

Kayla Harrison Scouting Report

Analysis of Harrison and her key opponents leading
into the 2016 Rio Games

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Introduction

This report was written to aid Kayla Harrison in winning a gold medal at the 2016 Rio Games. It utilized video analysis to determine strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities for winning matches against key opponents as identified by Jimmy Pedro and Christopher Round. As such, a similar analysis was done on Kayla in her matches against the identified individuals whenever possible. The focus of this report is optimization, not resiliency. The scouting report focused on a small sample size of actual matches, and is meant to discuss the optimization of Kayla's game against specific opponents. As of January 2016, Kayla is already the number one athlete in her category in the world, and has won against each of the individuals already listed in this report. Suffice to say, she's already excellent, and the hope of the authors is that the information in this report will give her an edge against these opponents.

This is also a gift from Chris Round to Kayla for being a member of his wedding party. See you in November!

Overall Assessment by Rhadi Ferguson

After looking at and analyzing many of Kayla's matches in :20 slow motion segments it was my job to provide feedback to Mr. Round per my assessment of Kayla per opponent and overall. My feedback is woven into the fabric of the document but here in the overall assessment I was charged with providing the basement level feedback per Kayla's tachiwaza game per my particular strengths.

In harmony with the Pareto principle we can assume that 20% of the scores are the results of 80% of the attacks since not every attack yields a score and all scores do not come from attacks.

The crux of the game is to win, irrespective of sport and while my personal philosophies and ideologies about the game of judo may differ with the readers of this report it should be noted that such feedback is great for awareness and small adjustments and changes within the coaching process.

Occam's razor states that among competing assertions and viewpoints, the one with the fewest assumptions and complexities should be selected. Further simplified by Leonardo Da Vinci as "simplicity is the ultimate sophistication."

In all of Kayla's matches I was looking for opportunities where she could throw and points where she was weak. I was time coding matches as was Mr. Round and was overloaded with so much information and data points that it was overwhelming. It was here that I stopped. Mr. Round and I had an in depth conversation. One of many during this process and as fellow scientist we asked the question "How do you win a judo match?"

It was here when we understood that we both had different jobs on this task. Because while that is the question, it is not "the" question. The question is, "How do you finish the day atop the medal stand?" And this is where Mr. Round and I discovered that there are actually two ways which we must attack this report.

You have to either "win" all of your matches or not "lose" all of your matches. And both answers are true but they produce a very different approach to the problem and have differing conceptual frameworks.

At its core, grip fighting is utilized to control and otherwise dynamic and entropic environment but its main purpose is not to score. Its main purpose is to mitigate risk. And such mitigation may lead to an attack or not but it MUST lessen the opportunity to be thrown.

With that being said, my task was to look at the situation(s) where Kayla is strong and stalwart.

My task is to identify that place where Kayla CANNOT lose.

RIGHTY VS. RIGHT

After hours of analysis it has been determined that from the double lapel position Kayla CANNOT be scored upon. With a right sided stance which is not extreme. However, at THIS particular time it does not seem like Kayla has an arsenal of attacks from this grip. Usually she get to this point and has to let go in order to attain a more powerful grip. This has been successful per her ranking be accolades but it does inject risk which can be mitigated with establishing some attacks from this positioning or attacking early in the match and then shutting down the play per this positioning.

LEFTY VS. RIGHTY

Here is where Kayla MUST play double lapel and NOT move to the sleeve as the normal gripping doctrine purports. The lefties in her division "switch hit" often. Meaning the stand one way and then attempt to perform an opposite side throw, usually in the form of a makikomi style techniques. Maintaining a double lapel grip while keeping her left elbow "active" via and up and down motion is desired (for the purpose of not losing). Again, her scoring options are reduced from this position at this time. Removing the right hand from the inside position reduces the distance of the competitors and thus makes Kayla vulnerable for hip techniques and taio toshi (mainly drop taio), which from my perspective is the read that has been taught to Aguiar.

Staying on the lapel and making sure that her big toe is in line with her opponents big toe (thus maximizing the distance) is the best defensive option.

That is the overall gripping assessment. That which you will read in the rest of the report is a more specific case by case assessment of our analysis on Kayla versus a said opponent.

Lefty versus Righty - when Kayla uses her left foot to hit her opponents left leg in order to get it back or reposition it because it's an off balancing move and not an actual throw with the purpose to score, she need to RESET her left foot back into a righty positioning. After doing that movement, her foot returns and then she is more square than she needs to be and she immediately creates the perpendicular "line" that her opponent's need in order to throw. This especially was evident in the matches with Aguiar. We understand that the near side kouchi in the kenka yotsu context allows her to set up her seionage but when she cheats over like that it telegraphs the movement and there are very few techniques that she does from that squared up position. As basic as it seems, she just need to get back into her stance. Because it actually creates an unnecessary movement within the iterations of movement for her to get back into her stance rather than being there on the reset. It actually can put her behind in the movement tempo.

From henceforth, the analysis is the combined work of myself and Mr. Round.

Mayra Aguiar

Background

Mayra Aguiar (henceforth referred to as Mayra) is a tall left sided judo player from Brazil. Mayra and Kayla have been neck in neck in their appearances, having competed against each other more than ten times. Kayla has won in two crucial engagements at the Olympic and Pan Am Games.

Grip Fighting

Mayra is a tall classically based left sided judo player. She is observed throwing her left hand high against Kayla. When she throws the left hand, it is as a hook or an overhand rather than a straight. She will almost simultaneously grab for Kayla's left sleeve. Kayla tends to control her from the inside.

When Kayla's right hand is over the back and Mayra's left hand is under, Mayra does a "shucking" movement to get Kayla's right hand off of her back. It's an upward elbow movement and it done several times in the matches in which they have played.

Key Grip Fighting Behaviors

Kayla maintaining the inside hand positioning is more optimal for scoring and defending BUT this has to be done from a double lapel stance with Kayla pushing and moving to the right. When Kayla has her right hand on the lapel and it is straight it is an automatic drop taio read for Mayra.

The most frustrating thing that I saw Kayla do to Mayra is use her right hand to lock down Mayra's left sleeve. Mayra absolutely dislikes this and has zero offense from here.

Kayla needs to keep her right hand on Mayra's left lapel. Kayla should not grab around Aguiar's back. Aguiar will immediately switching to a drop taio which has scored on Kayla in the past. Even when going on the offensive from this grip position, Mayra is capable of countering her. When her hand is on Mayra's lead lapel, Mayra cannot produce a successful offense. Kayla loses to Mayra if she grabs Mayra's back.

Throwing observations

Mayra favors a very low drop taio. She can hit technique off from a variety of grips, but most commonly is observed scoring with it against Kayla when she grabs around the back. She is observed attacking with left sided uchimata, and in one incidence a right sided osoto gari. She does utilize standard upright lanky¹ judo.

¹ Most of Kayla's opponents are much taller than her, and utilize "lanky judo". Their throwing sets tend to include osoto gari, harai goshi, uchimata, tai otoshi, and sasei tsuri komi ashi.

Newaza Opportunities

While not regularly observed taking the offensive against Kayla in their matches, Mayra does have a significant ground game. She cross trains with the Barbosa Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu team. Kayla has beaten her on the ground before.

Kayla does need to be more vigilant here. There are times when she is not protecting herself and where she is leaving her neck open. We have to assume that they are watching and analyzing like we are and if we were doing this for Mayra, we would certainly recommend attacking Kayla more in newaza as there are some opportunities where Kayla is not protecting herself.

Hamada

Background

Kayla has previously Hamada several times, and from a tachiwaza perspective, while capable, didn't warrant early inclusion in the report. The only reason why she was included is to examine a newaza situation [she created](#) that enabled her to beat Kayla in China in 2015.

Newaza Opportunities

Butterfly Guard Passing

Once Hamada has initiated her butterfly series, Kayla would be wise not to allow Hamada to stretch her out. If this means Kayla braces her and waits for matte, it is still a better option. She was opened up for the sumi gaeshi sweep when she attempted to get low and stretch out Hamada's leg for the over-under pass.

Turtle Defense

Kayla should not attempt to simply cover up against Hamada, as her game is tailor made for breaking open the turtle. She should either look to escape to her feet, or be active on bottom to prevent Hamada from settling into her butterfly series.

It is important for Kayla to learn how to improve her turtle by keeping her elbows in at her hips and her forearms locked into position on her thighs. And to not move from that positioning no matter how she is moved, rolled or translated and during such time she should look to explosively standup, granby roll or actively shrimp and recover guard.

Bottom line is that she is at a severe disadvantage in this particular domain of the game and the delta of technical differential is too wide to apply many skills and technique but the delta can be lessened a great deal with some small changes in the area of newaza vigilance.

Joo

Background

Grip Fighting

Joo is generally speaking a left sided judo player. She is tall, and has a preference for placing her right hand on the lapel and her left power hand on the neck (power gripping). In recent years she has

begun switching stances and reversing her grip protocol (left hand on the lapel, right hand on the neck) when fighting Audrey.

Kayla could conceivably answer this by fighting for the inside with her right hand, and keep her left hand in position to block Joo's initial punch to her left lapel. Joo doesn't appear to deviate very often from this gripping sequence.

Throwing observations

Joo relies principally on uchimata and sumi gaeshi, but has developed a sode esk entry for uchimata that is good to be aware of. Should Joo get her right hand on the gi before her opponent does, she will intercept their right hand or grab it at the wrist and attack uchimata with a sode grip. She has scored with this attack (see her match against Park from Korea).

Newaza Opportunities

Joo does pull full guard against some opponents. Her guard game does not appear to be significant complexity at this time, and should be a prime scoring opportunity for Kayla. [She sets up the full guard pull from a sticker with her left foot.](#)

Kayla should develop her ability to quickly break full guard, as Joo may pull it during the match.

Audrey Tchuemeo

Background

Audrey Tchuemeo is a tall right sided judo player from France who favors the traditional set of "tall person throws". Audrey and Kayla have competed against each other for several years, consistently go back and forth for wins.

Grip Fighting

Audrey uses her length to her advantage against Kayla, and may lead with her left leg to force Kayla to take a wider circle in order to reach her sleeve. Kayla will often post her left hand on Audrey's right shoulder, and utilize a style similar to Travis Stevens, and find her right sleeve caught. Kayla is most successful when combatting when keeping her right elbow bent.

Audrey presents a particular difficult due to the length of her arms. Even when Kayla has her left hand is on Audrey's right lapel, with her arm nearly fully extended, Audrey can place her right hand on her neck. She does have a tendency of doing this before establishing any kind of grip with her left hand, which would allow Kayla to turn and take advantage of this potential liability in Audrey's gripping game.

Kayla should maintain distance and play at the end of the sleeve before entering in on the lapel. The length of Tchuemeo requires for Kayla to be ahead in terms of tempo in the grip fighting sequencing and not to get behind. When Kayla has good control of the sleeve on either side, Tchuemo seems challenged and a bit bridled and constrained.

Throwing observations

Audrey doesn't have anything particularly out of the ordinary. Kouchi gari, osoto gari, and harai goshi have all been observed. She does have a solid tani otoshi and uranage counter game that she has scored with in the past. She rarely throws Kayla while on the offensive.

When Kayla is actively trying to throw Audrey, she's had greater success in recent matches by attacking with left sided attacks. The times she has attacked to the right have rarely generated an actual knockdown, and Audrey has successfully countered her. In comparison, based on the few matches observed, Audrey has been unable to counter Kayla's left sided attacks.

Newaza Opportunities

Tchuemo shows absolutely no interest in doing newaza in any of her matches (with Kayla and other opponents).

Yoon

Background

Yoon is roughly the same size as Kayla, and is a right sided judo player. Yoon beat Kayla in the third round of the 2015 world championships.

Grip Fighting

Yoon tends to reach with her left hand for her opponents right lapel first, followed immediately by her right hand to her opponents neck (power gripping). She will sometimes reach with her left hand very low on her opponents left lapel to facilitate a transfer to their right sleeve.

In the final exchange of their match, Yoon left her right hand on Kayla's neck to bait a harai makikomi attempt, which she countered for ippon.

Throwing observations

Yoon utilized seoinage, uchimata, and a left sided sode tsuri komi goshi (when Kayla reaches with her left hand) and won the encounter with an uranage. Yoon consistently broke Kayla's balance with uchimata. She will at times drop for a double footed tomoenage. Yoon was repeatedly advised by her coach to utilize her left sided sode when Kayla reached with her left hand.

Newaza Opportunities

Kayla is vastly superior on the ground to Yoon. Yoon failed to produce an offense against Kayla on the ground. That said, she [just missed an opportunity](#) to pin Yoon after a failed tomoenage attempt.

Guard Passing

Kayla exclusively relies on the use of an over-under pass to the left side. Due to a lack of follow up, she lost an opportunity to end the match against Yoon, and found herself in trouble against Hamada.

Defenses

Kayla struggles to finish this technique either when an opponent is capable of turning out to their stomach before she can control the top half of the body. This is the typical defense she runs across,

though when facing a competent user of the butterfly guard, such as when she fought Hamada, she struggles.

Follow Ups

Kayla should develop a single under pass to immediately follow up when the over-under pass is stifled. While it will be difficult for Kayla to immediately follow the under pass into a pin, she can use the scramble to take her opponents back and work towards her powerful juji-gatame game. The decision tree should look as follows:

1. Over under pass initiated
2. Opponent stifles Kayla's movement to her left.
3. Kayla hugs the opponents left leg low on the leg just above the bend in the waste with her right arm, while simultaneously bringing her left arm inside her opponents' right leg.
4. She should make a gable grip, with the right hand palm up, and the blade of her wrist cutting towards the soft tissue at the top of her opponents' leg, just above the waste.
 - a. It is important that she keeps her elbows in.
5. Decision Tree Diverges
 - a. Kayla walks to her right, keeping her opponents' leg tight, preventing them from turning to their stomach. When Kayla has rotated around far enough, she takes control of the top half of the body. Likelihood: low
 - b. As Kayla walks to her right, opponent successfully turns away towards their stomach.

Kayla used their own momentum to follow them and places her right leg into the gap between her opponents' right elbow and right knee. She should be able to high leg over very quickly afterwards.