



**THE
MODERN
LEGLOCK
POSITION
CHEATSHEETS**

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THE LEGLOCK GAME IS CHANGING!



Leglocks have been around a long time, but in the last few years they've become much more sophisticated, powerful, and effective.

These innovations have resulted in leglocks becoming the dominant submission in no gi grappling competitions like EBI, Polaris, and ADCC (plus they've had a resurgence in MMA as well.)

One of the biggest changes is the emphasis on controlling the underlying leglock *positions* rather than going straight for the *submission*.

In some ways this is an old approach (how long has jiu-jitsu been preaching **Position before Submission** again?).

What you have in this book is a *checklist of the essential leglock positions*. For each position you'll get an idea of how to do it, what your options are, other names for that position and more. This is material taken from "The Modern Leglock Formula" that we (Rob Biernacki and Stephan Kesting) released at Grapplearts.com/leglocks

It'll be enough to get you started, just know that it's far from complete. For each position you also need to learn the finer details of control, the gripfighting, entries, transitions, attacks, defenses, and escapes.

But there'll be time for that later... Let's get started and look at the first position!

1: ASHI GARAMI

(Aka Standard Ashi, Ashi)



“The Jab of Leglocks”

This is the most basic and easiest-to-get leglock position that we’ll cover today.

Superficially similar to the Single Leg X Guard position, this is what most people think of when the topic of leglocks comes up. But as you’ll see it’s really only a starting position.

You can get here from many bottom positions and almost all top open guard positions.

When you first get here you want to control both both of your opponent’s legs because that will deny him base and make it much harder for him to escape. Of course you’ll let go of that leg when you’re digging for the actual submission later, because then there won’t be enough time for him to actually use his base

You can hold Ashi Garami on either side, but ideally you want the leg you’re attacking to be on the bottom (like in the picture above) because it immobilises the hip better. We call this the ‘strong side’.

Submissions from Ashi Garami typically include the standard heel hook or the straight ankle lock. But it can be difficult to finish someone from here if they have good leglock defense, so typically you’ll want to improve your position before going for the submission on someone good.

From Ashi Garami you can transition to the Cross Ashi (position 2) to get access to a more powerful heel hook, the Outside Ashi (3), Inside Ashi (6) or the 411 (7) to improve both the amount of control you have and the amount of power you can generate during the submission.

2: CROSS ASHI

(Aka Topside Ashi)



“Upgrading for a More Powerful Finish”

The Cross Ashi is very similar to the Standard Ashi (1). It’s still an open circuit entanglement by which we mean your legs aren’t crossed or locked together, but now you’ve switched his leg across your body to give you access to more powerful finishes.

From here you can attack with the reverse heel hook, which is much more powerful than the standard heel hook, or the cross ankle lock. Typically if going to play this position up on your elbow (like in the photo above) you’re going for the ankle lock. On your side you’ll usually attack with the heel hook

Because your opponent’s leg is already across your body you can also abandon the attack and transition to an effective guard pass like the leg drag much easier.

Make sure that your leg position is correct when you’re doing the Cross Ashi. If he can pull his leg out easily then you’re doing it wrong; if that’s a problem then work on immobilising his hip and wedging behind his knee to make it tighter.

The disadvantage of the Cross Ashi is that you can’t easily deny your opponent base, which allows him more mobility and power generation. Also your opponent can use his free leg to fight your grips. It’s a great position for a quick finish, but if you get the chance then try to improve your position even further.

3: OUTSIDE ASHI

(Aka Double Outside Ashi, DOA)



“Improved Control and Power”

This is the first of the ‘closed circuit’ leg entanglement positions, and the starting point of the better finishing positions with great control.

A closed circuit in which your ankles and feet are crossed gives you better control and stronger finishes.

In Outside Ashi you step your inside leg over your opponent’s trapped leg and cross your ankles with your outside foot over your inside foot to avoid giving your opponent the reverse heel hook. Also move your hips as close as you can to your opponent, and flare your knees apart as wide as possible.

The reason we like to flare the knees (as opposed to pinching the legs like some other practitioners) is that your top knee creates a frame between you and your opponent for range management, making it much more difficult for him to get close enough to grab your head, gripfight or get on top.

The time it takes for your opponent to clear your frame allows you the time to dig for the heel hook

Just like with Standard Ashi, you initially control both legs to limit his movement and his ability to generate base

And finally, when you’re lying on your side *you have to always be bridging*. This so-called ‘bridge wedge’ is what transforms this from a loose position that is easily countered into a tight position that gets your opponent thinking about tapping out even before you apply the submission. Try it out and see!

4: FIFTY-FIFTY

(Aka 50/50)



“An Opportunistic Upgrade to a Killer Heel Hook “

The Fifty-Fifty guard in BJJ is one where both people have their inside legs intertwined, and anything one person can do the other person can do too, in theory at least.

In a leglocking context with the Fifty-Fifty you have access to the reverse heel hook with closed circuit control over your opponent's hip and knee, which makes for an incredibly devastating leglock.

The problem is that your opponent has the same option open to him too, so the Fifty-Fifty isn't a normal part of the progression in the leglock hierarchy.

However if you end up here in a scramble or transition then you'd better know what to do...

Sometimes you'll start in the Outside Ashi (position 3) and decide to opportunistically (and quickly) switch your opponent's leg over into the Fifty-Fifty, upgrading from a Standard to a Reverse Heel Hook to end the fight.

The extra power you derive from the Reverse Heel Hook can sometimes more than make up for the lesser amount of control. The choice is up to you, but to make a choice you need to know your options!

Now let's move on to a variation of the Fifty-Fifty that puts your own legs into a safer position while still giving you access to all the same great attacks as before...

5: EIGHTY-TWENTY

(Aka 80/20)



“Upgrading the Fifty-Fifty”

The reason the Fifty-Fifty is called that is because if both people know the same techniques then it's 50/50 as to who wins.

In the Eighty-Twenty you change the position slightly so that now you have 80% of the options and he only has 20%. It's a big upgrade!

To get to the Eighty-Twenty you'll drop to your side to get leverage which will help you pry your opponent's legs apart (which will typically be triangled or crossed at the ankles).

Once his legs are separated you can then drop your inside knee down towards the ground. This makes it much more difficult for him to attack you with the reverse heel hook, but doesn't prevent you from going for it on him.

Yes, if you have him in the Eighty-Twenty your opponent can still potentially do a toehold or the standard heel hook on your outside leg, but the reverse heel hook is much more powerful than both of those other submissions.

And if you can't finish from this position then you can extract yourself and go back to the top, pursuing your guard passing game or attempting to re-entangle into a different position on your own terms.

6: INSIDE ASHI

(Aka The Reap, Game Over, Leg Knot)



“From Here It’s Often Game Over”

Inside Ashi is a hellish leg configuration for your opponent to get caught in, giving you the luxury of moving to the submission at your own pace as he tries to figure out how to escape from there.

One common way to get here is to start in Standard Ashi (Position 1). Bring your *outside* leg over your opponent’s trapped leg and weave it into a number of different configurations that entangle his other leg.

This leg motion is called a ‘reap’ and it destroys the alignment of your opponent’s legs very effectively - they get all twisted up - making it impossible to generate effective base until he first disentangles his legs.

(This position is definitely NOT legal in IBJJF competition so don’t even think about it if you’re competing with the gi on!)

Ideally after you get the reap you want to drop your weight onto the side of the trapped leg (like in the inset picture in the top right) so you can move back onto the strong side, but it’s definitely possible to finish with the heel hook, ankle lock, or toehold on both sides.

If you’re a toehold specialist you may prefer this to the Outside Ashi (3) but if you want to go to the ultimate in control and potential leglocking position let’s move on to the next page and the 411 position!

7: THE 411

(Aka Inside Sankaku, Honey Hole, Saddle)



“The Best Control and Finishing Ability of all Leglock Positions”

OK, if you’re going against someone good or super flexible then the 411 position is where you want to end up!

It’s a closed circuit position, so it’s very powerful with great control... Your own legs are hidden and very hard for him to counter-leglock... You can control his free leg from beginning to end making it impossible for him to base up... And you have access to the reverse heel hook, the most powerful of all leglock submissions.

In other words, he’s really in trouble when you get here.

It’s called the “411” because your legs make a “4” and your opponent’s legs make an “11”. When you’re here you’re going to extend your outside leg (the one on the bottom in the photo above) to create a frame which both immobilises the hip and controls the distance.

Control the inside leg with your legs and his outside leg with your arms. Don’t touch his inside leg (the one you’re going to reverse heel hook) until you’re ready to attack with the submission. The leg you’re going to attack is trapped off the floor by your body for now, so focus on not letting him escape this horrendous position.

A beautiful thing about this position is that, unlike most other leglock positions, you can actually tie up his loose leg using different techniques as you move into the final submission, so he never regains the ability to use that free leg as part of his defense.

8: REAR ASHI



“Kneebar In Progress”

We’re now going to cover some additional leglock positions that you may run into, either accidentally, or by design.

These aren’t exactly on the main progression of Standard Ashi (Position 1), to Outside Ashi (3) or Inside Ashi (6), culminating in the 411 (7), but you still need to know about them to be a fluent leglocker.

The Rear Ashi is the most closely related position to that hierarchy, because you often get there from an Outside Ashi transition (another common entry is from the backstep guard pass).

In Rear Ashi you’re sitting on your opponent’s diaphragm, putting a lot of weight on him and making it hard to breathe. You’re facing his legs and your opponent will usually triangle his legs to prevent the kneebar, which is definitely the most obvious attack from here.

If you start peeling his legs apart you can definitely finish from here directly with a kneebar.

But you can also transition into the 411 and/or the Outside Ashi positions, which brings us back into heel hook country.

As always, once you know the positions and the transitions, where you go with them is your choice!

9: GROUNDED KANI BASAMI

(Aka Kani Basami, Smashed 411)



“One Twist Away from the 411”

The Grounded Kani Basmai is essentially the 411 (Position 7) where your opponent is on top and you're on your side rather than your back.

It's named after Kani Basami, the flying scissors throw now banned in Judo.

In the Grounded Kani Basami your opponent is in base and you don't have reliable control over his far leg, but if you manage to twist him backwards onto his butt then you end up in the 411 which we previously said was the most powerful leglock position for controlling and finishing your opponent.

For some grapplers (Eddie Cummings for example) getting into the Grounded Kani Basami from the seated butterfly guard is their go-to attack in tournament, so it's definitely a position worth exploring. And if you can't force the leglock then it does offer you some great transitions to take your opponent's back.

The danger in this position is if your opponent gets a strong underhook from the top then you're going to get smashed.

So you need to keep your arms up to fend off the underhook, and your top knee needs to be opening upwards up to manage distance and start tilting him backwards to put him on his butt

It's a great position proven in competition by some amazing grapplers - give it a try!

10: DE LA RIVA ANKLE LOCK

(Aka Caio Terra Ankle Lock)



“A Surprise Attack from Open Guard”

The de la Riva guard is a great guard, but it can be hard to use it in no gi when your ability to grab the lapels, sleeves and belt essentially evaporates.

But even in no gi a variation of the de la Riva that has been popularised by multiple time world champion Caio Terra can be used to establish control and put your opponent on his butt. Once he's on his butt you can either submit him with the ankle lock, or move into other leg entanglements.

There are 3 points of control in this leglock position.

You're immobilising his ankle with your arm using an ankle lock grip...

You're using hamstring pressure against his shin to push his near leg away from you...

And you're hooking his far leg with your butterfly hook

If you get into this position against a standing opponent and knock him over then you can get such a powerful ankle lock that he'll be tapping on his way down.

And if the submission itself doesn't work, well, you've now got lots of other leglock positions to move into right?

11: KNEE OUT POSITION



“The Leglock Position That Breaks the Rules”

Normally if your opponent manages to extract his knee from your leg entanglement it's over. He's out and you're starting at square one again.

But there is a way to reliably finish your opponent even if he has extracted his knee, and it's called the 'Knee Out' position.

First you need a good dig on his heel with the heel hook. Essentially it's trapped and he'll want to rotate out of it.

But now, by placing the back of your hamstring against the flat of his shin and kicking away you can create enough external rotation of his leg the other way so that he can't turn to escape the heel hook.

Essentially you are pulling his ankle one way while pushing his shin and lower leg in the opposite direction, while using a lever to immobilise the hip.

Even if the Knee Out heel hook doesn't finish your opponent it does freeze him in place, allowing you to reclaim positions and/or get on top of your opponent.

Note that the picture above features the Knee Out position being used with a standard heel hook, but there are similar methods to use this to finish a semi-extracted reverse heel hook as well.

12: BUTTERFLY ASHI



“The Opposite of Ashi Garami”

This is another oddball position that isn't on the main hierarchy of leglock attack entanglements. But you will encounter it from time to time when facing a Butterfly Ashi specialist, or you could end up in it by complete accident.

Either way, you should be aware that it exists!

In the Standard Ashi Garami (Position 1) it's your outside leg that curls over your opponent's leg and your inside leg is hooked on his leg.

In the Butterfly Ashi it's almost the exact opposite: the inside leg comes over the trapped leg and the outside leg is in a butterfly hook configuration.

Butterfly Ashi is an open circuit leg entanglement, meaning that your legs aren't connected together, making it a slightly less powerful control and finishing position.

One application for this position is controlling the leg for an ankle lock when 'reaping' of the leg (as in IBJJF rules) is illegal. Another is the relatively easy transition to a belly-to-the-floor style of ankle lock.

THE MODERN LEGLOCK FORMULA

It took years of research and development, but the Modern Leglock Formula with Rob Biernacki and myself (Stephan Kesting) is finally out!

This ultimate guide to leglocking in the modern era is available both as in an online format that you can access instantly on your computer, phone, or tablet, and as 6 DVD set.

In The Modern Leglock Formula you'll get a proven, step-by-step system for safely adding ultra-effective lower body submissions to your game. It covers everything from concepts to entries, from finishes to defense, from transitions to drills.

Now you can add the same leglock techniques and strategies that have transformed the grappling scene to your own submission arsenal.

Go to www.grapplearts.com/leglocks for more information!

