

# the **CrossFit** JOURNAL ARTICLES

## Wrestling with Dan Henderson

### Simple Takedown

Becca Borawski

Despite its place as a key element in Mixed Martial Arts, wrestling is frequently not prioritized by fighters learning the trade. Younger fighters often begin primarily as jiu-jitsu practitioners or kickboxers and later add wrestling in when they decide to transition to MMA. The fighters who come from wrestling backgrounds, however, have proven themselves dominant in the sport throughout its history so far—from Mark Coleman and Matt Lindland to Matt Hughes and Sean Sherk.

This month's article is the second of two featuring Pride welterweight and middleweight champion Dan Henderson. Henderson is known for his vicious overhand right, but prior to his MMA career, he was a highly decorated wrestler. Dan began wrestling at the age of five and went on to become a member of two Olympic teams. Last month I spent a day at Henderson's Team Quest gym in Temecula, California, and he shared a couple of his wrestling techniques.

The wrestling technique Dan is demonstrating here begins with him having an underhook on his opponent, Thierry. This position can be attained either following a wrestling collar tie, which was discussed in last month's article, or if a fighter is blocking strikes in close and digs in for the underhook.

Dan has a deep underhook, which means his right arm is going underneath Thierry's arm, and his right hand reaches over from the back to grab onto Thierry's left deltoid. Thierry's left arm is lying as close as possible to the bend of Dan's right arm, not high up on Dan's shoulder. Dan's left hand is gripped on Thierry's right elbow.



1 of 2

## Simple Takedown (continued...)

The next step in this takedown is for Dan to change levels. Changing levels means that he drops his focus down to Thierry's legs. He places his left hand on Thierry's knee to block it from moving.

With Thierry's knee blocked, Dan is able to run across the front of his opponent. He runs forward a few steps, keeping his left hand on Thierry's knee and keeping his deep underhook with his right arm. Dan's forward movement will cause the underhook to pull Thierry off balance, and the knee block will prevent Thierry from recovering his base and being able to keep his balance. Dan will further block Thierry's leg by placing his own inside leg (his right) on his own left hand, to inhibit movement either to the side or to the front.



Dan will continue to run forward until Thierry falls and Dan will end up in side control, having already cleared Thierry's legs. This is especially important if your opponent is a jiu-jitsu fighter and his guard is a potentially dangerous place.

Sometimes it will take more than a few steps to get the opponent to the ground. And sometimes the opponent will hop defensively and prevent the takedown. According to Dan, just keep running until he falls, or, if you run out of space, pin him to the side of the ring or cage.

To see takedowns and the upper-body clinch in action, check out any of Dan's fights in the Pride Fighting Championships over the past few years, but in particular his fights against Ricardo Arona and Murilo "Ninja" Rua.



Becca Borawski teaches and trains at [Petranek Fitness/CrossFit Los Angeles](#) in Santa Monica. She has a master's degree in film from the University of Southern California and a background in martial arts training. She has blended these skills together to produce DVDs and build websites for professional fighters. Her main job is as the music editor on the TV show *Scrubs* and she currently trains jiu-jitsu under Eddie Bravo at 10th Planet Jiu-Jitsu in Hollywood.

Dan Henderson is a professional MMA fighter who trains out of [Team Quest](#) in Temecula, California. He currently holds the Pride welterweight and middleweight titles. He will be fighting for the UFC against Quinton "Rampage" Jackson later this year.