain is not as painful as stomach ulcers so always eat when taking anti-inflammatories.

Speaking of finger pain, this is one of the most common issues. Taping fingers can be a positive habit to get into. If you get a finger injury and you need to splint it, then use the

common jiu jitsu method as prescribed in the video link below, this is the one I use if I get something jammed up:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yBPYIGPddYw>

**Warning!** This is a Kurt Osiander video and therefore R rated. Kurt doesn't bother me but some viewers can find him a little Full-On so please be warned.

Back to fingers, if your thumb jams up then you really need to bring the inflammation down because this area of the body is very difficult to protect. You can splint it with an aluminum splint and brace it but if you roll, you'll be one handed and there is a greater chance that you'll end up in a worse position than when you started. This is the time to rest it.

If it's extremely painful then make sure you get medical attention. One of my training partners thought he had dislocated his thumb but in fact he had torn the ligament from the top. It took a while to work this out and he had been rolling between doctors appointments. This did nothing for the healing process as you can imagine. If it's a thumb, rest and recuperation are the best options.

I have a pretty consistent shoulder injury that seems to bother me when I sleep. The act of compressing the shoulder from the side in a laying position just makes my shoulder ache. No problem when training or sparring but afterwards I get a dull pain sensation in my right shoulder. You may or may not have shoulder issues but if you do then you might want to look into DMSO.

DMSO (Dimethyl Sulfoxide) is a solvent (it smells like a solvent too), which you can rub onto any muscular area that is giving you a pain problem, especially those around joints. This product has a lot of controversy surrounding it as the medical profession doesn't see it as helpful, whereas the general wellness community uses it all the time. I get mine from a local health food store, it's right there on the counter so I assuming it can't be too dangerous. It comes in a roll on style container much like deodorant, which is a great applicator when I need to get it on my shoulder after training.

The benefits behind DMSO are fairly simple: 1. It has a great ability to cross membranes so by applying it to the skin it can penetrate deeply into the muscle and joint. 2. It has anti-oxidant properties. 3. It is a strong anti-inflammatory. That's the magic ingredient for the BJJ practitioner.

Don't just take my word for it: Stephen Edelson, MD, F.A.A.F.P., F.A.A.E.M., who practices medicine at the Environmental and Preventive Health Center of Atlanta, has used DMSO extensively for 4 years. "We use it intravenously as well as locally," he says. "We use it for all sorts of inflammatory conditions, from people with rheumatoid arthritis to people with chronic low back inflammatory-type symptoms, silicon immune toxicity syndromes, any kind of autoimmune process."

If you want to research DMSO more before use then just Google it or check this link:

<http://www.dmsso.org/articles/information/muir.htm>



## **Periodization**

This is one mental attitude that I try to get across to beginning students: to periodize their training. One of the most important elements to learn in bodybuilding, powerlifting or any pursuit of greater muscle size and strength is to periodize training.

It's important to all sports though. I had been practicing periodization for years as a bodybuilder and strength athlete but had never heard of it as a particular subject until I got caught up in a discussion with a tennis coach. That's right 'tennis'!? Why would that need to be periodized?

Let's look at the definition first, this is how it's applied to strength training, you'll get the idea:

Periodization is the process of structuring training into phases. During different times of the year, training programs vary in the length or number of repetitions in a training session (Volume) and the percentage of one's maximum capacity (Intensity). In strength training, the number of repetitions in a training session or training phase represent the volume of training. The amount of weight lifted in proportion to a person's 1-repetition maximum (1 RM), the speed of performance, and the technical difficulty of the exercise contribute to the intensity. The purpose of Periodization is to cause the muscle to continually adapt to new conditions of overload and to allow the muscles to recover from the stress of training.

As you can see it's basically creating a mix of hard and soft workouts. Go hard (Hi intensity), then go light (Low Intensity). But this needs to be pre-programmed. If you go by feel then when you should be going light you go hard, guess what, it's an injury waiting to happen. But if you periodize your training between heavy (hard) and light session then you are still training (volume) and you'll remain injury free for much longer as the recovery time between workouts is pre-determined.

If you compete then you should even divide up your year into:

A. Basic Phase - Covering and drilling technique

B. Power Phase - Only two to three super hard workouts per week. The rest of the time is recovery.

C. Endurance Phase - Up to four or five training sessions per week, though much lower intensity inter-mixed with a lot more sparring sessions.

D. Maintenance Phase - This is around competition time and the intensity and volume changes around the tournament schedule.

There is another cycle E. Construction. This isn't essential but if you want to embrace this system then it's worth considering. Take a look at the results from the competition cycle and then change your plan of attack for the next years tournaments.

This is how pro athletes put their year together.

For us forty-somethings we can really view it more along the lines of hard/light. If you go hard on Monday and the next workout is Wednesday then treat that as a light recovery round. Just lately I've gotten myself into a system that is not allowing me to recover quite as well.

I'm training hard on Friday, allowing Saturday to recover then going hard again on Sunday. I'm enjoying this, but I know that if I'm not vigilant then an injury will pop up somewhere on the horizon.

## **I.C.E.**

Using the I > C > E (ice, compress, elevate) protocol is simple, but some people get it wrong. Here's a recap of what seems to work best for BJJ and I've tried a lot of variations over the years.

1. Get Ice (I) on quickly. If you haven't iced at the academy then as soon as you get home get some ice on.
2. Massage with Ice. Don't just sit there with a bag of frozen peas on the pain area, that's why Compress I think is a misnomer. Rub the ice around and get some movement in the muscle or joint.
3. Elevate. If at all possible get the injured area higher than your heart.
4. Keep an eye on the time. Don't massage the area with ice for longer than 15 to 20 minutes and no longer. No one enjoys frostbite.
5. Wait. Between massage sessions leave the area to get some blood flowing back and the area to begin warming again. This could be 45 minutes to an hour.
6. Repeat until the inflammation or swelling reduces.

### **A few tips to help with the process.**

1. If you don't have a bag of frozen peas then put some crushed ice with a little water into a Ziploc bag so it can mold to your body.
2. Delay the heat. It's often an idea to have a hot bath when you have a pulled muscle, this isn't wrong depending on who you talk to. But if you can delay this and just stick to ice for 24 hours then recovery should speed up. By all means shower and then the next day put some Epsom salts into a bath and have a good soak.
3. If the pain and swelling persists go see the Doctor, no point in being stubborn at this point. I herniated a disc once and thought it was just a back pull. Big mistake. I could have been back training waaaay before I recovered.

# Chapter 5- Getting Fit for BJJ

We've covered the basic idea that injuries are inevitable and covered a few methods to ensure they don't keep you off the mat for too long. Now we can take a look at what you can do when you have some off-mat time and want to maybe improve on your fitness.

This is a difficult one and a subject I have discussed, debated and downright argued! The bottom-line though is that nothing can replace rolling. Honest I've tried them all: Boxercise, BootCamp, CrossFit, Weight Training, Cardio Training, Long distance running and many more but nothing emulates the roll quite like open sparring. With this in mind that doesn't mean that some exercise protocols can't be supportive to your jiu jitsu goals.

Some of the advice offered below is a more recent discovery and something that both myself and my professor have sampled and received positive benefits from. These are, in no particular order: Heavy Duty gym work, Hot Yoga and Hill Sprint or Fartlek Training.

I'll cover these and how they work with BJJ:

**1. Heavy Duty Gym Work:** This is different than just heading down the gym to do some weights. This is the system developed by Mike Mentzer in the 70's. It's a very high intensity weights workout that lasts a very short period of time. Traditionally it was always a total body workout but I found this to be too much. When I really hit the total body system with full intensity I was almost throwing up. The famous bodybuilder Dorian Yates adapted the system so that various body parts were worked on alternate days and at my age this worked much better. He proposed:

Day One: Chest, Shoulders, Biceps Triceps

## Day Two: Back, Thighs, Calves, Abs

Even with a minimum of days rest in between there is quite a grace period between body parts. If you trained the Day One program on Monday then it would be Friday before you would hit that program again. This helps with the rest and recovery phase and prevents over-training, for the over-forties this is exactly what we need.

In nutshell, the program consists of two to three exercises per body part with one warmup set and then one balls-to-the-wall set. That's it. Once you can no longer continue moving the weight under your own control you're done with that set. Total muscular failure.

At the time it was quite controversial but Mentzer made a very good case for this philosophy arguing that it was recovery and not gym-time that made the muscle respond and grow (hypertrophy). It turns out that science now seems to have backed this idea up and the physique of the Dorian Yates variety also lends support to his methods.

This works well with BJJ as you are improving muscle tone and due to the high intensity nature then long rest period (you could do a total body workout once per week and make great gains) it doesn't interfere with your time on the mat.

Alternatively the regular Bootcamp or brutal high load weight programs I've sampled made me so sore that rolling on the mat was almost impossible. My chest and thighs were so painful after a CrossFit class one time I was rigid for a week, my timing and my brain just didn't want to function in a BJJ capacity.

I have nothing against CrossFit and if you want to be super good at working out then it looks like a perfect system. But as an adjunct to jiu jitsu when you are over forty and your recovery levels are less than spectacular it's probably not worth the time and effort.

This weight training system is ideal and works very well in conjunction with jiu jitsu if you are looking for more tone, flexibility and strength. It seems to improve both. For further

information on the heavy duty system check out:

<http://www.mikementzer.com>

**2. Hot Yoga:** Now before I see eyes roll and all bemoan the Hot Yoga trend, hear me out. It's important to understand that I don't mean the intense, or super difficult style of Yoga that is presented at a lot of schools. Try and avoid classes like Bikram, power-fusion, Advanced hot yoga or anything with this type of name. These are more for the dedicated yoga trainer whereas we are looking at hot yoga to supplement and improve our BJJ. I think if you attended the higher level yoga classes you would get a great workout and feel pretty good even if it was tough but I don't think the benefits transfer so well.

Ask the local yoga school if they have a lower intensity class that revolves more around connective tissue and intra-muscular stretching. Using hot yoga as a flexibility plan is a great idea. You don't need to be able to hold the Downward-Dog pose for fifteen minutes, that's immaterial and if you find that you are enjoying the yoga at a higher level more than your time on the mat then it's probably time to reassess your activities.

It's important the yoga is hot though. I've sampled the traditional yoga and though enjoyable the stretching elements didn't seem to be as effective. Jiu jitsu by its nature is a very sweaty endeavor and this works in well with hot yoga.

Please be careful if this is something you want to sample. It worked very well for me and my professor and we both train hot yoga at least once per week. But remember there are varying levels of quality and if the school doesn't have a high level of instruction then injuries could follow, which is the exact opposite of what we're trying to work on here.

Yoga can be another high-injury-level pursuit and some schools are a little too intense with beginning students. Make sure you check references and see what the reviews look like on Google before you jump in. Most studios will give you a free week or a couple of sessions to see how you like it. Give them a try and see if you are comfortable with the teachers and

students. If you feel intimidated by the level of flexibility then you might be in the wrong class or even the wrong studio.

If you find the right place this will help ensure that you are flexible enough to prevent future injuries on the mat due to the nature of the stretching and poses.

**3. Hill Sprints or Fartlek Training:** This is where an alternative cardio workout can actually work. The only problem is it ain't pretty. If you embark on the hill sprints or Fartlek protocol then it's probably best to do this only once per week, same as yoga really. If you start to embark on this more than is required then over-training and worsening skill on the mat are probably round the corner.

A buddy of mine was recently doing a lot of extra curricular activities in preparation for an upcoming tournament. He did hill sprints just before a competition class a week out from his fight date. Seriously pulled his back straight after the warm up. No hard training or sparring required to keep him out of action and miss the comp. When I discussed his training routine with him he was over doing it big time. He was training CV or weights before BJJ and after. This might seem like a good idea. It's probably not, and he's only thirty!!

As hill sprinting pretty much explains itself let's look at Fartlek training. This is what Wikipedia says about this style of cardio:

**Fartlek**, which means “speed play” in [Swedish](#), is a training method that blends [continuous training](#) with [interval training](#). [1] The variable [intensity](#) and continuous nature of the exercise places stress on both the [aerobic](#) and [anaerobic](#) systems. It differs from traditional interval training in that it is unstructured; intensity and/or speed varies, as the athlete wishes. [2][3] Most fartlek sessions last a minimum of 45 minutes and can vary from aerobic walking to anaerobic sprinting. Fartlek training is generally associated with running, but can include almost any kind of exercise.

This is a tough workout, make no bones about it. Sounds pretty straightforward, very much like interval training. A sprint for thirty seconds then a minutes rest. This combines the

aerobic and the anaerobic, sound familiar? This is the closest thing to a rolling session without a training partner. It's all out effort (explosion) with a period of short rest (control position), then it repeats. I use the running method as described above, sprint for thirty seconds then walk for ninety seconds.

You will need to adapt this to your own personal fitness level as this could be difficult or it could be easy dependent on your current level of cardio. There is a good article about beginning the Fartlek system here:

<http://running.about.com/od/speedworkouts/ht/beginnerfartlekworkout.htm>

Give it a try, again only once per week and in a couple of weeks check to see if you are making progress on the mat. If not then it's time for an adjustment.

Hill sprinting is exactly what it says on the tin. Find a fairly steep gradient or a long medium gradient, run up it until you have to stop then jog back down. If it's the short variety then you can complete a few sets until you feel exhaustion. With the long gradient then maybe just up and down will do the trick? At the academy we run up a long hill on Saturday morning, allow an hour to recover then go and roll (light) for an hour. This is tough and not for the faint hearted, I tend to leave it to the younger guys and join in maybe once per month.

Out of the two, personally, I get more benefit from the Fartlek system. It's more flexible, doesn't need a special location (it's a flat path system) and I get the level of cardio I need. Give them both a try, see what works for you.



# Chapter 6 - Keeping Record

One of things I do now on an almost religious basis is to keep notes about my training and how my training sessions are going. This is easily achieved with a simple notebook, which was how I started. I used to have a few private lessons on occasion more in spurts than anything organized, and I do recommend privates when you are starting out and maybe even to customize your game to work with your age and body type. It's a good idea. I digress.

The techniques we covered were mostly the fundamentals of BJJ but there was always a detail each week that I either didn't know existed or even if I did know, I didn't really know why it existed. This is an essential part of learning the concepts of BJJ especially if you are over the age of forty.

You see if you are younger, tougher, more physically capable, then these attributes can more than compensate for the lack of technique. At our age, we need to ensure that our technique is drilled and perfect or as close to perfect as possible, this means the details **MUST** be in place. If we don't take this emphatic perfectionist route then the road ahead will feel like it's scattered with rocks, and we don't have shoes on!

Taking notes is great way to record the details and then review them from time to time. There is a better system to make records though if you want to take your game to the next level and that's to keep a journal. There are some great fight logs and journals out there. We even have our own Zen Jiu Jitsu training log, which you can get from Amazon here:

<http://www.amazon.com/Zen-Jiu-Jitsu-Training-Log/dp/1482667665>

If you decide to go down the journal route then here are the salient points that you should keep covered and why. This is a recap from Zen Jiu Jitsu - White to Blue, so if you've read that one you might want to skip this section.

5. The Date
6. Who the Coach was for the session
7. What you learned the most from that lesson
8. First Technique
9. Second Technique
10. Training Partners
11. What was the position for Specific Training
12. How did Specific Training (or Sparring) go?
13. Session start and finish time.

Now if you are already in the journal section of your training and keep diligent records, good for you. This is a better way to improve. Don't forget to review though. This is essential. At least once per month take a look back and see what worked and what didn't. How was your energy, fitness level, did you have any injuries?

This is one of the best ways to improve on a consistent basis. As I'm sure you've realized (unless you've only just begun BJJ) that plateaus happen all the time. The best way to prevent the funk that follows is to recognize that this is a plateau. Go back to your training log and check on the progress you've made. Be happy with the improvements and progress then settle into the slow road ahead for the next month or so.

Another way to keep the plateau gloom at bay is to work on what works. A teammate of mine works his A-game as soon as the plateau hits. No new moves, nothing that would confuse him and this seems to work really well. Sure, it's a little boring when you want to make strides but there is no getting around that feeling that your game is going nowhere.

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Plateaus

We touched briefly on training plateaus in the last section so I'll offer some advice on how to keep on keeping on when it feels like the BJJ world is conspiring to keep you bogged down in mediocrity.

First off, what is a plateau and how do we recognize it? This is an important question because sometimes we are not going through a plateau, we just need to be a little patient and then the techniques click.

You'll know it's a plateau when everything, and I do mean everything, you try doesn't seem to come off and you feel that you are actually going backwards. When I hit my first plateau at the end of my white belt (it always seems to hit me as my belt color is about to change), I decided to really turn it on. My answer was more training, just pile it on!

Problem here, I was getting even worse. The training partners I was working with seemed to be surpassing me and I was training twice as much and twice as hard. How could this be? The clouds of gloom seemed to be gathering around my head each time I set foot on the mat. Due to my body being over trained and exhausted I picked up a couple of stupid finger and toe injuries. This didn't deter me, I was going to get back in the groove no matter what.

I'll stop here for a second. Training in massive doses is never a good idea. As previously discussed in the sections on periodization and working out, this whole protocol is about balance.

The best thing I did was talk to my professor. I told him I couldn't do the things I once could, I didn't even have good recall of the basics I just couldn't get no satisfaction no matter what I did.

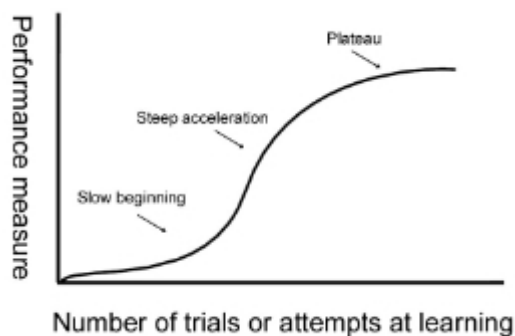
He laughed. This is natural. Like all things there is a learning curve and it doesn't just carry on upwards into infinity or until you get your black belt then it stops. It's steep at first, this is the exciting part when all things are shiny and new and then as

you adapt and start to learn a few things the curve slows down a little and starts to level out, this is the plateau.

This was a massive relief. Later on in my BJJ journey I developed the Zen Jiu Jitsu protocol to overcoming any plateaus and improving your game 100%. I know I said 1000% on the cover but that was more of a typo than anything else. It does work very well though and if you can stay with it for a month then you WILL improve.

Plateaus, can even be seen as good things. They give our brain and body a rest, just recognize it. Don't worry that other members of your team are speeding up or your game isn't clicking, it will come back.

Take this time to drill your A-game and keep supple, maybe cross-train a little. Don't press the action though, it rarely works. A friend of mine who trains (really hard) struggles with plateaus. Every time he hits a flat spot he panics and wants to quit. This isn't the time. Pressing the action usually leads to an injury. Stay cool and your performance will get you back on track before you know it.



Chapter 7 - Nutrition Tips

I had to use the expression Tips here, even though I don't like that term, as I'm not a dietician or any kind of health care expert. But I do manage to keep my diet healthy and body fat under control. This seems to get harder as I get older and I'm way over the 40 marker so if these 'tips' help a couple of my BJJ brethren get their waistline under control it's worth a mention.

1. Lower Carbs. I'm sure this comes as no surprise as most diet 'systems' these days employ some kind of lower carb process. If you can cut carbs out until much later in the day then this is a more effective way to utilize fat for energy. Try to stay as Carb Free as possible in the mornings, that's when sensitivity to insulin is the highest.

2. Use Intermittent Fasting. This is one of the nutrition processes that has made the most difference to me. Intermittent Fasting (I.F.) uses the basic logic that once you have the last meal of the day then you don't have anything else to eat until lunchtime the next day. If you have some cereal or something of this nature at 10pm then don't have anything else (yes, that means no breakfast) until noon the next day then you have gone over twelve hours with no food. In effect a real fast and then if you have a low carb meal with some fats even over a short period you will lose weight - fat weight and not muscle weight.

3. Use the morning hours to repair. Instead of breakfast I only drink coffee with heavy whip. Sounds like a fat fest but it contains nothing that might spike insulin, and that's what you are trying to avoid at this stage. Around mid morning I have a protein shake, which is made with coconut milk and ultra low carb protein powder. This aids with recovery and again does not spike insulin, so my fat is still burning and my muscle fiber repairing.

4. Don't jump on Weight Watchers. Or any of the other system based weight loss programs: Lean Cuisine, Jenny Craig, Nutri-system, etc. There is nothing bad with any of these weight loss programs per se, but they have one goal in mind - to make the numbers on a scale get lower. It doesn't matter if you are shedding water, fat, muscle tissue it's all the same to these companies who need to prove that you are getting thinner. That isn't our goal in BJJ. We need to stay healthy in terms of tissue (connective tissue, ligaments, joints) as well as keep our muscle tone in place. If we don't recover well between classes then this will make the long-term prognosis look very weak indeed.

I have found that Carb Nite and Carb Back Loading are both systems that work for well for BJJ. They can be pretty complex and they are not for everyone. A lot of powerlifters and bodybuilders use the protocols described in the manuals. I've been an advocate for over two years and they are the only thing that really works for me. Google them, then give them a try, they are not books you can get on Amazon so you have to track the information down (there is a link for Carb Nite in the back section of this manual). The old website that used to promote these books is no longer there but they have a fanatical following at Carb Back Loading so I'm sure they are still very active. Take a look and if you give it a try. The principal is to lose fat while retaining muscle, its worked for me.