



Grappling Concepts Lesson 10 **Caging The Hips**

Today we'll cover something that's saved my butt on the mat so many that it's not even funny. It's a really valuable concept that you'll be able to use in your own training. My partner today is Ritchie Yip of www.infighting.ca.

We're going to talk about being on top of your partner in their guard. Almost all the bad things that can happen to me in Ritchie's guard rely on him doing one of three things:

1. Moving his hips out laterally (this also moves his head closer to my knee).



Ritchie gets his hips out to the side, leading to...

This is bad for me because from this position he can launch a lot of offense, for example he can go for the high guard, lock on an armbar, or apply the flower sweep, etc.



...high guard...



... an armbar...



...or a flower sweep.



2. Rotating his hips. Typically here he gets his weight onto one hip, often taking an overhook with his top arm.



Ritchie rotates his body, right side down:

I always want him to have both shoulders and both hips on the ground. Any time that he gets onto one shoulder and one hip, it's bad for me.

When he's rotated it's much easier to attack with a triangle choke, an omoplata, or the v-armlock (the 'Frank Mir lock'), etc.



This sets up the triangle, and/or the V armlock, and/or the omo plata

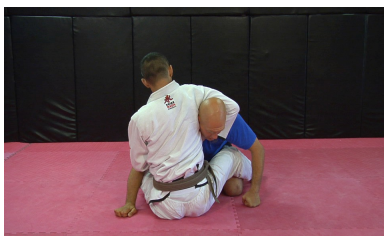


3. He gets off of his shoulders, moves his hips back, and sits up.



My opponent sits up, which can lead to...

Again this is generally bad for me (the top guy). From here the bottom man can guillotine choke, set up a Kimura armlock, do a hip-bump sweep, etc.



...the guillotine, the Kimura armlock, or the hip buck sweep.

The message here is that:

- I don't want his hips moving out.
- I don't want his hips rotating.
- I don't want his hips moving away from me and him sitting up.

Can I use this information to my advantage? Of course I can!



HIP CAGING DRILL

I'm going to demonstrate this by starting with a drill. You can use different hand positions for this drill, but we're going to start with hands on biceps because it's a nice universal position that works gi or no-gi.

Ritchie starts by moving his hips out to the side to create an angle. Then I shuffle to that side and square up again. This works any time he moves his hips laterally - maybe to set up an armbar. If I square up with his hips, I can flatten him out again.



My partner moves his hips to my right and I follow them.

This also works if he rotates his hips to get up onto one butt cheek. If I move sideways, I can flatten him out again.



My partner rolls onto his right hip (left hip up) so I circle to my right to roll him flat again.



What's important here is that my knees are caging his hips by squeezing in slightly. You can't really see this subtle action, but he can definitely feel it. If I'm not squeezing my knees, he can move easily from side to side. But if I squeeze properly then it's much harder for him to move.

Furthermore, I augment the knee squeeze by squeezing in with my elbows as well. Of course, this isn't bulletproof. He'll still be able to move his hips, he just has to work much harder to do it.



The subtle difference between not caging his hips (on the left) and squeezing inwards with your knees (on the right)

USING THE KNEE TO BLOCK THE HIP

Let's say I've screwed up: he's managed to get my arm across his body and is starting to climb to my back. This is bad for me...



Out of position and in trouble!

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Left unchecked he will attain my back, like this.

However, even if I'm completely out of position with my arms, I can still control his hips.



Posting with the right foot, knee against the hip

To counter this technique I bring my right foot up to the outside of his left hip. This accomplishes two things.

First I've put up a barrier. Now, to climb to my back he has to climb up over the 18-inch barrier created by my lower leg. That's hard.

Secondly I am pinching my right knee inward against his left hip. This cages his hip and cuts down on his maneuverability.



Note that my arms are still in a terrible position, but at least I'm blocking his hip with my knee.

My next move is to circle to my right, square up our hips, and work on getting my arm out.



By coming onto my foot and pressing in with my knee I stop him from escaping his hips further. It also buys me the time that I need to flatten him out again.

ARMDRAG/BACKCLIMB DEFENSE DRILL

So here we have another super-simple drill.

My partner begins it off by getting the right armdrag and threatening the backclimb.



Next I hug his arm and crush down, basically papercutting his upper arm between my right forearm and bicep. This reduces his mobility. While still not a great position, it's better than nothing as it cuts down on his mobility and buys me time



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Next I step up with my left leg, knee against the hip...



... I circle to my left, driving him back flat onto his back and square up our hips...



... finally I work my arm out. My partner then armdrags the other arm and repeat the whole motion on the other side.



Please take special note of the motion of the knee action. I'm driving it in and down to pinch his hip. It's a subtle movement but it's very important because it limits his ability to move his hips.

So these techniques and drills show you two subtle ways to control an opponent's hips and get yourself out of trouble.

The two previous examples deal with shutting down an opponent's lateral hip movement, but you can also control their hip movement up, down, and away from you...



STRAIGHT ARM HIP CONTROL GUARD PASS

Now I'll share a technique that I like to use against an opponent who has a guard that's hard to pass. I mostly use this no-gi, but it also works for gi.

Let's first clarify something. If Ritchie's wants to apply the armbar, he has to pivot and lift his hips. If he doesn't lift his hips - a common beginner error - it's not going to work. Without lifting his hips, he won't have enough leverage on my elbow to finish the technique and there will be so much space that I can just pull my arm out anyway. So always lift your hips when attacking your opponent's arm.



**Armbar setup with hip lift
(correct)**



**Armbar without hip lift
(incorrect)**

To do this guard pass I pretend to be careless and give him my left arm. I can't be too obvious about it or he'll realize that something is up. My other hand (the right) goes *lightly* on his hip, but I doesn't push too hard yet because that will alert him that I'm planning something. If he's wearing a gi, I'll grab the material.





Remember: there's no pressure yet - I'm gently controlling his left hip with my right arm and my left arm is in a position that suggests, "oh damn, I screwed up. I gave him my arm."

Now as he goes for the arm bar and swings his right leg across, I stiff-arm his left hip to the ground with my right hand.

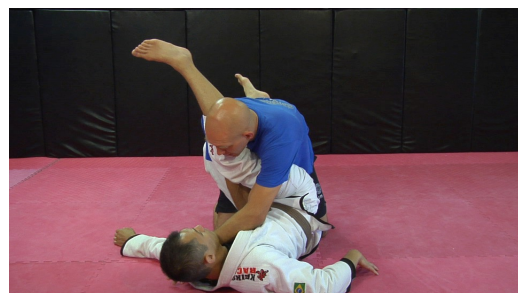
The motion is like doing a one-armed bench press. From here, the armbar will never happen because his hips are flat on the ground.

At the same time, I pull my left arm out using the same motion I would if I were starting a lawn mower.

I'm safe now because I'm controlling his left hip, pinning it to the floor. I now have a variety of choices of how to pass his guard.

The most obvious pass - if he's spun and his leg is up high - is to underhook his right leg with my left arm, control his left shoulder or lapel with my left hand, drive in, force his knee to his nose, and pass to side control.

The key to this pass is controlling the up and down motion of his hips.





CONTROLLING THE HIPS IN THE STACKING GUARD PASS

Let's take a look at the stacking guard pass (aka leg-on-shoulder guard pass or smashing guard pass). We covered it last week from a defensive point of view and now we're going to switch sides.



There are a lot details and subtleties about positioning when using this pass. For example:

- My neck/shoulder is up by Richie's calf, NOT down in the crook of his knee
- I drive forward, pushing his knee to his nose.
- If he's wearing a gi, I'll grab his collar thumb-in.
- In no-gi I can grab behind the neck or grab across to his shoulder (my preference).

Even when he's in the knee-to-nose position and his hips are elevated, if he can move his hips side to side a little bit, he still has options.

For example, he can create space with the Kung Fu Neck Lock...





... or he can push his knee with both hands to make space, and then use the space to work his hips back to the ground...



...or he can put his head to one side, roll backwards, and either pull guard or come forward for the tackle.



So I must control his hips, even when they're in mid-air. Note that I don't necessarily need to pin them on the ground - I just need to control them from moving. How do I do that? Let's find out...

In no-gi, I'll post up on my right leg and control his hips by pinching in with my right knee. I'll can also cup his left hip with my right hand (not shown in the picture below). This shuts down many of the movements he needs to do to prevent me from passing his guard.



Using my knee to keep his hips elevated and in place.

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With the gi I'll use my right hand to grab his pants or belt from behind. This gives me great control. If he starts doing a backwards shoulder roll, I push down. If he extends his hips to push me away, I lift up. If he moves left, I pull right. I really have control here.



Lifting the hips up



Pushing the hips down

And also with the gi - I can choke him with my left arm by grabbing his left collar and dropping my elbow to the ground. This is a good choke to know, because your opponent will be wondering why you haven't finished the guard pass and the next thing he knows - he's tapping out.



Controlling the hips and applying the choke

This choke has always stuck in my mind because, back when I was a white or blue belt, it was the first submission I ever finished on a brown belt.

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So when you're using the knee-to-nose position and driving forwards, forcing his hips off of the ground, be sure to also control the hips by caging them in mid-air with your knee or a grip on the pants. This will put you in a great position to pass.

DEFENDING BUTTERFLY SWEEP

Now we'll apply this week's concept to defending the basic butterfly sweep that I showed you in the '13 Techniques' DVD.



The basic butterfly sweep in action

When he's sitting up in butterfly position, he's very mobile and can adjust to any movement I make. From a sitting position, he can also develop momentum for sweeps by falling back or to the sides.

On the other hand, if he's trying to work butterfly guard while lying flat on his back, it's going to be much harder. He has more of his body touching the mat, which means more friction, and he can't pivot and adjust his position nearly as fast.

Knowing this gives us a few strategies for dealing with an opponent who is sitting up and playing butterfly guard.



SUMO PUMMEL AND SPRAWL PASS

My opponent is sitting up.

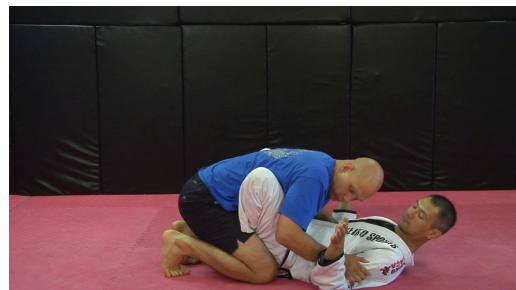
Initially I make sure that I keep my hands and elbows in like a Tyrannosaurus Rex (careful not to give him the underhook or armdrag!)



I use my hands on his shoulders to pummel him backwards until he's flat his back. I have to be careful here because he can still move his hips sideways, get his feet out, and do all kinds of horrible things.



Then I bring my knees up to his hips and drive them forward to clamp his heels to his butt. I'm trying to force his knees to full compression.



To stop him from moving away, I bring my elbows down to my knees and pull back. Now his hips are caged between my elbows and knees.





I can also use my head in the middle of his chest to stop him from sitting up.



Some people like this position so much that when they're doing a stand-up guard pass, they'll take both ankles, drive them down, and collapse on top. Effectively, they're forcing their opponent into a crappy butterfly guard.



This position gives you many guard passing options. We'll do a simple one today.

I start by moving my right leg back a little bit.



This give me space to reach under his legs with my right hand and grab his right foot. Then I grab his gi or behind his head with my left hand and sprawl backwards.





From here, I stay flat on my belly in a complete sprawl and inch around in a clockwise circle, pulling on his foot and head, until I've cleared his legs. Then I drive in. Even if he manages to hook my legs with his right leg, it's not very strong. He might get it - I really don't care.



And that's how to use the principle of caging the hips to defeat the butterfly guard. You can also use against the open guard, in the middle of a guard pass, against the closed guard, many different situations.

Remember, bad things happen to you when your opponent moves his hips, so use any means fair and square to stop those hips from moving and you'll improve your position and your situation.

CONTROLLING THE HIPS WHEN BREAKING THE CLOSED GUARD

Controlling the hips is also super important when you're in someone's closed guard.

One of the most basic ways I can open Richie's guard is to establish posture with my left hand on Richie's solar plexus and my right hand on his left hip or knee.



Next I wedge my left knee against his tailbone or one buttock and step my right leg out to the side.

Then I simultaneously sit down and back, arch my back, twist my body, and push down on his thigh with my right elbow. This pops his ankles open and sets up my guard pass.





This guard break works because my knee is blocking his body from following me and I'm moving my body back. Unless his legs are stupidly long, they have to open.

But this approach can get into trouble against a skilled opponent.

To counter this guard break Richie can do what I call the "ski jump" by lifting his hips on top of my thigh and moving them into me. Now my knee can't block his hip and I can't break the guard by moving my body backwards.



It gets even worse if he slides his hips sideways, to his right, past my knee. Now, not only is my knee not pushing against his hips, but I'm totally out of balance.



Unless I block this he'll be able to take my back or roll me over.



As you've probably guessed by now, the solution is to control his hips.



So let's go back to my starting position. My left hand is on Richie's solar plexus and my right hand on his hip.

What's stopping him from "ski jumping" his hips? It's the fact that I'm applying downward pressure with my right hand to pin his hips to the mat.

Now my knee is the stable point that I can use to push and open his guard.



If I don't control his hips, not only might the guard break not work, but I might be in danger of getting armbarred!



Not controlling his hips leads to getting armbarred!

This week's lesson covered caging your opponent's hips when you're on your knees - but you can also cage your opponent's hips when you're standing up. I'll probably cover that later in the course, so for now just keep it in mind because it's a really important part of passing your opponent's guard without getting armbarred, kneebarred, foot-locked, or having other unpleasant things happen.

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Also as part of today's online lesson I'm including a video about the tactics Brock Lesnar used when he fought Frank Mir in UFC 100. It's not exactly caging the hips but it's about a very similar concept.

Basically, effectively fighting from half guard relies on turning to face your opponent and getting your hips underneath theirs. Brock Lesnar used about 10 different ways to stop Frank Mir from doing those two things. He kept flattening Mir out, forced him to face away, and stopped Mir's hips from getting underneath his own hips. So it's directly related to what we worked on today.

Maybe you've seen it already, but now that it's in a downloadable format you can take it to your next training session and play with the techniques yourself.



Lesson 11 Preview:

Next week we're going to look at attacking by combination.

We'll go over some of my favorite combinations, learn how to drill combinations, and talk about how to include combinations in your training to make you a more effective grappler. This will all help you nail those submissions on your training partners!

So, see you next week!

Stephan Kesting

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