

Talking Takedown Basics

To be more specific, I want to talk briefly about basic takedown fundamentals. This is not rocket science, but I can assure you that it is a very powerful way to view the takedown learning process. I say this because many matches are won or lost due to basic mistakes.

The Stance should be the most secure part of every takedown. It is the foundation of a wrestler's takedown success and the position from which all takedown attempts start. Therefore, the emphasis on keeping the knees flexed, keeping proper spacing between the feet, moving efficiently, keeping the arms close to the body, keeping the head up and maintaining your best position to attack as well as defend, should be considered a top priority when teaching or learning takedowns.

I am not going to bore you rehashing all of the positional aspects of what a good stance looks like. There are many excellent books and videos that cover the positional details of a good stance. It is more important for me to emphasize that some wrestlers might be better served by changing the way they view the importance of takedown fundamentals.

It is also important that wrestlers understand the "why" as well as the "how." For example, the concept of changing levels is a very powerful wrestling concept. Wrestlers need to understand why they change levels and how it relates to the actual takedown. Wrestlers also need to understand how stance, motion, changing levels and the penetration step are all interrelated. Overlooking any of these basic takedown concepts can prove problematic throughout one's wrestling career.

I would be remiss if I did not talk more extensively about the penetration step. The ability to penetrate is the most glaring weakness I see when high school wrestlers make the transition to college. I often wonder how such an important skill is overlooked. There are a few different ways that wrestlers are taught to penetrate. Regardless of which technique is used, it is important to understand that it is the step that puts you in a position to score and I believe it's the most important aspect of the takedown.

Learning how to penetrate is also one of the most awkward skills any wrestler has to learn. Perhaps that is why wrestlers have such a tough time mastering this very important skill. It is a skill that should be taught properly and should be drilled every day in practice. It takes a while to develop specific muscle groups and it also takes time to develop good penetrating balance and coordination. That can be accomplished by drilling 25-50 penetration steps across the wrestling room each day. Once a wrestler knows how to perform proper mechanics of the penetration step, this skill will improve very rapidly. Further, a great benefit of having a good penetration step is that you will be quicker, more efficient and will be able to learn takedowns at a much faster pace.

I will be writing more about developing your takedown system over the coming months. However, this might be a good time to change the way you view takedown basics. When you consider what works at the highest levels in our sport, I am sure you will find that even our greatest champions depend on basic takedown fundamentals to win against the world's toughest competition.

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