

# Master the Game

Rey Diogo's Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu Drills Will Enhance Your Timing, Body Control and Technique Development

By **Andreh Anderson**

**S**KILL IN BRAZILIAN JIU-JITSU DOES NOT COME EASY. If it did, there would be more black belts. In fact, there would be more purple belts. But relatively speaking, there aren't many, and that is largely because progress in jiu-jitsu isn't just about the accumulation of technique, but also the exhausting repetition of very basic movements. We call them drills.

The pattern for most jiu-jitsu burnouts is as follows: A student begins his training and starts learning technique. It is all very exciting and he begins to progress quickly, first by surviving in sparring, eventually by holding his own and finally by tapping out others at his level. But somewhere around the blue belt level, he hits a wall. The daily progress he once made slows down until months pass and his game remains unchanged. The higher belts still smash him and the lower belts begin to catch up. The lessons remain fresh, but for some reason anything beyond the basic positions just don't make it into his game.

If he is like most people, it is at this point that he quits in frustration. But it doesn't have to be this way.

Drills are vital tools for learning the art of Brazilian jiu-jitsu on a physical level, yet they are often neglected or underused at many academies. The reason they are skipped in training is because they are generally more difficult and less exciting than the technical and sparring segments of class. Truth be told, some instructors fear boring their students with them, but what they are sacrificing is an opportunity for the students to

## Armbar Drill

(1) In order to maximize the use of the hips, Rey performs this drill with his hands behind his head. He first steps onto his partner's hip on the side he wants to armlock. (2) He then angles his body away and "climbs" his opposite leg up underneath his partner's shoulder. (3) Finally, he passes his left leg over his partner's neck and drops his weight down to complete the position. He then starts again in the guard and performs the drill on the opposite side.





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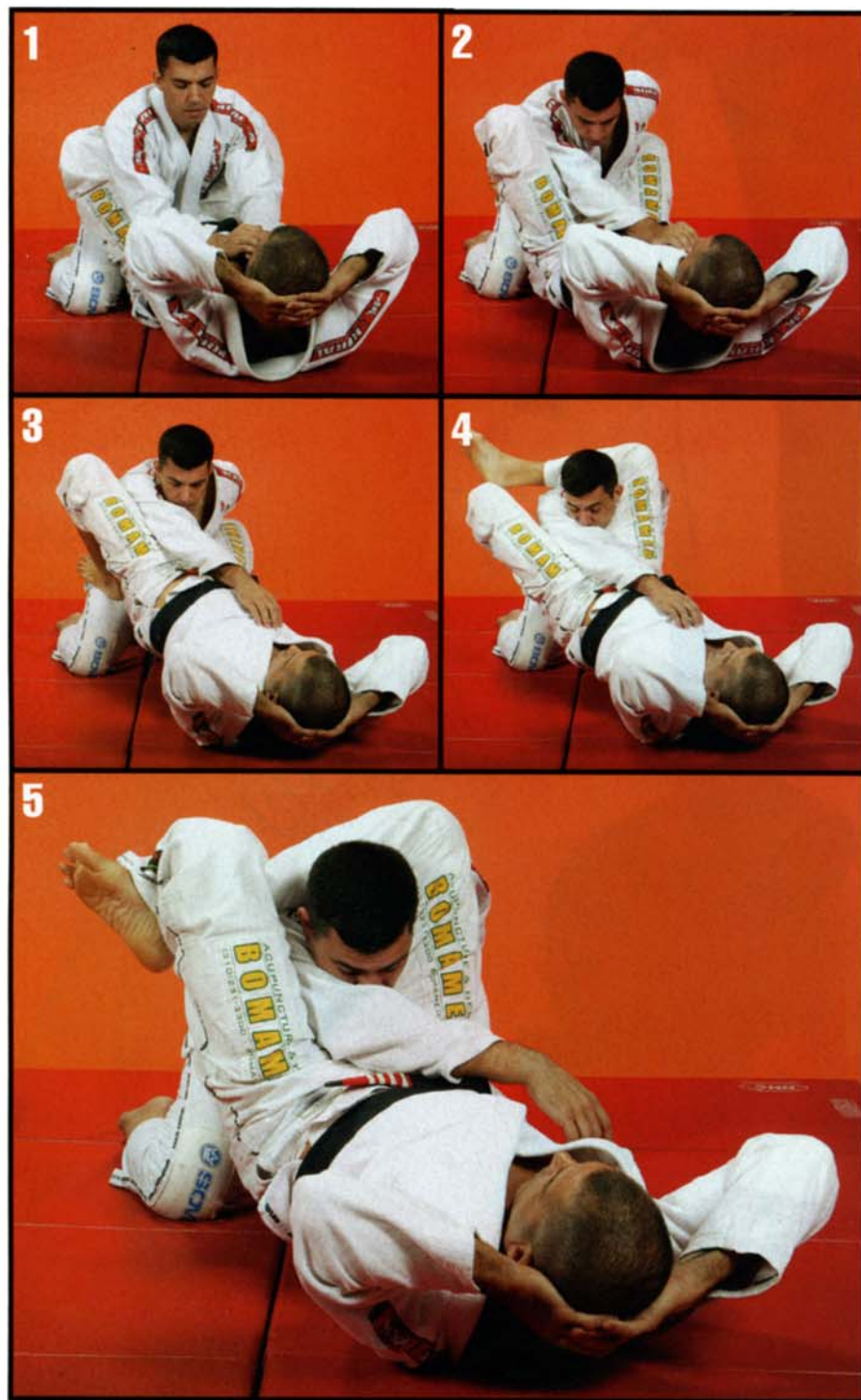
etch the positions into their minds so that their bodies will react to the moment-to-moment changes in a fight without having to wait for the mind to decide the right move.

Rey Diogo is an instructor who strongly believes in the use of drills in

training. In fact, drills are an integral part of almost every class he teaches.

“Repetition is very important in jiu-jitsu,” he says. “You can’t learn the game without doing the positions over and over so that they stick with you.”

Drills enhance the development of



## Triangle Drill

(1) Rey starts with his partner in his closed guard. Rey keeps his arms behind his head in order to focus on using his hips properly. (2) His partner first feeds the triangle choke to Rey by putting his arm between his legs as if he were trying to open the guard incorrectly. (3) Rey steps onto his partner's right hip with his left leg and lifts his hips up. (4) He then passes his right leg over his partner's neck, while keeping his hips up. (5) Finally, he locks in the triangle. He will then repeat the movement on the other side.



## Recovering Open Guard Drill

(1) Rey grabs onto his partner's ankle and straightens his legs. (2) He then swings his legs up over his head and places his right foot onto his partner's inner thigh. (3) Rey uses the foot on his partner's inner thigh to spin himself into position. (4) Finally, he ends up with his opponent between his legs. He will repeat the drill by using his other foot to turn himself.

technique. They tighten the basic positions so that the movements become natural and more precise. One can easily see the difference between a practitioner who has performed 100 armlocks from the guard versus someone who has performed 1,000. When the technique becomes more natural, the student will inevitably develop a sense of timing and body control that will help him perform the technique against a higher level of player, and by increasing the precision of the movement, the student maximizes his efficiency and reduces the chances of escape for his opponent.

Diogo claims there is an added benefit: "By working your drills, your body learns to move the right way. This not only helps you with the basic positions, but also makes it easier for you to pick up advanced techniques."

### Rey Diogo's Bio

- Black belt on the Carlson Gracie Team
- More than 15 years of studying and training under Carlson Gracie
- Nine years of teaching BJJ under Carlson Gracie
- 2005 Pan-Am heavyweight and open division champ

"There are four different types of drills I use with my students," Diogo says. "Each one is useful and I mix them up so that the students don't get bored doing the same type of drill every day."

#### No. 1: The One-Step Drill

The key to developing the first type of drill is to make it limited in scope. While sparring encompasses the entire range of possibilities in a grappling match, drills are meant to enhance specific positions or attributes. By making the focus of a drill too broad, you dilute the effectiveness of the individual movements it contains. Choose a specific area, such as submissions from the guard, then narrow it down further to one type of submission, like the triangle, and then focus on an important component to an effective triangle, such as the elevation of the hips.

Grab a partner and ask him to start in your guard with his hands in a position that will make it easy for you to lock in your triangle. Without using your hands to help, use your foot on his hip to make

*Continued on page 52*

## Scissor Sweep Drill

(1) Rey's partner starts in his guard and lifts one leg. Neither Rey nor his partner should use their arms in this drill, so both should keep their arms away from their lower bodies in order to avoid using them. (2) Rey opens his guard and uses his weight over his right leg to lift his hips. (3) He then turns his body to the left as he escapes his hips to the right. (4) He then slides his right shin across his opponent's stomach to simulate the scissor sweep position. (5) In the final step, he extends his left foot out so that he can scissor his legs to finish the sweep. Instead of sweeping, he will go back to guard and his partner will step up with the other leg so that Rey can switch to the other side for the drill.



# Master the Game

Continued from page 51

an angle and elevate your hips, pass your opposite leg over the neck and lock the triangle in. Your partner should not resist in this type of drill. Once you have

secured the triangle, release it, close your guard and start again on the other side. Repeat the steps at least 10 times on each

Continued on page 98

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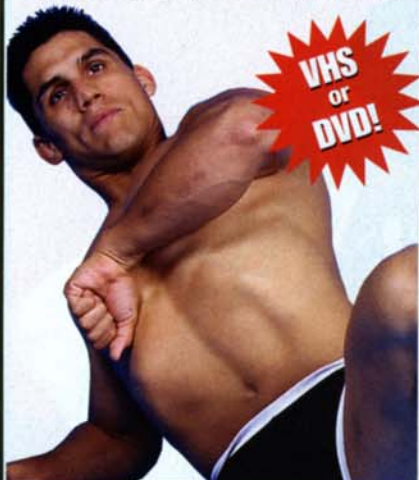
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### Open Guard Sweeps Drill

(1) Rey starts in the open guard with his feet on his partner's hips and his right hand controlling his partner's left ankle. (2) He then escapes his hips to the left and pushes on his partner's hips. (3) Rey drops his right foot behind his partner's right ankle. If he were actually completing the sweep, he would push with his left foot and kick behind his partner's right ankle with his right foot. (4) Instead, he moves immediately back to the starting open guard position. (5) And this time moves to another sweep by placing his left foot behind his opponent's right knee and pushing with his right foot on his partner's hip. He will switch back and forth between sweeps without actually causing the partner to fall.



### S-Mount Hips Drill

(1) In order to practice sliding his hips into place behind his opponent's elbow when in the mount, Rey starts by inserting his right hand into his partner's lapel. (2) He then pushes the elbow across (3) and then turns his partner and slides his hips behind his partner's elbow. He will repeat this movement on the other side by going back to the starting point and inserting his left hand into the lapel the next time.

## New! "Tennessee Mountain Man Discovers Missing Link to Eternal Youth Previously Known Only to China's Yellow Emperor and an Anonymous Tibetan Sage!"

**This startling discovery by a Tennessee recluse supercharged my body in just 11 days.** I thought I had been doing everything right until he shared his secret. My skin became as smooth as silk. My eyes took on a new power and brightness. **I just drank from the fountain of youth! And you will too!** Would you like to supercharge your chi and revitalize your internal strength in as little as 15 min. a day? Can I tell you my story?

**At first they laughed at me** when I told people the secret went back to the Yellow Emperor's classic of internal medicine of the 1st century B.C. But no one was doing it except an American, affectionately known as the "Magic Man" living on a mountaintop in Tennessee. I had to thank my lucky stars for finding him. I pleaded with him to teach me his practice. **He said the surprisingly simple secret was used by a Tibetan Yogi** in the 1800s to expand the body's subtle energy fields. It creates high amplitude alpha brain waves, when done with a special Qi Gong routine. It is said to change the brain tissue. Can you imagine how this sets the environment for eternal youth? Since I'm an avid athlete, I asked if the missing link could also improve my strength. He went over to a cutoff 80 lb. dumbbell, his fingertips just barely reaching around the wide end. He picked it up as if it were a paperweight. He laughed at my amazement and replied, **"How would you like to magnetize your fingers with chi like this? My Magnetic Qi Gong is the fastest way to turbo-charge the physical body that I've ever found."**

As we walked together down the twisting mountain trail under a flowered canopy of pink and white laurel, he said, **"When you hold your hands apart, if the empty space doesn't feel as solid as an iron ball, your chi could be toxic, and that could cause tumors, cysts, and growths. Do you agree that could be a problem? When do you believe the best time to change would be?"** I sputtered, "Why, right now!" He put his hand on my shoulder as he laughed. His laughter made me feel unusually peaceful. The countless songbirds flittering from branch to branch seemed somehow to sing louder now. I'd always heard stories about sages secreted away in the mountains but I never thought I'd have the opportunity to... He stopped me as he read my mind. **"Of course, it takes a very special individual to fully appreciate the value of this Qi Gong. The healing effects are so awesome. In fact you'll multiply your personal power instantly. That's why I've hesitated in sharing this secret, some might misuse it. So it's not for everyone. But, if one does misuse it..."** I assured him I would not misuse this teaching and that I believed there were many other people who would value this as a priceless treasure. He relented.

**I can't believe my good fortune. I doubled the power of my chi in less than 11 days, and even further, he allowed me to film his secret!** As I profusely thanked him, the Mountain Man just laughed and laughed, **"Isn't it a shame how others waste their time when so simply, they could do what you just did?"** Tony Balistreri Milwaukee, WI

◆ **"Magnetic Qi Gong is power-personified. Learn these ancient teachings and alter your life!"** Matt Furey Author of *Combat Conditioning* Gold Medalist / NCAA National Wrestling Champion

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## MASTER THE GAME

Continued from page 52

side. Try to move as quickly as possible without being sloppy in your execution of the technique.

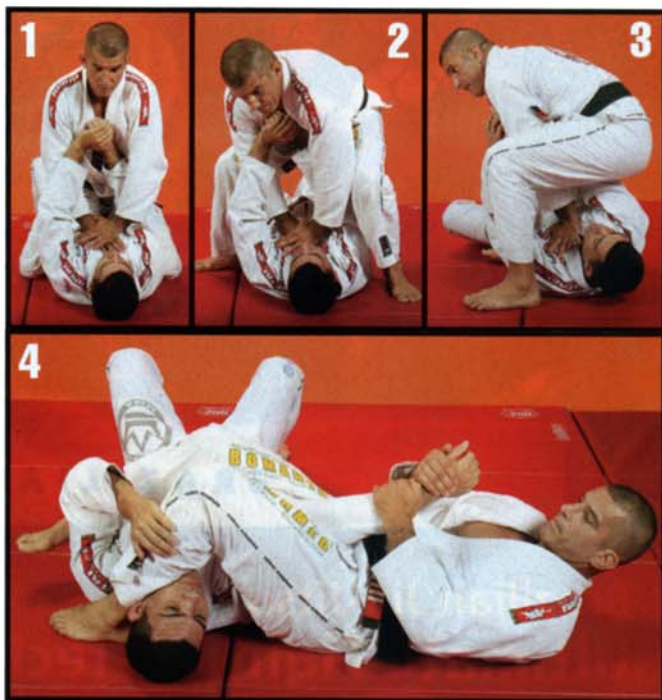
"This type of drill is important, especially for beginners, because it is simple to learn and it usually involves the hips which are the most important parts of your body to develop," Diogo says. "You can never work your hip movement too much."

### No. 2: The Options Drill

The next drill adds another element to the exercise. In addition to the repetition of a basic movement, it also provides the person doing the drill with the need to make a quick choice. This is important for shortening the time it takes for the mind to notice an opportunity and the body to take it.

Here you will once again use a partner and choose a specific area to develop, but this time rather than performing a single movement, there will be the opportunity to execute more than one. For example, start in the mount and ask your opponent to put his hands in a position to defend. Ask him to try to defend one of two ways each time, either by protecting his neck or pushing on your chest. He can choose how he will defend each repetition, and you must react. If he defends his neck, slide your hips into position behind his elbow as if you were going to use the "triple attack." If he pushes on your chest, make a frame with your arms and swing your body into an armlock.

Continued on page 100



### Armbar Drill

(1) Rey starts in the mount position on his partner. His partner feeds his arms to Rey by pushing on Rey's chest. Rey will pass his left arm over his partner's right arm and post his weight over his arms. (2) He will then use his weight over his arms to lift his hips off of the ground and begin his swing. (3) Rey then passes his left leg over his partner's head while keeping his hips as low to the ground as possible. (4) The completed position. Rey has his partner in the armlock. He will mount again and perform the movement on the other arm. The key is to move as quickly as possible from arm to arm.

## MASTER THE GAME

Continued from page 98

It is important that he change the defense each time and that you react as quickly and as smoothly as possible. In the beginning, you may have to think about your reaction, but as you continue drilling, you will find that your reaction time will get shorter and shorter. Perform the repetitions at least 10 times on each side.

Diogo explains that one of the keys to this type of drill is to cooperate while still using a real defense and offense.

"You don't want to let it turn into a sparring match," he says. "If you are the one helping your partner drill, you want to make him choose, but if he makes the right choice, you shouldn't resist or try to trick him by switching to another defense."

### No. 3: The Action-Reaction Drill

This drill allows the full execution of a movement by both participants. The goal here is to make the positions as seamless as possible for each person. If it were boxing, it would be like allowing one boxer to throw a jab cross while the other responds immediately afterward with two punches of his own. An example of this type of drill would involve Student A sweeping Student B with a hip bump sweep (over the shoulder sweep) right into the mount. As soon as Student B is mounted, he performs an elbow escape to place Student A into his guard. Then Student B will perform the hip bump sweep right into the mount and Student A will have his turn to immediately elbow escape back to guard. The movements should flow smoothly and there should be cooperation between both students so that each can have a chance to execute the position perfectly. You will find that a sense of timing develops for each as they begin to realize when the best time to begin their movement occurs.

"This is one of my favorites to do when I'm injured because it allows me to move and exercise without re-injuring myself from an unpredictable movement by my partner," Diogo explains.

### No. 4: The Game Drill

This is a mini-sparring session that is limited to one position. In this drill, one partner will try to control and finish the other,

while the other partner simply works to escape. The possibilities are endless. One partner can start in the guard and simply try to pass while the other works to keep the guard or sweep, or the position can begin in side control with one struggling to escape while the partner on top tries to submit him.

The important thing here is not to let the scenario progress into other positions like the mount or the back. When one person sweeps, submits or passes, begin the drill again from the same position. Another possibility is to start from the turtle position with one partner controlling his opponent from the side and trying to submit him or take his back, while the person on the bottom tries to turn into him and escape or replace his guard.

"The instructor should watch this type of drill carefully to make sure that it doesn't become a full sparring match. That would miss the point of the drill," Diogo says.

### Make It Exciting

Every instructor has his own set of drills to offer the students; the key is in communicating the importance of the exercises and finding fun ways to keep the excitement level high. The student also holds a high level of responsibility to commit to the drills by practicing them diligently whenever the opportunity arises. **Grapple**

*The Writer: Andreh Anderson is a freelance writer and brown belt in Brazilian jiu-jitsu under Rey Diogo. He currently resides in Redondo Beach, California.*



### Contact Info

**SCHOOL ADDRESS:** Rey Diogo Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu Academy, 8733 Venice Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90034

**PHONE:** 310 839-9086

**WEBSITE:** [www.reydiogo.com](http://www.reydiogo.com)



### Sweep and Escape Drill

(1) Rey begins the drill by rising up and crossing his left arm over his partner's left shoulder. (2) He then bumps his hips and drives his partner's back toward the mat. (3) As his partner is about to hit the mat, he must be prepared to start his escape. (4) Once he hits the mat, he immediately gets to his side and pushes on Rey's knee with his elbows. (5) He then crosses his left leg over Rey's left leg and uses it to hook that leg into the half guard. (6) He then pushes on Rey's leg, (7) and escapes his hips to the right to make room for him to recover his guard. (8) Once Rey's partner has recovered his guard, he will initiate the sweep and Rey will have to escape the mount.