

LETTERS TO THE LEGION XXVI

AUGUST 2026

Dear Legion,

Hopefully you've spent the last month improving your jiu-jitsu, enjoying the long days of sunshine and avoiding getting sucked out into the ocean by a rip current or shattering your pelvis into a million pieces with an ill-advised cliff jump. Speaking of jumping, let's dive right into this newsletter with some guard passing concepts, an update about stripes, matches of the month, new events and more.

MAIN COLUMN

GUARD PASSING CONCEPTS

In the previous few editions, I wrote about concepts tied to military strategy but applicable for jiu-jitsu. Those concepts are very macro. They apply to many situations, but you have to remember and use them at the right time. For this edition we're going back to something more practical: guard passing concepts. The better you get at jiu-jitsu, the more time you spend playing or dealing with the guard, so these should be useful, immediately.

UP-DOWN, LEFT-RIGHT, IN-OUT

The concept of up-down, left-right, in-out is something that top guard passers understand and use, even if they aren't able to articulate it. It is a cheat code for randomizing and chaining different passing techniques for maximum effect.

Even a novice knows after a few months that only passing guard to one side will quickly become predictable and easy to defend. So, with experience comes the tactic of switching from side to side and making the opponent switch between defending both. For example, a toreando pass to the right becomes an attempt to pass to the left after the opponent reacts.

However, that leaves two whole dimensions to work with. There's up-down: will you pass on the knees, from a split squat or from standing? And in-out: will you go deep into the guard and attempt a smash pass through frames, or will you leave the option of backing out to flank and attack with outside passing?

Most of us rarely even think about this concept when we're faced with a challenging guard. We either think in terms of the techniques we're trying to use, or we don't think much at

all and let our body send it on whatever pass feels like a good choice at the moment.

The reality is that, consciously or not, we'll have to mix up the attack based on these dimensions to be successful. A half guard smash pass will be effective, but hard to get to with just down and in. It will probably require something more like: left, in, up, out, right, in, down, out, up, left, in, down. Think of an outside passing sequence starting with a toreando, then a leg drag attempt on the other side, then another toreando, ending up in a smash half guard.

Take a moment to think about your favorite guard passing sequences and how the dimensions mentioned today play a factor in them!

DON'T FORGET YOUR GUARD PASSES AFTER YOUR FIRST FOOTLOCK

This is a phenomenon that happens all too often, typically around blue belt. It even afflicted the author of the newsletter you are reading. Guard passing can be difficult and tedious against an evenly matched or superior opponent.

Now let's say you learn some footlocks or even heel hooks and you start to feel their power course through you, electrifying you. Unbeknownst to you, there was this hail mary option available the entire time. You crank on someone's ankle in the right way and they have to give up or have it snap. Then you see a match where someone is getting beat up for the entire duration and then pulls off a stunning comeback with a quick footlock. Now you're cooked. You can find yourself chasing that footlock dragon while ignoring guard passing fundamentals.

What will probably happen is you'll find short-term success, especially if you discover footlocks before your peers. You may find it so easy to get wins in the gym now that you can't believe everyone isn't learning them. Eventually however, especially if you compete, you will run into people who are good enough not to be afraid of those attacks and will use those attempts to get on top of you, score, and possibly smash you for trying.

When I was a purple belt I tapped my first few black belts in competition using my superior leglocks, and it took a wise coach to help me round out my game when I realized that the approach didn't work so well at the European or World Championships.

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PASS FROM HALF GUARD TO MOUNT FOR MAXIMUM POINTS

In the social media world of jiu-jitsu, flashy, novel, and unique techniques reign supreme. On the mats, the simple, timeless, and common techniques rule.

There are no passes more dominant than passing from half guard to mount. Perhaps you can pass into a submission, but not in any kind of replicable way.

Most half guard passes begin with securing underhooks, flattening the opponent on his back and applying a liberal amount of pressure. From there, the name of the game is extracting the knee and then the ankle from half guard.

More often than not, this leads to a mount that is difficult to escape because of the upper body control that came with the guard pass. Speaking of coming with the guard pass: **seven points** come from this one maneuver. Three for the guard pass and four for the mount.

Coming back from that kind of a deficit is very difficult, and most of the time your opponent now needs a submission.

ACADEMY NEWS

BELT STRIPES UPDATE

One of the changes you may have seen recently in the intermediate-advanced classes is that some stripes are being given out to colored belts. This hasn't been the case for the first six years of Legion. Stripes have been reserved for white belts.

A lot of us instructors come from a hardcore background where stripes just weren't a thing. Personally, I've never gotten a single stripe on my belt, to this day. Furthermore, we aim to ensure that within our ranks of colored belts, the drive to train stems from a genuine love for the art rather than just chasing the next promotion. We thought that maybe some of our members think that stripes are uncool.

Keenan and I have found those reasons to be pretty silly. Jiu-jitsu is hard enough, with so many peaks and valleys, that it's very unlikely that 20% milestones from an instructor are anything but positive. With the culture we have, it's unlikely that suddenly people will start to train for 4 inches of white tape on the black part of the belt. The cool thing about stripes is that if you're personally not into them, you can just remove them from your belt. Absolutely no hard feelings.

As there is some catching up to do, the pace of the promotions will be a bit quicker in the beginning.

WATCH & LEARN

MATCHES OF THE MONTH

MATEUSZ SZCZECINSKI VS. MICHAEL LIERA JR. (NO-GI, POLARIS)

We have a match here from Polaris between Mateusz Szczecinski, one of the most feared European grapplers at the moment and one of the frontrunners to do well at the upcoming ADCC, and Michael Liera Jr., who used to live here in San Diego but now runs an academy in Denver, Colorado. Mateusz is known for his leg locks, specifically the shotgun ankle lock. He's been incredibly effective at them, to the point where the threat of the leg locks is setting up upper body attacks, which is something that we can all learn from. Check out this match between them at Polaris.

Search YouTube for: **Szczecinski vs Liera Polaris**

HORLANDO MONTEIRO VS. WILL WILSON (GI, HONOLULU IBJJF OPEN)

The other match is one that you may not expect to see here, because it's not from a big show. It didn't get any media attention, it has just 2,000 views on YouTube. I just happened to stumble upon it when I was doing research on which matches to include. This is a match from the finals of the absolute division at the Honolulu IBJJF Open.

Horlando Monteiro has been very competitive at the top of the sport for many years. Then he moved to Hawaii, opened his academy, stopped competing, and dropped off the scene for a little bit. He's recently made a return and he's still just as dangerous and sharp as he was. Will Wilson is from the new generation of American grapplers and he's been doing really well, winning Europeans this year. He's got a dynamic single leg X and X-guard game. This match goes the distance. It doesn't have much scoring, but it is very exciting, and if you're looking to learn something, watching the full thing will definitely make you better. Pro tip: just turn off the audio.

Search YouTube for: **Monteiro vs Wilson Honolulu Open**

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TEAM LEGION ABROAD

POSTCARDS FROM THAILAND

Coaches Sloan and Paige are in Thailand for another few weeks after Paige's match at ONE FC. Sloan's taking advantage of the Thai boxing training and Paige is building up her strength ahead of the ADCC World Championships. They're also taking advantage of the exotic beaches in Phuket and quality massages at 10% of the price.

NEW AT LEGION

YOGA FOR AJJ

Believe it or not, yoga and my involvement in Legion are closely connected. As a starving martial artist (purple belt), I got the opportunity to scale up a website called Yoga for BJJ in 2015. The founder, Sebastian, was the guy who introduced me to Keenan, which led to me working with him and ultimately co-founding Legion.

Sebastian is a certified yoga instructor. The man who certified him is Jason Crandell, who has been a member here for four years. You may know him as just another purple belt body on the mats, but you have NO IDEA how good his upavishta konasana is.

No, for real, Jason is one of the most renowned yoga instructors in the world. Think of what Keenan is in the jiu-jitsu world. That's what Jason is in the yoga world. He's known as the teacher's teacher, as his job is running teacher training courses all over the world.

He has gracefully offered to start a small workshop at Legion to help us feel less beaten up. These workshops will be on **Mondays, 7:30 to 8 PM**. Even (or especially) if you've never done any kind of mobility practice before, you should take advantage of this! I will see you there.

FREE WORKSHOP · SATURDAY, AUGUST 29TH · 2 TO 4 PM

JIU-JITSU FOR MARINES

With our location here in Miramar, we've always been blessed with getting a good number of Marines on our mats to either start their grappling journey or continue it. We've always had good experiences with the Marines, because they are typically motivated and scrappy from the very beginning. The only downside is that they can get ripped away from us for

global conflicts that may or may not be completely necessary.

That's why we're putting on an event to provide a free workshop to our neighbors, encourage them to come, become more familiar with jiu-jitsu, upgrade their considerable skills from the MCMAP program, and just have a good time.

The workshop will have some instruction, and it will also have some fun sparring and specific sparring, where the Marines can test themselves against our black belts and each other as well.

We do need some help spreading the word. I've already talked to a couple of our Marine members, who have actually recommended doing something like this, and I would like everyone to please invite your colleagues over there if you can. The workshop is free, and some flyers will be available for distribution at the front desk as well.

Sign up at: legionsandiego.com/marine-workshop-2026

LAUNCHING SEPTEMBER 7TH

NEW PARENTS CLASSES

On September 7th we are launching a new parents class on the two days that currently lack one: **Monday and Wednesday at 5 PM**.

These classes are an opportunity for existing parents in the program to train on those days as well, since we know that kids have pretty demanding schedules, which can fluctuate through the year.

But we are also using it as an opportunity to encourage more parents to jump on the mats for the first time. To become familiar with what the kids are learning. To get a workout in, instead of doom scrolling in the lobby or running the A/C in the car. To lead from the front and share jiu-jitsu with the kids.

These classes will launch with 5 weeks of our Beginner Course curriculum before transitioning into the Fundamentals curriculum, which is appropriate for all levels. Talk to Will to learn how you can get involved.

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COMPETITORS

MASTERS WORLDS

I know some people are planning to compete at Masters Worlds this year. Please let me know if this is you, so that we can get a handle on how many people are going and organize some extra preparation and coaching.

That does it for another edition. I hope you enjoyed it. As always, feel free to hit reply and let me know what you'd like me to write about in the next one.

Written by Miha Perhavec

ON THE MATS

ATTENDANCE LEADERS, JULY 2026

You may have seen a fun little new feature in our app that tracks your attendance on a leaderboard. The top 3 for the month of July:

1ST PLACE · 26 CLASSES

JASON BUNCH & JIMMY WANG

2ND PLACE · 25 CLASSES

REBECCA MATHIS

3RD PLACE · 21 CLASSES

ADAM JOHNSON

PRO SHOP

NEW RASHGUARD

At Legion we follow a highly regimented and professional pipeline for designing, producing and releasing apparel and training gear. It is the "whenever I have time and leftover creativity to come up with something system™". Well, thankfully this system has produced the fastest selling t-shirt that we've ever released: the **Grunge T-Shirt**, which has a more metal feel to it, with a special spiky logo. We've restocked those t-shirts for the second and last time, and also received the rashguard version. We only have a handful left in stock, so make sure to grab yours.

We do also have some hats coming in the following weeks (first batch ever) and a t-shirt design that I'm very excited about. One that was recommended by our member Trinh Phan.