

Counter for Hiza Guruma



INTRODUCTION

This photo sequence series shows one of the two most effective counters for hiza guruma. Both are widely used, but the method shown here (in which the counter man grabs the thrower's leg, holds it up and applies ouchi gari) is better known to American Judomen. This counter is a valuable addition to your Judo technique, even though it is little known. The movement used here to counter hiza guruma is a rapidly applied kosoto gake (little outside dash). Kosoto gake is the first throw of the third kyo of the Go Kyo No Waza, and is therefore quite difficult (the Go Kyo being arranged from easy to difficult). For this reason it will require a good deal of practice to master this counter. The value of the counter is, however, that when you get it you can counter sasae tsuri komi (foot stomp) with the same movement.

In fact, we can divide the minor foot techniques (all involving a forward sweep of the leg) into two general categories, the swinging foot techniques (hiza guruma and sase tsuri komi ashi) and the sweeping foot techniques (de ashi harai, okuri ashi harai, kosoto gari) this includes all of the frequently used minor foot techniques except kouchi gari which is in a category by itself and requires a special counter. The value of dividing the minor foot techniques into these two groups is that one general counter will work for each group. Tsubame gaeshi (or nidan kosoto gake) is the counter movement used for the sweeping foot techniques, and the kosoto

gake show here is used against the sweeping foot techniques.

THE PLAYERS

The kosoto gake counter for hiza guruma is applied in this sequence by Ron Hoffman, a National Intercollegiate Champion and teh Pan-American Maccabia Games Heavyweight Gold Medalist of 1966, against Allen Coage, 1966 National AAU Heavyweight Judo Champion, AFJA Technical Series No. 1 (Requirements for Sankyu) includes hiza guruma applied by Allen Coage against Ron Hoffman. The reader is advised to review that photo sequence carefully before studying this counter movement.

COUNTERING THE KUZUSHI

As in all counter movements, the first action of the player who is going to apply the counter is to resist and change the off-balance the thrower is applying to him. If the thrower succeeds in breaking your balance, then it will be difficult if not impossible to apply a counter, though you may manage to stop his attack. On the other hand, if you can change his off-balance attempt to one of your own, breaking his balance instead, then you have an ideal chance to throw him, all the more so as your attack will be unexpected, catching him in the middle of his own attack.

In the photo on this page you'll see that Ron (on the right, who will apply the counter) has premeditated Allen's

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attack and is starting to rock his body to his left front instead of to his right front, the way Allen wants to pull it for the hiza guruma off-balance. This is the beginning of Ron's counter movement into kosoto gake.

LEFT HAND ACTION

In the two photos above you will see clearly how Ron is driving to his left front corner as Allen attempts to make his off-balance and entry into hiza guruma. In the left photo above, although Allen's right foot is in place, Ron has started to swing his left foot outside of it. Notice that Ron has rocked his body away from Allen's off-balance. Now, even though Allen's left foot comes up for the hiza guruma, Ron is already out of the way and in position to attack Allen's right leg, which is supporting all of his weight as he attempts to sweep and hold with his left leg. Note that Ron's left hand is pushing strongly back and down on Allen's sleeve, it is this action that keeps Allen from completing the tai sabaki which is necessary for making a successful hiza guruma. Ron's hands keep Allen from turning, so Allen is unable to complete the off-balance and entry properly.

SPEED IS NECESSARY

When you first try this counter, you will probably be unable to get started before you balance is broken. In many cases your opponent will quickly break your balance so that you are leaning forward to your right front, and hence can't duplicate the action show in this sequence.



This is because you are not acting fast enough and early enough. Remember that in countering Judo movements, you can never wait until your opponent actually starts his throw. You have to start the counter when you feel he is going to attack, having your counter in motion at the same time his throw is in motion.

MIFUNE'S MASTERY

Professor Kyuze Mifune, one of the six 10th degrees in Judo, said that he always tried to act in that instant after his opponent decided to do something, but before he actually started to do it. Sometimes we call this, "Catching him flatfooted." It means that he has made his decision to act, and we know what that action will be by his preliminary movements such as breathing, eye movements, and tightening of hand grip. We take advantage of that knowledge to move in that instant when he can't call his decision back but before that decision has taken effect in his movement. It may take you a long time to master or even to be skillful at this art of feeling his attack beginning, but it is so necessary that you ought to start working on it immediately.

COUNTER OFF-BALANCE COMPLETE

When this sequence gets to the right photo above, Allen's attempted off-balance for hiza guruma has failed, and Ron has completed his own off-balance for kosoto gake. From here on the sequence will show Ron continuing with kosoto gake, and it could be used as a

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sequence for that throw.

LEFT LEG ACTION

As Ron continues with the kosoto gake, notice that his hands keep driving Allen back straight to Allen's right heel. This action is very important, as it tips Allen back on his right heel, making it easier to throw him with the kosoto gake. At the same time, Ron's left leg, which was swinging around to the outside in the photos on the last page, is now hooking Allen's right leg. Ron will hook Allen's right leg in, at the same time dashing him down to the rear.

KO SOTO GARI - THE DIFFERENCE

The difference between the action Ron is applying (kosoto gake) and kosoto gari is that Ron is primarily interested in holding Allen's right leg while he drives him backward over it, this is called a gake (dashing) movement. If Ron were to keep his upright stance, hold Allen's upper body fairly still, and reap Allen's right foot out using the bottom of his foot against Allen's heel tendon, then that would be a gari (reaping) movement. Kosoto gari is actually easier than kosoto gake, but in the position Ron is in, it would be difficult to make kosoto gari. This is because to sweep or reap Allen's right foot out effectively Ron would have to place his left or supporting leg closer to Allen, about at the spot marked (1) in the left photo above. To sweep effectively, the thrower must be able to keep his balance throughout the sweep.



But to hook and dash the opponent over, all that is necessary is to be close enough to him to reach him with the hooking foot, trap it, and drive him down. Hence, we can see that in this sequence shows Ron reaching out from quite a distance in the left photo above, hooking and holding Allen's leg, and finally dashing him over it in the two photos on the next page.

BODY ACTION

Fundamental to many Judo throwing actions is the "coil up and spring" movement. This is a point made repeatedly by Dr. Sachio Ashida, 6th Degree, who is now teaching at Michigan State University. Dr. Ashida makes the observation that in most throws the body crouches or coils up as the entry into a Judo throw is made. Then as the entry is completed and the kake or execution starts, the body straightens with a snap to execute the particular movement required to throw the opponent. In this photo sequence you can see in the two photos on the last page that Ron's body is bent slightly at the waist and knees. However, as he finishes the entry and starts to throw in the right photo above, his body is straight from his right heel to his head, almost a perfect line. In fact, if you'll check the left photo on the next page, you'll see that even Ron's toe is pointed at the end of the throw.

FINISHING THE DASH

In the dynamic sequence photo on the left above, we see both players completely off the ground as Ron

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dashes Allen down for the end of the counter. There is almost a perfect line from Ron's right toe, which has driven so hard it has left the mat, to the top of his head. Every muscle is straining to snap straight. Ron's hooking leg is still off the ground, but is now returning toward the mat to catch his weight and maintain his balance for the follow through. Ron's body is following Allen's right to the mat, so that he will keep control until after contact has been made. In all Judo throws this is very important. Time and time again we lose control during the final split second of a throw, failing to score because we didn't keep the opponent going straight on his back to the mat. If we lose control at the last instant of the throw, we also lose control of his body after the throw, and are unable to follow through into matwork, wasting another chance to score.

FOLLOW THROUGH

In the photo on the right notice that Ron's right leg is still straight and is off the mat nearly as high as his waist. Ron's weight is on his left foot, and both of his hands are pressing Allen to the mat. With a single swinging movement, Ron can shoot his right leg around and through under his body, landing in perfect position for kesa gatame. This movement is exactly like an exercise most of us do in warm-ups. We rest with the hands and feet on the mat as if to start pushups, and then instead shoot first one leg and then the other under and across, twisting the hips and body as we slide one leg under the



other. It is an important exercise, and an important movement in going from throwing to grappling work in Judo.

SUMMARY

The key to successfully applying kosoto gake as a counter to hiza guruma is in starting your action to the left front corner just before your opponent starts his attempt to break your balance to your right front corner. If you are successful in doing this his off-balance fails, and you can easily break his balance to his own right rear corner, setting up your kosoto gake.

After you have broken his balance you must reach out with great speed and force to trap his right leg. It is important that your counter be one continuous movement from the time you start shifting to your left front corner until you finally dash him to the mat. Holding his foot with your left heel, you continue to drive him down, keeping control and going instantly into matwork.

Never underestimate this kosoto gake movement. It is very important and much used contest throw. Murata, three times All-Police Champion of Japan, uses it as his major means of scoring, either by catching it as a counter as shown here, or by faking a left throw and then catching kosoto gake on the right. World Champion Anton Geesink also uses this throw, so it is definitely worth learning.