

Osoto Gaeshi (JudoInfo.com)



DEFENSES AND COUNTERS IN GENERAL

In this series you'll see one of the counter movements for osoto gari, undoubtedly the most important one. In studying these sequence photos, it is important to remember two facts about counters. First, you must first defend against the throw you are going to counter. Your movement is always a defense, which, if carried to its logical conclusion; results in a counter. Second, your counter must begin as or even before he attacks. Failures to counter successfully are almost always due to failure to begin the counter soon enough.

THE PLAYERS

Here we see Leroy Abe of Denver, Colorado, (left above) attacking with osoto, and Odell Terry, of New York (on the right) countering. Leroy is one of the top light heavyweights (205) in the country, placing fourth in the 1966 National AAU Judo Championships. Odell, who began his Judo with the AFJA while in the Marine Corps on Okinawa and later was stationed at Camp Pendleton, placed second in the 1966 National AAU Judo Championships in the Middle Weight Division (176). Both are sandan (third degree).

FIRST DEFENSE, COUNTERING THE KUZUSHI (OFF-BALANCE)

The initial movement of Odell's body to defend against Leroy's off balancing drive is clearly shown in these stop-action sequence photos. As Leroy whips in, trying to drive Odell backward to his

right rear, Odell counters by swinging his own body backward to the left rear, turning his hips away to present a strong point (the side of his body) to the sweep which is coming; thus Odell changes Leroy's drive from left front to toward Leroy's own right front side. This redirecting of the initial drive is all-important.

ACTION OF THE LEFT LEG

Study carefully, the swing of Odell's left leg backward. Note that it is quite deep so that there is no danger that Leroy's sweep will trap both his legs. Leroy's osoto gari is already lost. If Leroy were going to be successful with this throw, Odell would be driven back on his right heel. Note that instead of being driven back, Odell's chin has been pulled in and forward, and his shoulders are being swung forward just opposite to the way Leroy wants to drive him for the osoto. It may seem that Odell's position is weak at this moment, but remember that these photos are snapped right in the middle of the action, and Leroy has not actually made contact with his sweeping leg as yet. The chief danger at this instant of the throw is if Leroy is able to drive Odell back so that his balance is broken and he cannot recover. Odell has in fact stopped this danger by redirecting Leroy's drive with his backward turning movement. The osoto counter will not work if you don't redirect the thrower's drive and stop his kuzushi.

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BODY TWIST AND PULL

In the four photos on these two pages the osoto counter (called osoto kaeshi) is nearly completed. Now Odell's hands are pulling with full strength to force Leroy's head up (as in the left photo above) and to break Leroy's balance for Odell's own osoto gari. Look very carefully at the slant of Odell's body into the counter in both of the above photos. You'll see that the twist which was starting strongly in the two photos on the last page is now an all-out snap and twist to redirect Leroy's drive from Leroy's left to right front side, and then to continue to Leroy's left rear corner and counter throw him with osoto. Odell's left arm, straight in the left photo above, is pulling tight across his chest so much that it is bent at right angles in the left photo on the next page. This pull of the left arm, and the pull up and across with Odell's right hand, coupled with the twist of the body, is what destroys Leroy's kuzushi, and redirects him into Odell's counter osoto.

HEAD ACTION

A very important part of the counter at this stage is the movement of Odell's head. In the left photo above notice how deep his chin is pulled in, and in the right photo study carefully the twisting downward action of the head. The body follows the head. Divers start their twist by twisting the head, and Judo is no different. Proper head positioning is extremely important at this instant of the counter. If the head is thrown around and down swiftly, the back is aligned so that the sweeping leg can drive



up with maximum force and effectiveness.

LEG ACTION

In the left photo above Odell's left leg is just touching down after its swing to the left rear. His left foot is just visible under Leroy's right foot. Note that the left leg is driving, with the knee slightly bent and the ball of the foot just touching. It is important to swing the left leg back in just the right way so that the opponent's body will remain close and counter thrower will keep control of it.

Think carefully what would have happened if Odell's leg had slid straight back to the position marked with a circled(1) on the mat. Then his whole body would have been too far away from Leroy, and his right leg could only have hooked Leroy's leg ineffectively, not swept it. On the other hand, if he had completely swung his left leg completely around back to the position marked with a circled (2), he would in fact have been countering Leroy with harai goshi. The harai goshi counter to osoto actually happens a good deal, but it takes longer to execute and is therefore more dangerous than the osoto counter to osoto.

In practicing or teaching this counter the first mistake of the counter thrower will probably be to fail to destroy the thrower's off balance and redirect his movement. But even if the counter thrower succeeds in changing the off balance of the thrower to an off balance of his own, incorrect placement of the left foot can ruin everything. So the second common error is to place the foot too far back or too far around. Thousands of practice tries are

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required to get the feel of the counter, because the foot will be placed a little differently for each attacker.

RIGHT LEG REAPING ACTION

In the left photo above the counter thrower has completed his *kuzushi* (off balance), has also completed the *tsukuri* (positioning one's own body), and is beginning the *kake* (final throwing action). Here you must take note of the perfect position of Odell's body as he begins the *kake*. Having swung his left foot back and around to the right position, and having thrown all his weight on it, he is balanced perfectly on his left foot and is ready to reap with his right leg. Remember that if the foot placement is wrong, or if the body is not pulled and twisted completely, then some of the weight will be left on the right foot of the counter thrower, and he will be unable to reap with it. The counter will therefore fizzle out into a tugging match and stalemate.

Look closely at the position of Odell's right leg at his moment. His right leg is completely engaged with Leroy's right leg, not just hooking it behind the knee. This is extremely important, because in this position he has complete control of Leroy's body, not just the right leg. His main force, in fact, is directed *upward* against the back of Leroy's right thigh, hip, and buttock. You must understand that all that has gone before has resulted in this perfect position. Look through the photos in sequence again, and you'll see that all of Odell's pull and twist have been aimed at pulling



Leroy tight against his side while breaking his balance. Thus, when he is ready to reap, after having got all his weight thrown onto his left foot, he will reap all of Leroy's body with the counter.

To get power in the reap, Odell's right foot is pointed. In the right photo on the last page you'll see this clearly. You must point your foot and toes along the straight line of your leg to get the power in the reap. This is true of *all* sweeping and reaping movements of the leg, major (rear sweep) and minor (forward sweep), without any exceptions.

In the two photos above the true nature of the reaping action is clearly shown. It is not a hooking action of the leg with the leg starting straight and ending bent. It is a rotary motion of the whole body around the left hip joint. You can draw a nearly straight line between Odell's right foot and the top of his head in every one of the six photos on these two pages and the next. This means that the whole body is sweeping, not just the lower leg. This is the third big mistake that is made in this counter. The counter thrower loses power by failing to sweep with his leg extended and with his whole body. He may just put his foot down and try to push his opponent over it, or he may leave his head upright and try to hook the opponent's leg up by doubling up his own. In either case the counter won't work right. One final point on the leg action. Notice that all the way through the reap, Odell is keeping his head twisting to the left and down so that his weight will remain balanced on his left foot.

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RIGHT ARM ACTION

In the last photo on the preceding page you'll see Odell's right arm coming into action to drive Leroy down into the mat. Notice that the right arm is bent at least at right angles. It got bent by the force of Odell's pull across his body. In both photos on the preceding page this is clear. When the pull is finished and the arm well bent, the right arm is in a natural position to push very strongly against the opponent's chest to drive him down and complete the throw.

LEFT ARM ACTION

The left arm action in the photos above is the same as before, a strongly continuing pull to turn the opponent's body over.

FINAL REAPING ACTION

Compare the position of Odell's left foot on the mat in the right photo on the last page with its position in the left photo above. Note that in the left photo above the reaping action up against Leroy's body has driven Odell up in the air to the ball and toes of his foot. It is this final spring and drive upward with the reap that makes the counter complete. It is the opposite of just putting your foot behind your opponent and trying to push him over it, which is so often done with incorrect countering of osoto.

FOLLOW THROUGH

In the right photo above Odell's body is in fine position to continue into mat work or to take an



arm lock. This is essential. In many cases the counter thrower will score only a waza ari (half point) with this counter. Therefore, he must continue into mat work without an instant's hesitation. This calls to mind the great player Nozaki of Southern California, who won five U.S. AAU lightweight championships. Nozaki always continued into mat work, usually an arm bar, as a part of his throws and counters. He never left anything to chance. He never left anything to chance, which made him the champion he was.

GENERAL SUMMARY

Here are the points to remember in practicing this counter for osoto gari. (1) Starting the counter nearly is essential. Counter when you think he is about to start his throw, don't wait until he actually starts the throw. If you wait that long, he'll break your balance before you can counter. Try to develop a sixth sense of knowing when he is going to attack. Don't worry if you start the counter sometimes when he doesn't attack, it's all part of developing that instantaneous reaction. (2) He intends to break your balance to your right rear corner with his osoto. Your first action must be to redirect this action toward your left rear corner instead by pulling sharply across your body with both hands and dropping and twisting your upper body to the left. (3) Swing back with your left leg to a position that will balance you with his body pinned to yours. (4) Sweep with your whole body, toe pointed, and leg straight. Follow thru into mat work.