

How to Throw Big When You're Small

In the past year, I've picked up a few students who are smaller women. When I say small, I mean like 12-year-old small. These women are between 5'0" and 5'2". They are truly petite. I've been working with them lately to help them with their throwing, the shoulder throw in particular. They may not have confidence in their ability to throw a 6'3" guy who is over 200 lbs right now, but ironically, they'll be better at throwing down the line if they stick with it.

For smaller men and women, it's natural to get a little frustrated when they see bigger students who are able to do throws on almost anyone seemingly without trouble. What they don't know is that the ability to throw competently of these much bigger students is nothing more than an illusion.

Yes, it's true. Bigger people can more easily pick someone up and toss them to the ground, but that's not necessarily skilled throwing. Oftentimes, bigger people compensate for poor form by using their strength in ways that are imperceptible to someone without a lot of experience.

Smaller students often do struggle more with throwing bigger people to start with, but more often than not, it's a confidence issue. They worry that they won't be able to support the weight of the person they're throwing so they hesitate mid-throw. Ironically, this hesitation is often what causes that which they worry about to happen in the first place.

In many ways, it is a lot easier for a smaller, shorter person to throw a bigger person because they have a low centre of gravity, so it's not as hard to bend to the level they need to complete the throw. Also, if they are on the slimmer side, their girth doesn't get in the way when they move in for the throw.

The biggest hurdle for smaller people isn't really about overcoming a physical attribute. It's all in the mind. They simply need to trust that good technique will allow them to throw safely, and they need to have confidence that they have the ability to do it. And once they have this confidence, they'll usually have technically much better throws than the fellow students who are much bigger than them, who continue to struggle not to use their strength.

So how does one get to this magical place?

The way I work with smaller people to develop this confidence is to start working with small to mid-sized people and work their way up to the big boys. By working with smaller people, they can develop an understanding of how the throw works, as well as their own technique in entering and executing the throw. They'll develop their confidence in completing the throw skillfully without the mental roadblock of the perceived risk of getting crushed by a much bigger person if they mess up. Then when they've got their throwing mojo going with small to mid-sized people, they'll be better equipped both mentally and physically to get it going with the big guys.

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