LETTERS TO THE LEGION XXIX

NOVEMBER 2026

Dear Legion,

We have a packed edition for you. The attendance leaderboard battle in October was insane and down to the wire, Veterans Day & Thanksgiving schedules are inside. Some fun matches of the month from very different eras. New hoodies and sweatpants for the temperature drop. But first, let's dive into some lessons for human chess from regular chess.

MAIN COLUMN

LESSONS FROM CHESS

I was looking at one of our Human Chess Club rashguards the other day, and it got me thinking about what chess has taught me about jiu-jitsu.

Before anyone asks: yes, I play chess, but you could not torture my Elo out of me.

I also don't like losing at anything, and chess has given me plenty of practice. At one point I caught myself getting frustrated with ranked games. I was trading wins and losses, not making any progress, and not really learning anything.

So I asked myself what that would look like in jiu-jitsu. It would be like only rolling with people at your exact level, with no thought given to size or athleticism, and expecting to get better. That brought me back down to earth pretty quickly. How could I be mad about not improving when I wasn't reading about chess, watching courses, doing puzzles, or taking lessons? I was just playing and hoping the patterns would click on their own.

Most of you reading this probably don't have that problem. But if you've only been coming to open mat, or skipping warmups and technique to get to the rounds, that's probably not the best way to improve.

LESSON I

CAPITALIZE ON UNFORCED ERRORS

One of the easiest paths to victory in a sport where nothing is that easy is to capitalize on your opponent's blunders. One type of blunder in jiu-jitsu would be making an unforced error.

For example, your opponent in top closed guard reaches for your neck in order to choke you. That is a blunder against anyone who knows how to do the most basic armbar. This is unforced as the position was neutral, the opponent did something silly and should now pay the price.

Unforced errors are also possible when we are defending a bad position. For example, your opponent has you mounted and you are in trouble. But then, inexplicably, he steps a foot out to the side for "base". This gives you the option to get half guard and escape immediately.

Think of unforced errors like surfing. You don't create the wave. You just catch it when it shows up. Stay in the water and keep scanning the horizon. You never know what's barreling your way, even if the session hasn't been good to you so far.

LESSON II

FORCE ERRORS

A round between two new white belts features blunders galore. You can almost rely on the opponent doing something suboptimal, and by being more patient and conservative, you can take advantage when the error comes.

Everywhere beyond the wild white belt exchanges, you'll find forcing errors to be a great path to victory. For example, you're playing guard, breaking the opponent's posture. On one off-balance, he posts his hand on the mat, leaving a gap between his arm and his torso, which you quickly take advantage of by securing a kimura grip.

You can force errors **directly** by using (yep, you guessed it) force. For example, you put so much pressure on your opponent with the over-under pass that he has no choice but to remove his legs as a barrier and concede side control.

You can force errors with **pressure and dominance**. In competition, going up on points early is a great way to have your opponent make mistakes as the clock ticks down. The time pressure makes him take risks that you can capitalize on.

You can also force errors **indirectly** by laying traps. For example, you back off from holding side control to give the opponent the underhook in order to attack a d'arce choke. This method is the most satisfying, and it will make you feel like a puppet master.

LESSON III

THERE'S NO DILEMMA HERE

More strategically minded coaches will tell you to force your opponents into dilemmas.

The advice is correct, but if we want to use precise language, we should be talking about a **double bind**. A double bind is a forced dilemma, where either option leads to a negative outcome. You're damned if you do and damned if you don't. In chess, this is also called zugzwang.

We force opponents into choosing between a set of options, both bad. Once they choose, present another double bind, again with both options bad for them and good for you. Following this process, you will eventually get your foe to one of just two options: tap or nap. Tap or snap.

An example of an early stage double bind would be passing the guard with a toreando or a throw-by pass. At the moment the opponent realizes that his guard is no more, he can make a choice. Concede the pass, stay on his back and get pinned. Or go with the momentum and expose the back in an attempt to get to turtle and fight for a neutral position from there.

A late stage double bind would be locking up a triangle and attacking the arm at the same time as the choke. The opponent has to choose: defend the arm or defend the choke. Doing both is nearly impossible.

There are also trilemmas. For example, from the front headlock, we can threaten a guillotine, a d'arce, or an anaconda choke with small changes in the setup.

ON THE MATS

ATTENDANCE LEADERS, OCTOBER 2026

🥇 1ST PLACE · 36 CLASSES

JIMMY WANG · BROWN

🥈 2ND PLACE · 35 CLASSES

ERIC SCHAUMBURG · BROWN

🥉 3RD PLACE · 32 CLASSES

JASON BUNCH · BLACK

4TH TO 10TH

4. Kristina Rogovoya (purple) 28 · 5. Morgan Walker (black) 28 · 6. Andrew Nguyen (purple) 25 · 7. Adam Johnson (purple) 22 · 8. Rebecca Mathis (brown) 22 · 9. Andrey Drakh (purple) 21 · 10. Luis Bermudez (purple) 20

The leaderboard battle in the Legion app has been an absolute frenzy for the last couple of months. Just to bring you up to speed, we have Jason Bunch, who has indeed done a bunch of classes, and by that I mean over 1,500. He is the GOAT, the benchmark. That's why he has frequently topped the charts for attendance.

But when people see greatness, they want a taste of it for themselves. In September, Kristina Rogovoya stepped up and trained more than she's ever trained before to take the crown away from Jason.

At around the number 3 and 4 spots in September, we had Jimmy Wang and Eric Schaumburg. Perennial contenders, especially Jimmy, has been in the top three consistently, but he has never tasted the ultimate glory before. He made his play in October, but while Jason was still on his normally impressive pace, it was Eric who stepped up to fight for the number one spot. If I am not mistaken, Jimmy and Eric both did **FIVE classes** in a single day on the last Friday of the month. At the end,

Jimmy prevailed and finally claimed a month as his own, but incredible work from everyone else on the list as well.

One person that I want to highlight is actually Elijah Mata, who is at number 11, with 19 classes. However, he has also only recently graduated from the beginner course, so he is white belt number one for the month. Congratulations.

PRO SHOP

NEW MERCH

In the last edition, I promised some new merch, and some of it is finally here. The **hoodie and sweatpants** have landed in a limited quantity. You can pick up your hoodie or sweatpants at the front desk, and they're available as a set as well, which saves you **$10**.





A big pack of ranked rashguards and black no-gi shorts is also on the way, and those will work as a set as well. Either at the end of the month or in early December, we are also getting a new gi.

WATCH & LEARN

MATCHES OF THE MONTH

This month we have two matches, both ending in submission, from two different eras.

GI | 2009 WORLD CHAMPIONSHIPS

ROGER GRACIE VS. RAFAEL LOVATO JR.

This match features two legends of the sport, and Rafael is still actively competing and doing well against people half his age. What I like most about it is the timeless jiu-jitsu on both sides. The person who won this match won every single one of his matches that year in the exact same way, which is unheard of.

WATCH THE MATCH →

NO-GI | 2026 ADCC WORLD CHAMPIONSHIPS

DANIEL SCHUARDT VS. EOGHAN O'FLANAGHAN

This is one of the best modern no-gi matches I've seen recently. It shows a wide array of attacks, with submission threats, escapes, novel counters, and more.

It also features a submission that has become quite popular lately, called the Mussolini lock. This is one of the dumbest names I have ever heard. I didn't bother to look into why it's called that, but maybe I'm just salty because in World War II, Italy occupied half of my home country of Slovenia. Being occupied by any dictator is less than ideal, but it being someone so incompetent and Italian just pours salt into that wound.

The submission is basically a shin breaker footlock, which is something we have been exchanging on Legion mats in the no-gi classes for the last five years. The match is still a good watch.

WATCH THE MATCH →

HELP WANTED · BLUE BELTS AND ABOVE

KIDS PROGRAM ASSISTANTS

Our kids program keeps growing, and we're looking for a few more assistants to help on the mats. If you like working with kids and want to give back to the program, this is a great way to do it.

We're looking for **blue belts and above who are available twice a week at 5 PM**. Each group has a head coach running the class. The assistant coaches help run drills, partner kids up during technique, keep everyone safe, keep the energy up and, of course, help kids with their technique.

We'll provide training for the role and have a couple of different compensation options. To apply, send an email

to **info@legionajj.com** or talk to Will at the front desk.

APPLY BY EMAIL →

WHAT'S ON

EVENTS AND SCHEDULE

All of our events are always visible in the Legion app, so check there anytime for the latest.

HOLIDAY SCHEDULE

Here's how the holidays change the schedule this month.

VETERANS DAY, WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 11

- 11:00 AM: No-gi (all levels)
- 5:00 PM: Kids class
- 6:00 PM: Gi (all levels) and the beginner course
- All other classes are canceled

THANKSGIVING, THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 26

- 10:00 AM to 12:00 PM: Members-only open mat
- No kids classes

Black Friday, Friday, November 27: normal schedule.

Sunday, November 29: no open mat because of the Dima Murovanni seminar.

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 14 · BATTLESHIP IOWA, SAN PEDRO

JIU-JITSU ON A BATTLESHIP

Quick reminder: I'm teaching a seminar on the USS Iowa on Friday the 13th, and a couple of our students are competing in the Finishers event on Saturday. If you're up for a drive up I-5, come check out the only time jiu-jitsu will be done on a WW2 era battleship.

TICKETS & DETAILS →

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 29 · 12 TO 3 PM · AT LEGION

FINISH EVERYONE: DIMA MUROVANNI SEMINAR

Last call for the Dima Murovanni seminar. It's open to everyone from white belt to black belt.

DETAILS & SIGN-UP →

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 12 · 9 AM TO NOON · AT LEGION

KIDS IN-HOUSE TOURNAMENT #7

Registration is open now.

SIGN UP & PAY →

HEALTH & SAFETY

TAPING UP WOUNDS, CUTS AND SCRAPES

Several years ago, I visited a large academy in a different state, and I guess they don't segment their newsletter audiences, because I've been receiving their emails about class cancellations, newsletters, and other stuff ever since. One thing I noticed recently is that they've been sending out a bunch of public service announcements about skin infections, which, to me, suggests they are dealing with a significant issue. (They are also using it to institute a uniform policy, because apparently their merch will protect students.)

I never want Legion to get to that point, so the better approach seems to be including some periodic public service announcements about taking care of our skin.

There are different kinds of skin infections. We are most worried about bacterial ones (aka staph), with fungal ones (like ringworm) being common as well. There are viral infections too. The skin is our largest organ, and all of these pathogens need a place to get in. That's why it's important to cover any cut, scrape, or other type of wound.

Sometimes you will get scratched during training, or maybe you will have a nail lift on a finger or a toe. In all of those cases, the protocol is to **step to the side of the mat, get an alcohol prep pad, wipe off the wound area, wait for the bleeding to stop, and then apply a bandage or gauze**.

The important thing to know is that a bandage on a wound, especially when you're already sweaty, is like using a Cheeto in place of a sliding lock. There's no way that thing is staying on, so make sure to also **put some**

athletic tape over it. Also, relying on the gym having athletic tape lying around is not a viable strategy. Sometimes you might get lucky, but it is not at all reliable.

What we do make sure to provide are the alcohol prep pads, bandages, and gauze. They are available self-serve in the **second drawer of the white cabinet** at the edge of the gym area, on the side of the mats. You don't have to go to the front desk and ask for them. Most of the time, you can just grab what you need, take care of yourself, and get back to training.

If a wound is too big or bleeding too much to stay covered, or it looks red, swollen or infected, training is over. A few days off is a lot better than a few weeks off, and a lot better than taking out half your training partners with you. If you suspect you have an infection, seek medical attention, because a simple course of antibiotics or antifungals will typically clear it up quickly. Waiting and allowing it to fester will produce worse outcomes.

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

P.S. Keep an eye out for the Black Friday membership sale at the end of the month if you're looking for a big saving.