

# WINNING JUDO

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*Realistic and Practical Skills for Competitive Judo*

**STRATEGIES  
THAT WIN**  
*for all grappling  
styles*

**STEVE SCOTT**

*Foreword by John Saylor, 8th dan*



## Advance Praise for *Winning Judo*

“Once again, Steve Scott, the most prolific American writer for judo knowledge, has produced a new book on successful play, practice, and competitive judo principles for all levels of judoka. Careful reading is sure to expand one’s thoughts, first on the important basics of our sport, second as it accompanies us throughout life’s journey as we study our favorite sport.”

—**Bruce Toups**, 7<sup>th</sup> dan,  
former director of development, US Judo, Inc.,  
US team coach and team leader to numerous international judo tournaments

“This is the type of book I wish I had when I started out in judo as a teenager. *Winning Judo* offers real-world advice to every judo athlete, from a novice starting out to an elite-level judoka looking for a competitive edge.”

—**John Saylor**, 8th dan,  
US National Judo Champion,  
Pan American Judo Medalist,  
Retired Head Coach of the US Olympic Training Center Judo Squad,  
Director of the Shingitai Jujitsu Association,  
Author of *Strength and Conditioning Secrets of the World’s Greatest Fighters*,  
*Conditioning for Combat Sports* and *Vital Jujitsu*

“I have always enjoyed Steve Scott’s works. His latest book *Winning Judo* reminds me of my extensive studies and training camps of judo and sambo in the former Soviet Republics. Just like the Soviet coaches and scientists did, Steve has broken down all aspects of judo training in this latest work. This book gives the judo athlete a comprehensive guide to training properly and helping to ensure competitive success on the mat, from local to international tournaments.”

—**Gregg Humphreys**, 5<sup>th</sup> dan,  
judo and sambo coach of Dynamo Grappling Concepts,  
North American editor for Igor Kurinnoy’s *SAMBO for Professionals* series

“Steve’s passion in life has been to help his athletes and students achieve excellence in their lives, both on and off the judo mat. His coaching helped me win World and Pan American Games gold medals, so I can personally tell you that what is written in this book works. Steve’s my husband as well as having been my personal coach for my athletic career, so I may be a bit biased, but this is a book that every judo or sambo athlete should own and read.”

—**Becky Scott**, 7<sup>th</sup> dan, World and Pan American Games sambo champion,  
US National judo champion,  
US Olympic Festival judo champion,  
US team coach for the World Judo Championships (under 21)

“This is the thinking woman (or man)’s book on judo. Whether you are a highly successful competitor or coach, a ‘weekend warrior who has to be at work on Monday’ or any other person who is interested in the whole of judo—history, vocabulary, and structure, this is the book for you.”

—**Dr. AnnMaria DeMars**, 7<sup>th</sup> dan,  
World and Pan American Games judo champion,  
US National judo champion,  
US Olympic Festival judo champion

“I’ve been in judo for over 50 years and have seen a lot of books, but when I first read Steve’s book, *Winning Judo*, I reacted by like a little girl opening a present and found myself enthusiastically saying, ‘That’s a great idea’ or ‘That’s really a cool drill’ on just about every page I read. This book is packed with practical knowledge and information and every judoka reading it will benefit. Steve is not only keeping the sport of judo alive by his work, he is also part of judo’s history.”

—**Grace Jividen**, 7<sup>th</sup> dan,  
World and Pan American Games sambo champion,  
1992 judo Olympian,  
world champion in judo for International Police and Fire Games,  
US National judo champion

“*Winning Judo* is a must-read for anyone looking to learn the art of competitive judo. This comprehensive book is a treasure trove of expert insights and effective techniques. Steve Scott’s passion and deep understanding of judo shine through on every page, making this book a valuable resource for both beginners and seasoned practitioners. I can’t recommend *Winning Judo* enough for every aspiring judoka or grappler of any style.”

—**Andrew Zerling**, martial artist,  
award-winning author of *Sumo for Mixed Martial Arts*

“One-step judo book. Steve Scott has done it, everything you want to know about judo in one book. Steve is an amazing person, teacher, coach, and author. Like his book, he is amazing too.”

—**Louis Moyerman**, 8<sup>th</sup> dan USA judo,  
team leader 2000 Olympics and 1999 Pan American Games,  
team manager for ten world events,  
Liberty Bell Judo Classic tournament director of twenty-eight years

“*Winning Judo* is a ‘Judo Bible.’ Everything is in here. Throws, chokes, pins, and armlocks, from every position. Plus, training methods, strategy, theory, and coaching. Every competitor, or judo enthusiast, should have this book. I wish I had it when I was competing in the 80s and 90s. Steve Scott is the most dedicated coach in judo today, still producing champions.”

—**Janet Trussell**, 5<sup>th</sup> dan,  
World and Pan American Games sambo champion,  
Pan American judo champion,  
US National champion in judo, sambo, and freestyle wrestling

“*Winning Judo* offers a deep analysis on the various judo techniques, training drills and competition strategies. A must-read for athletes, parents, and coaches who practice the art of judo.”

—**Donna Turk**, Pan American Games sambo silver medalist,  
US National judo medalist

“Steve Scott’s *Winning Judo* tells and shows both the elite and recreational judoka how to best prepare, train, compete, and win in competition judo. Judo competition is a complex and often daunting challenge, and *Winning Judo* is a guide you will use immediately and often to become a winner in today’s sport of judo. I’ve trained an Olympian as well as other elite level athletes as well as recreational players and can tell you that this is bread and butter winning judo advice.”

—**Tom Crone**, 7<sup>th</sup> dan, former member US National coaching staff,  
head coach of NorthStar Judo Club, author of *Shichidan, Judo Basics*

“*Winning Judo* by Steve Scott is one of the most thoroughly thought out and detailed judo books I have had the privilege to explore. Judo principles, concepts, tactics, strategies, and kinesiology can all be found in this book along with training, competition, and safety tips. This book is great for students, athletes, and coaches alike. Every grappler regardless of rank or style should have this book in their collection. I love the breakdown and usage of the Japanese terminology. The contents of this book are a testament of the wealth of knowledge and experience possessed by Sensei Steve Scott. I am grateful that he has taken the time and effort to share this wisdom with us all. I am looking forward to using this book as a reference guide for my own students and recommending it to all my fellow judo and jiu-jitsu peers.”

—**Larry W. Keith**, Kodokan Judo 3<sup>rd</sup> dan, BJJ 1st degree black belt,  
author of *Takedown Secrets*, host of Takedown Confidence Summit,  
owner Dynamic Martial Arts, LLC

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# **WINNING JUDO**

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**Editor's Note:** Throughout this book, readers will see mention of US Judo, judo's national governing body. This organization is also known as US Judo, Inc. and USA Judo. For our purposes, the terms are synonymous.

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# FOREWORD

It's a great personal pleasure to write the foreword for Steve Scott's book *Winning Judo*. This book is aptly named, as it offers sound, practical advice on what it takes to be successful in the sport of judo. This is the kind of book I wish I'd had when I started my judo career, and it's also the kind of book that elite-level judo athletes and coaches will find enormously useful. For those who are looking for real-world advice on every aspect of training and competing in judo, such as cutting weight, drill-training, strategy and tactics, dealing with the stress of competition, and many other vital components of being a success in competitive judo, this book should prove to be a "go to" source of information for years to come.

Steve and I have been friends for many years and have coached together at many national and international training camps. We were the two coaches selected by the national governing body of judo to attend the USOC Coaches College at the US Olympic Training Center in Colorado Springs, Colorado, starting in 1984. I distinctly remember, after attending the daily classroom presentations by some of America's foremost coaches and sports scientists, sitting on the mat in the Olympic Training Center's dojo comparing notes with Steve. We were both young and upcoming judo coaches and excited about how we could have a positive impact on judo in the United States. It was during these conversations that I realized Steve had the technical and organizational ability to coach judo athletes so that they would be able to meet their full potential, both as athletes and as human beings. Through the years, he's proven me right. Steve has developed national- and international-level athletes in judo, sambo, and other grappling sports at his Welcome Mat Judo Club as well as international judo champions when he worked as the national coordinator and head coach for the under-twenty-one program with our national governing body. I worked closely with Steve at many national training camps held at the US Olympic Training Center and had more opportunities to discuss coaching judo with him. But, more importantly for those who read this book, Steve's practical experience as a coach at all levels of competition—from local judo tournaments to being the coach for the US team at the World Junior (under-twenty-one) Judo Championships, Pan American Judo Championships, and many other international tournaments—is reflected on the pages of this book.

When reading this book, you will notice that Steve has developed what I consider to be a complete system of attack (as well as defense) organized into progressive groups of skills. He peels back one layer after another to get to the core at what an athlete needs for success in the sport of judo. It's this focus on progressing from one level of skill development to the next and how to make it work for each individual athlete that has made him a successful coach, and that is what's presented in this great book.

One last thing. Everything in this book is based on sound principles of sports science that have proven successful at all levels of competitive judo. What you will see on these pages is both fundamentally sound and technically innovative, providing a reliable source of information.

—**John Saylor**, 8<sup>th</sup> Dan  
Former Coach, US Olympic Training Center Judo Squad  
US National Judo Champion and Pan American Medalist

# INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this book is to provide a realistic and practical guide to winning in competitive judo. The information contained on these pages can be used by experienced judo athletes as well as those who are starting out in the sport. In addition to explaining how to use or apply a particular technique, tactic, or drill, the reasons that technique, tactic, or drill works will be analyzed. All of this discussion aims at helping you be successful in the sport of judo.

Judo is based on sound principles of movement and biomechanics. It's a sequence of skills based on functional efficiency. Judo is also a tough and demanding sport that reveals the character of the person doing it.

Everything on these pages is based on a lifetime of experience, education, training, experimentation, and observation. I am fortunate to have gotten involved with judo during a time when many technical innovations were taking place. This was during the 1960s when growth took place in all aspects of judo, especially in competitive judo. Back then, judo was emerging as an international sport, and this led not only to the development of innovative techniques but also to innovative training methods, all absorbed from the wider audience that judo was attracting. Judo retained its value as a method of physical education but gained new prominence as a sport. As a sport, judo has proven to be one of the most challenging ever invented. As a method of physical education and means of personal growth, judo continues to fulfill Jigoro Kano's vision of his invention, Kodokan judo.

I wish to express my sincere thanks to my wife Becky Scott and to my great friends John Saylor, Dr. AnnMaria DeMars, Ken Brink, Tom Crone, and Dr. Phil Rumaboia for the technical expertise, advice, and input that they gave me in the writing of this book. The photographs for this book were provided by some consummate professionals; Terry Smemo, Mark Lozano, Sharon Vandenberg, Jorge Aldovar Garcia, Jake Pursley, and Joe Mace offered their considerable skills graciously and I sincerely thank them. The publisher of this book, David Ripianzi, was instrumental in getting this book written. David urged me for about a year to start this project, telling me that there was some more to say about judo and he was right. Doran Hunter, the editor of this book, did his usual masterful work in keeping me focused. Barbara Langley, our publicist, was a pleasure to work with again

as was the entire staff at YMAA Publication Center. Additionally, the athletes and coaches who train at Welcome Mat with me have contributed much to the quality of this book. I appreciate their input, time, and patience in demonstrating the skills presented on these pages.

It's always been my belief that, in any book, the author is having a discussion with the reader. Hopefully, if I'm successful as a writer, the words and images presented on these pages will elicit both thought and action on your part. Books are marvelous tools in that you can come back at a later date and gain another perspective or insight you didn't have before. This is certainly the case for me. There are books I have read, reread, and then read even more for many years. These books represent a valuable reference source as well as a source of inspiration to delve further into a subject. Books make us think and, of course, the purpose of this book is to make you think. Hopefully, you'll come back time and again to ponder what is presented in this book further and we can continue our "discussion" for many years to come.

—**Steve Scott**  
Kansas City, Missouri

## CHAPTER 1

# Some Background

*We all start somewhere and with somebody. It's where we end up that counts.*

—John Saylor

This short first section examines some fundamental topics that every athlete who aspires to be successful in judo should consider. This section starts out with a personal question about the reasons a person has for competing in judo and moves onto a variety of subjects that provide a background for appreciating the difficulty of achieving success in the sport of judo.

### *Why Do You Compete in Judo?*

This is a question you should ask yourself; and after asking it, think about it and give yourself an answer. There's no "right" or "wrong" answer, there is only your answer. There may be one reason or there may be many reasons why someone competes in a demanding sport like judo. But it's important that you consciously tell yourself the reasons why you're doing what you do so you can go about doing it better.

Every species on earth has to compete to survive and humans are no different. Some like to compete more than others and they like to compete with each other in different ways. It's human nature to want to prove oneself, to be tested and prevail. There are different kinds of

tests. Some people like to climb mountains and some people like to throw others on a mat. If you're reading this book, the odds are good that you are not a mountain climber.

## The Growth of the Sport of Judo

To have a better appreciation for gaining success in competitive judo, it's a good idea to know how judo developed into the modern Olympic sport that it is today. What follows is a brief history of judo's journey from the early years of Kodokan judo to today's international sport.

The sport of judo as we know it today was developed from Japanese jujutsu to become Jigoro Kano's Kodokan judo in 1882. It was from this foundation established by Kodokan judo that judo developed as a sport, growing and evolving in the twentieth century. The late 1800s and early 1900s were the time when the concept of "sport" as we know it now was beginning to develop. Many of the sports we do today were born during this period, including judo.

With the onset of the industrial revolution, life generally improved for most people from their earlier condition in agrarian societies. One benefit of the improved living conditions was having more leisure time. Also, more people lived in cities and had more interaction with others. Humans, as the competitive beings that we have always been, developed new methods of recreation and sport.

Jigoro Kano's timing couldn't have been better. His Kodokan judo was at the vanguard of the popularity of sports in the late 1800s. The modern Olympic movement was developing at this time, and in 1894 Pierre de Coubertin spearheaded the founding of the International Olympic Committee. In 1896, the first modern Olympics were held. Jigoro Kano saw the Olympics as an opportunity to further his new innovation in jujutsu: Kodokan judo.

Kano developed a relationship with de Coubertin that was both professional and friendly. Both men shared the same vision of using sport to improve the lives of people around the world. For his part, Kano worked to advance the Olympic movement in Japan as well as promote a wider acceptance of physical education in general. Part of this effort was getting judo accepted as part of the Japanese school curriculum. Along with his efforts to advance judo, Kano was a founder of the Japanese Olympic Committee, and in 1912 at the Stockholm Olympics he was the flag bearer in the opening ceremony representing Japan with its first two Olympic athletes who competed in track and field.

## CHAPTER 2

# Basics Win Matches

This section of the book focuses on the importance of fundamentals. No one has ever walked onto a judo mat and immediately became an elite-level athlete. Natural athletic talent is helpful, but judo is a sport made up of many complex skills that require serious effort and a lot of time to develop for anyone who aspires to be a champion. Anyone who thinks otherwise will have a short and limited career in judo.

During the course of his career, a judo athlete will train at a variety of dojos and with a variety of coaches. But every judo athlete starts his career somewhere and with somebody. This first exposure to judo is critical. Initially learning, practicing, and applying biomechanically efficient technical skills in judo is vital for long-term success at the sport. These technical skills are the basics of judo. There is a progression of technical skill as well as a progression of understanding and appreciation of judo for every successful judo athlete. For all of this to take place, there must be a solid foundation of technical skill provided by a judoka's initial coach.

Elite-level judo is simply the basics performed to their full potential. No judo champion ever skipped learning the fundamental skills of judo. Basics do indeed win matches. Not only are the technical fundamentals of throwing and grappling necessary for an aspiring judoka, learning and understanding the theories and philosophies of why Kodokan judo works are also necessary. To begin, let's examine the basics.

## What Are the Basics?

When beginning anything (including judo), learning the basics sets the foundation for more advanced study, application, and appreciation of that subject. But what are the basics of judo?

They are skills and movements that focus on the gross motor skill of applying a technique or movement in judo. These gross skills don't require a lot of intricate or refined physical actions on the part of the beginner. They are simple, direct, and don't require higher levels of critical thinking.

Basics are also skills readily learned by a beginner, giving him a real sense of accomplishment in a relatively short period of time. These are skills a beginner can apply on a non-resisting partner initially. These gross motor skills progress to fine motor skills as the student progresses. What often takes place in skill progression is that a student will apply the skill he initially learned and apply it in a more practical or realistic situation. These basic skills are lead-up skills that logically progress to more advanced application of the initially learned skill and then on to more complex and intricate patterns of movement.

Throwing techniques such as *koshi guruma* (hip wheel), *ogoshi* (major hip throw), *uki goshi* (floating hip throw), *kubi nage* (neck throw), and *o soto gari* (major outer reap) are techniques that focus on gross motor skills and don't require a great deal of intricate movement for a beginning student to grasp them.

From these basic techniques, the coach can add another layer of technical skill and progress the students to the next level of ability. For example, *koshi guruma* (hip wheel) is a good lead-up skill in order for a student to learn *ippon seoi nage* (one-arm back carry throw). Another example is starting a student with *kubi nage* (neck throw) and progressing on to *tai otoshi* (body drop). One thing leads to another in a logical progression of adding more layers to the initial technique or skill.

Pinning techniques such as *kesa gatame* (scarf hold) or *mune gatame* (chest hold) are good examples of techniques that take a relatively short amount of time for a beginner to understand and apply successfully. From these initial pins, a student can quickly progress in his or her learning and acquire the ability to turn a training partner over and secure the pin. From this set of skills, the coach can add another layer of skill and teach beginners how to escape from these pins. This sequence of learning starts with the coach teaching a technique that doesn't require a lot of fine motor skills to learn or master. As the students developed skill, understanding, and confidence in the technique, another layer of skill can



## CHAPTER 3

# Factors of Success

This section of the book focuses on the factors that make for a solid foundation of technical and tactical skill in competitive judo. The previous chapter stressed the importance of basics and this chapter will examine how each judo athlete can adapt and personalize the basics to work in the most effective way for him.

### **Judo Is Gripping and Movement**

Fundamentally, judo is a contest of gripping and movement. If you control the grip, you control the movement. While there are unlimited permutations of what can take place in a judo match, it really all comes down to gripping and movement. The athlete who has the better grip will control how his opponent moves around the mat. This is what I call “control judo.”

The basic strategy of control judo has two tactical applications: 1. Control and nullify an opponent’s ability to move about the mat freely and prevent him from launching an attack. Shut him down as much as possible. 2. Increase your ability to move about the mat freely and increase your ability to launch your attack. In other words, make your opponent fight your kind of fight. Control and nullify his movement. Prevent him from getting the grip he wants. By doing this, you increase your chances of doing what you want in the

match. Effective grip fighting limits your opponent's mobility and his ability to fight the kind of match he wants to fight.

In any field of endeavor, whether it's a judo contest, a business operation or armies fighting in a war, a basic precept of every successful judoka, businessman, or general is to control and limit an adversary's ability to be successful. The ultimate goal for a judo athlete is to be able to be as free as possible to apply his skills and win the contest. To do this, he must be physically and mentally fit enough to accomplish the task as well as be technically skilled enough to accomplish the task. But just as important, he must make sure that his opponent doesn't have the opportunity to apply his skills. By no means is this to imply that an athlete resorts to cheating. It means that a key factor of success in a combat sport like judo, an athlete not only must apply his own skills, but he must limit his opponent's ability to apply his skills.

### Control Judo: The Tactics of Judo

Control judo is simple in concept but takes work to accomplish. Control as many aspects of every situation as possible and use them to your advantage. Control the grip and control the opponent's movement. Control the clock and use the allotted match time to your advantage. Control as many aspects of the contest as possible for as long as possible during the match. It's not always possible to win by a resounding ippon, and because of this, an athlete will have to rely on his tactical ability to win a tight, hard-fought match. Control judo is tactical judo. When it comes down to who will stand on top of the podium, this is important.

The most physically gifted athlete, the toughest guy in the tournament, or the athlete with the best technique doesn't always win. In a competitive match, where the contestants are equally matched, the athlete who knows how to get the tactical advantage is often the winner. Knowing how to fight hard is important, but it's just as important to know how to fight smart. A tactically aware judo athlete should never want a "fair fight." That's not to say that the mat officials should be unfair to an opponent, but what it does mean is that a tactically smart judoka should do everything possible to have an advantage as often as possible in every aspect of the match. The goal for a judo athlete is to control as many aspects of a match as possible, imposing your will and forcing your opponent to fight on your terms, not his.

## CHAPTER 4

# Efficient Training Produces Effective Results

*Never miss practice.*

—Jigoro Kano

This section of the book focuses on efficient training methods. Training is the activity of improving a person’s capacity for a specific task or behavior. It’s a process, and the more efficient the process, the more effective the result of that process will be. This process of training is called practice. Practice is a systematic or repeated performance for the purposes of becoming proficient at something. It is more than simply showing up and rolling around on the mat. There has to be a reason for everything that is done in training.

### **Train Hard and Train Smart**

There is no “secret” to being successful in a difficult sport like judo. A judo athlete must train hard and train smart. In other words, everything done while training on the mat (and off the mat) must have a purpose and be focused in order to train in the most efficient way to achieve that purpose. This is what is meant by “training smart.” Showing up and working hard at practice is laudable, but it’s not enough for an athlete who wants to excel

at competitive judo. There must be a reason for everything done in training, and everything must be geared toward a specific goal. On the other hand, training smart isn't a replacement for training hard. These concepts must be mutual to get optimal results from training. If a judoka truly trains "smart," he or she will invariably train "hard." An athlete will push himself harder if he understands the purpose of what he is doing in a training session because he will then know why he is doing something and therefore be better able to discern how to get the best results from his training. This is a smart, informed, and objective approach to training.

A judo athlete must be prepared both aerobically and anaerobically much more than athletes in many other sports (more on aerobic and anaerobic training later). A sprinter trains to run fast in a straight line. A powerlifter trains to lift heavy weights. A gymnast must train so he or she has control over his or her own body in order to perform physically complex technical skills. But a judo athlete also trains to perform physically complex technical skills, and he has to train so that he attains control over not only his own body but also control over his opponent's body.

### Three Levels of Training Intensity

There are three levels of development and preparation in judo training.

**General Preparation (GP) or "Accumulation Phase":** This level of intensity is what most of us do on a regular basis. It's the normal workout we get when we go to the dojo. Judo is first and foremost a method of physical education and this is when we accumulate technical knowledge and skills as well as physical fitness through judo training. Some workouts will be harder than others. For some people, practicing judo once or twice a week is enough; others may wish to train more often during the week. Training at this level doesn't prevent a judoka from entering judo tournaments and enjoying competitive judo if he or she wishes. But competitive judo isn't the entire focus of training at this level. For a majority of judo enthusiasts, this level of training is sufficient for a well-rounded education and training experience in judo.

**Directed Preparation (DP) or "Intensification Phase":** For those so inclined to pursue judo as a competitive activity, the next phase of training is more intense. Directed preparation consists of the methods used that are in some way more focused on success in competitive judo. It's during this level of training that a judoka will engage in more off-mat training in order to increase his or her aerobic and anaerobic fitness to supplement

## CHAPTER 5

# Gripping and Movement

Your first contact with your opponent is with your hands. How you grab or grip your opponent plays a vital role in your success. The purpose of gripping is to control your opponent's body and how, where, and when he moves it. The better that a judo athlete controls the grip, the better he will control how his opponent moves. Gripping and movement combine to control an opponent's body. This section of the book concentrates on how the effective use of gripping and holding onto an opponent often determines how and where that opponent moves. The first part of this section focuses on gripping and grip fighting, and the second part of this section focuses on movement in judo and how movement is determined by gripping.

### Gripping in Judo

How you grab onto your opponent directly determines how, where, and when he moves. Likewise, how your opponent grabs onto you determines how, where, and when you move. The judo athlete who controls the grip will control the movement. Gripping and movement are linked together in the same way a train engine pulls the freight cars. The grip is the engine and determines how, where, and when the freight cars move. Let's now examine gripping and grip fighting.

## Everything Is a Handle

Any grip that works for you with a high rate of success is a good grip. In most cases, the throw you choose is designed from the grip that you control your opponent with or counter with. Knowing the many ways to grip, grab, and manipulate your opponent to control him is an essential skill in judo. It's best to think that every part of your opponent's body and uniform (and every part of your body and uniform) are handles. Everything is a handle when it comes to gripping. Using your hands to grab your opponent is the primary way of connecting your body to his, but you should learn how to use your arms, elbows, shoulders, hips, and any part of your body possible to control him. Generally, if you are a right-handed thrower, your right hand/arm is the "steering hand/arm" and your left hand/arm is the "leading hand/arm." The Japanese consider the right hand the "tsurite" or "lifting hand" and the left hand the "hikite" or the "pulling hand."

### *Tying Your Opponent Up with the Grip*

If you think of your grip on your opponent's jacket in the same way you would think of wrapping a belt or rope around him, you have a good concept of how to control your opponent with your grip. If you successfully control your opponent's grip, you are "tying him up" with the grip, controlling and breaking his posture, controlling his body movement, controlling the tempo of the action, and ultimately controlling how you throw him to the mat. Your grip is the first link in how you throw your opponent. Your posture and your opponent's posture are part of how you grip with him and dictate the type of throw you will choose to attack or counter with. The space between your hips and your opponent's hips dictates the posture and often dictates how you will choose to grip fight with him.

## Take Control: Tactical Purpose of Gripping

Don't just show up on the mat and "see what happens"; take control from the start of the match. To accomplish this, you must have a plan and the plan you have is made up of the tactics you employ. This starts with how you grip your opponent. There are two primary purposes in grip fighting. They are: 1. Control your opponent in order to give yourself more mobility and freedom of movement. In doing this, control the space between your body and your opponent's body. By doing this, you must also control how slow or fast you and your opponent move about the mat (the tempo or pace). 2. Control your opponent to

## CHAPTER 6

# Throws, Transitions, and Defense

*No matter what you call it, just call it ippon!*

—Don Bunch

This section of the book focuses on three related areas of competitive judo skill: throwing techniques, transitions from standing to the mat, and defensive skills. While there are sixty-seven throwing techniques recognized by the Kodokan, the reality is that there are countless ways of throwing another human being to the mat. The only limiting factors are the imagination of the judo athlete and the mechanics of how the human body works. This section will first examine some throwing techniques that effectively serve as both ways of scoring points and transitioning to groundfighting. This first examination of throwing techniques will blend into an analysis of some transition skills you might find interesting. Finishing up this section will be an analysis of defensive skills in standing judo.

### **Nage Waza**

Nage waza are the throwing techniques of judo. Nage translates to “throw, cast, or fling,” and waza translates to “techniques.” Competitive judo consists of about 70 percent throwing techniques and about 30 percent groundfighting techniques.

## Many Throwing Techniques Merge Together

In many situations, throws used in competitive judo will merge or blend into each other. For instance, a throwing attack starting out as *o soto gari* (major outer reap) can quickly turn into an *ashi guruma* (leg/foot wheel) or a *harai goshi* (sweeping hip). For this reason, when making an analysis of throwing techniques, I will make a grouping of throws that are similar in one or more ways to what takes place in actual competitive judo situations. This is why one of my athletes Don Bunch said, “No matter what you call it, just call it *ippon!*”

## Throws, Takedowns, and Transitions: Their Purpose

There are differences among throws, takedowns, and transitions. Each has its own distinct purpose technically and tactically, and a smart athlete will use each of these skills to his advantage. There is a difference in the purpose of each, and sometimes it's a blurred line that divides them, but it's the intent of the attacker that really determines whether a technique is a throw, takedown, or transition. Realistically, the intent of the attacker is based on the tactical situation in the match in which he is engaged.

Here's a good example of how tactical considerations affect whether to use a throw, takedown, or transition. Some years ago, one of my athletes was competing in the finals of a regional judo tournament against a rugged wrestler who also competed in judo. On scouting the opponent in his earlier matches, we noticed that this athlete had an effective defense against the throws of all of his opponents. Additionally, while he was a strong wrestler, we noticed that he made some mistakes by extending his arms out too far when in groundwork. This opponent looked to be a hard guy to throw, and while my athlete was skillful at throwing techniques, he was even more skillful at doing *juji gatame*. We knew that our best bet was to get this guy on the mat quickly and work him over with *juji gatame*. In the final, after some preliminary grip fighting, that's exactly what my athlete did. He used a *yoko tomoe nage* to transition immediately to *juji gatame* to get the tap-out and win by *ippon*. A bit later, the referee of the match told me that my athlete was “lucky to win by a trick armlock since he couldn't throw the other guy.” My reply was that my athlete had no intention of throwing his opponent and wanted to get him onto the mat to armlock him. The referee replied with a question, “Why would he want to do that?” I said, “Because he wanted to win, and he did.” In this case, the tactically smart thing to do was to use a transition to get the opponent to the mat and apply an armlock.



## CHAPTER 7

# Transitions

*I would get them to the mat and have my way with them.*

—AnnMaria DeMars

Transitions are an essential part of competitive judo and deserve the same attention that throwing and grappling techniques get. A transition is a continuous and planned link from one technique or situation to another. In this sense, a transition is a *renzoku waza* or continuation technique because there is continuity in the movement from start to finish. Often, a judoka will use a transition from a standing position to set something up in groundfighting, and to most judo athletes and coaches, this planned continuation from standing to the ground is what they envision a transition to be. But techniques can be linked to another in groundfighting as well, and for that matter, from one standing situation to another standing technique. Another transition situation is for the attacker to start a transition from groundfighting against a standing opponent. A great thing about judo is that you can make an attack from any position, even if you are on the mat and your opponent is standing over you. In this section, we obviously can't analyze all transitions, but we will examine some selected situations that happen frequently.

## Three Types of Transitions from Throwing to Groundfighting

There are three types of transitions from standing to the mat. The defining feature in all three is that each is a sequence of events that finish with the attacker controlling the defender to secure the winning score.

**Finish with a Specific Technique:** In the first type, the attacker has a specific attack he wants to finish his opponent with. An example is to use a yoko tomoe nage (side or spinning circle throw) as the attack used to get the opponent down onto the mat in order to apply juji gatame (crossbody armlock). In this type of transition, the attacker visualizes his opponent in the finished position; it's just a matter of executing the move after that. The attacker elicits a response from the defender with a pre-determined outcome. This type of transition is not so much an actual throwing technique that leads to groundwork; rather, the initial attack is made to look like a throw in order to convince the referee that it is a legitimate throwing attempt, ending in groundwork. The contest rules of judo stipulate that a legitimate throwing attack is the only way to get an opponent to the mat; dragging, pulling, or snapping an opponent down to the mat isn't permitted. In this type of transition, the attacker really has no intention of throwing his opponent; he simply wants to get his opponent on the mat and apply a submission technique. What may look like a yoko tomoe nage is really a good disguise for getting the opponent to the mat in order to finish him off with a juji gatame.

**The Insurance Policy:** The second type of transition is to think of a transition as an "insurance policy" in case the referee doesn't award a score for your throw. An immediate transition from the throwing attack to the mat using a pre-planned pin, choke, or armlock to finish the opponent is the "insurance" needed to secure the win. This type of transition is used when the attacker knocks his opponent to the mat but either doesn't get a score for the throw or receives a score less than ippon. In this case, the attacker will immediately transition to a pin, choke, or armlock to finish his opponent.

**Makikomi:** A third way to transition is a makikomi. The word makikomi translates to "winding or wrapping around a fixed object." A makikomi is the finishing action where the attacker lands on or near his opponent with considerable force. Getting thrown by an opponent who finishes with a makikomi is not a pleasant experience, to say the least. Throwing an opponent and using a makikomi to finish the throw often results in a definite ippon score. However, that may not always be the case, so in many situations, the attacker who finishes with a makikomi can quickly transition to a pin in order to finish the opponent in case the referee didn't call ippon.

Everything in judo is connected somehow and in some way. Transitions provide a natural link between throwing techniques and groundfighting techniques, and the only limita-

tions on how to use transitions from standing to matwork are an athlete's imagination and the physical limitations of the human body. Here are some selected transitions that have good rates of success in all levels of competition.

**A Throw to Pin Transition Type 1:** Here's a sequence that every judo athlete has seen and done: completing a throw and immediately finishing an opponent with a pin. In this case, the attacker scored ippon for his efforts but had his "insurance policy" handy by immediately pinning his opponent upon landing on the mat. In this type of a throw/pin transition, the attacker's intention is to throw his opponent for an ippon, and the transition to the pin ensures victory for the attacker.

**Throw to Pin:** The attacker has his opponent at the power peak of the throw and is controlling the entire action.



Upon landing, the attacker uses a makikomi (winding finish) to add more force to the landing for his opponent, all the while maintaining control.



The attacker finishes the throw with a hard landing for his opponent. This hard landing momentarily stuns the opponent and takes the fight out of him, making a quick transition to a pin easier for the attacker.



The attacker transitions to kesa gatame (scar hold) to finish his opponent in the event an ippon wasn't called by the referee.

**Throw-to-Pin Transition Type 2:** This is another common throw-to-pin transition sequence, but in this case, the attacker's main purpose is to get the opponent to the mat in order to apply a pin. Getting a score for the throw is secondary to getting the opponent to the mat. One of the most common and effective of this type of transition is the knee-drop seoi nage (back carry throw) to a pin (most often the pin used is kesa gatame or scarf hold).

**Knee-Drop to Pin:** The attacker goes under the defender's center of gravity with a suwari (both knees) ippon seoi nage (one-arm back carry throw). A good score can be gained with this throw, but the attacker's primary intent is to get low under her opponent and to the mat in order to pin her. If the referee calls ippon to secure the win, all the better for the attacker.



The attacker finishes the throw, making sure that her body is solidly connected to her opponent's body and there is no space between them. This is a low, short, and compact throw designed to get the defender onto her back and permit the attacker to immediately apply the pin to secure the victory.

The attacker has completed the throw and immediately works to secure the pin.



**Ko Uchi Makikomi to Pin:** Another effective transition that is difficult for an opponent to counter and has a high rate of success is using ko uchi makikomi (minor inner wrapping throw) to get an opponent to the mat and quickly apply a pin. This technique is low to the ground and hard for an opponent to counter. The primary purpose of this throw is to get the opponent to the mat in order to secure the pin, but in many cases, this throw produces a hard landing for the defender and may result in an ippon.

**Ko Uchi Makikomi to Pin:** The attacker comes in low with a hard-driving action with the intention of getting the defender onto his back as quickly as possible. Ko uchi makikomi is considered a “safe” throw for the attacker because it is hard for the defender to block or counter.



Look at how the attacker drives forward using her left leg and foot to hook the defender low on his leg, near his ankle. Also, look at how the attacker uses his left hand to drive and steer the defender onto his back.



The attacker completes the throw but makes sure to not remain between her opponent's legs. If she remains between the legs, the defender may be able to wrap his legs around her and stop her from continuing on to the pin.



The attacker immediately swings her right leg over the defender's left leg to start the transition to the pin. If you don't immediately pass over your opponent's leg, you will get stuck between your opponent's legs and be at a stalemate.



The attacker passes over the defender's left leg and hip to start the pin.



The attacker finishes with mune gatame (chest hold) to secure the ippon.

**A Throw to an Armlock Transition:** This is a transition where the attacker has no intention of throwing the opponent; he merely wants his initial attack to look like a throw and get the opponent to the ground in order to apply a submission technique. If the attack looks enough like a throw to fool the referee, good for you and bad for your opponent. You will notice that the armlock used in these transitions is juji gatame (crossbody armlock). This is because juji gatame is such a versatile armlock that can be applied from just about any position. Several transitions where the attacker starts from a standing position and finishes with an armlock will be analyzed.

**Yoko Tomoe Nage to Juji Gatame:** In this first sequence, the attacker uses a yoko tomoe nage (side or spinning circle throw) to get his opponent to the mat in order to apply juji gatame (crossbody armlock). This is a popular and effective transition that has been used for years and continues to be effective at all levels of competition.

**Yoko Tomoe Nage to Juji Gatame:** The attacker faces his opponent and leads with his left foot as shown. The attacker uses his right hand to grip his opponent's left lapel and his left hand to grip his opponent's right sleeve.



The attacker places his right foot on his opponent's left hip as shown. As he does this, the attacker spins to his right and under his opponent, using his right hand to pull down on the opponent's left lapel.

The attacker spins under his opponent as shown. As he does this, he pulls his opponent down so that the opponent is bent over forward.





The attacker swings his left leg over his opponent's neck as he continues to spin under him.



The attacker rolls his opponent over and finishes in the leg press position ready to apply juji gatame.

**Foot Push to Juji Gatame:** In this transition, the attacker must make his initial foot push look like a failed throw and then immediately transition to the juji gatame. Often, the defender is taken to the mat and lands face down. This disorients him for long enough to allow the attacker to apply the juji gatame. This transition has a good rate of success, especially against skilled opponents who may more easily stop a yoko tomoe nage to juji gatame transition.

**Foot Push to Juji Gatame:** The attacker uses his right foot to jam in the left hip and upper leg area of his opponent as he rolls to his right side.



The attacker is on his right side and uses his right foot to push his opponent's hip and upper leg area. Doing this extends his opponent's right arm.

The attacker uses his left foot and leg to swing over his opponent's extended right arm and head.





The attacker swings his left leg over his opponent's head as he uses both of his hands and arms to pull his opponent's extended right arm tightly to his chest. The attacker is rolling to his right as he does this.

The attacker has rolled over onto his front as shown and thrusts his hips forward. Doing this creates pressure on his opponent's extended arm.



If the attacker chooses, he can add more pressure to the armlock by continuing to roll onto his left side as shown.

**Knock Down to Juji Gatame:** Keeping in mind that in order to enter into ground-fighting from a standing position, the attacker must attempt what appears to be an actual (and legitimate) throwing technique. Often, the attacker will use his hands and arms to snap his opponent down to the mat or fake a foot sweep or prop to knock his opponent to the mat in order to make it look like a valid throwing attempt to fool the referee. This sequence shows how the attacker has snapped or knocked his opponent to the mat and follows through with a rolling juji gatame.

**Knock Down to Juji Gatame:** The attacker uses his hands and arms to pull his opponent down to the mat.







As his opponent goes to the mat, the attacker places his left leg near the opponent's right shoulder and starts to swing his leg over the opponent's right shoulder.

The attacker steps over his opponent with his right leg and starts to roll over his right shoulder. Doing this extends the opponent's right arm.



As the attacker rolls over his right shoulder, he uses his feet and leg to hook and control his opponent's head. As he does this, the attacker continues to use both of his hands and arms to pull and control the attacker's extended right arm.

The attacker rolls his opponent over and onto his back.



The attacker immediately applies juji gatame.

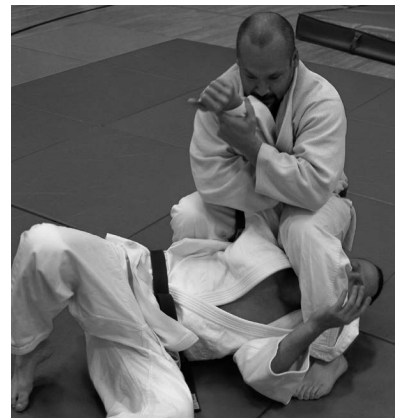
**Knee-Drop Throw to Juji Gatame:** In the same way a judo athlete can use a knee-drop seoi nage (back carry throw) in order to transition to a pin, the same can be done with a knee-drop seoi nage to juji gatame. The attacker's intent is to get the defender to the mat and apply juji gatame, but if the referee awards as score for the throw, that's even better.

**Knee-Drop to Juji Gatame:** The attacker uses a knee-drop ippon seoi nage (one-arm back carry throw) to throw his opponent.



The attacker immediately springs up and onto his feet and jams both of his knees into the side of his opponent's torso and neck as shown. As he does this, the attacker uses both of his hands and arms to pull his opponent's right arm to his chest.

The attacker swings his left leg over his opponent's head as he uses both hands and arms to trap his opponent's extended right arm to his chest as shown.



The attacker rolls back and applies juji gatame. Transitions from a throw to an armlock are effective, and every judo athlete should have at least one transition from a throw to an armlock in his or her arsenal of skills.

**Transitions When Opponent Attempts to Stand:** A good time to catch an opponent in a transition is when he is on the mat and attempts to stand up. It's a smart tactical move to make it look like you are attempting to throw him as he stands, but the referee may or may not award a score. One way to possibly get a score is to “sell” your attack by using a loud kiai (spirit shout) as you apply the transition.

**Transition to Pin:** Sometimes your opponent will hop up quickly onto his hands and feet if he has been down on the mat.



The attacker quickly uses his left arm to hook under the opponent's right shoulder and upper arm. The attacker uses his right hand to grab his opponent's jacket for control.

The attacker uses his right hand and arm to reach down his opponent's back and firmly grab the belt as shown.



The attacker uses his left hand to firmly grab his right arm. As he does this, the attacker starts to move to his left and under his opponent's right shoulder.



The attacker spins his opponent over and onto the mat.



The attacker immediately follows through and lands on his opponent to pin him.

### *Drill Training for Transitions*

As with any other set of skills, the best way to become proficient in transitions is to learn the correct way to perform linking standing throws to groundwork and then do a lot of drill training so that it becomes ingrained as a good habit.

Here are three drills that are effective in training for effective transitions and should be done on a regular basis. They are: 1. Spin and Pin Drill. 2. Spin and Stretch Drill. 3. Spin to Win Drill. The defender starts on her knees to better simulate taking a fall. Rather than taking a lot of hard falls from throws, you can perform many repetitions to develop skill in transitions by having the defender start on her knees.

**Spin-and-Pin Drill:** This drill is highly effective to teach and reinforce the skill of immediately following through with a pin after a throw. Doing this drill on a regular basis will significantly increase a judo athlete's skill in transitioning from a throw to a pin.

**Spin and Pin:** The attacker places his right foot in front of the defender's right knee as shown. As she does this, the attacker uses her right hand to reach around the defender's neck and grabs the defender's jacket at the right shoulder area. The attacker uses his left hand to grab the defender's right sleeve.



The attacker uses her left hand to pull on the defender's right sleeve and spin the defender over her extended right foot and leg as shown.



The attacker spins the defender over and onto her back.



The attacker immediately transitions to kesa gatame (scarf hold).



**Spin-and-Stretch Drill:** This drill simulates doing a throw and transitioning immediately into juji gatame (crossbody armlock). This drill is highly recommended for every judo athlete, but especially for those who compete at advanced or elite levels. Here's a personal story to illustrate how effective this drill is. Several years ago, in the first round of the World Sambo Championships, one of my athletes was paired against the previous year's silver medal winner. One of the primary drills we used in preparation for the tournament was this spin-and-stretch drill. My athlete had an effective tai otoshi (body-drop throw) but had also spent many hours doing this transition drill. With just nineteen seconds into the match, my athlete threw his opponent with tai otoshi and immediately transitioned to a juji gatame to get the tap out. After the match, my athlete said to me, "Coach, I owe you an apology." I asked him why. He said, "I've cussed you under my breath for the last four months in training because you made me do the spin-and-stretch drill over and over and that's exactly how I beat that guy. Thanks for making me do that drill."



**Spin and Stretch:** The attacker is standing in front of the kneeling defender. The attacker uses his left hand to grab the defender's right sleeve and uses his right hand to grab the defender's jacket at the upper back.



The attacker extends his right foot and leg, placing it in front of the defender's right knee as shown.

The attacker pulls the defender and spins him over his extended right foot and leg as shown.



The attacker spins the defender over and onto his back.

The attacker immediately squats low on the defender's right shoulder and head area as shown. The attacker swings his left foot and leg over the defender's head. Doing this traps the defender's head and upper body.



The attacker rolls back and applies juji gatame.



**Spin-to-Win Drill:** This drill teaches an athlete to pursue an opponent after a throw if the opponent attempts to get a stable base after being thrown by rolling over onto his or her front and getting onto all fours. This is an effective drill based on what really happens in a judo match, and doing this drill on a regular basis will increase a judo athlete's skill in transitions against opponents who roll out and get onto hands and knees.

The attacker uses her left hand to grab the defender's right sleeve and uses her right hand to grab the defender's upper back and shoulder area on the jacket. As she does this, the attacker places his right foot in front of the defender's right knee as shown.



The attacker uses his hands and arms to pull the defender over her extended right leg.

The defender is spun over onto her back but immediately rolls over onto her elbows and knees as shown. This is an important part of this drill as it simulates an opponent rolling out of a throw.





The attacker quickly moves to her right side and to the defender's left side and uses her left hand to hook and pull on the defender's right elbow. As she does this, the attacker uses her right hand and arm to grab around the defender's left upper leg.

The attacker rolls the defender over and onto his back as shown.



The attacker immediately applies mune gatame (chest hold) to pin the defender.



Only a few transition skills were analyzed in this section, but if you make it a point to develop your skills in transitioning from one technique to another, you will add another layer of skill to your judo. A good way to think about transitions is that they are the mortar that holds the bricks of a house together. Just like mortar, transitions firmly bind techniques together into a cohesive and efficient sequence of movements, resulting in control for the judo athlete who applies them.



## CHAPTER 8

# An Aggressive Defense

*Make him sorry for attacking you.*

—Rene Pommerelle

Defense is more than simply avoiding defeat; it's an integral part of imposing your will on your opponent. This section of the book focuses on an aggressive defense. An aggressive defense is based on the tactical combat concept of kobo ichi where offense and defense are one and the same thing and are used interchangeably as the situation dictates. This means that you not only defend yourself; you force your opponent into making mistakes that can be used to defeat him.

### **An Aggressive Defense Wins Matches**

Don't simply seek to avoid or evade an opponent's attack; prevent it from taking place. But if it does, stop it dead in its tracks. There is both a physical difference and a psychological difference between avoiding or evading an opponent's throwing attack as opposed to shutting it down and stopping it dead in its tracks. Avoiding an attack is passive in nature. A judoka reacts to what his opponent does. Stopping an attack is aggressive in nature because it's proactive. This proactive approach is what defines an aggressive defense.

## More About Kobo Ichi: Counterattacks

Kobo ichi is discussed elsewhere in this book; it is the central concept in the tactics of a judo contest. A practical example of kobo ichi as a tactical aspect of an aggressive defense is that it will lure an opponent into a trap. Much like the concept of counterpunching in boxing, an intelligent judoka can set his opponent up into making a mistake and then capitalize on that mistake with his counterattack. A good example of how you can use this is to use a “sugar foot” to lure an opponent into extending his foot and leg in his attempt to sweep or reap you. A sugar foot is where you place your foot and leg out just far enough to tempt your opponent into going for it. When he does, you can quickly launch your counterattack that you had planned all along. This is an old tactic, but it continues to work at all levels of judo. Kobo ichi is a state of mind as well as an actual occurrence. If an athlete constantly seeks to control or attack his opponent and views the time when he has to defend himself as an opportunity to turn it around and beat his opponent, he has the advantage over his opponent. Knowing that a good defense limits and nullifies what an opponent can do is part of imposing your will on your opponent and gives you a psychological edge.

## Training for Defense

As with any skill, if you don't practice defense, you won't be very good at it. An athlete is as only good as what his training produces. Probably one of the most neglected aspects of training in judo is in the area of defense against throwing techniques. This is true from both a technical aspect (the physical act of defending against a throw), but also from a tactical aspect (using defense to control the action in the match).

There are two effective methods for practicing an aggressive defense.

The first is drill training on the hip block and cut-away defense on a regular basis. The hip block and cut-away defense (more on this a bit later) is the most effective defensive skill used in standing judo. Perform this drill with the training partners doing a specified number of attacks on the left side and the same number of attacks on the right side. This can also be done as a timed drill where each judoka has thirty or sixty seconds to attack and defend. This is a skill drill where there is cooperation between the athletes. This drill can progress to a more realistic drill where one judoka attacks his partner (with varying degrees of intensity) for a specified time period and the partner must defend against all of them

## CHAPTER 9

# The Groundfighting of Judo

Groundfighting in modern competitive judo takes place in many positions and situations. Often, the tempo in groundfighting in judo is fast, especially in contrast to the tempo in other forms of submission grappling. And, as in the standing aspect of competitive judo, groundfighting has changed over the course of judo's history, both from external sources such as Western-style wrestling and sambo, and just from the natural development of this aspect of judo. This section of the book will examine selected pins, chokes, and armlocks of competitive judo, as well as practical ways of applying them using the different breakdowns, turnovers, and other entry methods used in judo.

### **Newaza, the Guard, Groundfighting, and Groundwork**

The earliest position for grappling on the mat in judo was “newaza” or “newaza no seme-kata.” Newaza translates to “supine techniques” and newaza no semekata translates to “attack forms of supine techniques.” (This phrase “newaza no semekata” was popularized in the book *Newaza of Judo* by Sumiyuki Kotani, Yoshimi Osawa, and Yuichi Hirose and published in 1968 by Koyo Bussan Kaisha, Ltd.) From a technical standpoint, newaza places emphasis on osaekomi waza (pinning), shime waza (strangling), and kansetsu waza (joint locks). Early in judo's history, striking, leglocks, neck cranks, wristlocks, and other submission techniques were permitted, but as injuries increased and the safety of the con-

testants was constantly at risk, the rules gradually changed. Kodokan judo's emphasis was (and continues to be) placed on nage waza (throwing techniques) over katame waza (grappling techniques). All contests start standing up, but in reality this simply reflects the nature of real fighting. A good way to look at the rules of judo, especially in groundfighting, is that they mirror what actually takes place in a self-defense situation. If you throw an assailant hard onto the ground, you will injure him and it often ends the fight. In the rules of judo, if you throw an opponent hard onto the mat, it ends the match with ippon. If for some reason, in a street fight, you throw your opponent but not with enough control or force to injure him, you may have to engage him in fighting on the ground. Your goal then is to control him and pin him until you can get help or inflict further damage on him (osaekomi waza), lock his arm, and end the fight (kansetsu waza) or strangle him to end the fight (shime waza). Looking at it logically, the rules of judo simply reflect what can take place in real personal combat.

**Newaza Position:** Unlike Western wrestling, where being on the back is considered to be a disadvantage, judo views fighting off the back, backside, buttocks, or flanks as just another opportunity to beat an opponent. Kyuzo Mifune, in his classic book *Canon of Judo*, featured most of the groundfighting techniques from this position. The exponents of Kosen judo in pre-World War II Japan were highly skilled in all phases of groundfighting but especially in fighting from this position. The Kosen judo movement was organized at a number of Japanese universities and emphasized the groundfighting of Kodokan judo over the throwing techniques. After the war, only a few universities continued Kosen judo, but its influence on Japanese judo remained. One of those influences is probably why, in judo, the term “newaza” has become the general term used to describe all ground grappling. This newaza position is called the “guard” in Brazilian jiu-jitsu and mixed martial arts. No matter the name, it's an effective position for groundfighting.



Speaking of groundfighting, what is called “groundfighting” is a descriptive name for all grappling and fighting on the mat or ground. In mixed martial arts, this includes both grappling and striking, so it's accurate to call it groundfighting because that's what it literally is: fighting on the ground. While many people call grappling on the mat “groundfighting,” some call it “groundwork,” “ground grappling,” or “ground play” but whatever you call it, do it skillfully.

## CHAPTER 10

# Armlocks

*An armlock is like a throw. Your opponent usually doesn't see it coming.*

—Becky Scott

There is an old saying about submission techniques: “If you make your opponent give up to you, he will never forgive you, but more importantly, he will never forget you.” In other words, if you force an opponent to tap out, there is a definite psychological advantage for you every time you face him again on the mat. He won't forget you, and it doesn't matter what he may say; he knows that you are the person who made him quit. This is why, from a competitive point of view, it is important to be skilled in armlocks and strangles. If you have the reputation of being the person who makes opponents tap out, then you will have an edge every time you step on the mat. No one likes to have his throat squeezed or arm stretched and if you're known as someone who will do this to others, it certainly gives you an edge.

This section of the book is focused on kansetsu waza. Kansetsu translates to “joint” and waza translates to “techniques.” In the sport of judo, the arm is the primary target of joint locks, with the focus on the elbow joint. A secondary target is the shoulder joint, and this is because there is often pain resulting in the shoulder joint when the elbow joint is taken out of its normal range of motion. Based on personal observation and statistics that have been kept through the years, the two most popular armlocks used in judo are juji gatame

(crossbody armlock) and ude garami (arm entanglement). Another popular armlock is waki gatame (armpit lock). All three of these armlocks have a high rate of success at all levels of competition. For this reason, this section will focus on practical and functional ways to apply these armlocks. Judo has a wide variety of armlocks and every serious judoka should make a thorough study of them and find what works best for him or her. So, by all means, don't limit your arsenal of armlocks to what is popular or commonly used.

## **Control the Position and Get the Submission**

Position is purposely (and with forethought) placing your body in such a way that you can successfully control how and where your opponent moves. Break him down from a stable to an unstable position and control his movement. Limit his movement, and while doing that, do everything possible to continually put yourself in a better position to armlock, choke, or pin him. A major goal in groundfighting is to establish a position of control and dominate your opponent. This is especially true when attempting to secure an armlock. The armlocks shown in this section all are the result of controlling an opponent's position and taking advantage of the situation. Armlocks often come out of a fast tempo when fighting on the mat. Often, the actual roll or setup to the actual armlock comes out of a fast flurry of activity much in the same way a throw develops in standing judo. Then again, some of the most effective armlocks come out of a grinding, methodical series of movements ending in stretching or bending an opponent's arm.

### **An Explanation of "Position"**

"Position" was discussed earlier in this book, but let's take a closer look at it now. Position is where, how, and when the bodies of the two judo athletes engaged in a contest are in relation to each other and in relation to where they are located on the mat at any given point in time. One athlete will be in the controlling or dominant position in relation to his opponent, or the two athletes will be situated in a neutral position where neither have the advantage. A judo contest is a series of positions and situations that are linked together based on the movement and actions taken by the two judo athletes that are engaged in the match. The goal of each athlete is to control (as much as possible) how his body is positioned, and how his opponent's body is positioned during the course of the match. This control of position leads to applying a technique or movement that results in defeating the opponent. The more effectively a judo athlete controls where, how, and when his opponent moves, the better he will be able to apply an armlock, choke, or pin. Position is also import-

## CHAPTER 11

# Chokes and Strangles

*Everybody's got a neck.*

—Dewey Mitchell

Strangling is the great equalizer in judo. Everyone has a neck, and it doesn't matter how thick the neck is—it can be strangled or choked. This section of the book focuses on *shime waza*. The word “shime” translates to “squeeze” or “tighten” and is a good description of what happens to the neck of an opponent. The tightening or squeezing effect on an opponent's carotid arteries or trachea are effective and unforgiving. “Waza” means “technique” and implies a broad approach in its application. Strangles are the subtlest of all grappling skills. They aren't spectacular; choking an opponent isn't nearly as exciting for spectators as seeing an opponent slammed to the mat with a throw. There's no loud thud, just a tap-out, but there is a definite winner and a definite loser. As with armlocks, strangling an opponent is an emphatic way to win. As I said earlier, once you strangle an opponent, he'll never forget you and certainly never forgive you. You have a psychological edge over him, and the next time you fight him, he'll remember you're the person who made him give up.

A good strangler seems to sneak the choke in on his opponent; his hands and wrists seem almost loose, but always gripping, controlling, and manipulating his opponent. A good strangler also knows how to use each hand independently. One hand may grip the lapel in a certain way and the other may wing the opponent's arm or pull the other lapel to

gain the best leverage in the strangle. I've always told my athletes that you need to "get to know your chokes." Knowing how to strangle takes a lot of time, experimentation, effort, thinking, and practice. It's not a set of skills are quickly acquired. What happens is that after a lot of hard work and time on the mat, and once you've developed enough skill, you get a "feel" in your hands and arms for applying strangles. I'm not sure how to explain it other than it's a kinesthetic awareness you develop after having done it for so long. After a while, you can actually feel when your opponent is going out and can control the flow of action in applying the strangle.

## **Defining Features of Shime Waza**

It may be simply a matter of terminology, but there is a difference between the terms "strangle" and "choke." A strangle is a generic name in the English language for any form of shime waza but is usually specifically aimed at the carotid arteries, cutting off the blood supply to the brain. These are the "sleeper holds" that the old-time professional wrestlers made famous. Someone will "go to sleep" or go unconscious quickly if strangled. I've heard this type of shime waza called a "blood strangle" by some people because of how it cuts off the blood supply to the brain. A "choke" usually refers to any shime waza aimed at the trachea. Squeezing the trachea shut is, if not painful, certainly a very unpleasant experience for the victim and cuts off the air supply, often producing a gagging reaction. This shime waza has been called an "air choke" by some old-timers for obvious reasons.

Historically, the neck and throat were not the only targets of shime waza; the opponent's body was fair game as well as the neck and throat. The use of dojime (trunk or body squeezing) was included as a method of shime waza in the early years of Kodokan judo. Eventually, changes in the contest rules in the early part of the twentieth century eliminated attacking the body with dojime so that shime waza was directed toward the throat and neck.

## **Strangles Start with the Legs**

It may sound odd, but most (if not all) strangles start with controlling an opponent's lower extremities. Strangles and chokes simply work more efficiently when you are in the right position and have good lower body (leg and hip) control over your opponent. Isolating an opponent's legs and hips effectively controls his entire body. Don't be in such a hurry to get your hands around his neck that you forget to set him up and control his body before





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