

# the **CrossFit** JOURNAL ARTICLES

## Countering the Clinch Escape

Becca Borawski

The Muay Thai clinch is a dangerous position. It presents a variety of offensive opportunities in the form of punches, knees, and elbows, and it can quickly lead to a knockout. The clinch, sometimes also called the “plum,” consists of one fighter controlling the head of his opponent, using weight and gravity against him, while delivering strikes to his head and body.

In previous articles I discussed how to enter the clinch and how to escape the clinch. A good fighter not only has escapes in his arsenal, but also knows how to counter his opponent’s escapes. For that reason, this third and final article in the clinch series addresses how to counter an opponent’s clinch escape.



Photo 1

To begin, Tait Fletcher (with shaved head and tattoos in the photos), a veteran of the television show *The Ultimate Fighter*, and demo guy Andy Petranek are in the clinch (photo 1). Tait has his hands clamped on the back of Andy’s head and is keeping his elbows in tight like a cinch on Andy’s head. By grasping the back of Andy’s head and not his neck, Tait is better able to maintain leverage over Andy and also prevent Andy



Photo 2

from posturing upward. By keeping his elbows tight and pushing against Andy’s collarbones, he can prevent Andy from moving forward.

Using the technique discussed in last month’s Journal, Andy escapes the clinch by first reaching out with his right hand and pressing it against Tait’s face and chin. Andy then stiff-arms Tait’s face by pushing against him

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## Countering the Clinch Escape (continued...)



and then locking out his own arm (photo 2). At the same time, Andy steps back and around to the side. The end result is that both Andy and Tait are facing forward on the same plane (photo 3).

Here is where Tait's counter to Andy's clinch escape begins. The first thing Tait does is to drop his level. Dropping level means he will lower his center of mass but keep his weight centered and in balance. He does this by bending his legs and pulling his hips downward, not by leaning forward (photo 4).

Tait then steps in toward Andy and reaches with both hands for Andy's leg. He grasps his hands together around Andy's leg, just below the knee. Tait's head is up and he is looking in the direction he intends to move (photo 5).

Keeping his face up, Tait then stands up, bringing Andy's knee up with him, and pinches Andy's lower leg between his own knees (photo 6). He now has Andy off balance and can execute a takedown.





## Countering the Clinch Escape (continued...)



Once Andy's leg is trapped, Tait lowers his level again, turns in toward Andy, and dumps him on the ground. He does not drive straight forward, but instead gets Andy off balance by moving at an angle—back and to the left—with the intent of putting Andy down behind him (photos 7 and 8).

Having achieved the takedown, Tait can then easily move into half guard or side control to begin to execute his submission game.

A recent example of the clinch in action took place on *EliteXC Saturday Night Fights* on CBS. Shayna Baszler and Cris Cyborg put on an exciting match, pairing up Baszler's slick submissions against Cyborg's Chute Boxe style Muay Thai and wrestling.



Tait Fletcher trains MMA with Greg Jackson in New Mexico and is a veteran of the television show *The Ultimate Fighter*. He has been training in mixed martial arts for approximately eight years, earning his brown belt in Brazilian jiu-jitsu from Eddie Bravo.

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.