

USJA GRASS ROOTS DEVELOPMENT NEWS
AnnMaria De Mars, Ph.D.

Sometimes it is the simple things that win a match. This week's tip is a simple way to fix two common problems beginning (and sometimes experienced) athletes have. The first is having opponents escape from a pin. Obviously, you need a better pin, so here is a tip on making your yoko shiho gatame better.

Of course, the typical yoko shiho gatame you see in books has one arm under the opponent's head and the other grabbing the near leg. It seems pretty illogical to me to grab the leg when you score on a pin by holding their upper body to the mat. Below is a picture of my yoko shiho gatame. As you can see, I use my right hand to feed his judo gi



into my left. Pull the gi tight. At this point, I only need one hand to hold him down. The left hand can then be used to post if he tries to turn away from me, to grab his ankle and pull it up to his hip (works great with masters players who have bad knees), or, as my seven-year-old says, "You can wave to your mommy while you hold them down."

The second common problem is when an opponent has your leg scissored so your pin doesn't score. I totally ignore the leg and lock up the upper body exactly as shown above. Now, I have one arm and two legs to use against their two legs. I always find that having one more limb than the other person works to my advantage. Also, if you pull the gi really tight, and put your weight on their head as much as possible, it tends to be a bit uncomfortable for the other person. That distraction, combined with having both an arm and a leg to push their legs away from you, as you pull your leg out, is usually sufficient for you to remove your leg and secure the pin.