

Guard Primer

I thought I would share a guard primer from the perspective of one that has used the guard in NHB/MMA, submission competition, Integrated Training Scenarios, and in the real world. Additionally, I've had numerous training partners apply this material in the same venues.

All with good results.

First things first. Closed guard? Forget about it. We did, about 10 years ago and our game took off as a result.

In a recent phone conversation it was mentioned that closed guard might restrict weapon access for the guy in your guard. This is true, but once you've been ground and pounded you'll know beyond doubt, that limiting weapon access with a closed guard is momentary. Once he knocks you out with ground and pound or picks you up and slams you head first into the nearest fixed object because your legs lock you to him, you'll realize the limitations. Pressure is the key, not locking down. More on that later.

Okay, here is our overall concept for guard work. We use the acronym that the crazy Pikey John Kavanaugh came up with, A.P.E. The poster, Special Brew, works with John K so he knows first hand what this is all about. Being caught in Kavanaugh's guard is a nightmare. My understanding from people that have worked with both is, there is only one worse place to be and that would be caught in Brennan's guard.

The key? Active Pressure and Energy.

Active Pressure and Energy involves a three pronged attack.

They must be constantly under pressure from a submission, getting reversed (turned over), you will take their back, or you will sit out/stand up.

This forces them to accommodate you. If you start to sit out/stand up, they force you back down guess where their arms are? They definitely aren't tight to their body, they are away from the body and all you need to reap that kimura is enough space to fit your hand between his body and his elbow. Takes about a second to wreck that arm after that.

Continually attacking for subs and you will get something. If not, that means they are trying to hold tight in a safety position. Work on sitting out/standing up. If they hold tight, you will sit out. If they try to counter this by breaking out of their safety position, see above.

Your feet have to be another set of hands. I like butter fly guard, regardless, get your heels on their hips to start, sit up off your back. Try to always be on

one hip. A good starting position would be the finish position of a traditional sit-up. I'm sitting up, feet on my opponent's hips/legs and I'm grabbing his arms with my hands.

Hand control is a key to upper body control as well as keeping track of the two things on his body that can wield a weapon.

He should feel like a bug caught in a spider web. Attack his base relentlessly with your feet, while disrupting his ability to keep his upper body erect with your hands.

Accessing a weapon will be the last thing on his mind. I've had "weapons" people tell me this first hand. They went in with the intention to get a knife into the fray immediately and stab me in the groin to prove their point. They never had a chance. All they could think about was trying to not get turned over and then blacking out because the choke happened too fast for them to realize what was happening. This has happened more times than I can even number at this point over the last 10 years.

Simply put, put and keep them on the defensive and they won't be able to launch an effective offence.

This is what I consider the starting point. I'm sitting up, not lying on my back, ready to work. I just need someone in front of me.



Here is the pressure I'm talking about above. My feet are pressuring his legs/hips and my right arm is pushing his face/throat. If he doesn't do something I will turn him over or stand up.



If he pushes into me I can get under his arms. This will create several issues for him. His base is just about screwed at this point.



This is a rear view of the above post. You can see my feet are pressuring his legs out, attacking his base. This is a very active approach to butterfly. Note also the grip. Both hands are gripping; never grip with one hand if you can help it. I'm also twisting him to one side, further attacking his base. The last thing on his mind right now is hitting me; he is worried about my next move.



He continues to push in, trying to force me back to the ground and I'm on my way to his back. Remember, my pressure forces him to do something. Anything he does is going to be a mistake. Sucks to be him.



This one shows a different angle. You can see the hand control and I'm attacking his base hard.



If he is able to correct himself and tries to push me back down or flatten me out, he will go for a ride. Obviously this opens up lots of possibilities. Once he is off the ground he is done.



Here is the other side of it. I sit out/stand up. That always messes them up. I start from the same point. Active Pressure and Energy. His response is different. Instead of pushing in, he hesitates, if I can't simply push him back and over, I use his resistance to bounce off and stand up.



The majority of the time, this chains right into a snap down/front headlock/face choke or neck crank.



Going back a few posts, you'll note I'm under his arm and off to one side. Just as in Clinch work, this opens a lot of possibilities. Particularly taking the back.



I punch the choke in, literally, make a fist and punch it into the back of his head. The choke should set in immediately. You can't see my right hand but it is a fist. This also serves to make for a super tight choke, taking up all the space between his head and mine. Pinch your elbows together and pull your shoulder blades back and down. One explosive movement. Note I've tucked my head down, his options are nil. Also note my right foot is not hooked per se. It is set to sink the hook if need be but I like to ride one side loose so I can disengage if need be due to friends getting involved and other issues I need mobility, just in case.



On to stopping the ground and pound. Spider guard or the variation I use works really well for this. This isn't GI spider; this is no-GI spider. Subtle differences. Again, avoid being flat. Flat = less than zero.

Heels on his hips, pressure on. My hands are up and I'm watching his hands, waiting to catch them.

My primary Defense is NOT my hands. It's my shins. I'm going to stop his arms with my shins.



He throws his first shot off his left arm. I lift my hips using my foot on his hips and let him crash into my shin. Simple enough. Why can't he stand? The pressure from my feet into his hips, if he goes to stand he will get pushed backwards, allowing me to stand up. He is stuck like a bug in a spider web. Kinda cool huh? It only gets worse for him.



As soon as his arm hits my shin, I catch it by grabbing his tricep and mashing my shin into his bicep, clamping them together. He throws a shot with his right and now he is fully caught.



If he tries to stand out of it and a lot of guys will, he is still caught. Pull hard with your arms and push hard with your legs on his hips. He should feel like he is being pulled apart. Now frustration sets in and subsequently, stupidity. He's caught and everywhere he goes from here is bad.



A lot of times they will try to mash back into you. Whatever. If they go to stand back up again, give them a good shove with your feet, and let go with your hands if you want to stand up. Otherwise, sweep them or shuck them to one side and take the back.



I'm just going to roll him and set him up for some paybacks. To go to my right, I'm going to pull hard with my right arm and leg while pushing hard with my left arm and leg. Remember he is glued to me now, so wherever I go, he goes.



I'm on top now. I'm going to pin his head down. Too many guys want to just start throwing bombs. No. The best way is to pin his head by mashing it to one side. Here I am trying to mash the left side of his face into the ground. This makes it extremely hard for him to bridge. Try it, have someone mash your head to one side and then try to bridge. I do this by putting my thumb under his jaw bone and my fingers behind his ear. This is important. I want a

clean shot at his ear and my fingers away from his mouth. Plus I can really rotate his head with my hand there and his ear is like a natural speed bump to keep my hand from slipping off.



Now I'm going to beat his ear until something breaks. Seriously. I'm going to pound my hand straight into his ear until he passes out, which on average is around 3 solid hits. Why the ear? It's like shooting. Aim small, miss small. Also, a good hit on the ear will really discombobulate people. Maximum bang for the buck.



Okay, here is a situation I've been in and a good friend and training partner of mine was in as well. Both situations involved multiple opponents. I'm going to use "I", but my friend did the same things so I'm speaking for both situations. I was pinned up against a wall; he was pinned up against the tire of a car.

Basics of half-guard. Underhook on the half side, the other arm is blocking out his free arm so he can't hit me or access a tool.



I'm keeping his hands tied up and away from his waist line. His buddies were trying to kick me but I was able to pull him in between us, so he was getting the crap kicked out of him by his buddies. Great stuff. I was getting hit here and there but nowhere near what it would have been if I hadn't spent time on the ground game. While this was going on, I was accessing tools. I grabbed my O/C with my right hand, (my buddy grabbed his pistol), while he was busy trying to squeeze my head off with a killer playground headlock. Which, coincidentally, was keeping him right in line with his buddies kicks intended for my head. Idiots.



You can see a tool is now in play. I have left some space so you can see the tool. In my situation, I stuck the O/C canister in his open mouth; he was gasping for breath and pleading with me to let him go, he was done....., should have thought about that a little bit sooner. My buddy put his pistol

right about where you see mine, again, his opponents body was pulled down tighter to him to help shield himself from the kicks.



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