

Sumo for Mixed Martial Arts: Winning Clinches, Takedowns and Tactics

Andrew Zerling

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This text balances instruction with deep insights, giving mixed martial artists the understanding and skills they need to excel.

Sumo for Mixed Martial Arts: Winning Clinches, Takedowns, and Tactics by Andrew Zerling equips practitioners of other martial arts to add sumo to their skill set.

Early portions of the book focus on the history, culture, and significance of sumo wrestling. Zerling immediately goes far beyond the simple stereotypes and cartoonish notions that most people—even many martial artists—may hold related to this less-practiced craft. This depth and background is shown to be necessary for understanding any martial art, and helps the text balance attention on the importance of thinking as well as of doing.

It may be tempting to jump to the technical photos later in the book, but Zerling reveals that every fighter needs to fully understand their martial art in order to do it well. He paces the introduction nicely, keeping martial artists engaged and ensuring that they will have room to grasp key concepts before proceeding. The third chapter, which links sumo and mixed martial arts, ties together the background, what mixed martial artists already know, and the practical skills that come later in the book. Once the book gets to the instructional section, which fills the bulk of the pages, Zerling's approach turns to no-nonsense action and instruction, showcasing skills that fighters can apply on the mat right away.

Zerling is a black belt with several decades of experience in a number of martial arts. His expertise and interdisciplinary approach shine through in the book's balance of instruction and depth of insight. His background as a technical writer is also apparent in the book's straightforward, thorough, and no-frills prose.

Zerling's key audience is experienced mixed martial artists who want to add depth and complexity to their fighting repertoire through sumo. The book is best suited for those who take their craft seriously and who want to grow in skill as well as in understanding, but who have little or no experience with sumo. Those new to mixed martial arts will find this book inspiring, but not as practically useful as it is for those with more skills or experience.

The numerous step-by-step photos are a key feature of the book. These serve as a guide through the sport's complex actions, helping to show how motions operate, even when single photos can't fully encapsulate motion and direction. Occasionally the images run small, but experienced fighters will have the confidence and know-how to understand and apply what they see.

Sumo for Mixed Martial Arts is a thoughtful work that will help to make mixed martial artists more centered and formidable in their craft.

MELISSA WUSKE (June 29, 2016)

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