

the **CrossFit** JOURNAL ARTICLES

The Left Hook

Becca Borawski

Nothing quite catches the attention of an audience like a knockout, whether it be in boxing, kickboxing, or mixed martial arts. The left hook is a particularly famous knockout punch, and it is the focus of the second part of this four-part series on striking. However, it's not just for knockouts. The left hook can be utilized in the gym to develop explosive power, hip movement, and coordination.

All techniques and stances in the article will be described for a right-handed individual; left-handed fighters will need to reverse the left and right directions for all the techniques (e.g., right foot forward in fighting stance and a right hook).

The left hook

There are three distances a fighter can work from: long, middle and tight. The left hook is a powerful tool for the tight distance, also known as "inside" fighting.

The left hook is typically a power punch and consequently a fighter puts his whole body into the punch. Fighters who do not train proper technique fall victim to what is termed an "arm punch," or a punch without the power of the hip and bodyweight behind it, strictly swinging the arm. As with everything in CrossFit, our goal is to learn to use multiple joints and the entire body in coordination, with the end result being powerful explosive movement.

Like the right cross, the movement for the left hook originates in the foot. Beginning in fighting stance (see the detailed description of fighting stance in last month's article on the jab and the right cross), you should

Once again, as I describe the left hook, Bridgett "Baby Doll" Riley demonstrates proper form in the photographs. Bridgett is a former world champion boxer and a five-time world champion kickboxer. She trains and works at the world-famous Wild Card Boxing Gym in Hollywood, California, and also works as a stuntwoman and actress.

Coincidentally, Bridgett's favorite punch is the left hook and several of her knockout wins have come courtesy of this strike.



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The Left Hook (continued...)

transfer weight into your front foot, bending your knee, and pivoting your left foot outward. Your hip will follow the rotation of your knee in toward the target. As your hip turns inward, your upper body and shoulder follow as well, putting your entire body behind the shot as your fist lands.

Photo 2 is the standard fighting stance. Photo 3 shows where your feet should be when landing a left hook.

Different trainers teach different ways to hold the fist when throwing the left hook. When throwing a powerful left hook, Bridgett prefers to keep her fist parallel to the ground, with her knuckles up and her thumb toward her when the punch lands.

(Photo 4) Make sure that your elbow joint creates a ninety-degree angle in your arm and that your elbow is not above or too far below parallel with your fist. Keep your chin tucked down and your right hand up at your face. Protect yourself at all times, even when executing offensive movements

In this full body photograph (Photo 5), Bridgett's left foot has pivoted inward and a higher percentage of her weight is over her left foot than in the fighting stance. Her knee has turned inward and her hip has followed. Her shoulder and hip are in line because her entire body has moved together to power her punch. Her arm is not swinging on its own. The snapping pivot of her core as a solid unit behind her arm makes a solid punch.

An alternate way to throw the left hook is to throw it with the thumb toward the ceiling. Bridgett uses this punch when she is throwing a wide "slapping" left hook. This is a distraction technique, or setup, as opposed to an intended knockout punch. She typically uses this slapping left hook to set up her right cross.

To add more power to the left hook, you can "sit down" into it. Bend your knee more and put more bodyweight behind the punch. You can throw the left hook to the body or to the head. A good combination to set up a left hook is a jab, followed by a right cross, followed by a left hook. You can also double up on the left hook. Opponents are frequently expecting left-right combos, not left-left combos, and it can be an effective way to catch them off guard with a damaging blow.

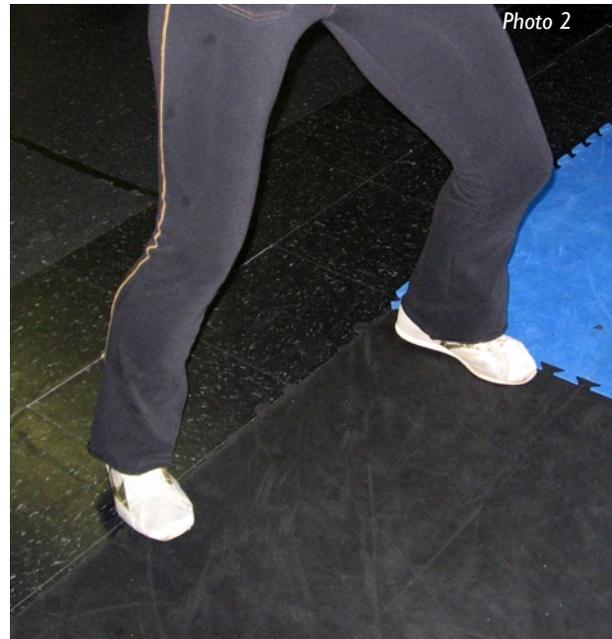


Photo 2



Photo 3

The Left Hook (continued...)

Photo 4



Photo 5



For examples of knockouts by left hook in Mixed Martial Arts, see the following fights:

- *Pride Total Elimination 2004* – Kevin Randleman vs. Mirko Filipovic
- *UFC 31* – Chuck Liddell vs. Kevin Randleman



Bridgett Riley is a former world champion boxer and a five-time world champion kickboxer. She trains and works at the world-famous Wild Card Boxing Gym in Hollywood, California, and also works as a stuntwoman and actress.

To see Bridgett in action, watch a clip online from her [World Kickboxing Association championship fight](#).



Becca Borawski, CSCS, 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 to produce DVDs and build websites for professional fighters. Her main job is as the music editor on the TV show *Scrubs*. She currently trains Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu with Rey Diogo, a Carlson Gracie affiliate.