

The Granby Roll

Described by Sheldon Zablow, MD

As taught by Billy Martin, Sr.

The **Granby Roll** is one of the most dramatic, high point award wrestling moves in collegiate (folkstyle) wrestling. The Granby shoulder roll is an offensive move made from the defensive (bottom) position that can result in a five-point award (two for a reversal, three for a near fall) or a pin. The roll can be initiated from the sit-out position, the referee's position, or standing when held from behind. It is rarely used in international (freestyle) wrestling because rolling across the shoulders would award two points to the opponent.

History- The Granby roll was developed over many years at Granby High School in Norfolk, Virginia by Wrestling Hall of Fame coach Billy Martin, Sr. and his wrestlers. Coach Martin cultivated one of the leading high school wrestling programs in the country, winning over twenty consecutive State Championships while developing many state champions, All-Americans, collegiate champions, Olympic contenders, and Olympic champion, Gray Simons. Somebody once said, "Learning the Granby Roll from Billy Martin is like learning basketball from James Naismith."

The Granby roll started out as a simple forward roll from the bottom referee's position to escape. The key to further development of the roll was always in response to the offensive wrestler's response to the current version of the move. When opponents tried to stop the forward roll by holding onto the waist, this forced the bottom wrestler to roll across their shoulders to get an escape. Opponents tried to stop this new move by holding onto the waist more firmly. This led the bottom wrestler to grab the opponent's wrist for leverage and hold on throughout the roll, ending with the top wrestler now on the bottom on their back in a near-pin.

Opponents named the move, shouting during matches, "Watch out for the Granby!" which Coach Martin then used to label the move. As opponents tried various ways to counter the Granby, a progression of responses was developed by Martin and his wrestlers called the Granby Series.

The Granby Roll Setup- The shoulder roll described will be the basics as taught by Coach Martin and his senior wrestlers to me and others in the mid-sixties. While it seems like a lot of detail, it is these specifics discovered by several generations of wrestlers that made the move work and made it teachable. With practice, the parts of the move will fall into place making one smooth motion like a complex gymnastic move.

From the referee's position, the bottom wrestler's head is pointing toward twelve o'clock on an imaginary clock on the mat, with the top wrestler on their left. Before the whistle is blown, weight is distributed evenly on the hands and knees (four-point stance) with a light touch of the toes, while the elbows are slightly bent.

The setup begins in rapid succession over one second. After the whistle is blown, the elbows are popped straight to get the top wrestler's weight off your back, and both feet are swung out to the right side, pivoting at the knees to prevent an ankle grab by the opponent's left hand. The right foot is planted pointing toward the 2 o'clock position, while the left foot is swung under the right leg and planted a few inches forward and to the left of the right foot, pointing left toward the 11 o'clock position. While all this is going on, the right arm has been rotated back using the right upper arm to knock the top opponent's right shoulder back to get more weight off. This action elevates and rotates the hips so they are now facing the same direction as the right foot toward 2 o'clock. The opponent is now reacting to all your efforts by pushing their chest into your back, tightening their grip around your waist and pulling down on your left elbow.

Your right hand drops to grab the opponent's right wrist, which is held over the point midway between the navel and right hipbone. Putting pressure on their wrist will also pin their right forearm onto your right hipbone, locking their arm in place. This is an essential part of the move because it gives some control over the opponent by preventing them from pulling their arm free but also telegraphs a possible countermove to the impending Granby. Their response will determine if the roll can be completed or needs to be redirected to a sit-out turn-in reversal, a turn-out escape, a turn-out switch reversal, or a push-back stand-up escape (see the Granby Series below). You have now rotated from a four-point stance through a two-point stance (left hand and right foot) to a three-point stance with the left hand and the balls of both feet on the mat. Your left hand has essentially not moved from the starting position. With your chin down, you are now in position to start the Granby Roll.

The Granby Roll- Most people don't realize that the move is actually started by the opponent on top. When they feel you raise up with their right arm around your waist and their left hand on your left elbow, they will instinctively pull your waist in and chop your left arm down to get you back to the mat. With the momentum of the chop taking your left shoulder down to your left, the beginning of the roll is directed with a push from the right foot. This causes you to "fall" to the left and commence the roll along your left elbow, then upper arm then your left shoulder forming an arc in the same direction of the roll. The increasing pressure of the roll progresses toward full weight across your shoulders. The roll across the shoulder blades is in the same direction the left foot is pointing (11 o'clock) along an imaginary line starting on the left top outer edge of the left shoulder blade, across the base of the neck, then across the right shoulder blade. As the roll advances, your left arm is now pulled up tight against your left side to prevent an underhook.

As the left arm and shoulder are dipped, the power-push by the ball of the right foot (still facing 2 o'clock) continues in the direction of the left foot is pointing toward 11 o'clock. This starts a big fly-wheel motion with the shoulders as the low point of the wheel and the hips, still facing at 2 o'clock, now rolling in the middle of the circle. As the shoulders and hips continue to roll, a follow-up push is made from the left foot in the direction of the roll. As the left foot push-off continues, the right leg naturally comes off the mat circling in the direction of the roll. To increase the power of the Granby even more (called the Power Granby), the right foot accentuates the momentum and is thrown across the top of the flywheel arc in the same 11 o'clock direction. The momentum

created by this action will speed up the flywheel and transfer energy to the opponent through their tightly gripped right arm. The opponent is now being flipped across their shoulders onto their back.

The person doing the roll comes out still gripping the right wrist in the original position locked between the navel and hipbone, with their back against their right rib cage and their left arm over top then under the opponent's right knee. The previous top person, now on the bottom, has to struggle to avoid being pinned by rolling away to their left. This end position of the Granby roll established in the 1950s was many years later called the Peterson.

Pin From the Granby- It is hard to achieve a pin from the Peterson because the opponent can roll back and forth, though you will still be getting near-fall points. When they roll right toward you, pull their left leg up and transfer their right wrist from your right hand to your left hand that is under their right knee. This leaves your right arm free to wrap around their neck, and force both shoulders to the mat. You must stay in a low position to prevent them from rolling you over to the left. If they roll away, hold the right wrist tight, push your back and left ribcage up into their armpit while still holding the right leg with your left hand. In one swift motion, let go of their leg, roll to your left onto your stomach and throw your left arm up and over your opponent's head and around their neck. Grab onto their armpit over the lip where the shoulder muscle inserts into the chest muscle and lock their right wrist against your right hipbone. Pulling their right arm tight around your waist as you twist to your left will drop their right shoulder to the mat for the pin.

The Granby Series- The Granby roll, just as with many other winning wrestling moves, is most successful in response to a move made by the opponent. As the Granby became more well known, opponents developed countermoves which required the development of counter-countermoves called the Granby Series. All counter-counter moves are dependent upon controlling the wrist as mentioned above.

It is best to explain the series from the sit-out position, though these all apply to the three-point Granby setup from the whistle. You are in the middle of a period on the bottom in the sit-out position with your opponent behind you. You first gain control of the right wrist with your right hand and block their left hand from coming around your waist by making a V with your left leg and left arm. You establish this blockade by resting your left elbow on your left hip, your left forearm on your left thigh, and your left upper arm on your left rib cage. If the left hand has come in around your waist and you are being held down by each of their hands on each of your hips, you will need to let go of the right wrist and go to a two-on-one on the left hand to push it out, form the left blockade then go back to control of the right wrist.

What move you use now, depends on how tightly you are grabbed around the waist and how closely you are pulled in. If the opponent keeps their hand where you have placed it between the navel and hip and they have not pulled you in too close, then the Granby is there for the taking. To start the Granby from the sit-out position, you need to start the roll just as before with a right foot push as your left shoulder drops to the mat, followed by a left foot push and a strong right foot Power Granby. In the sit-out position, the left

elbow and bent arm add to the momentum by pushing off against the mat halfway through the roll as it progresses.

To counter a Granby from the sit-out, opponents first tried to back off, staying low and pulling their right hand back to the bottom person's right hip to prevent it from rising off the mat for the roll. This left the top person open for a sit-out turn-in reversal. They next tried to thrust their arm all the way across to the left hip and stay low which left them open for a righthand switch. To prevent this, they next tried to push their arm across to the left hip and pull the bottom person back into them to keep their hips down. This left them open for a push-back stand-up to an escape, or a standing switch, or a standing Granby depending on how tightly the top person was now holding on and pulling in.

Teaching the Granby Series- The success of Coach Martin in teaching the Granby Series were three innovations. The first was to impart on the practice partner that their controlled resistance was the key to learning the move. When the move was being acquired, resistance from the defensive partner would be 50% to let muscle memory develop in the person executing the move. When the basics were grasped, Martin would call out the next percentage and resistance moved up to 75%. When the move had been learned, resistance was then moved up to 95% to solidify gains by barely letting the person doing the move complete it. Going to 100% was only used to test mastery or for matches.

The second innovation in practice was to have the bottom wrestlers attempting the move to be blinded to the kind of resistance that would be applied. All bottom wrestlers would be in a sit-out position with their heads down while Martin gave hand signals to the top wrestlers as to the kind of resistance to be applied. After the whistle was blown and the move was completed, everyone should end up in the same final position. If not, Martin could easily pick out those who needed more work.

The third point he insisted on was that after all moves were mastered, they had to be re-learned equally as well from the other side. In a match, you don't get to pick the side the move needs to be done on.

The Granby Roll Beyond Folkstyle- The Granby roll is typically not used in freestyle wrestling because it will award two points to the opponent for both shoulders being exposed. However, it can be used as a desperation "come-from-behind" move. If someone is controlled from behind and being chopped down from the side, on the way down they could initiate the Granby. They will have two points awarded against them, but if they do the move all the way through, they will get a reversal, back-exposure points and possibly a pin.

The Granby roll has now been incorporated into other martial arts and is now used in Mixed Martial Arts and Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu.