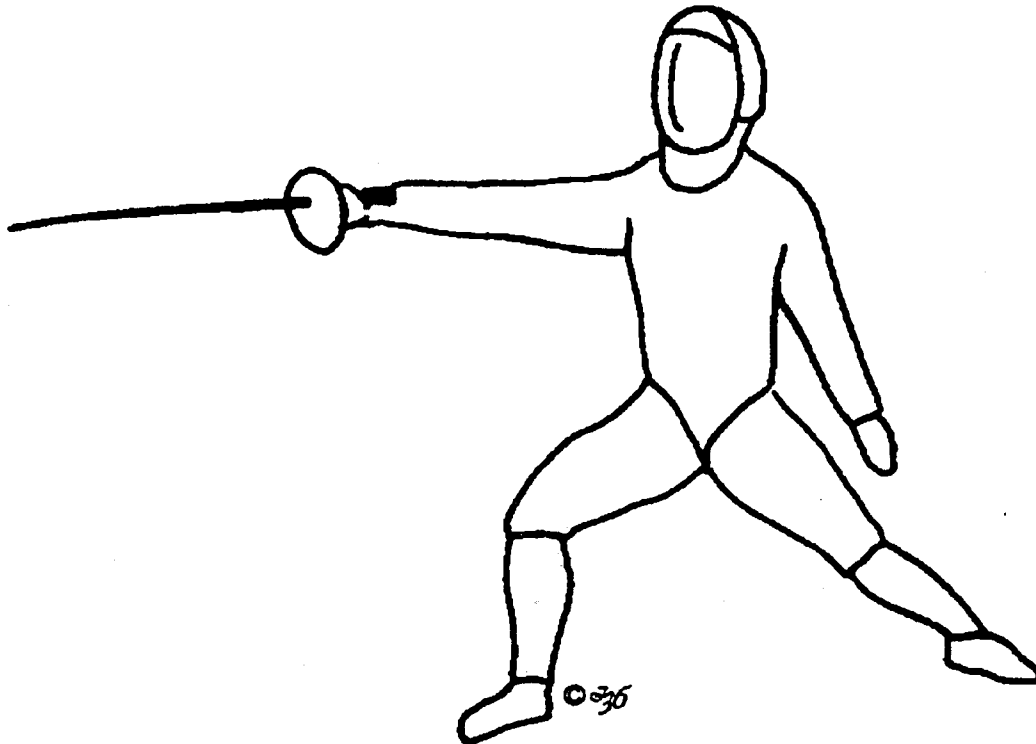


# The Fencers' Workbook

## II - EPÉE



# **The Fencers' Workbook**

## **II - EPÉE**

# Acknowledgements

This manual was based on translations of "*Le Cahier des Escrimeurs*" by Maitre THIRIOUX, Technical Advisor, Trainer at the Ecole Interarmées des Sports at Fontainebleau, France.

English translation by: Nanette McCallum, David Laloum & John Fethers.

Translation Editorial Input: Alwyn Wardle, Helen Smith & Susan Shahin - Melbourne 1997.

Illustrations: Frank Groeneveld, (Image 36).

---

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

## EPÉE

<b>Chapter I</b>	Holding The Weapon .....	1
<b>Chapter II</b>	The On Guard Position .....	2
<b>Chapter III</b>	The Development .....	4
<b>Chapter IV</b>	The Flèche .....	6
<b>Chapter V</b>	The Return To Guard .....	7
<b>Chapter VI</b>	Offensive Actions.....	9
<b>Chapter VII</b>	Simple Attacks .....	10
<b>Chapter VIII</b>	Defensive Actions - Parries .....	16
<b>Chapter IX</b>	Simple Parries .....	18
<b>Chapter X</b>	Feints Of The Attacks .....	24
	Attacks On The Withdrawal Of The Arm.....	24
	Compound Attacks.....	24
<b>Chapter XI</b>	Successful Parries .....	30
<b>Chapter XII</b>	Attacks On The Blade .....	34
	The Beat .....	35
	The Froissement .....	36
	Generalities On Attacks On The Blade .....	36
<b>Chapter XIII</b>	Takings Of The Blade .....	40
<b>Chapter XIV</b>	Counter Attacks.....	46
<b>Chapter XV</b>	Remise - Redoublement - Reprise .....	52
	Generalities .....	54

# CHAPTER 1

## HOLDING THE WEAPON

### I - DESCRIPTION

Refer to the corresponding section of Chapter 1 in Foil Workbook.

### II - TECHNIQUE

Refer to the corresponding section of Chapter 1 in Foil Workbook.

### III - TACTICAL STUDY

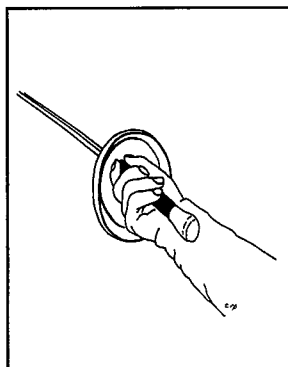
In Foil, the position of the fingers on the handle should not change whereas in Epée the tactical circumstances of the bout permit the fencer to modify the grip on the weapon. In Epée, the length of certain actions (such as counter attacks to the forward parts of the target or to attacks executed with a full lunge) is particularly important. Consequently, by changing the grip on the weapon, an alert fencer can gain useful extra centimetres of reach.

#### 1) Different ways of holding the weapon:

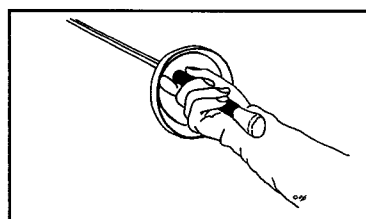
a) The position with the fingers against the guard and the thumb in opposition to the index, gives maximum strength and is particularly recommended for actions requiring authority (actions on the blade, takings of the blade, defensive actions).

b) The position with the hand held back several centimetres from the inside of the guard facilitates derobing actions.

c) The position with the index extended along the handle offers extra length and precision, but reduces strength (see Foil) and leaves the fencer vulnerable to strong actions or close fighting.

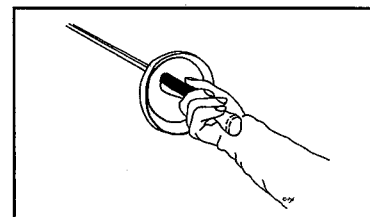


Classical grip



Grip in which the index finger does not hold the handle

Grip in which the index finger is extended along the handle



Note - In Epée it is necessary for the fencer to keep the hand in supination.

### IV - FAULTS TO AVOID

a) Taking account of the preceding paragraph, the adoption of one single position is not recommended. The fencer must adapt to the tactical circumstances of the bout (offensive, counter-offensive, defensive).

b) Holding the weapon by the pommel. This position on the handle offers maximum length but entirely exposes the hand and reduces all strength, making the execution of parries practically impossible.

### V - TEACHING RECOMMENDATIONS

As early as possible the Master teaches the pupil to use the different ways of holding the weapon in relation to the actions to be executed. It is indispensable that the pupil be equally trained to execute all movements with any position of the hand on the handle. The Master pays particular attention that the pupil keeps the hand in supination.

## CHAPTER II

# THE ON GUARD POSITION

### I - DEFINITION

Refer to corresponding section in Chapter II of Foil Workbook.

### II - COMING ON GUARD

Refer to corresponding section in Chapter II of Foil Workbook.

#### *First step:*

The distance between the feet, as well as the flexing of the legs are slightly reduced.

#### *Second step:*

As in Foil

#### *Third step:*

Bend the sword arm with the elbow out from the body, the forearm horizontal and forming an angle of about 150° with the arm, the hand in supination, the point of the weapon slightly lower than the hand and turned in slightly (right hander to right hander, pointing just under the hand of the opponent). The left arm is placed as in the third step in Foil.

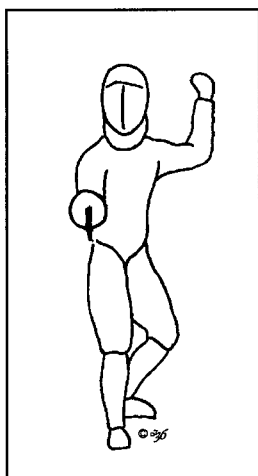
### III - TECHNIQUE

**A- The feet:** the distance between the feet is reduced.

**B- Leg flexion:** is less pronounced so as not to expose the leading knee.

**C- The trunk:**  
(see chapter 2 on Foil).

**D- Unarmed arm:**  
(see chapter 2 on Foil).



*On guard position*

**E - Weapon arm:** the forearm must be entirely covered by the guard such that the frontal projection (view face on) is as in figure below.

### IV - TACTICAL STUDY

The mobility demanded in Epée is helped by a less pronounced flexion of the legs which gives more suppleness to footwork and swiftness to the flèche. The fencer must be careful not to carry the body weight on the front leg in order to be able to rapidly move the leg out of distance. The position of the weapon arm is very important, allowing:

- 1) with the aid of the guard, to protect against all classical direct attacks to the forward target areas (weapon arm, front knee and foot).
- 2) with the aid of the point, to protect against all direct attacks to the body.
- 3) facilitation of, by the oblique position of the blade and low point, derobements, and takings of the blade.
- 4) rapid and easy extension of the arm into the opponents low line attacks (counter attack).

The trunk, the centre of gravity, and the rear arm are subject to the same tactical advice as was given in Foil.

### V - FAULTS TO AVOID

The faults discussed in Foil remain valid, and are not given here. Only the faults specific to the on guard position in Epée are mentioned below.

- A- Exaggerated stance:** this is an error that results in excessive flexion of the legs and exposes the fencer to direct actions to the leg as the knee is in the same vertical plane as the wrist or the forearm.
- B- Rear foot:** Many épéists only push on the ball of the rear foot which aids the launching of the flèche but inhibits execution of a correct lunge.
- C- Weapon arm:** The over-extension of the weapon arm causes the fencer to be vulnerable to angulated attacks and takings of the blade. If the arm is foreshortened, the frontal surface area of the guard is reduced which facilitates the opponent's offensive action to the body. All other variant positions expose the forward target area and make offensive actions by the opponent easier. A bent wrist exposes the forearm; the hand positioned with the thumb on top exposes the exterior of the forearm and the position of the point can no longer respond to tactical demands.

## VI - GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

The suppression of all conventions and the extension of the valid target area in Epée to include the whole body augments the chances of offensive actions reaching the target while reducing the defensive value of the parry.

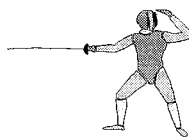
The fencer who neglects the classical on guard position therefore offers a greater target area to

the opponent's strokes. Defence is closely linked to the on guard position and it is proportionally more efficient if the fencer maintains the correct position. Less pronounced leg flexion is recommended, but the fencer must nevertheless maintain the possibility of attacking at any moment by lunging, or counter attacking, parrying etc. The tactical circumstances, which are more varied than in Foil, compel the fencer to maintain constant equilibrium and to place the centre of gravity forward or back so as to be able to adapt to any situation instantaneously.

## VII - TEACHING RECOMMENDATIONS

A bad on guard position reduces the indispensable precision of Epée actions. The Master must examine the position of the feet and legs of the pupil and at all times control his balance by asking him to execute "appels" with either foot. He must assure the vertical position of the trunk and head, in order to prevent the pupil collapsing the body in the execution of counter attacks. After the execution of an action, the Fencing Master must insist upon the return to the correct on guard position and try, if necessary, to hit on the front arm to get the pupil to correct a bad position of the weapon arm.

*Note:* "Appel" means to slap the ground with the ball of the foot.



## CHAPTER III

# THE DEVELOPMENT

### I - DEFINITION

### II - DESCRIPTION

### III - TECHNIQUE

Refer to the corresponding section of Chapter III in Foil Workbook.

### IV - TACTICAL STUDY

The lack of all convention, together with the extension of the valid target area to include the whole body, means that technique and tactics in Epée are closely interlinked. The extension of the weapon arm must be executed while keeping in mind that:

- 1) The hand, forearm and the arm are closer to the opponent.
- 2) The protection offered by the guard is reduced.
- 3) The point leaves the ideal position as defined in the on-guard position.

In order to limit the possibilities of counter offensive actions, the movements *with opposition of the weapon arm become indispensable*. They are executed depending upon:

- 1) The position of the opponent's blade
- 2) The target area aimed at.

The opposition movements of the weapon arm must never *reduce the length of the attack*.

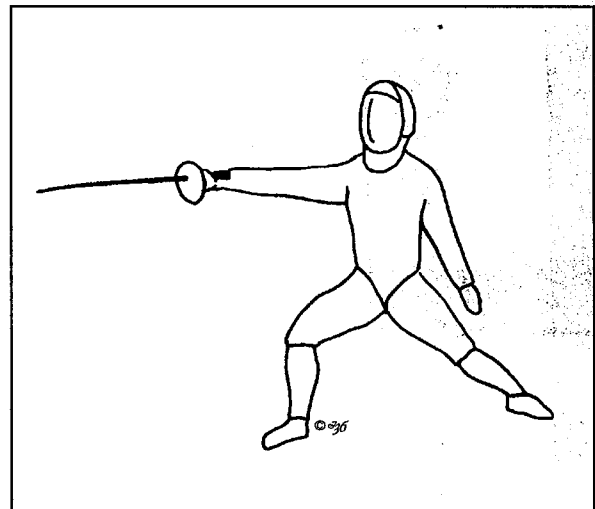
The lunge must vary in length according to the distance from the target area aimed for. These are:

- 1) The hand and forearm
- 2) The arm and the front leg
- 3) The body.

Whatever the target aimed at, the lunge must allow a *touch without the blade bending and with complete extension of the rear leg*. The trunk remains upright in order to expose the minimum target to a counter-offensive action.

*The lunge must be blocked* to allow the fencer to pass easily into a counter offensive action if the attack fails.

### V - FAULTS TO AVOID



*The development in Epee*

The faults common to Foil and Epée are discussed in the Foil chapter. Those specific to Epée are discussed below.

- 1) *Lifting the hand during the extension of the arm*: this fault is often that of foilists who fence Epée. It exposes the hand and underneath the forearm.
- 2) *Insufficient opposition*: does not prevent counter attacks from landing and often results in double hits.
- 3) *Delayed and exaggerated opposition*: the point lands flat on the target, and does not depress into the barrel.



## **VI - GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS**

Complements the corresponding section in the Foil Workbook.

The surface area as well as the mobility of the different parts of the target require great precision. This is obtained by the correct execution of the development.

The position of the hand in complete supination prevents lateral movement of the point and keeps it in line with the target. The exact awareness of distance is indispensable. The development should allow the hit to land with a minimum pressure of 750 grams.

Extra exaggerated pressure risks unnecessarily exposing the fencer to counter attacks. Certain target areas do not permit the development to be correctly executed (attack to the leg or foot). Tactics allow these targets to be reached but impose modifications to the execution of the development.

## **VII - TEACHING RECOMMENDATIONS**

Complements the corresponding section in the Foil

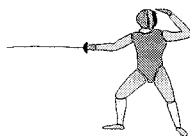
Workbook.

The Master must insist on great precision from the beginning. To this end, he can ask the pupil to hit the arm, then the forearm, and then the hand. He increases the difficulty until there is perfect execution to the different target areas.

The Master, by varying the distance, obliges the pupil to modify the length of the development and thus raises awareness of the distance for each action.

In the development, the Master must make sure that the rear leg is completely extended, that the torso is vertical and check the amount of blade flexion. In Foil, the pupil can stay in the position of the development on the plastron without hindering the study of defence.

In *Epée*, however, the Master must avoid letting the pupil remain on the lunge and teach him to keep the weapon arm extended without contraction when the attack is parried. In this way, the pupil realises the necessity to not extend past the target and to return rapidly backwards to the guard position.



# CHAPTER IV

## THE FLÈCHE

### I - DEFINITION

### II - DESCRIPTION

### III- TECHNIQUE

Refer to the corresponding sections of Chapter IV in the Foil Workbook.

### IV- TACTICAL STUDY

Although subject to the same rules as those given in paragraph III of the development in Epée, the flèche is a movement that is frequently used for the following reasons:

- 1) *The fencer need not respect the fencing phrase.*
- 2) It allows the fencer to *hit from a distance.*
- 3) It remedies the problem of *inferior height* which is much more significant in Epée than in Foil.
- 4) It leaves open the possibility of *executing remises or redoublements.*

5) It gives more *authority to actions that dominate the blade*, especially in the high line.

6) It allows the fencer to *rapidly execute opposing defensive actions*, in order to prevent counter-offensive actions to the forward target areas (hand, knee, foot).

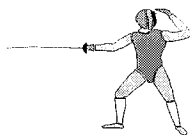
7) The corps à corps resulting from the flèche is not penalised.

For all these reasons the flèche is frequently used in offensive actions and in second intention actions destined to hit the body. The variations offered for its preparation (Section III, Chapter IV in Foil Workbook) allows it to be utilised in numerous situations and its execution is obviously dependent on the fencer's tactical intentions.

### V - FAULTS TO AVOID

### VI - TEACHING RECOMMENDATIONS

Refer to the corresponding sections of Chapter IV in Foil Workbook.



# CHAPTER V

## THE RETURN TO GUARD

### I - DEFINITION

### II - DESCRIPTION

### III - TECHNIQUE

Refer to the corresponding sections of Chapter V in Foil Workbook

### IV - TACTICAL STUDY

As in Foil the return to guard must respond to the tactical necessities of the bout, but it must always be covered by the point in order to counter any direct offensive action from the opponent in case of failure of the attack. The return to guard is executed with the *weapon arm completely extended*, and must allow the fencer to withdraw the forward target areas out of distance *by a rapid movement of the legs*.

In addition, the extension of the weapon arm permits:

- 1) The simultaneous execution of counter-attacks and the necessary opposing movements.
- 2) Derobements of actions on the blade by finger movements only.
- 3) Parrying, if the offensive action is executed by flèche.

*The return to guard forwards* permits the fencer to renew the offensive action when the opponent has simply withdrawn his target area.

*The return to guard by jump backwards* has the advantage of moving rapidly out of distance but can lead to lack of precision in counter-offensive actions. It often induces large defensive actions.

### V - FAULTS TO AVOID

The faults discussed in Foil are valid. Those discussed in the following section are specific to Epee:

- 1) *Premature withdrawal of the weapon arm*: the point no longer protects the fencer on the return to guard and the opponent's offensive action is made easier. Counter-offensive actions are limited.
- 2) *The point higher than the hand*: exposes the underneath of the hand and facilitates the opponent's actions on the blade.
- 3) *The hand with the thumb on top*: diminishes the precision of counter offensive actions and inhibits movement of the fingers in either direction.
- 4) *The torso leaning forward*: this fault is often brought about by the concern for freeing the rear leg to facilitate retreating. If exaggerated or executed at the moment of the return to guard, it impedes the precision of the counter offensive action whilst placing the head within reach of the opponent and removing all effectiveness of defensive actions.

### IV - GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

The absence of conventions allow the fencer to protect himself during the return to guard by threatening one of the opponent's target areas. The epeeist, therefore, returns to guard with the arm extended for security and to impose on the opponent the necessity to first deflect the blade to prepare for an offensive action executed on the return to guard.

The extended position of the arm facilitates actions that the opponent can execute on a blade that is within his reach. He can displace it violently, dominate it, or throw out a rapid action that avoids the point. Therefore, the weapon arm must be *extended without tension and the hand in complete supination*.

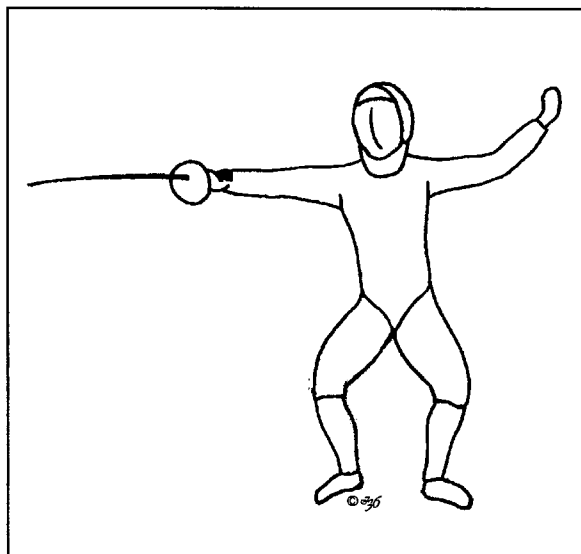
The strength of the fingers holding the handle must allow an instantaneous evading or resistance

of the blade. The precision of the counter-offensive action is clearly linked to the fencer's balance during the return to guard. Concern for placing oneself out of distance frequently causes the fencer to return to guard by placing the ball of the front foot on the ground, allowing him to free the rear leg and to move it instantly. The distance at which the fencer repositions the front foot from the rear foot varies; if it is reduced to a minimum, the return to guard is transformed into a backward jump.

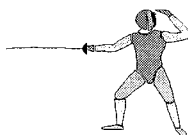
## VII- TEACHING RECOMMENDATIONS

The Master must be mainly concerned with the pupil's balance in the return to guard and to the position of the weapon arm. He must insist on the return to a perfect on-guard position. As soon as the pupil returns to on guard correctly he must put himself out of distance in one single time; that is, by re-positioning the front foot on the ball of the foot in order to immediately move the rear foot. The Master must prevent the pupil leaning forward as

he moves the rear leg. The weapon arm only returns to the on guard position at the end of this movement.



*The return to guard preparing a retreat*



## CHAPTER VI

# OFFENSIVE ACTIONS

*The electrification of fencing has taken out the combat character of Epée. This evolution has created a "coded" fencing discipline which has completely modified the technique and tactics used in Epée. Offensive actions in electric Epée are influenced by the following principles:*

- 1) Elimination of all conventions.
- 2) Extension of the target area to include the whole body.
- 3) Limited time for registering the double hit.

### 1 - ELIMINATION OF CONVENTIONS

The lack of conventions offers enormous possibilities for counter-offensive actions, which can result in the failure of even the simplest offensive action. The simple extension of the arm, which can be very fast and precise towards different target areas, markedly interferes with offensive actions executed with either a development or a flèche. In order to reduce the risk of counter offensive actions, all offensive actions must be accompanied by covering movements that protect parts of the body that are vulnerable to being hit during the development.

A particular form of counter-offensive action (hits with angulation) impedes even the best covered offensive action. Tactics, however, allow for defence against this.

### 2 - EXTENSION OF THE TARGET AREA TO INCLUDE THE WHOLE BODY

The inclusion of the whole body as target area offers a vast field of offensive actions. A reasonable offensive action is one that allows the fencer to reach the closest parts of the

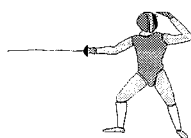
opponent's target with a minimum of risk. Attributed the name "*forward target*", these parts of the body become target areas that regulate the distance separating the fencers. The "forward targets" are: the hand, the wrist, the forearm, the knee, the leg and the foot. Certain unorthodox on guard positions sometimes include the head (torso leaning too far forward) or the thigh (exaggerated distance between the feet).

### 3 - LIMITED TIME FOR REGISTERING A DOUBLE HIT

The fact that the electronic scoring apparatus does not signal a hit received by a fencer between 1/20 and 1/25 of a second after he has scored a hit has enormous influence on offensive actions in Epée, and in a general way on the whole game of Epée, as a function of the principle "hit first".

A number of fencers use this principle as the only rule of their game. They are often gifted with natural quickness that allows them to gain the fraction of a second that triggers the hit to their advantage, but they practice a very dangerous type of fencing.

A game that is based uniquely on speed sometimes impedes the counter-offensive, but can be blocked by defence (parries and ripostes) that is judiciously employed.



## CHAPTER VII

# SIMPLE ATTACKS

### I - DEFINITION

A simple attack is an offensive action consisting of only one fencing time, executed with a lunge or a flèche.

### II - CLASSIFICATION

#### A - Simple attacks to the advanced target

##### I - Classic

- a) Straight hit
- b) Disengagement

##### II - Agulated

#### B - Simple attacks to the body

- a) Straight hit
- b) Disengagement

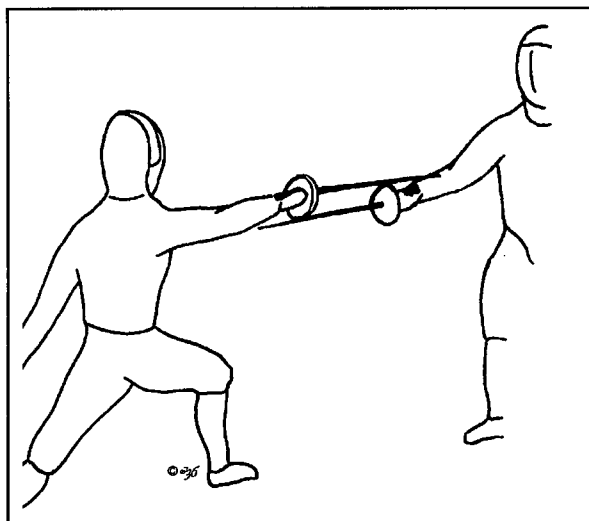
### III- TECHNIQUE

#### A - Classic attacks to the advanced target

##### 1 - Straight Hit

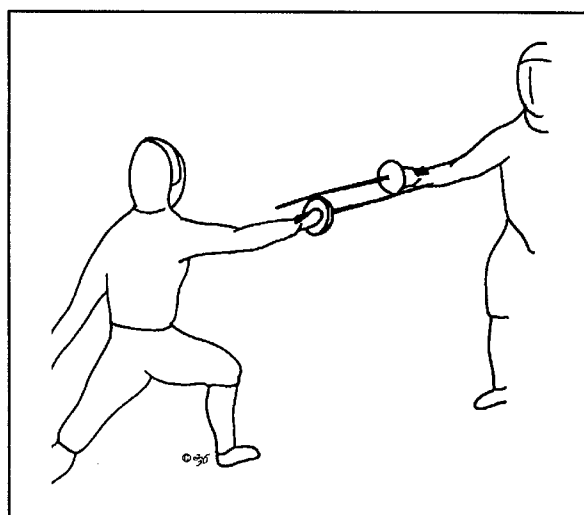
- a) To the wrist or forearm:
  - above
  - inside
  - under
  - outside

Extend the arm while covering in the line of the opponent's blade and point, the hand in complete



Classical attack above the hand

supination and with the point aimed at the target. Then execute a lunge, all in one fencing time.



Classical attack under the hand

- b) To the knee:

Extend the arm with the hand in complete supination and the point aimed at the target. The weapon and the arm form a straight line. Then execute a full lunge, all in one fencing time.
- c) To the leg and foot:

Extend the arm with the hand in complete supination and the point in the direction of the target. The weapon and the arm form a straight line. Then execute a lunge, all in one fencing time. This is a full lunge and dependent on the tactics and circumstances.

*NOTE* - For the full lunge (attack d'allonge) the fencer can modify the grip on the weapon to gain several centimetres.

## 2 - The Disengagement

To the wrist and the forearm:

The disengagement can be executed in the four lines; above, inside, below and outside, according to the opponent's guard position or the engagement that he wishes to take.

Extend the arm, the hand in supination and whilst covering in the line of the opponent's blade and point, pass the point under the opponent's guard. Then execute a development, all in one fencing time.

### B - Angulated attacks to the forward target

An angulated attack is a flicked hit, with the weapon and arm forming a broken line. It must be directed as close as possible to the opponent's guard.

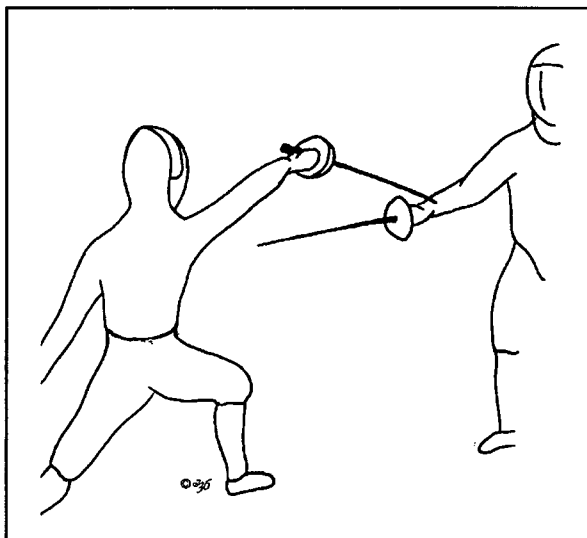
To the wrist:

a) *Top*: Launch the hit by lunging with a rapid extension of the arm, the hand clearly higher than the point and the thumb on top.

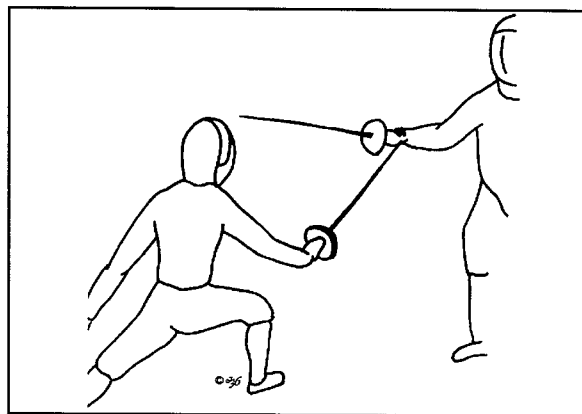
b) *Inside*: Launch the hit by lunging with a rapid extension of the arm, the hand in supination at the height of the point and angulated exaggeratedly to the right.

c) *Underneath*: Launch the hit by lunging with a rapid extension of the arm, the hand in pronation and clearly lower than the point.

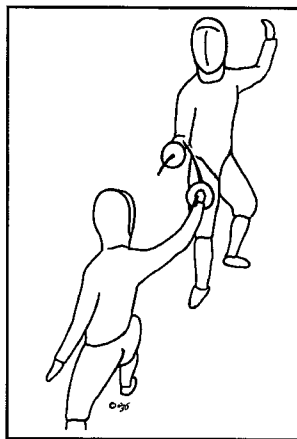
d) *Outside*: Launch the hit by lunging with a rapid extension of the arm, the hand in semi-pronation at the height of the point and angulated exaggeratedly to the left.



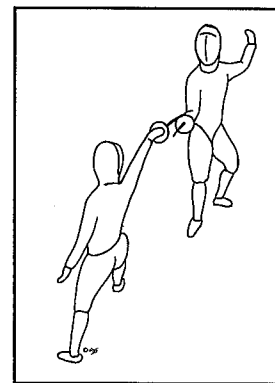
*The angulated attack to above the hand*



*The angulated attack to the underneath the hand*



*The angulated attack to the inside of the hand*



*The angulated attack to the outside of the hand*

### C - Attacks to the body

#### 1 - The Straight Hit

Action of instantly exploiting a favourable situation created by the opponent (action d'apropos) executed preferably with a flèche. For a technical explanation see chapter IV of Foil Workbook.

#### 2 - The Disengagement

Also an "Action d'apropos, preferably with a flèche. The technical execution is the same as for Foil, however, covering in the line of the opponent's blade is indispensable right to the end of the attack.

## IV - TACTICAL STUDY

### A - Classical simple attacks to the advanced target

#### 1 - The Straight Hit

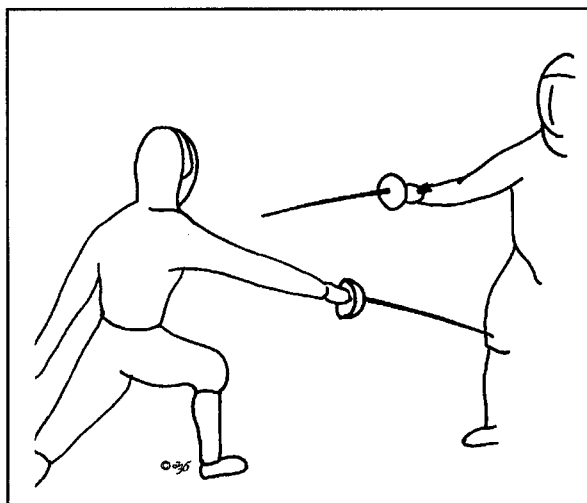
##### a) To the wrist, forearm:

The classical on guard position protects the hand, wrist and forearm perfectly and renders offensive actions by straight hit virtually impossible. The circumstances of the bout, lack of concentration, fatigue or an unorthodox on guard position sometimes allow it to be employed successfully. In general, the straight hit to the advanced target requires a preparation that has the aim of making the opponent expose a target. Naturally it can be used on the opponent's preparation when the hand, wrist or forearm are momentarily uncovered.

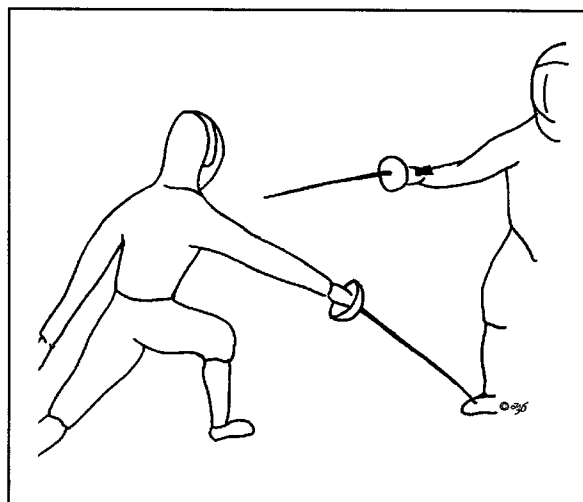
##### b) To the knee, leg or foot:

Although these are considered to be advanced targets, they are nevertheless at a greater distance than the hand or the wrist. Situated in the low line, they are protected by easy counter offensive actions executed simultaneously with the retreat.

The preparation of this straight hit must not systematically provoke immediate counter-offensive actions, since it is impossible to cover these during the execution of this offensive action.



*The attack to the knee*



*The attack to the foot*

#### 2 - The Disengagement

##### a) To the wrist and forearm:

The disengagement is little used in *Epée* as the classical on guard position does not allow it, however, the circumstances of the bout can sometimes offer the occasion to take an engagement. In this case, it is indispensable to precede the attack with a preparation (pressure), having the objective of exposing the target to be reached.

The disengagement can finish at the knee if the preparation provokes an exaggerated reaction in the high line.

### B - Angulated attacks to the advanced target

The straight hit with angulation to the advanced target offers the opportunity of hitting an opponent even if he is protected by a correct on-guard position. Its success is however dependent on certain conditions:

- 1) *Attack* the target least protected by the opponent's point.
- 2) *Form* an angle with the weapon and the arm in the execution of the hit to:
  - a) Make the counter attack miss the target
  - b) Be as perpendicular as possible when hitting the target.
- 3) *Launch* the hit by moving the arm as fast as possible. Avoid a counter-offensive action using speed by withdrawing the arm immediately.



- 4) *Direct* the hit as close as possible to the guard in order to maintain the advantage of length.
- 5) *Surprise* the opponent as much as possible in order to avoid the possibility of a double hit.

These straight hits with angulation, the particular execution of which resembles snatching movements with a lunge, demand much precision. They are to be recommended on fencers whose on guard position is with the weapon arm overextended.

### C - Simple attacks to the body

- 1) The straight hit:

The straight hit to the body is little used in *Epée*. In the bout, the *flèche* allows it to be used in certain circumstances, without having to worry about counter-offensive actions. Some fencers, particularly tall ones, use it more frequently by deceiving the opponent on distance.

Even if the preparation of the attack offers possibilities of reaching the body, it is preferable to direct it to the bend of the arm with the necessary covering.

- 2) The disengagement:

The tactical use of the disengagement is identical to that of the straight hit. The distance between the fencers offers few opportunities to take an engagement that would be sufficient to assure success. It is preferably used with a *flèche*, by engaging forwards, as near as possible to the opponent's guard. This attack is sometimes used by tall fencers.

## V - FAULTS TO AVOID

### A - In classical attacks to the advanced target

- 1) *Insufficient covering on the side of the opponent's blade*: access to the target is easier, but leads to vulnerability to simple and fast counter attacks.
- 2) *Exaggerated covering on the side of the opponent's blade*: reduces the length of the attack and impedes precision, the point slipping on the target.

- 3) *Insufficient or non-existent blocking of the lunge*: any immediate counter-offensive action is impossible if the attack fails. When the attack is very deep, the opponent's riposte by takings of the blade is facilitated.

*NOTE*: All the faults discussed in the development (hand position) impede the indispensable precision needed to reach these target areas, as they present only a reduced surface area which is often mobile.

### B - In angulated attacks to the forward target

- 1) *Attack driven or carried by the extension of the rear leg*: counter-offensive actions often gain the advantage.
- 2) *Slowness or delay in the withdrawal of the weapon arm*: does not allow the fencer to avoid the opponent's counter-offensive action.
- 3) *Insufficient angle formed by the weapon and the arm*: facilitates counter-offensive actions and does not allow them to be avoided.
- 4) *Bad positioning of the hand in relation to the target aimed at*: the point does not reach the target with sufficient perpendicularity, so the attack passes or lands flat.

### C - In attacks to the body

The faults discussed in the simple attacks for *Foil* are applicable to *Epée*.

*Insufficient covering at the end of the attack*: facilitates counter-offensive actions to the advanced target and does not allow the fencer to avoid the double hit.

## VI - GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

The notion of *precise distance* is of primary importance in the productive execution of classical or angulated attacks to the advanced target.

The attack must reach the target *aimed for without bending the blade* and with a sufficient angle so that the tip depresses perfectly to a pressure of 750 grams. The forward target areas (hand, wrist, forearm) are practically parallel to the direction of the hits. A bad appreciation of distance causes attacks to pass or land flat, dangerously expose the advanced target to the opponent's counter-offensive actions and makes the attacker's

immediate counter-offensive action practically impossible in the case of failure of the attack.

By its specific execution, the simple angulated attack requires much precision. The lunge is used to carry oneself within reach of the target area aimed for. The hit launched by the rapid extension of the weapon arm forms an exaggerated and variable angle with the blade. This has an effect on distance which is indispensable to its effectiveness. In no case must the point pass the target aimed at, so as to allow for the withdrawal of the arm and thus avoid the opponent's counter-offensive action.

The positions of the hand given in the technical study of attacks with angulation allows their execution by a movement that is as natural as possible. This is essential to obtain maximum speed and better precision.

The position of the hand must allow the target aimed for to be hit as perpendicularly as possible close to the opponent's guard. In angulated attacks to the inside and outside of the hand the fencer can move to the right or left in the landing of the front foot when executing the lunge, to obtain easier access to the target aimed at.

The cutover that exposes the wrist and forearm is not to be used in the simple attacks to the forward targets. The precision that is necessary to reach a small target is difficult to obtain due to the movement from high to low described by the point. Its use attracts an easy counter-offensive action that is always successful.

All these offensive actions to the advanced target impose the need for sufficient covering in the line of the opponent's point and blade to limit the ever possible counter-offensive action. This covering is much more natural in the right hand side lines and requires more practice in the left lines.

Covering actions must be progressive, as the risks increase at the moment of the final part of the attack when the advanced targets are within reach of the opponent. However, an exaggerated covering at the beginning or at the end of the attack hampers precision and reduces the length of the attack.

Although simple offensive actions to the advanced target require controlled covering, it is important to accentuate this during offensive actions to the body, which must only be used with second intention. All other methods are more a question of chance than of calculated tactics. Even in the instantaneous exploitation of a fault of the opponent, it would be wise to use a *flèche*.

In general, the defensive actions used against simple attacks to the advanced target are the

classical or angulated counter-offensive actions. However, when the attack is deeply forward, it is preferable to use parries. Defensive actions are discussed in detail in Chapter IX.

## VII- TEACHING RECOMMENDATIONS

The execution of classical simple attacks to the advanced target is performed on the Master's openings. This must be done in a way that presents the target as a measure of the skill level of the pupil. The point must threaten the advanced target of the pupil (wrist, forearm) in order to obtain a good covering in the desired line. The Master can even turn sideways or execute a counter-offensive movement.

The Master must be particularly aware of the position of the pupil's hand, only the position with the *hand in complete supination* avoids lateral movements of the point that obstruct the precision of the hit.

From the beginning, it is logical and indispensable to get the pupil used to executing counter-offensive actions during the return to guard. To teach this, the Master must demand an *exact appreciation of distance, and a blocked lunge* so that the pupil hits *without pushing and without passing the target*. He returns the pupil to his distance by attacking to a given target and thus gets him used to returning to guard and moving out of distance with the point well in line whilst taking the necessary covering movement.

To be sure that the attack is correctly blocked, the Master must parry it sometimes (neither too early nor too late) and ask the pupil to keep the point well in line and to bring it back on the target (*remise*).

Attacks to the knee and foot must be studied during lessons. Numerous Masters leave it to their pupils to discover them in bouting. The tactical conditions of their use are specific, as these attacks require much precision and rapidity of execution. The Master must therefore teach them and obtain perfect execution before placing them in tactical exercises.

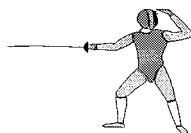
The modifications tolerated in the holding of the weapon allow a gain of several centimetres. However, they must not interfere with actions following the attack. The Master can allow or prohibit them.

For angulated attacks, the Master stays in a correct on-guard position, the *arm slightly more extended*. The pupil must launch his attack without

exaggeratedly moving the point out of line and with maximal speed. As for classical attacks, the Master can turn sideways to avoid the counter-offensive action but must be careful that the hit does not go past the target. The study of classical and angulated

simple attacks must be done with displacements of the feet.

The Master must get the pupil used to finding his correct distance and executing the offensive action when the invitation is presented.



## CHAPTER VIII

# DEFENSIVE ACTIONS - PARRIES

*The absence of conventions, the extension of the valid target area to include the whole body and the necessity to hit first, gives a special character to the technical and tactical execution of parries in Epee.*

*The defensive actions used are determined by the target that they must protect, with the aim of deflecting the opponent's blade aside while hitting the opponent, without giving him the opportunity of reacting within the 1/20th or 1/25th of a second that follows.*

*Therefore the following attacks must be considered:*

- To the extreme advanced target; hand, forearm, knee.
- To the advanced target; arm, front thigh.
- To the body.

### **I - DEFENSIVE ACTIONS FOR THE ATTACKS TO THE EXTREME ADVANCED TARGET.**

Attacks to the hand, the forearm and the knee are offensive actions which do not allow the defender to be sure of the position of the opponent's blade. They easily avoid parries, which leaves few possibilities for overcoming them. The extremely reduced target area (hand, forearm) that is presented to the defender requires much precision that is not always possible to obtain after a parry. It is therefore preferable to employ counter-offensive actions, which are much more rapid and precise. The judicious use of parries and counter offensive actions hampers the opponent's offensive actions.

### **II - DEFENSIVE ACTIONS FOR ATTACKS TO THE ADVANCED TARGET**

Attacks to the advanced target are more deeply engaged than those to the extreme advanced targets and allow the fencer to dominate the blade under good conditions. The simple parry offers total security if it moves the blade aside at the correct moment. The parry in Foil followed by the riposte

form two distinct fencing times. The parry in Epee and the riposte form only one fencing time and take the form of a "hit within a hit" whilst deflecting the blade.

To be effective, the simple parry is executed:

- 1 - *By moving the arm and blade forward into the attack* before the attack progresses too deeply, which allows for the immediate extension of the arm without the risk of being hit by the opponent's point.
- 2 - *With a step back*, to conserve dominance of the blades in spite of the progression of the opponent's attack.
- 3 - *By directing the point* onto the target aimed at, while *simultaneously executing a covering movement* to move the blade aside.

These conditions of execution have the aim of hitting without giving the opponent the possibility of undertaking a new action, (remise, reprise) between the 1/20th and 1/25th of a second that follows.

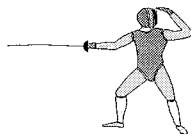
### **III - DEFENSIVE ACTIONS FOR ATTACKS TO THE BODY**

When the fencer cannot retreat sufficiently when an attack to the body begins, or has not been able to withdraw his blade from the opponent's action, he then finds himself at a distance that no longer allows him to respect the principles given in the preceding paragraph, and obliges him to employ defensive actions as used in Foil. During the execution of the riposte, the attacker retains the possibility of reacting immediately (remise, reprise), which forces the

defender, generally speaking, to riposte while maintaining contact with the opponent's blade.

A difference in height and/or excellent footwork sometimes offers the possibility of utilising counter-offensive actions on attacks

directed either to the advanced target or to the body and in particular on those directed to the low lines. Some fencers possess *a very accurate notion of distance* and use this effectively.



## CHAPTER IX

# THE SIMPLE PARRIES

### I - DEFINITION

*This action consists of deflecting the opponent's blade with a stroke of the weapon.*

### II - CLASSIFICATION

Parries offering *maximum protection* must preferably be used. For this reason, they have been called *basic parries* and have the following advantages:

- a) They do not require any lateral displacement of the hand that is liable to expose the advanced target areas.
- b) They immediately deflect the opponent's blade to the outside of the body, in the lines where the arm and body are entirely covered.

#### A - Basic Parries

- 1) Sixte : protects the high line
- 2) Octave : protects the low line
- 3) Counter sixte : protects the inside line
- 4) Counter octave : protects the low line

#### B - Secondary Parries

- 1) Quarte : protects the inside line
- 2) Septime : protects the low line
- 3) Counters of quarte and septime:  
protect the inside and low lines respectively

### III- TECHNIQUE

Whichever simply parry is used, it must be executed while respecting the following principles:

- 1) Give predominance to the displacement of the point so that it goes immediately in line with the target.
- 2) With the aid of the guard, completely close the threatened line without exaggerated movements (vertical-lateral).

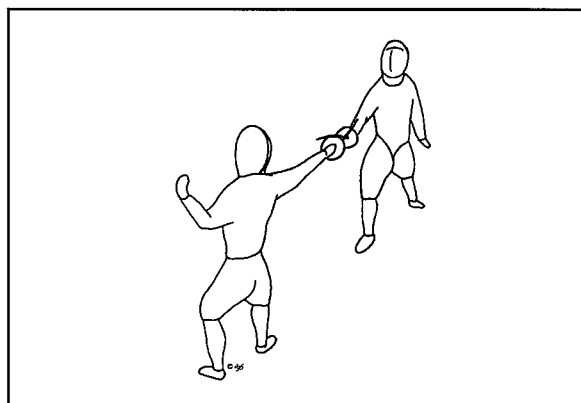
- 3) By simultaneously extending the arm and stepping back in order to prevent the blade bending, without lifting the hand and with re-establishing distance.
- 4) Go forward to meet the opponent's attack, so that it does not come too far forward, deflecting it aside as early as possible.
- 5) Maintain the point in line with the target, threatening any advanced target that may be exposed during the execution of the attack.
- 6) Maintain control of the blade until the final part of the movement.

#### A - Description of the simple parries

##### *1 - Basic Parries*

*Sixte*: Starting from a classical on guard position, semi-circular parry, deflect aside the blade when it is presented in the high line while keeping it in the same line.

*Octave*: Starting from an on guard position, the point higher than the hand, semi-circular parry, deflect the blade when it is presented in the low line, keeping the hand in the same line.



*The classical parry of sixte*

*Counter sixte*: Starting from a position with the point higher than the hand, circular parry, take the blade when it is presented inside the high line and guide it into the opposite line.

*Counter octave*: Starting from a classical on-guard position, circular parry, take the blade when it is presented in the low line, underneath, and guide it into the opposite line.

## 2 - Secondary Parries

*Quarte*: Starting from a position with the point higher than the hand, or from a classical on-guard position, lateral or diagonal parry, deflect the blade when it is presented in the high line, leaving the hand in the same line.

*Septime*: Starting from a position with the point higher than the hand, or from a classical on-guard position, diagonal or lateral parry, deflect the blade when it is presented in the low line, leaving the hand in the same line.

*Counter parries of quarte and septime*: Counter quarte takes the blade presented in the high outside line and takes the blade into the opposite line. Counter septime takes the blade presented in the low outside line into the opposite low line.

## B - Execution of simple parries

Whichever parry is used, it is always executed with opposition on an offensive action executed with authority or by dominating the blade. The parry can also be executed by ceding.

- 1) *With opposition*: the parry with opposition deflects the blade without brutality and together with the riposte takes only one fencing time. The riposte is executed by extending the arm with covering movements of the hand.
- 2) *With ceding*: The ceding parry is executed in the same conditions as for Foil. It is indispensable to maintain the point in the direction of the target during the whole execution.

## IV - TACTICAL STUDY

Generally, tactics require the frequent use of simple parries offering a maximum of security as they allow the fencer to:

- 1) Protect himself from remises
- 2) Obtain complete covering without exposing the advanced target by inhibiting any insistence or continuation of the offensive action.

A parry is justified when the attack is sufficiently deep. The four basic parries allow the fencer to deflect the opponent's blade aside and to take it outside the body. The choice of which is a function of the position of the point and the circumstances of the bout.

*Parry of sixte*: deflects the attack directed to the high line, but can also, when it is executed in time, deflect an attack directed to the inside line. In the execution of the parry, the point must reach the opponent's inner elbow without exaggerated lifting of the hand.

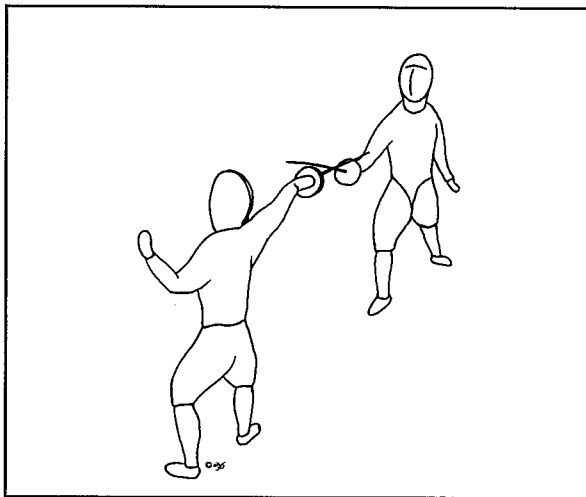
*Parry of octave*: is used when the fencer finds himself, by the circumstances of the bout with the point higher than the hand, to deflect an attack directed in the outside line and sometimes even in the low line. The position of the point in relation to the opponent's arm does not allow a direct hit. It is therefore useful to:

- a) Follow the parry with a bind destined to hit the inner elbow.
- b) Execute the parry with a half-lunge while directing the point to the thigh or the flank.

*Parry of counter sixte*: is executed starting from a position with the point higher than the hand and deflects the attack directed in the inside line. It has the same advantages and disadvantages as the parry of sixte.

*Parry of counter octave*: is executed starting from a position with the point lower than the hand and deflects attacks directed into the low line. It has the same advantages and disadvantages as the parry of octave.

The secondary parries are not to be ignored. Used well, they offer certain advantages and allow for a varied defence. Their technical execution does not allow the fencer to obtain sufficient covering and exposes him to remises and reprises. However, executed at the right time and at a correct distance, they often surprise the opponent.



*The classical parry of quarte*

*Parry of quarte:* is executed starting from a position with the point higher or lower than the hand and deflects the attack directed to the inside line. The arm and the blade form a broken line which obstructs precision and does not allow the blade to be taken with security.

*Parry of septime:* is rarely used in Epée because the blade can be avoided too easily. It is executed with minimal hand movement. The position of the point in relation to the opponent's arm does not allow for a direct hit. It is therefore, wise to follow the parry with a bind in order to reach the bend of the arm.

*Parries of counter quarte or septime:* seldom used in Epée, they can be effective when, in attempting to find the blade, the hand is caught up in the opponent's feints.

*Parries of seconde and counter of seconde:* much less employed in the electric weapon than in ordinary Epée, they are more authoritative than the parries of octave and counter octave. However, the position of the hand (in pronation) sometimes causes them to be very wide and does not allow for rapid ripostes.

*Parry with opposition* deflects the blade while offering the possibility of covering the advanced target and of immediately advancing the point into the opponent's attack. It allows for dominance of the opponent's blade and determination of, according to the depth of the offensive action, the suitable riposte. Thus, it can be:

- 1) Reinforced with a taking of the blade to avoid the remise or taken again when distance no longer allows the opponent's blade to be dominated.
- 2) Followed by an indirect riposte when the opponent reacts immediately to the parry and cannot execute an immediate remise.

*The parry executed as a beat* is not recommended in Epée for the following reasons:

- 1) It only deflects the blade momentarily and gives the opponent the possibility of continuing his action.
- 2) At the moment of the parry the opponent's point is much closer to the target than the target the parrier wishes to reach. This gives the attacker the time necessary and the possibility to bring the point in line during the riposte.

*Ceding parry:* as offensive actions to the body are nearly always developed by dominating the blade. The ceding parry is executed as in Foil and imperatively with a step forward. It has the following advantages:

- 1) "Breaks" the distance. The opponent's point passes the target sufficiently to prevent an immediate remise.
- 2) Executed with the point well in line, the attacker often throws himself accidentally onto the point.
- 3) Taken in close to the opponent with the arm brought back, it requires only a slight extension of the arm.

The parries of quarte and sixte can be followed by a croisé. The croisé in quarte to septime is employed by same handed fencers, that of sixte to octave by fencers of opposing hand. The technical execution of these two actions varies according to the tactical intention of the fencer and by the circumstances of the bout.

For left hander to right hander or vice versa, the parries of quarte and septime offer the same advantages as the parries of sixte and octave recommended for two same handed fencers. Their



effectiveness naturally depends on their technical execution. Defensive actions in Epée must also be as varied as possible, but they will never be really effective unless they are employed *at the correct distance*. The circumstances of the bout sometimes makes them difficult to execute and the mobility of Epée fencing requires them to be perfectly executed.

## V - FAULTS TO AVOID

- 1) *Overuse of the parry*: is found above all in foilists doing Epée. They use parries by reflex or through lack of confidence in counter-offensive actions. These fencers often uncover their targets and expose themselves to the *trompement*.
- 2) *Delayed execution of the parry*: the parrier is obliged to draw back the arm and becomes vulnerable to the dangers of the exaggerated use of short parries.
- 3) *Exaggerated use of parries deflecting the blade to the inside of the body*: this fault of foilists who, by reflex, limit their defensive to lateral and diagonal parries. They become exposed to remises or reprises in the high or low line.
- 4) *Incomplete supination of the hand in the parries of sixte and octave*: the point does not arrive in time on the target, or passes, often provoking an exaggerated elevation of the arm in sixte and a wide parry of octave.
- 5) *Insufficient covering*: caused by a bad position of the hand (incomplete supination) and often leads to double hits.
- 6) *Insufficient extension of the arm*: does not immediately close the line and allows the offensive action to continue.
- 7) *Lateral or vertical movements of the point*: the point is no longer an immediate danger for the opponent and there is a delay in aiming it towards the target during the progression of the offensive action.
- 8) *Exaggerated elevation or opposition*: often caused by bad hand position and renders the fencer vulnerable to reprises.

9) *Delayed retreat or no retreat at all*: distance is incorrect, the point misses the target and causes exaggerated lifting of the hand in order to maintain dominance of the blade.

10) *Leaving the blade before the end of the action*: increases the risk of remises.

## VI - GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

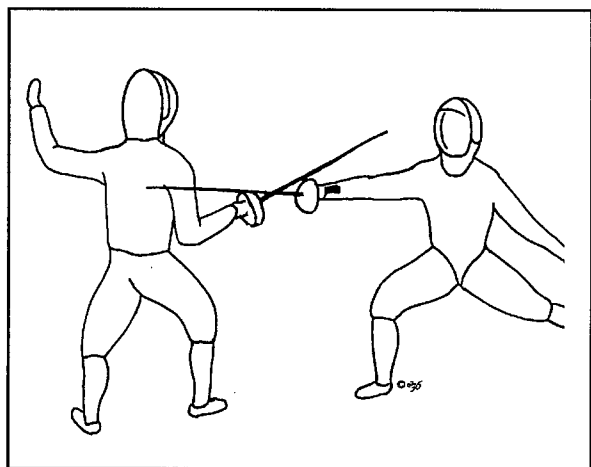
Each épéist has his own game, but it is rare to find a game that is absolutely complete. In non-electric Epée, simple parries had a considerable place. Electrification favours counter-offensive actions, and the game for many épéists is uniquely based on offensive and counter-offensive actions. Sometimes they attain a certain level due to natural abilities, but their incomplete game does not lead to a confirmation of their real potential. Instantaneous exploitation of a situation (timing) is one of their major qualities, which is dependent on physical fitness and steadiness of nerves at the right moment - the lack of which is very often the cause of sub-optimal performance.

Counter-offensive actions occupy a very important place in Epée. They derive from movements that are easily, or even instinctively executed. Parries require intense training sometimes over a long period. The difficulty in parrying correctly at the right moment, or even instinctively, together with a riposte either simultaneously or immediately, according to the circumstances of the bout, requires perfect technical and mechanical execution.

Distance is certainly the most important quality for good defensive actions in Epée. The choice of parry and its execution are conditional upon the distance: long for attacks to the forearm or arm, coordinated with a step back on attacks to the body; short for attacks with a flèche or with those coordinated with a step forward. The judicious use of the parry necessitates good footwork and perfect balance in order to deflect the blade and hit with a minimum of risk. In the high line the most common target for defensive actions is the opponent's interior elbow. This small target requires a degree of precision which can only be obtained through good hand position and the correct grip allowing the fingers to bring the point to the target with authority.

This principle of "*respecting the straight line*" recommended for offensive actions, is valid in

defence. Whichever parry or action that follows, the point must always take the shortest path towards the target.



*The parry of counter sixte with a step (Foil Type)*

## VII - TEACHING RECOMMENDATIONS

The fact that defence in Epée is most often combined with the riposte obliges the Master to take particular care regarding the technical principles of the grip, the on-guard position, footwork and offensive actions, without which the parry and riposte lose all correctness and precision. Right from the beginning the Master must get the pupil used to parrying and hitting at the exact distance and then to be able to vary his displacements. Thus, the Master gradually gives the pupil an appreciation of the length of the attack and leads him, according to the parry to:

- 1) Reach the closest target while deflecting the blade.
- 2) Hit without bending the blade
- 3) Maintain good covering.

To obtain perfect execution, the pupil must simultaneously move the rear foot during the extension of the sword arm. This coordinated action of the arm and the legs must be executed at the moment the Master's front foot starts to move, *without leaning the body forward* and while deflecting the opponent's blade with the forte of the blade and the guard.

To obtain maximum precision, complete supination of the hand, at least for the parries of sixte and octave, must be required. According to the pupil's wrist suppleness the Master can allow a certain reserve of supination in the on guard position, which still permits the pupil to obtain a blocked movement through a rotation of the hand as the arm is extending.

The complete closing of the threatened line is vital in Epée. The Master must give this all his attention and make sure that it is executed *during the extension* of the arm and correct the movement any time that:

- 1) The parry precedes the point, which makes it pass or land flat.
- 2) The point precedes the parry but does not prevent the attack from landing, often resulting in a double hit.

To obtain good execution of the simple parry and to simulate the realities of a bout the Master must:

### A - Present his offensive action with:

- 1) The arm completely *extended*.
- 2) The point aimed in the *exact direction* of the target.
- 3) The hand placed according to the covering movements to be respected.

### B - Lunge (Attack)

- 1) *Trying to hit* the target aimed at.
- 2) Blocking the lunge.
- 3) Returning *forwards* to guard *after the pupil's action*.

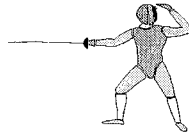
The pupil himself must deflect the offensive action and open up access to the target. The Master must therefore give the *required intensity* to his action.

When the Master executes the offensive action more deeply, he applies the teaching principles dealt with in Foil. The defence and riposte are executed as a function of distance and follow the same rules as in Foil.

## VIII - RIPOSTES AND COUNTER RI-POSTES

The execution of the riposte as it is done in Epée gives specific character to the counter-riposte when it is used in the bout. In extremely rare cases, it resembles a *counter-opposition* that is naturally determined by the opponent's riposte.

The distance that the point of the weapon must travel after the short parry cannot prevent the remise. However, according to the distance and the circumstances of the bout, the speed of the riposte allows a hit to land. In general, it is useless to parry an opponent's riposte and preferable to do a remise or reprise.



## CHAPTER X

# FEINTS OF THE ATTACK, ATTACKS ON THE WITHDRAWAL OF THE ARM AND COMPOUND ATTACKS

### I - DEFINITIONS

#### A - Feint of the attack

Refer to the corresponding section of Chapter IV in Foil Workbook

#### B - Attack on withdrawal of the arm

The attack is described as being *on withdrawal of the arm* when the aim is to reach one of the targets uncovered by the withdrawal of the opponent's arm which is provoked by a feint.

#### C - Compound attacks

#### D - Trompements

Refer to the corresponding sections of Chapter IV in Foil Workbook

2) *Attacks to the advanced target*: arm, knee and front leg

3) *Attacks to the body*.

#### C - Compound attacks

In general, compound attacks with only one feint are intended to hit the body. Sometimes they consist of two feints if they have been well judged.

1) *Compound Attack with one feint*:

- to hand, wrist and forearm
- to arm, knee and front leg
- to the body

2) *Compound attack with two feints*:

- to the body

### II - CLASSIFICATIONS

#### A - Feints

Feints must be sufficiently menacing to provoke a reaction from the opponent. They are determined by the different targets:

- 1) *Feints to the advanced target*: to provoke a withdrawal of the arm or a parry
- 2) *Feints to the body*: to provoke one or several parries.

#### B - Attacks on the withdrawal of the arm

- 1) *Attacks to the advanced target*: hand, wrist and forearm

### III - TECHNICAL STUDY

#### A - Description

Feints have the same technical execution as the attacks, for which they must be mistaken (refer to chapter on simple attacks). However, in order to limit the risk of counter-offensive actions, the most frequently used are:

- 1) *Simple feints of the attack*:
  - a) Straight hit
  - b) By disengagement

2) *Simple feints of the attack into the opponent's preparation:*

- a) Derobement of the engagement
- b) Derobement of the change of engagement (infrequent)

3) *Feints of the attack composed of two feints:*

- a) Feint high-low
- b) Feint low-high
- c) Feint of the doublement

## **B - Execution**

### **1) Attacks on the Withdrawal of the Arm**

a) *Attacks to the advanced target:* hand, wrist, forearm; arm, knee, front leg.

The feint is directed towards one of the four targets of the opponent's arm with the help of a half-lunge. The attack is carried through by extending the lunge to one of the targets exposed by the withdrawal of the hand and point.

b) *Attacks to the body:*

The deeper feint is directed to the opponent's forearm with the aid of a half lunge or a step forward. The attack is carried out either by a redoublement, or with a fleche to the most favourable target.

### **2) Compound Attacks**

a) *Compound attacks with one feint to the advanced target:* hand, wrist and forearm.

The feint is directed towards one of the four targets of the opponent's wrist, with a half lunge. The final part of the attack is carried out by lengthening the lunge to the desired target while deceiving the opponent's parry, with or without blade contact.

b) *Compound attacks with one feint to the advanced target:* arm, knee and front leg.

The feint is directed to one of the four targets of the forearm with a half-lunge. The final part of the attack is carried through to the desired target by lengthening the lunge while deceiving the opponent's parry, with or without blade contact.

### **3) Compound Attacks with One Feint to the Body**

The feint is directed to one of the four targets of the forearm at the height of the inner elbow by a half lunge or a step forward. The final part of the attack is carried out by a redoublement or with a fleche, while deceiving the parry, with or without blade contact, to the most favourable target.

### **4) Compound Attack with Two Feints to the Body**

The first feint is directed to one of the four targets of the forearm, the second is deeper and at least at the height of the opponent's arm.

These two feints are executed with successive steps forward and the final part of the attack is carried through with a lunge or fleche towards the most favourable target while deceiving the last parry, with or without blade contact.

## **C - Technical Principles**

### **1) Attacks on withdrawal of the arm**

Certain technical principles are to be respected in the execution of attacks on the withdrawal of the hand:

a) The feint must possess all the qualities of a simple attack (precision, speed, timing) in order to provoke the withdrawal of the hand.

b) The feint must be deep enough (10-20 cm behind the opponent's guard).

c) The feint must be directed towards the target that least advantages the counter-attack, taking into consideration the distance of the opponent's point in the position it momentarily occupies, in order to profit from the lack of covering and provoke the expected defensive reflex.

d) The final part of the attack is executed with a lunge when it is destined to hit on the advanced target, or with a flèche when it is destined for the body.

e) The chosen target must, in principal, be the furthest from the opponent's point in order to be safe from a delayed counter-attack.

For example: Feint above the hand, the opponent pulls back the hand and lowers the point, lengthen the lunge by carrying the attack to the top of the forearm or to the knee.

## 2) COMPOUND ATTACKS

In addition to the principles given for attacks on withdrawal of the arm, feints of attacks which have the aim of provoking a parry need certain other technical conditions that are indispensable for their success.

a) The feint must be deeper, while respecting the principles of covering, in order to provoke the reflex of the parry and not that of the counter-attack.

b) The hand must be in complete supination in order to deceive the blade as vertically as possible with the point staying in line with the target during the entire action.

c) The *trompement* must be executed as often as possible with blade contact, having the aim of:

- acting on the tactile sensitivity of the opponent by giving him the impression of the success of his parry.
- avoiding the trap of "the false parry" immediately followed by a counter-attack to the advanced target in the same line.

d) When it is directed towards the body, the final part of the compound attack must reach the closest target and as often as possible the top or outside targets, which are the only two lines that deflect the opponent's blade to the outside.

e) When the attack is composed of two feints, the second must progress sufficiently in depth and speed to stop the opponent from counter-attacking and thus oblige him to stay on the defensive.

## IV - TACTICAL STUDY

In *Épée*, the choice of target at which to direct the feint is extremely important. Obviously it is indispensable to judge with certitude the opponent's reflexes, but one must also be able to provoke and then exploit them, while taking the minimum of risks. The withdrawal of the arm is a reflex that is easily exploited. The attack which is developed without a pause maintains the fraction of a second advance on the counter-attack which can only be executed after the withdrawal of the arm.

The compound attack is exposed to more risks, especially when it is destined to hit the body. The fencer must judge with certitude that the parry that he is to provoke will be a *short parry*. The short parry is thus named when it starts with the arm 3/4 extended (on-guard position) to finish in a Foil parry position (arm shortened, point higher or lower than the hand). If executed in this manner, the parry cannot meet the attack and deflect it early enough and therefore allows the *trompement* with the minimum of risk, as the point is considerably further away.

When the compound attack or the attack on the withdrawal of the arm is intended to hit the advanced target, it must be carried through by lunging or lengthening the lunge for the following reasons:

- 1 - The distance of these targets does not justify the use of the flèche
- 2 - Great precision is necessary for hitting small and very mobile targets.

Certain fencers use the flèche to reach the arm or the thigh, but generally they are short fencers. It is preferable, whenever possible, to use the development as this maintains perfect balance and if the attack fails, leaves open the possibility of executing immediate counter-offensive actions.

To reach the body, the flèche is recommended. The time taken in its execution is shorter than that of the attack with step forward and lunge or by redoublement. Used judiciously, it benefits from the element of surprise without having to worry about great precision and, even if it fails, it allows either a remise or reprise to be executed.

Attacks that finish on the leg or foot are not to be neglected. They must be prepared with effective feints that exploit the opponent's faults in balance, and be carried out with instantaneous exploitation and great speed. In general, the feint must provoke:

- 1 - withdrawal of the arm upwards
- 2 - a short parry in the high line.

For two opposite handed fencers, the execution of feints is subject to the same principles. The position of the blades naturally leads fencers to more frequently feint to the outside advanced target. The most common compound attacks are the reverse to those for same handed fencers and it is always preferable to employ those that deflect the opponent's blade to the exterior in the parry, which reduces the risk of a double hit.

If a right-handed fencer rarely uses the parries of quarte and counter-quarte, the left hander uses them quite often. They allow him to dominate the blade but make him vulnerable to compound attacks to the outside advanced target or to the body with a flèche.

## V - FAULTS TO AVOID

Only the faults related to attacks on withdrawal of the arm and compound attacks are discussed in this section. The faults discussed in the corresponding chapter in Foil and the chapter in Epée on "simple attacks" are applicable.

- 1) *Lack of covering in the feint*: induces the opponent to counter-attack instead of parrying or withdrawing the arm.
- 2) *Lack of precision in the feint*: the point does not threaten the chosen target with sufficient realism to provoke the expected reaction.
- 3) *Insufficient acceleration in the final part of the attack*: gives the opponent the chance of regaining the counter-offensive.
- 4) *Bad positioning of the weapon arm and hand in the final part of the attack*: reduces the speed and precision of the trompement. The attack lacks effectiveness.

## VI - APPROPRIATE DEFENSIVE ACTIONS

### A - Attacks on the withdrawal of the hand

If the attack is destined to hit:

- 1) *On the hand, wrist, forearm or arm*: counter-attack with angulation to the opponent's advanced target together with moving out of distance of the attack.

- 2) *On the knee, leg, foot*: counter-attack classically with a withdrawal of the front leg to remove this target.
- 3) *On the arm, body*: successive parries and riposte with extension of the arm in the line in which the attack finishes.

If the fencer judges or provokes this kind of attack, he must counter-attack by extending the arm and stepping back in order to maintain distance while seeking to hit the opponent as close as possible to the guard as soon as the feint begins.

### B - Compound Attacks

If the attack is destined to hit:

- 1) *On the hand, wrist, forearm, foot, leg or knee*: counter attack classically after a simple parry as close as possible to the opponent's guard, with a step backwards.
- 2) *On the forearm or thigh*: immediately after the first parry take a long simple parry in the line in which the attack finishes and direct the point towards the nearest target.
- 3) *On the body*: do a short successive parry in the line in which the attack ends and riposte to the most favourable target according to the distance separating the fencers.

If the fencer anticipates or provokes a compound attack:

- 1) *To the advanced target* (hand, wrist, forearm, knee, leg or foot). Take a long simple parry in the direction of the opponent's arm. This forms a counter-attack by giving the opponent the illusion of having provoked the desired reflex, who then continues his attack.
- 2) *To the advanced target* (arm, thigh)
  - a) Same defensive action as above
  - b) Execute a simulated parry and counter-attack with angulation as close as possible to the opponent's guard.
  - c) Take a successive parry in the line in which the attack finishes by beginning to extend the arm in the first parry.

3) *To the body:*

- a) Same defensive actions as above taking into consideration the distance.
- b) Execute a fencing time gain of interception or opposition.

## VII - GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

It is rare to find épéeists who possess a complete game of varied actions equal in defence and offence. It is common to meet fencers for whom the defensive game is uniquely based on counter-offensive actions or parries. It is easy to exploit the opponent's parries as it allows a variety of compound attacks to be used. On the other hand, it is more difficult to attack an opponent who has a tendency to counter-attack, as he can equally withdraw the target when a feint is very threatening, before executing the counter-attack. It is therefore, indispensable to judge with certitude the opponent's reflex action and to provoke the withdrawal and not the extension of the arm.

In offensive actions on the withdrawal of the arm, the point must go straight to the chosen target without a pause, thus profiting from the backward movement of the opponent's point. Even a delayed counter-attack can be extremely rapid since it is launched by the extension of the arm only. It is therefore, indispensable to be a fraction of a second ahead, which procures the withdrawal of the opponent's arm. The action of the legs is very important. It is preferable to execute the feint with a half-lunge with only the heel of the front foot coming in contact with the ground and then immediately extending the lunge. This procedure allows for a gain in time, as it eliminates the time taken for the ball of the front foot to land and lift when the lunge is lengthened.

Trompements of the blade executed with blade contact require good tactile sensitivity and skill (fingerwork). It is difficult to deliberately allow the opponent to contact the blade when he executes a parry and prevent him from dominating it. Trompements on blade contact are very effective since for a fraction of a second the opponent believes he is controlling the blade and continues his attack without any suspicion.

The final trompement is sometimes executed with angulation when the compound attack is destined for the extreme advanced target. The most

favourable targets for these attacks are under the hand and outside the hand on a left hander.

When the trompement is delayed, the compound attack can be confused with a simple attack followed by a reprise. To retain their effectiveness, compound attacks with or without blade contact must reach the target before the front foot lands on the ground.

## VIII-TEACHING RECOMMENDATIONS

The teaching recommendations outlined in the chapter "simple attacks" are valid, in particular, for the technical execution of feints which begin in a similar manner.

When the Master begins teaching attacks on the withdrawal of the arm, he must attach particular importance to the pupil's balance while taking into account the difficulties in obtaining good precision and appreciation of distance. The Master should follow the progression below:

- 1) Withdraw the target indicating to the pupil beforehand the action he is going to execute, which makes the action easier.
- 2) Withdraw the target by varying his movement, which requires the pupil to observe carefully and so ensure that the action is executed without hesitation.

Certain targets are difficult to reach due to the reduced surface area available to hit and to their mobility. The concern about the position of the point at the moment of the withdrawal of the arm, including that of performing the action without hesitation, often makes these actions spontaneous, but for which the technical execution must also be perfect.

To have the pupil execute attacks on the withdrawal of the arm the Master must:

- 1) Start from a position with the weapon arm slightly more extended than the classical position.
- 2) Not withdraw the target until the last moment and without hesitation.
- 3) Require that the feint be executed with covering and be precise and sufficiently threatening.
- 4) Require maximum final acceleration.

In the teaching of compound attacks, the Master must:



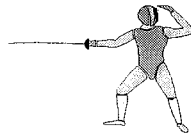
- 1) State the parry he will use.
- 2) Choose different targets, taking into account the difficulty in reaching them.
- 3) Require the trompement without blade contact.
- 4) Then require the trompement with blade contact.

To have the pupil execute compound attacks the Master must:

- 1) Start from a classical position of the weapon arm.

- 2) Take the parry as for Foil.
- 3) Expose the target according to the pupil's level of skill (precision to the advanced target).
- 4) Require that the feint be covered, precise and sufficiently deep.
- 5) Give the maximum realism to the parry.

To have the pupil execute compound attacks to the body, the Master must step back immediately after the parry in order to maintain distance and to be able to chase the pupil's blade.



## CHAPTER XI

# SUCCESSIVE PARRIES

### I - DEFINITIONS

*A - Successive Parry*

*B - Feint of the parry*

*Refer to the corresponding section of Chapter XV in Foil Workbook.*

### II - CLASSIFICATION

The classification of successive parries is determined by the form of the defence; whether the successive parry is premeditated or the result of a defensive reflex.

*When premeditated* it maintains the classical character of the long, simple parry in which the parry and riposte together make up only one fencing time.

*As a reflex* it is identified with the parry in Foil. The épéist who is surprised by the opponent's deep feint has no choice but to take one or several short parries.

The two varieties of defence are classified as:

- long successive parry
- simple successive parry.

### III - TECHNICAL STUDY

The basic technical principles of the parry have already been explained in the corresponding chapters on simple parries in Epée. They are therefore applicable until the last action of the long successive parry.

In this chapter only the technical principles related to the combination of two or several long parries are discussed.

#### A - Basic technical principles

- 1) Maintain the arm extended and supple by keeping a slight reserve after the first parry so as to be able to progress further in the execution of the following parry.
- 2) Respect this same technical principle for each

parry of the defensive action, when it consists of several parries that have also been deceived.

- 3) Maintain the point in line during the entire execution of the successive defensive action.
- 4) Only execute the complete opposition on the last parry with the side of the blade.

No technical principle for the execution of short successive parries is defined. As these parries are only the result of uncontrolled defensive reflexes, at least in the beginning, it is difficult to subject them to rigid technical principles.

As much as possible they must respect the principles of successive parries in Foil with which they can be identified. The parries must compensate for the handicap created by the weight of the weapon which in turn influences the size of the defensive action.

Two technical principles concerning the riposte linked with the parry, are to be respected:

- 1) Maintain the blade in the parry until the opponent's point has passed the target, and only then riposte indirectly by extending the arm as much as necessary, according to the distance that separates the two fencers.
- 2) Riposte with a taking of the blade, with the arm more or less extended, when the last parry coordinated with a step back makes this possible.

## **B - Description of the Parries**

### **1) Long Successive Parry**

Consists of a succession of a maximum of two or three parries. The types of parries are:

#### *a) Starting from the position of octave*

- Sixte and counter sixte, hitting on the inner elbow
- Counter of octave and sixte, hitting on the inner elbow
- Sixte and counter-sixte and octave, quarte bind to the arm.

#### *b) Starting from the sixte position*

- Two counter of sixte, hitting on the inner elbow
- Counter-sixte and octave, quarte bind to the arm
- Counter-sixte and octave and sixte, hitting on the inner elbow.

These defensive actions are composed of several parries, the description of which are outlined in the chapter on simple parries in Epée.

### **2) Short Successive Parry**

Consists of a succession of two or three parries taken with a retraction of the arm. The composition of the defensive action is virtually the same as that given above for long successive parries.

The description of each one of the parries for these successive defensive actions has also been described in the chapter on successive parries in Foil.

The execution of the riposte which must follow these parries is generally done with a bent arm. The fingers and the hand react to position the point in the direction of the desired target which continues forward when the opponent's compound attack is executed with a flèche.

## **IV - TACTICAL STUDY**

Few fencers use defensive actions with a defined tactical aim. If the range of actions that are possible is less vast than for offensive actions, it offers, while

economising on use of one's physical resources, the occasion to provoke the opponent's offensive action and to exploit this in several ways:

### **A - Feint of the successive parry**

This tactic consists of following the opponent's point in the lines in which it is presented, while maintaining correct distance in order to avoid being hit. It is rare to find épéists who are not tempted and decide to attack with a compound action.

Three procedures executed with second intention can lead to the failure of the opponent's offensive action that has been provoked:

#### **1) False Parry**

This tactic consists of two phases. The first consists of taking a successive parry (two counters of sixte for example), to induce the opponent to do a compound attack. At the anticipated moment of the opponent's attack, the second phase consists of a simple parry executed with an extended arm, point in the direction of the forearm. This type of counter-offensive action allows the target to be reached before the opponent has finished the second movement of his compound attack.

#### **2) Counter-attack With Angulation**

This tactic, after having provoked the opponent's compound offensive action, consists of luring with the first parry (preferably a counter or semi-circular parry), then of placing the point on the path through which the opponent's hand must pass. It is important to hit close to the guard, maintain correct distance and keep the arm bent, thus forming an angle so that the opponent's point cannot reach the target and preventing a double hit.

#### **3) Long Successive Parry**

When this defensive action is premeditated, the parrier must force himself, during the execution of the parry, to respect all the technical principles for effectiveness. Any faults in distance or covering will provoke a double hit or give the opponent the possibility of undertaking a reprise or remise.

However of the tactics described above, this is certainly the most secure because of the fewer risks taken during its execution. It is less subject to specific qualities of speed (second case) and skill (first case) that are indispensable to the success of these defensive actions.

## **B - Short successive parry**

This defensive action is infrequently used and only with second intention. It requires enormous self control to deflect the attack at the last moment without stepping back, to prevent any attempted remise by continuation of the attack.

Long competitive experience allows a short fencer (who are becoming more and more uncommon), to effectively exploit this tactic thanks to their shorter upper limbs (weapon arm) which makes them able to riposte at an extremely reduced distance.

It is recommended to maintain contact with the opponent's blade as long as possible by accentuating the final movement of the parry by a movement identical to that of a "high" septime.

## **V - FAULTS TO AVOID**

The faults mentioned in the chapters corresponding to the simple parries in Epée as well as those cited for the successive parries in Foil remain valid according to the defensive actions employed. The only ones discussed here relate to the combination of several parries.

- 1) *Wrist movement in the long parry*: originates from bad execution of the first parry. The guard of the weapon no longer protects the forearm during the defensive action.
- 2) *Exaggerated size of the long successive parry*: originates from not blocking the first deceived parry. The point is no longer in line and loses time reaching the target.
- 3) *Bad appreciation of distance*: originates from a lack of co-ordination of each parry with a step back, the defender risks hitting flat or passing.
- 4) *Prematurely leaving the opponent's blade in the short successive parry*: originates from bad feeling for the blade, allowing the opponent the option of remising on the indirect riposte.

## **VI - GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS**

It is sometimes difficult to induce an épéist to vary his defensive movements. He creates his own defensive game from which he has difficulty changing, even if the circumstances of the bout and the variety in the opponent's game require this. Quite

often defence is only used to avoid the most threatening of the opponent's offensive actions. Since the initiative remains with the attacker, the pressured defender has to rely on reflex movements that are exploitable by an opponent who discovers them by forcing or putting on pressure.

Using successive parries with the right timing, either in defence, or as counter-offensive actions to counter the opponent's offensive actions which can no longer be developed with certitude, seems to be the ideal. However, to use this tactic with success, one must not be dominated by the opponent's game beforehand.

It is recommended to use:

- 1) Long successive parries on compound attacks executed with a lunge or step forward lunge, which give the defender the possibility of maintaining correct hitting distance (to the inner elbow), with the help of appropriate small steps back.
- 2) Short successive parries on compound attacks developed with a flèche. The immediate gain in distance does not give the defender the opportunity to reach the arm with the riposte, and any attempt at delaying the step back, again puts the attacker in an ideal position to attempt remises or reprises.

For same handed fencers, it is recommended to finish the final part of the short parry in a high septime position. Between opposite handed fencers execute the final part of the successive parry in quarte, elbow to the body. When judiciously employed on compound attacks with flèche, this successive parry benefits from the same tactical advantages as the "high sixte" from the instant that the parrier maintains the opponent's blade without stepping back until the point has passed the body.

## **VII - TEACHING RECOMMENDATIONS**

Only épéists with excellent technique use successive parries judiciously. In the training of an épéist, two distinct cases are to be envisaged:

### **A - Long Successive Parries**

These can be taught relatively early - this classical defence is just an extension of the study of simple parries.

However, very early on the Master must tackle the reflex execution of these parries, asking the student to parry and riposte in one fencing time on the simple attack or to catch the blade with the aid of a second parry when the first is deceived.

The student thus learns to maintain his point in line in the execution of the successive parry and to constantly develop his feeling for the blade. The Master can make the exercise easier, if that is deemed necessary, by executing the compound attack with a step forward and lunge.

This should be carried out in the outside lines where the last parry gives maximum security. Alternatively, the student should finish his simple or successive parry with a taking of the blade hitting on the arm.

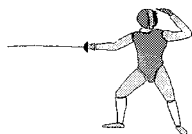
### **B - Short successive parries**

Short successive parries, if used too often, risk leading to faults with obvious consequences.

This study is particularly tiring for the Master who, in order to respect the exact form of this defensive action, must attack the pupil with a flèche or with a step forward and flèche.

The Master can pair up his students and ask them to practice these actions under bouting conditions. For these exercises, the Master confines himself to a role identical to that which he holds when he gives a group lesson.

All the teaching recommendations given in the chapters corresponding to simple parries as well as those developed in the chapter on successive parries in Foil are applicable as long as they do not contradict the specific study of successive parries.



## **CHAPTER XII**

# **ATTACKS ON THE BLADE**

### **I - DEFINITION**

### **II - CLASSIFICATION**

Refer to the corresponding section of Chapter XVI in Foil Workbook.

## **THE PRESSURE**

### **I - DEFINITION**

*Refer to the corresponding section of Chapter XVI in Foil Workbook.*

### **II - TECHNICAL STUDY**

The corresponding paragraph discussing the pressure in Foil is applicable, however differences regarding the distance that separates the fencers or when the attack is destined to hit the advanced target exist.

-It requires an almost complete extension of the arm to contact the opponent's blade.

-It can be executed with the last third of blade due to its rigidity.

### **III - TACTICAL STUDY**

The tactical use of the pressure in Epée has the same aims as in Foil, but the extension of the target area including the whole body and the use of counter-offensive actions requires, as for offensive actions, the consideration of the following:

#### **1 - The pressure preceding offensive actions to the body**

The circumstances of the bout or knowledge of the opponent's game sometimes allows the pressure to be used to develop offensive actions to the body. In these cases, it is executed as in Foil, but it must provoke, with certitude, the

expected reaction in order to prevent an immediate counter-offensive action to the advanced target. The pressure can be followed by direct or indirect attacks to reach the target before the opponent's blade returns into line. Compound attacks are more dangerous and they must not, in any case, consist of more than one feint and only be employed after having judged the opponent's parries with certainty.

#### **2 - The pressure preceding the offensive action to the advanced target**

##### *a) Provoke a reaction*

As in Foil the pressure is quick, precise and provokes the same reaction that momentarily exposes the line opposite to that in which it is executed. It must be followed by rapid indirect attacks. The attack can be directed to the thigh or the knee when the reaction has exaggeratedly led the opponent's point upwards.

##### *b) Expose a target*

The pressure must be more accentuated and firmer. It has the aim of exposing a target and is followed by very fast direct attacks the execution of which is closely linked to that of the pressure.

# THE BEAT

## I - DEFINITION

*Refer to the corresponding section of Chapter XVI in Foil Workbook.*

## II - TECHNICAL STUDY

The beat is executed following the same technical principles as in Foil. However, the form of the attack imposes some modifications to this execution and one must consider:

### 1 - The beat preceding a classical attack

In this case the beat requires:

a) A more pronounced extension of the weapon arm to meet the second (middle) third of the opponent's blade.

b) A more accentuated rotation of the wrist and an oblique displacement of the blade whilst searching for sufficient perpendicularity of the blades. The hand immediately returns to its supinated position during the end of the extension of the arm.

### 2 - The beat preceding an angulated attack

The perpendicularity of this attack, which is a flicked hit, does not respect the principle of the straight line, which means that the execution of the beat is with:

a) increased bending of the sword arm

b) rotation of the wrist according to the target aimed at

c) the point of contact of the blades similar to that for the classical attack and situated according to the distance separating the fencers; at the beginning of the last third of the blade since the rigidity of the blade allows this.

## III - TACTICAL STUDY

The tactical study of the beat is developed following the same considerations as the tactical study for the pressure.

### 1 - The beat preceding an offensive action to the body

The attack to the body prepared by a beat has very little chance of succeeding. While the pressure can provoke defensive reactions, the beat always creates counter-attacking reactions. The counter-attack to the advanced target presents too many dangers and does not allow for hitting a target as far away as the body. The circumstances of the bout, the exploitation of an error in distance, or spontaneity (sometimes reckless) in some exceptional cases, allow the body to be reached. It is however, recommended to use the flèche.

### 2 - The beat preceding any offensive action to the advanced target

#### A - Preceding Classical Attacks

The beat can have the aim of:

#### 1) *Exposing the desired target:*

The beat must deflect the opponent's point from its position and move it as far as possible from the line in which the attack must be carried out, expose the wrist and the forearm, and allow for very rapid direct attacks. The beat must be powerful and sharp, executed with a minimum displacement of the hand to sufficiently shock the opponent's hand and reduce the speed and precision of the counter-offensive action.

#### 2) *Provoke a reaction to expose the desired target:*

Very often this beat is executed in the line where the opponent's blade is positioned, either through habit or intentionally. The reaction can, in either case, bring it back in this line more than is necessary. The beat is executed lightly with the fingers followed by very rapid indirect attacks. It does not always immediately provoke a counter-offensive action.

## B - Preceding Attacks With Angulation

Attacks with angulation, which completely expose the advanced targets and owe their success to instantaneous exploitation and speed, are often prepared by a beat which does not hamper their

speed of execution. They do not prevent counter-offensive actions, but can delay them and trick the opponent by fixing his hand and point. The beat is executed with lightness, and it can be repeated before being followed by angulated attacks launched with the greatest speed possible.

# THE FROISSEMENT

## I - DEFINITION

## II - TECHNICAL STUDY

Refer to the corresponding sections of Chapter XVI in Foil Workbook.

## III - TACTICAL STUDY

The tactical use of the froissement is infrequent for the following reasons:

- The position of the blade and the opponent's point, often lower or at the height of the hand, obliges the fencer to exaggeratedly uncover himself to be able to contact the opponent's blade.
- The distance that separates the fencers makes the fencer executing the froissement vulnerable to derobements.

The froissement can however be used:

-On an opponent who stays on guard, with the arm extended or over extended after all attempts at offensive actions have failed. In this case, the strength of the opponent's hand is reduced and he is obliged to withdraw his blade.

-On an opponent in a shortened guard position and having the point higher than the hand, but this occurs rarely. In this case, the froissement must be followed by a direct attack preferably with a flèche.

Generally speaking, the froissement offers few advantages. It does not allow for precise actions and is easily deceived.

# GENERALITIES ON ATTACKS ON THE BLADE

## 1 - TECHNICAL STUDY

The generalities discussed in the Foil Workbook are valid, however, two points are to be emphasised for the execution of the beat when it is followed by an attack with angulation.

- 1) It is essential to not be uncovered when executing it.
- 2) To carry out the movement without the slightest withdrawal of the hand and point in order to reduce the risk of counter-offensive actions.

For the duration of an offensive action, the possibility of a counter-offensive action in time is a constant worry. It is important to minimise the time taken to perform offensive actions and to perfectly coordinate movements of the legs (distance, displacements) and those of the hand. In the execution of attacks on the blade, one must consider:

- 1) **Middle distance** (length of the lunge)
  - a) *The pressure*: the engagement that precedes a pressure is very fleeting and it is executed simultaneously with the start of the movement of the front foot.



b) *The beat*: when the beat precedes a classical direct attack, it is executed during the lunge. The arm catches up its delay by extending completely, before the front foot lands on the ground. In an angulated attack, it is executed before the front foot starts to move, which is carried forward only to gain distance.

## 2) Long distance (Step lunge)

a) *The pressure*: is executed simultaneously with the landing of the rear foot on the ground and the start of the movement of the front foot in the lunge.

b) *The beat*: is executed as for the pressure on the landing of the rear foot. Angulated attacks are only executed from middle distance.

## II - TACTICAL STUDY

Attacks to the body present too much danger to be executed without caution. They are used with second intention and attacks on the blade are excellent ways of preparing a counter-offensive situation for the opponent that can be exploited with success. Attacks to the advanced target reinforced by attacks on the blade can be carried out with the intention of hitting, but they can also be used to provoke a counter-offensive action. In this case they contain a certain reserve, but have sufficient realism to provoke reflex actions from the opponent. It is recommended to use them with step forward and with all the necessary precautions (see feints of the attack).

Simulated beats or froissements called “false beats” or “false froissements” offer the following tactical possibilities:

- 1) Executed in a sufficiently large fashion or with reduced speed, they are instinctively derobed by the opponent and allow:
  - a) Catching the opponent’s blade (counter-time)
  - b) Executing an angulated action to the advanced target, as close as possible to the guard (counter stop hit).
- 2) If the fencer repeatedly executes the beat or the froissement it can appear like a reflex action, and at the moment when the fencer senses the opponent’s intention to deceive the blade, they

can be simulated and then changed into a rapid direct attack to the advanced target (the opponent deceives an attack on the blade that did not take place).

## III - FAULTS TO AVOID

The faults discussed in this chapter are specific to Epée.

- 1) *The attack not immediately following the attack on the blade*: the fraction of a second separating the offensive action from the attack on the blade allows the counter offensive action to gain a fencing time.
- 2) *Displacement of the hand in the execution of the beat*: exposes the wrist and sometimes the forearm and facilitates the counter-offensive action by derobement.
- 3) *Not blocking the beat*: results in loss of time and precision for the attack and facilitates derobements.
- 4) *Weapon arm over extended when the beat precedes the angulated attack*: the flicked hit sometimes lacks speed and obliges the fencer to withdraw the arm resulting in a lack of immediacy which facilitates counter-offensive actions.
- 5) *Shortened position of the weapon arm*: in particular for the pressure, this arm position does not allow the fencer to act on the right part of the opponent’s blade, exposes the forearm and increases the execution time of the offensive action during which a counter-offensive action is possible.

## IV - SPECIFIC DEFENSIVE ACTIONS FOR ATTACKS ON THE BLADE

In this section only the methods of defence in relation to attacks on the blade will be discussed, and not those related to the attacks that may follow them.

### A - Defensive actions on attacks to the body

- 1) *Preceded by a pressure*
  - a) As a reflex:
    - parry the attack as in Foil
    - counter-attack to the forearm or arm

- b) Premeditated:
- do not react on the pressure, counter attack as close as possible to the opponent's guard with a step back.
  - derobe the engagement with or without blade contact and hit the wrist or forearm.

2) *Preceded by a beat:*

- a) As a reflex:
- parry the attack as in Foil
  - counter-attack to the forearm or arm as close as possible to the opponent's guard, by opposing in the threatened line.

**B - Defensive actions on attacks to the advanced targets**

1) *Preceded by the pressure:*

- a) As a reflex:
- counter attack as near as possible to the opponent's guard with opposition in the threatened line.
- b) Premeditated:
- derobe the engagement which precedes the pressure, with or without contact, and hit as near as possible to the guard and with a step back.

2) *Preceded by a beat:*

- a) As a reflex
- counter-attack as near as possible to the opponent's guard, opposing in the line being threatened.
- b) Premeditated:
- derobe the beat without contact, hit to the body by half lunge, derobe the beat with a step back, hit as near as possible to the guard.
  - derobe the beat with or without blade contact and counter-attack with a step back.

3) *Preceded by a beat and executed with angulation:*

- a) As a reflex:
- counter-attack to the exposed advanced targets with a step back.

b) Premeditated

- counter-attack, with a half lunge, on the exposed advanced targets at the instant of the beat, by resisting it.
- adopt a shortened on-guard position to spoil the execution.

**V - GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS**

Attacks on the blade followed by offensive actions to the body must not be completely eliminated because of the following reasons. It is strongly suggested that they not be used on fencers whose reflex to counter-attack is instantaneous and precise to the advanced target. On the other hand, they can be used on fencers who have been formed and who have the "hand" of a foilist which leads them to react or parry when the attack penetrates beyond the advanced target.

The constant worry of the épéist resides in the duration of his actions. This means he must coordinate the attack on the blade with displacements and the offensive action he wants to develop in such a way that the counter-offensive action cannot profit from any sort of fault that may open up a way to the target. All this must occur in an extremely short fencing time, as the apparatus is regulated to react only between 1/20th and 1/25th of a second.

The execution of the attack on the blade must be perfect so as not to spoil or reduce any of the precision that is indispensable to the hit, which must reach a target that is often very small and that is only accessible for a very short instant. Attacks on the blade are also used to help provoke counter-offensive actions upon which the fencer can develop the offensive action. They must be developed with the same precision and speed in order to give conviction to the hit.

Between opposite handed fencers, attacks on the blade are easier to execute. The two blades are often in the same plane, which considerably

limits movements of the point while giving them considerable authority. They allow for the efficient preparation of offensive-actions to the exterior of the advanced target, to the knee, thigh or front leg.

In *Epée*, the pressure does not lead to provoking a change of engagement as it does in *Foil*, as it needs a much longer time and is easily exploitable by the opponent. It is also not followed by compound attacks to the advanced targets as the point is not sufficiently deep to provoke a parry. The reaction that is provoked is very brief and is always followed by a counter-offensive action.

## VI - TEACHING RECOMMENDATIONS

The general teaching recommendations given in *Foil* as well as the execution of attacks on the blade preceding offensive actions to the body remain valid. Attacks to the advanced target that demand speed and precision must obtain, in part, their success from the attacks on the blade that precede them, which requires special study.

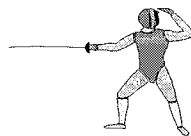
In addition to the timing and opportunism that is indispensable for executing attacks on the blade, it is naturally necessary that the pupil already possesses good precision, fingerwork and a maximum speed of extension of the arm. The Master must present the blade in such a manner that the pupil can limit his blade and hand movement, and teach him the most advantageous attacks on the blade for the various positions of the opponent's blade. He must require good covering during and after the attack on the blade. If it is necessary he counter-attacks to correct a fault in execution. The reaction provoked by the pupil's attack on the

Master's blade must not be a reaction of a fixed rule of action. The Master must react logically *at the desired moment* when the attack on the blade occurs, and *not before* the blade contact. The size of the Master's reaction is variable and as the pupil progresses he must reduce the surface of the presented target until he only reacts a fraction of a second by uncovering the target very slightly.

The Master's reaction must correspond exactly to the execution of the attack on the blade. It will be even more correct if the Master maintains good positioning of the weapon and possesses a good feeling for the blade.

In the study of attacks on the blade that precede offensive actions with angulation, the Master can first have them executed at a close distance. He must ensure that the point always progresses towards the target, even when the offensive action requires a change in hand position. The Master positions himself at the desired distance, with the weapon arm nearly extended. He progressively increases this distance to get the pupil to move the front foot and place himself at the correct distance. He also supervises special coordination of the flicked hit.

Generally, the pupil concentrates more on his offensive actions than on the attacks on the blade. The Master must watch that the offensive action is not developed too early to the detriment of the pressure or beat which will then no longer provoke the desired reaction. Each time it is necessary, the Master breaks down the movement step by step, in order to prevent an offensive action occurring with the arm shortened.



## CHAPTER XIII

# TAKINGS OF THE BLADE

### I - DEFINITION

*Refer to the corresponding section of Chapter XVII in Foil Workbook.*

### II - CLASSIFICATION

The simple takings of the blade (opposition, bind, croisé and envelopment) discussed in Foil are obviously used in Epée. The absence of conventions and the mobility in Epée advantages derobements and as a consequence, leads to the combining of different simple takings of the blade.

These combinations are classified as follows:

- double takings of the blade
- compound takings of the blade
- double-compound takings of the blade
- compound double takings of the blade
- the different varieties of these combinations of takings of the blade.

### III - TECHNICAL STUDY

The technical study of simple takings of the blade in Foil is valid. This section only deals with their combinations.

#### A - Description

##### 1) *Double taking of the blade:*

A double taking of the blade is composed of a simple taking of the blade immediately followed by another simple taking of the blade executed in the same direction.

E.G. Bind of quarte to octave-envelopment of octave.

##### 2) *Compound taking of the blade:*

A compound taking of the blade is formed by a simple taking of the blade which has been deceived, immediately followed by another simple taking of the blade executed in the same or opposite direction.

E.G. Derobement of opposition of sixte - bind from quarte to octave.

##### 3) *Double compound taking of the blade:*

A double compound taking of the blade is the combination of 3 simple takings of the blade of which the second has been deceived.

E.G. Bind from septime to sixte-derobement of envelopment in sixte-bind of quarte to octave.

##### 4) *Compound double taking of the blade:*

A compound double taking of the blade is the combination of 3 simple takings of the blade of which the first has been deceived, the two other executed successively in the same direction.

E.G. Derobement of envelopment of sixte-bind of quarte to octave-envelopment of octave.

##### 5) *Varieties of double and compound takings of the blade or vice-versa:*

The double, compound and compound double taking of the blade etc can be combined and are described according to the order of their execution.

## B - General conditions of technical execution

The general conditions of technical execution given in Foil are valid. However, the game of Epée imposes specific conditions of execution. They are the following:

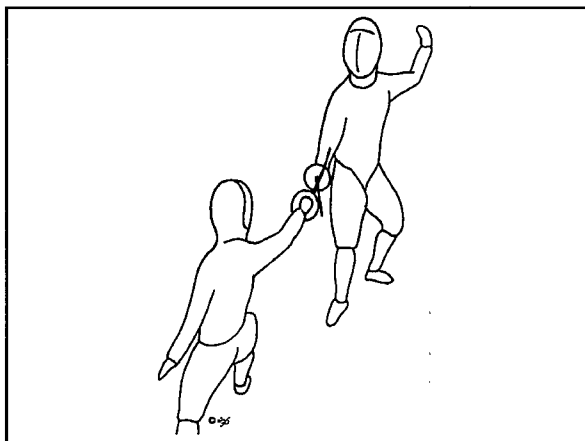
- 1) Execute the taking of the blade while maintaining a straight line between the arm and the blade during the entire duration of the action.
- 2) The displacement of the point must be as vertical as possible and always in the axis of the target.
- 3) Combine each taking of the blade with a step forward with perfect coordination.
- 4) Choose takings of the blade in which the final part of the action does not result in a double hit.
- 5) Only double or re-double takings of the blade when it is necessary to dominate the opponent's blade or to engage one's own blade as far forward as possible.
- 6) Limit the movements of the hand during compound takings of the blade to avoid provoking a new derobement.

## C - Execution of takings of the blade

### 1) Simple takings of the blade:

The execution of simple takings of the blade in Epée is slightly different compared to those in Foil, as follows:

- The weapon arm is more extended in the on guard position which limits the forward progression of takings of the blade and does not allow for sufficient engagement.



*Taking of the blade by opposition to sixte to the arm*

- The indispensable progression with the complete domination of the opponent's blade requires a step forward.

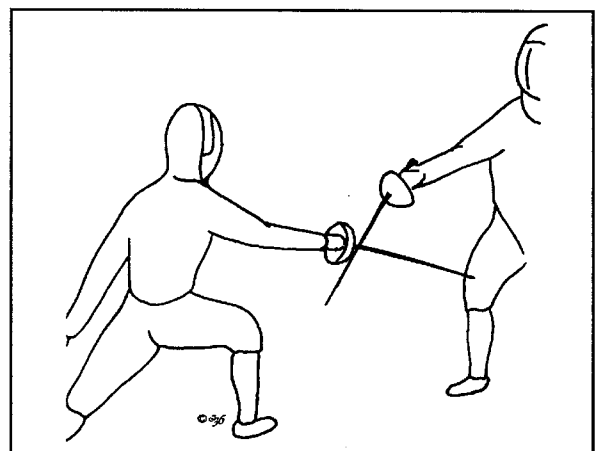
- The taking of the blade is executed with the whole arm, which remains supple without exposing the advanced target during the entire duration of the action.

- Avoid any wrist movement that could expose the advanced target or lose the opponent's blade.

- Finish the simple takings of the blade at the advanced target: inner elbow, front leg, thigh or knee.

### 2) Compound, double or combinations of takings of the blade

The execution of each simple taking of the blade of which these actions are composed has been given above. As their goal is to engage as deeply forward as possible while exploiting the opponent's counter-offensive action, each taking of the blade (in whichever direction) must be executed with a step forward. The final taking of the blade is developed with a lunge or a flèche.



*Taking of the blade by bind from quarte to octave to the leg*

### 3) Ripostes with takings of the blade

These are used a lot in Epée and are dependent on the preceding parry. Their execution varies according to the distance between the fencers and the target to be reached. The depth of the attack as well as the opponent's tactical intention generally leads to them being used in different ways:

- Coordinated with a step back to hit the opponent on the inner elbow
- Coordinated with a step forward or a lunge to hit on the arm after having parried with a step back.
- Coordinated with a step forward or a flèche to hit on the body after having parried with a step back.

#### **IV - TACTICAL STUDY**

Takings of the blade that are destined to hit the advanced target can be actions of timing and spontaneity. However, this is not the case for those destined to hit the body, which must be executed with second intention. This tactic allows the opponent's blade to be taken with more security and in the best possible conditions, and to develop the offensive action to the body while reducing the risks of derobements to the advanced target which are always easy to execute on a reflex taking of the blade. The second intention action is justified by the use of one or more preparations which have the aim of provoking the opponent's counter-offensive action in order to take the blade at the desired moment and in the best conditions for developing the offensive action.

All these different actions together are called counter-time and are the subject of a specific section.

##### **A - Simple takings of the blade**

According to bouting circumstances, simple takings of the blade are executed to the advanced target or to the body. To be effective they must be preceded by preparations having the aim of disguising the direction of the movement that is designed to take the opponent's blade, in order to increase the difficulty of, or delay the execution of an ever possible derobement.

The simple takings of the blade are used in the following preferential order (right hander to right hander):

- 1 - Opposition in sixte
- 2 - Opposition in octave
- 3 - Envelopment in sixte
- 4 - Envelopment in octave
- 5 - Bind in quarte-octave
- 6 - Bind of septime-sixte

All of the simple takings of the blade that finish in the high line can be directed to the inner elbow. All those finishing in the low line to the kneecap.

##### **B - Compound takings of the blade**

Compound takings of the blade are generally used on fencers who adopt an on guard position with the arm quite extended and who are always ready to deceive the first taking of the blade. The second taking of the blade is executed in the opposite direction and, as it progresses forward, increases the difficulty of a second derobement. The choice of the line in which to finish the final taking of the blade must either avoid the double hit or take into account the direction in which the opponent derobes with the greatest difficulty.

##### **C - Double takings of the blade**

Double takings of the blade are used when the first taking of the blade has not allowed sufficient domination of the opponent's blade to allow further development of the offensive action. In general, two cases justify their use:

- On a fencer who reacts to the first taking of the blade by stepping back sufficiently to disrupt forward progression and to prevent domination of the blade.
- On a fencer who possesses sufficient strength of hand to resist the first taking of the blade and in this way prevent the domination of his blade.

##### **D - Combined takings of the blade**

The numerous combinations of the different takings of the blade described in the preceding paragraphs are quite varied and their use is justified by the opponent's reactions to the taking(s) of the blade preceding the final action. In principle, they are used on fencers who derobe well while stepping back sufficiently to not let their blade be dominated, while at the same time keeping the point in line.

Each time that the tactical circumstances allow it, it is preferable not to multiply the takings of the blade, limiting the duration of their execution in order to give the development of the final action a chance of success.

## E - Ripostes with takings of the blade

The circumstances of the bout give the parry its value. It is indispensable in Epée not to lose blade contact while riposting, so as to avoid being hit by a remise. The reprise is still possible but its effectiveness is often increased by a fault in the execution of the taking of the blade. A correct riposte by taking of the blade which is directed to the arm only gives a small chance for the reprise to hit a target with certitude and at the desired time.

If a taking of the blade has provoked a reprise, it can be followed by a second taking of the blade in the opposite direction to retake the blade and dominate it again. In this case it is very important to know the opponent's reflexes and to judge distance correctly.

Ripostes with taking of the blade can be executed:

- 1 - With a step back to hit on the inner elbow an opponent who attacks with the intention of remising.
- 2 - With a step forward or a lunge to hit the arm when the parry has been executed with a step back or on an opponent who has the intention of remising or who returns to guard leaving the point in line.
- 3 - With a step forward and lunge or with a flèche to hit the body after a parry with a step back on an opponent who returns to guard rapidly and immediately steps back to return to his distance, leaving the point in line.

## V - FAULTS TO AVOID

The faults mentioned in the corresponding chapter of Foil Workbook are applicable to Epée.

## VI - APPROPRIATE DEFENCE

Only the defensive actions that are specific to takings of the blade are discussed in this paragraph, and not those of the different preparations that can precede them.

Several defensive or counter-defensive procedures can be used:

- 1) Parry with opposition
- 2) Ceding parry

- 3) Resistance
- 4) Derobe with or without blade contact.

### A - Parry with opposition

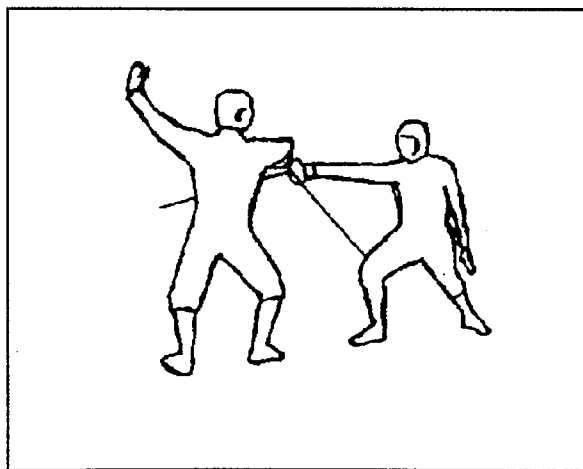
The parry with opposition is taken *with a step back* with the weapon arm completely extended and supple in order to deflect the opponent's blade with the forte of the blade. The point remains in line to hit the target and the blades stay in contact. The riposte coordinated simultaneously with a step back must allow the hit to be made at the *exact distance*.

### B - Ceding Parry

The ceding parry is executed with a step forward on the final part of the taking of the blade in order to make the opponent's blade pass any exposed target. The point must not wander from the opponent's target area so that the riposte needs only a slight extension of the arm. The two blades remain in contact and the chosen target for the riposte must be the closest, determined by the position of the point.

### C - Resistance

Resisting a taking of the blade requires a certain strength of hand and also the advantage of greater height of the fencer which in itself impedes the opponent when he wants to dominate the blade. The point is maintained in line thanks to the strength and rigidity of the blade. This method of executing the action can obviously be combined with a step back.



*The ceding parry of prime with riposte to the knee*

#### D - *Derobe without blade contact*

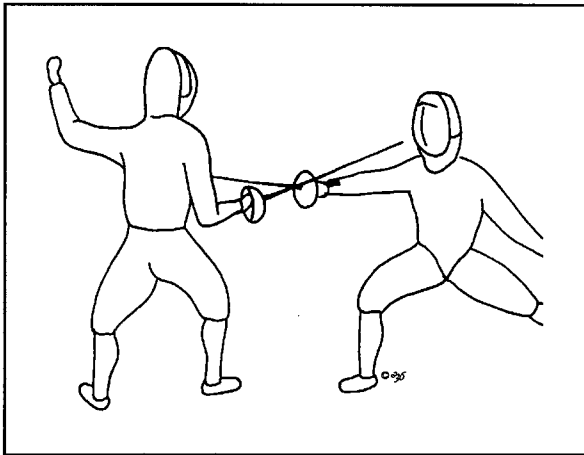
The derobement without blade contact consists of evading the blade at the moment that the opponent attempts to contact it at the beginning of the taking of the blade.

It is executed in two ways:

- 1 - By stepping back to reach the advanced target (hand, forearm).
- 2 - With a half lunge to reach the body.

#### E - *Derobe on blade contact*

The derobement with contact consists of removing the blade after the opponent has just made contact with it. As previously, it can be executed in two ways:



*The low ceding parry of quarte and riposte to the mask*

- 1 - With a step back in the final part of the taking of the blade to reach the advanced target (hand, forearm).
- 2 - With a half lunge and before the final part of the taking of the blade to reach the body.

When the opponent's tactical intention has become clear, it is preferable to use derobements on blade contact.

### VII - GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

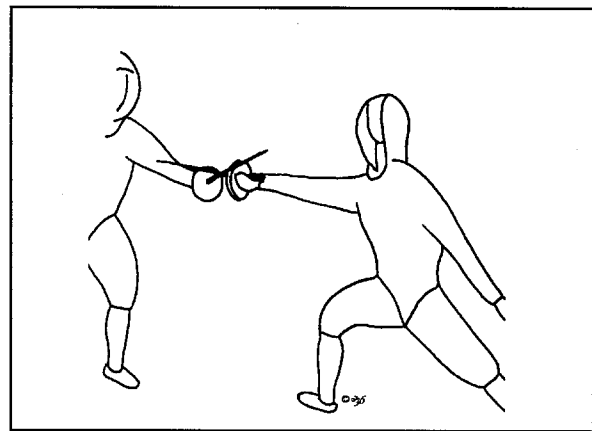
Offensive actions to the body in Epée are almost exclusively developed with takings of the blade. These offer the advantage of deflecting and dominating the opponent's blade during the entire duration of the attack, which ensures security, especially when the principles of technical execution

are observed. To possess a complete game, the épéist must study and have perfect knowledge of takings of the blade, as offensive actions to the advanced target are not sufficient to alarm the opponent. The effect of the cylindrical electric point with rounded angles and slippery fencing outfits leads to difficulty for hitting the advanced targets such as the hand, wrist and forearm for which the amount of perpendicularity that can be achieved is limited.

Certain takings of the blade are executed in an identical manner, whether they are destined for the body or the arm, in particular those that finish in the high line.

The binds of quarte to octave and sixte to septime between opposite handed fencers must be extended a little further to be able to reach either the inside or outside arm, as the target "under the arm" is always protected and difficult to reach.

The flèche is a method of attack which suits the use of takings of the blade destined for the body and especially in the high line where it allows the opponent's blade to be more easily dominated. In spite of the advantages it offers, the flèche must not be used without precaution and it is preferable to develop the offensive action with a lunge. It allows all targets to be reached and to instantly regain balance in order to move to a counter-offensive action if the attack fails.

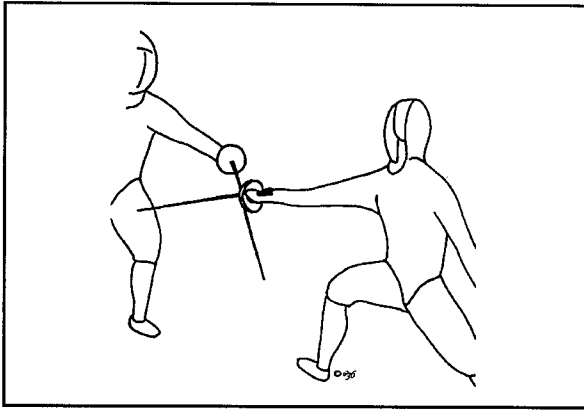


*Taking of the blade with opposition of quarte to the arm on a left hander*

It is important to vary the takings of the blade and to give those that finish in the low line the attention that they merit. Quite often defensive reflexes or the opponent's counter-offensive actions dominate actions that end in the high line.

Generally speaking, the choice of taking of the blade must be determined by the opponent's ability to derobe. This ability will be reduced by bad hand position (thumb on top) or from bad positioning of the fingers on the handle (index finger extended).





*Taking of the blade  
by bind from sixte to septime on a left hander*

Between opposite handed fencers, takings of the blade must be selected from those finishing within the inside lines in order to maintain blade domination as long as possible.

Note: The point of the weapon traces the shape of 3/4 of a circle in binds to the arm, which classifies

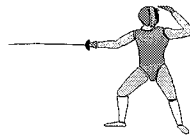
this movement between the envelopment and the classical bind.

### VIII - TEACHING RECOMMENDATIONS

The teaching recommendations given in Foil are valid. However, the Master must have the takings of the blade practiced with a step forward and lunge in order to obtain good coordination. From the beginning, the Master can, while keeping in mind the progression, develop the takings of the blade to the body, followed by those to the advanced target, while taking into account the difficulty of reaching these targets.

The Master requires in the study of takings of the blade; feeling for the blade, fingerwork and precision, and also *constant awareness of distance*.

The study of compound takings of the blade or their combinations requires the Master to derobe *at the opportune moment and with precision* while giving the maximum realism possible to his actions.



## CHAPTER XIV

# COUNTER ATTACKS

### I - DEFINITION

*Counter attacks are actions that cause the opponent's offensive action to fail while giving the time necessary to make a hit (with one light).*

### II - CLASSIFICATION

The importance of the counter-attack in this weapon due to the absence of conventions and the possibility of reaching the advanced target leads to the following classifications:

#### A - Counter attacks to the advanced target

- 1) The classical stop hit
- 2) The stop hit with angulation
- 3) The derobement
- 4) The derobement on blade contact

#### B - Counter attacks to the body

- 1) The derobement
- 2) The derobement on blade contact

The use of other counter-attacks discussed in Foil is more a matter of chance than calculation, which does not justify their discussion in this chapter.

### III - TECHNICAL STUDY

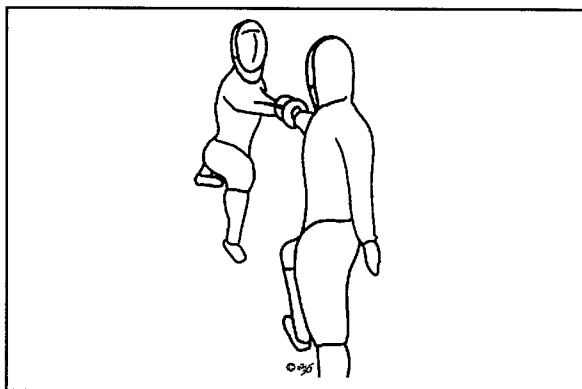
#### A - Counter attacks to the advanced target

All the counter attacks destined to hit the advanced target are executed by coordinating the extension of the arm with the movement of the rear foot so as to maintain correct distance and prevent a double hit.

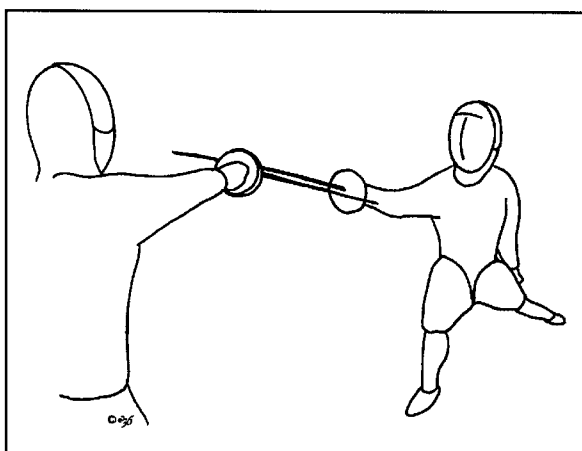
They must be directed towards the targets closest to the guard and be executed with the hand in complete supination, except for those with angulation.

#### 1) *The classical stop hit*

Consists of extending the arm while guiding the point to the open target and executing the necessary opposition on the side where the opponent's attack is directed.



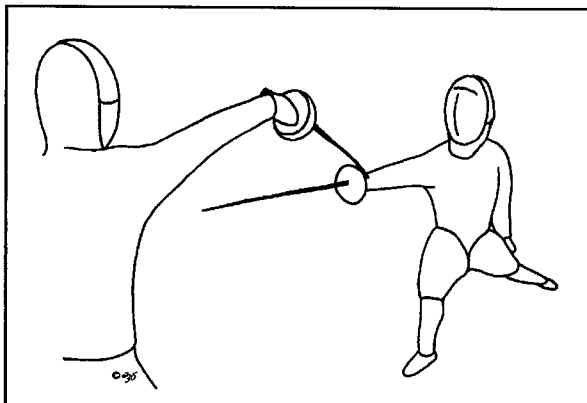
*Classical stop hit to the outside of the hand*



*Classical stop hit to the inside of the hand*

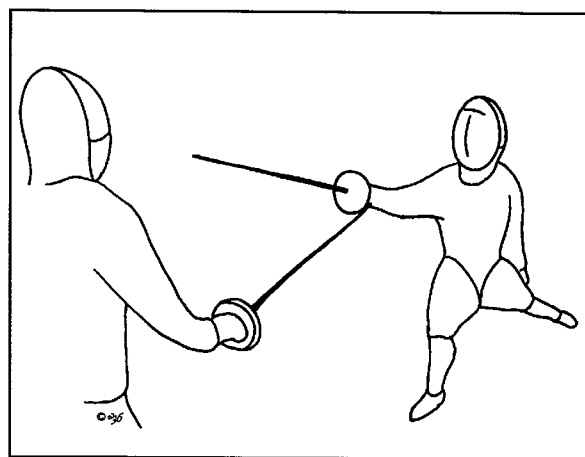
#### 2) *The stop hit with angulation*

This action consists of withdrawing the target towards which the attack is directed, by moving the hand to obtain sufficient angulation formed by the forearm and the blade and launch a hit to one of the targets that are the closest to the guard.



*The stop hit with angulation to the top of the hand*

Note: The rotation of the hand varies with the target aimed at and is executed as for the attacks with angulation.



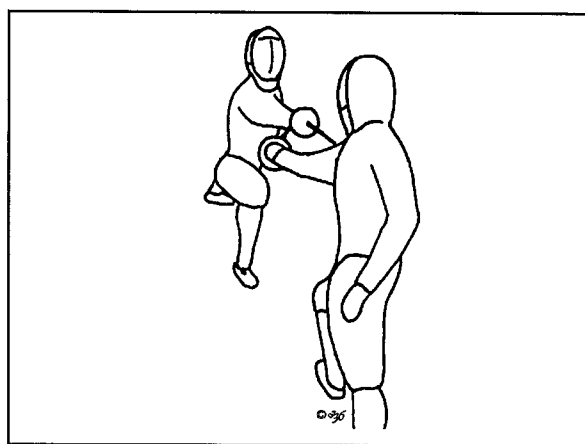
*Angulated stop hit under the hand*

### 3) *The derobement without contact*

Consists of an evasion of the blade, from an opponent's offence that has been preceded by a preparation, while extending the arm to reach an exposed target. The derobement is executed with the hand in complete supination.

### 4) *The derobement on blade contact*

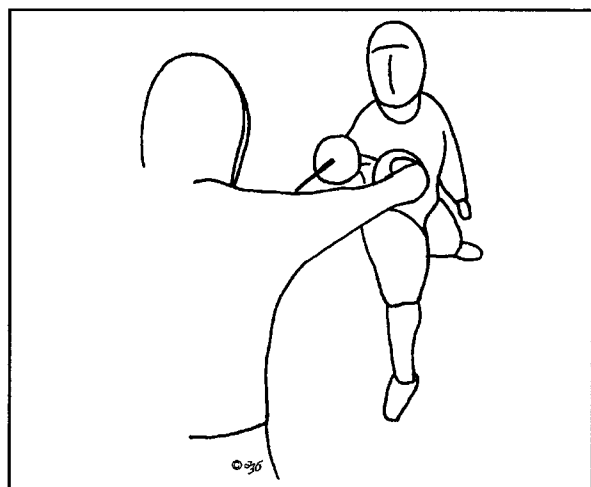
Consists of allowing the opponent's preparation to contact the blade then removing it at the moment when the offensive action develops, hitting the target that has become exposed.



*Angulated Stop hit outside of the hand*

## **B - Counter attacks to the body**

All counter attacks directed to the body are executed with a half lunge following the same principles as in Foil.



*Angulated stop hit inside of the hand*

### 1) *The derobement*

The derobement is executed in the same way as counter attacks to the advanced target but reaches the body in the line that is exposed.

### 2) *The derobement on blade contact*

This movement is executed in the same way as counter attacks to the advanced target but it is made at the beginning of the offensive action reaching the body in the line that is exposed. The technical execution of counter-attacks corresponds to that of attacks from which they take their name; disengagement, counter disengagement, 1-2, etc.

## **IV - TACTICAL STUDY**

In Foil, the counter attack must be the result of sure judgement, but this is not necessarily the case in Epée. The counter-offensive action allows the possibility of reaching the advanced target during

the development of the offensive action, and of hampering the opponent's game. It must therefore be, to a certain degree, the result of reflex actions, however its greatest effectiveness obviously comes from judgement. Since counter-offensive actions can be exploited by the opponent, feeling for the blade and finger dexterity must also allow for the evasion of the blade as a reflex movement.

#### **A - Classical Stop hits to the advanced target**

These are used on:

- 1) Simple or compound offensive actions that may or may not be preceded by an attack on the blade. They are directed to the advanced target that is insufficiently or incorrectly covered.
- 2) Offensive actions with angulation. In this case they are obligatorily coordinated with a step back to avoid the attack. The opposition to the side of the opponent's blade is not justified because it is always insufficient for this kind of attack.

#### **B - Angulated stop hits to the advanced target**

These are used on:

- 1) All attacks, even the best covered, that are directed to the advanced target, but they can be risky if executed on simple direct attacks aimed to hit just behind the guard.
- 2) Well covered, indirect or compound attacks to the body.

#### **C - Derobement to the advanced target without blade contact**

These movements are used on preparations, takings of the blade, attacks on the blade preceding offensive actions to the advanced target or the body, but can be easily made to fail because few épéists develop offensive actions when the preparation has been derobed. They instinctively or deliberately seek the blade which has escaped in order to continue the action.

#### **D - Derobement to the advanced target with contact**

These are used in the same circumstances as for the derobement without blade contact, but the

greater or lesser blade contact during the preparation provokes a different reaction. When the opponent takes the blade, his tactile senses give him the impression that his action has been successful and in general he immediately develops the offensive action (with lunge or flèche) at the moment the blade escapes, giving him no chance of regaining it.

The success of these counter-attacks requires considerable blade feeling, finger dexterity and precision.

#### **E - Derobements to the body without blade contact**

Derobements to the body are used in the same conditions as in Foil. They, therefore, require sure judgement of the opponent's offensive action. Because of this they must be used with second intention.

#### **F - Derobements to the body with blade contact**

These derobements are used in the same conditions as previously discussed and, similar to the advanced target, they require feeling for the blade, finger dexterity and perfect technical execution.

Counter-offensive actions give certain advantages in Epée. However, it is indispensable to vary them as much as possible so that they are not too easily exploitable by the opponent. The best way to thwart the opponent's offensive action with second intention is to link parries to the counter-offensive actions.

#### **V - FAULTS TO AVOID**

The faults to avoid concerning counter-offensive actions to the body have been discussed in Foil. In this paragraph, only those specific to the use of counter-attacks to the advanced target are discussed.

- 1) *Lack of precision*: often results from muscular contraction of the arm, from a bad position of the hand, or from incorrect judgement of distance which is caused by a lack of coordination between the extension of the arm and the step back.
- 2) *Movement of the torso forwards*: causes loss of balance, the counter-attack is forced and hits too far from the guard, precision is bad.

- 3) *Insufficient opposition*: does not prevent the attack from landing or results in a double hit.
- 4) *Insufficient angle formed by the arm and the blade*: (stop hit with angulation) does not allow one's advanced target to be withdrawn and the attack hits or provokes a double hit.
- 5) *Lateral derobements*: lead the point out of the axis of the target and increases the duration of execution which reduces precision.
- 6) *Rushed or delayed derobements on blade contact*: allows the opponent to retake the blade in the first case, or cause withdrawal of the arm in the second case.
- 7) *Point reaching a target too far from the guard*: comes from an error of distance or from bad execution. The counter-attack does not have time to land first and thus avoid the double hit.

## VI - APPROPRIATE DEFENCE

The defensive actions to use against counter-attacks vary according to the type of counter attack executed.

A - *On the classical stop hit to the advanced target*:

- counter attack with angulation
- counter-time by a taking of the blade while gaining ground.

B - *On the stop hit with angulation to the advanced target*:

- counter stop hit with angulation to the opposite side to the stop hit.
- counter-time by taking of the blade while gaining ground.

C - *On the derobement to the advanced target*:

- compound taking of the blade while gaining ground.
- counter-time by taking of the blade while gaining ground.

- counter stop hit with angulation with displacement of the target area.

D - *On the derobement on blade contact to the advanced target*:

If the action is correctly executed, there is practically no effective defensive action. In effect, this action gives no possibility of changing or preventing the offensive action. Even when the derobement on blade contact has been anticipated, it is very difficult to use one of the defensive actions cited in the preceding paragraphs because the fencer does not derobe until the final part of the attack.

E - *On the derobement on blade contact executed to the body*:

Same observations as in the preceding paragraph.

F - *On the derobement to the body without blade contact*:

- compound taking of the blade
- counter-time by taking of the blade
- counter stop hit with angulation with step back and displacement of the target.

## VII - GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

Counter offensive actions derive their value from two principle qualities:

- the exact notion of distance
- precision

The exact notion of distance naturally depends on instantaneous hand-eye coordination and the correct judgement of all the opponent's offensive actions. Due to the mobility of Epée, footwork is a primary factor for being able to place the point in the ideal conditions for effectively countering the opponent's game.

The classical stop hit or stop hit with angulation must reach the targets closest to the guard. It is often exploited by the opponent when an error in the judging of distance prevents this.

If the point is too deep, retracting the arm to reach the opponent's wrist results in loss of a fencing time and the point slides or misses the target which is moving in parallel. This fault facilitates the opponent's takings of the blade because the derobement becomes difficult, if not impossible, when the opponent has taken over the blade on such an advanced section. The size of the derobement is too large to stop the offensive action, in time or with precision.

When the point is not sufficiently deep it is not threatening and does not prevent the opponent from executing a new action. It may sometimes hit the guard and the opponent hesitates in taking the blade, thereby not allowing the possibility of executing second intention derobements.

Precision is naturally the result of serious training and perfect technical execution. The smaller, constantly moving targets that counter-offensive actions must reach makes precision very important. A major rule to be noted is that two points moving in space have very little chance of hitting each other. However, if one of them is positioned at the right time in the predicted trajectory of the other, it is inevitable that they will meet. Precision is the quality that allows the point to be placed in the exact trajectory of the chosen target. Many fencers execute their counter offensive actions with force in a desire to move in and meet the offensive. In this case it is better and more effective to let them come and throw themselves onto the point. This manner of fencing is often due to bad technical execution and also to a lack of co-ordination of the weapon arm and legs, causing a forward movement of the torso and a contraction of the shoulder.

Derobements are commonly used in *Epée*. They obviously require finger dexterity and feeling for the blade, above all when they are executed on blade contact.

Derobements to the advanced target constitute a large portion of counter-offensive actions. To be effective it is indispensable that the point remain as much as possible in line with the target and move vertically. In this way, it remains dangerous and can hit the target at any moment.

The tactical circumstances of the bout and sure judgement of the opponent's offensive action sometimes allows a derobement with angulation to be used. This offers the advantage of removing the target from the opponent's point but its delicate execution makes it a dangerous action.

Generally, counter-offensive actions are one of the trumps of an experienced fencer. It is indispensable to emphasise again the advantages of using the French handle. It alone allows the

execution of all the counter offensive actions with a maximum effectiveness and in particular for the derobements with contact which require finger work and a feeling for the blade.

## VIII - TEACHING RECOMMENDATIONS

From the beginning, the Master must get the pupil used to defending himself with the point. He must teach the pupil the reflexes which ensure the return to guard while making the counter-attack, after each offensive action. It is important that the Master supervises the pupil's position and the coordination of his movements, as well as the size of his displacements. He must maintain perfect balance in order to regain his distance.

Many Masters teach the counter-attack with a withdrawal of the front foot, which is practised on offensive actions to the leg or the foot. This does not allow the possibility of immediately regaining the offensive or of retreating, as the position of the torso (leaning forwards) and the feet (brought together) cause loss of equilibrium.

It is very important that the Master execute his actions perfectly when counter-offensive actions are practiced. In order to place the pupil in situations as close as possible to the bout he must:

- 1) *Completely* extend the arm.
- 2) *Attempt to reach* the target aimed at by lunging and slightly exposing the target to allow the counter-attack to land.
- 3) Return to guard forwards *after* the counter-attack has landed.

All these actions must be *perfectly coordinated* and their speed is dependent on the pupil's skill. They must not be changed so as to become an attack with a bent arm executed with a step forward.

Derobements can be studied in the following way:

### 1 - Exercises

- The pupil is positioned with the arm extended, the hand in complete supination, the Master attempts to catch the pupil's blade in a previously indicated direction and the pupil derobes. The Master gives his movement the desired speed and amplitude.

- The pupil is placed in the same conditions as above. The Master tries to catch the pupil's blade in different directions whilst varying the speed and suddenness of his actions without previously informing the pupil which movements he will use.

These exercises must not last too long because the immobility of the arm is very tiring and leads to contraction of the shoulder muscles. They are, however, excellent for hand/eye coordination and finger dexterity.

The Master can proceed in the same way for teaching derobements with blade contact.

## 2 - Combined actions

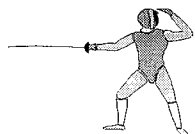
- The pupil attacks one of the advanced targets presented and on his return to guard the Master

executes a simple taking of the blade that has already been indicated, and the pupil derobes.

- In the same conditions as above, but the Master varies his taking of the blade and tries to surprise the pupil. He increases the difficulty by using compound takings of the blade that the pupil derobes with or without blade contact.

As for the counter offensive action by stop hit, the Master must execute his actions perfectly, taking the blade as he would in a bout, and presenting the target only at the desired moment.

When the Master teaches counter-attacks with angulation, he must not make it easier by exaggeratedly exposing the target. On the contrary, he must get the pupil used to hitting on actions that are completely covered.



## CHAPTER XV

# REMISE-REDOUBLEMENT-REPRISE

## THE REMISE

### I - DEFINITION

### II - CLASSIFICATION

Refer to the corresponding sections of Chapter XIX in Foil Workbook.

### III- TECHNICAL STUDY

The absence of all conventions makes the remise a common action that is very effective and for which the technical execution and coordination with foot displacements are the same as for Foil.

The extension of the valid target area to include the whole body allows the remise to be executed:

#### 1 - To the advanced target

- a) Classical
- b) With angulation

The technical study of these actions is identical to that in Foil, however their use is more common from:

- a) the lunge, with return to guard
- b) the on-guard position, with a step back.

#### 2 - To the body

The remise is done classically according to the principles and the positions given in Foil.

### VI - TACTICAL STUDY

The remise in Epée has the aim of profiting from all the opponent's faults following the parry of the offensive action or the counter-offensive action in order to gain the fraction of a second necessary to hit in time so that only one light results.

As in Foil, it is executed as a continuation or as a stop hit. The remise to the body can be executed with a flèche although this procedure is not

sufficiently precise for hitting the advanced target with certainty.

### A - Remise as a continuation

#### 1 - To the advanced target

*Classical* is used when:

- the opponent relaxes after a parry or commits a technical error.
- there is a slight gain in distance on an opponent's parry which results in the point ending up very close to the target.

#### 2 - To the body

*Classical*: this remise is not justified, the opponent's fault allows the advanced target to be reached as easily as the body. It is preferable to choose the advanced target.

### B - Remise with a stop hit

#### 1 - To the advanced target

a) *Classical*: is used on an opponent who ripostes while exposing his target.

b) *With angulation*: on an opponent who ripostes well covered, by displacing the target to the opposite side to where the riposte is directed while avoiding the point.

#### 2 - To the body

The remise as a stop hit to the body is only used in the case of a riposte with flèche which maintains the blade. The reduced distance between the fencers no longer allows the advanced target to be reached.



# THE REDOUBLEMENT

## I - DEFINITION

## II - CLASSIFICATION

Refer to the corresponding sections of Chapter XIX in Foil Workbook.

## III - TECHNICAL STUDY

The redoublement in Epée is executed in the same positions as those given for the remise. According to the distance separating the fencers, it requires variable movements that are coordinated with the action of the weapon arm.

In order to not expose the advanced target, the execution of the redoublement is limited to the following actions:

- by disengagement
- by deception (trompement)
- by compound actions (one or several feints of disengagement)

These different actions are technically executed:

- classically, in every case
- with angulation principally from high line to low line.

## IV - TACTICAL STUDY

Redoublements are often used in bouting, particularly in the form of counter-offensive actions because of the necessity to maintain blade contact after a parry in order to riposte and avoid the remise.

Redoublements are also used much more as continuations of the attack than remises. It is in effect very rare to meet épéists who leave the blade after the parry without taking any precaution.

### A - Redoublement as a continuation

- 1 - To the advanced target

a) *Classical* is used:

- by disengagement on an opponent who maintains the blade after having parried.
- by deceiving the change of line, which is common in Epée after the parry of quarte.

b) *With angulation*:

- by disengagement underneath, in general on an opponent who maintains the blade after having parried, but where the point remains dangerous for a classical redoublement.

2 - To the body

The redoublement to the body is done with a disengagement on an opponent who has parried with the arm bent and whose advanced target is out of reach. This action is mainly executed with a flèche.

### B - As a stop hit

1 - To the advanced target

a) *Classical*:

By derobement, either by disengagement or compound, on fencers who riposte by taking of the blade.

b) *With angulation*:

By derobement on a fencer who ripostes by taking the blade without moving the point out of line, which makes the classical derobement dangerous.

2 - To the body

By disengagement on fencers who riposte by taking the blade with a step forward or with a flèche.

# THE REPRISE

## I - DEFINITION

## II - CLASSIFICATION

## III - TECHNICAL STUDY

Refer to the corresponding sections of Chapter XIX in Foil Workbook.

## IV - TACTICAL STUDY

The reprise is necessary on opponents who parry with a step back without riposting or who systematically step back when attacked. However, the ease and rapidity with which the counter-attack

can be executed by the simple extension of the arm, makes the reprise difficult to use and requires tactical sense and perfect technical execution. The reprise is executed with less risk with a flèche, the return to guard forward facilitating its use, but it is indispensable that the distance be correctly judged.

The nature of the offensive action by reprise must be justified by the opponent's reflexes or by the choice of target to be reached.

The reprise can be done with less risk on opponents who have the defensive reflexes of foilists, but whatever the case, it must be done as simply and as direct as possible.

# GENERALITIES

## I - FAULTS TO AVOID

The faults of technical and tactical execution mentioned for Foil are valid. Only those specific to Epée are outlined below:

- 1) *Lack of coordination between the weapon arm and leg action*: reduces precision and exposes the fencer to the double hit.
- 2) *Projecting the torso*: comes from the preceding fault, the remise or reprise is executed with the shoulder resulting in lack of precision and making any consecutive action difficult.
- 3) *Lack of covering*: does not prevent the opponent's action from landing thereby allowing the possibility of a double hit.

- Parry and riposte while dominating the blade.

- Counter-attack with a step forward and opposition

- Take the blade on the remise (using second intention).

## B - Redoublement

a) *As a reflex*:

- Parry with opposition

b) *Premeditated*:

- Take the blade on the remise (using second intention).

## II - APPROPRIATE DEFENCES

### A - Remise

a) *As a reflex*:

- Counter attack with opposition at the correct distance.

b) *Premeditated*:

## III - GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

The remise with angulation, as for all angulated actions must be an action launched with speed in order to avoid the opponent's point. Naturally this action necessitates a withdrawal of the arm after the offensive action, which makes it difficult and dangerous. Another way of executing it consists

of going around the protection of the opponent's guard by angulating without pulling back the arm or by flicking the hit. This requires moving the hand and breaking the wrist which allows no other option if the action fails.

The mechanics of the return to guard with the point in line facilitates the remise as a stop hit on the opponent's riposte. The riposte, sometimes more or less covered (fault in execution, tactical error) facilitates the remise, the opponent risks throwing himself on the point.

In any circumstance, when the point is well in line it gets in the opponent's way especially when the distance has been correctly judged. The redoublement with angulation must be well judged and executed in the line opposite to that of the riposte. According to the distance, redoublements to the body are not to be neglected but it is preferable to execute them with second intention.

Redoublements preceded by an attack on the blade are not recommended, as the beat invariably attracts a dangerous counter-offensive movement. The circumstances of the bout and above all distance sometimes allow sufficient force to be given to the beat to violently deflect the opponent's blade. Even in this case, it is preferable to execute the reprise with a flèche and with second intention.

More so than in Foil, distance is of primary importance for the execution of remises and redoublements to the advanced target. The difficulty comes from the reduced surface area of these targets which are in perpetual motion and quite often in a position that is parallel to the direction of the hits. Distance must not be regulated by moving the torso forwards or backwards but by using the legs, keeping the torso vertical, with the body perfectly balanced.

Redoublements can be done to the leg or the mask taking into consideration the proximity of these targets and of the offensive action used.

The reprise must be well judged and exploit the opponent's reflex movement. If this reflex movement maintains the line the reprise can be executed with a taking of the blade with all the necessary precautions.

The remises and redoublements are actions of finesse, largely facilitated by the quality of hand and finger dexterity, as well as blade feeling, all of which make up precision. They are even more effective with the use of the French handle already recommended, which gives the hand the freedom of movement and the ability to control the point with the fingers.

#### IV - TEACHING RECOMMENDATIONS

The absence of conventions give the remise and redoublement a very important place in Epée. From the beginning, the Master must familiarise the pupil with these actions which must be executed as a reflex.

To teach the remise the Master must:

- 1) *Parry at the correct time:* The parry must occur at the exact moment when the point is about to hit the target. If executed too early, the pupil holds back his offensive action and quite often his point meets the Master's guard. Taken too late, the offensive action risks hitting, the Master's parry is forceful (with withdrawal of the arm) which falsifies the distance for the remise.
- 2) *Parry preferably with opposition:* The parry that is executed as a beat provokes a reflex contrary to that of the remise, above all in a beginner. The parry with opposition leads him to remise involuntarily so it must not be exaggerated and take the pupil's point too far from the target otherwise it will provoke a movement contrary to good covering.
- 3) *Leave the pupil's blade cleanly.* The pupil must sense the absence of the blade which follows the parry. The quality and speed of the execution of the remise depends on the quality of this absence of the blade.
- 4) *Present the target:* Without exaggeration, by a correct hand movement following the line in which the remise has occurred, the point of the blade placed in such a way that it obliges the pupil to maintain good covering.

To teach the redoublement the Master must:

- 1) *Parry at the correct time* as for the remise.
- 2) *Parry with opposition* while slightly accentuating the parry.
- 3) *Maintain the pupil's blade* by slightly extending the arm while exposing the target.

Taking into account the pupil's speed of execution and his coordination, the Master can teach the remise and redoublement as a stop hit on the riposte while observing the principles cited above and those listed below:

- 1) Riposte or dominate the blade *with arm extended* and by exposing the desired target without exaggeration.
- 2) Lunge to follow the pupil, taking into account the speed of the return to guard.
- 3) *Return to guard forwards.*

In no case must the Master who has asked for a remise or redoublement to the advanced target parry with a step forward - this only suits the study of redoublements to the body with a half lunge.

The reprise which is an action of second intention executed depending on the tactical circumstances of the bout can nevertheless be studied in the lesson to a certain degree.

For example, the pupil executes an attack (or false attack) to the hand, the Master removes the

target by moving away the point, the pupil executes a reprise by direct hit to the knee. On an attack the Master takes a short parry, the pupil redoubles to the body with flèche.

The Master must place great importance on the pupil's hand position (complete supination) and to his balance (position of the torso) - as the precision of all actions depends on this.

It is obvious that the distance must be perfect so that the pupil hits without bending the blade. It is up to the Master to develop his actions with more or less rapidity according to the pupil's technical level and speed of execution.

Remises and redoublements with angulation are more difficult to execute. They must only be taught when the pupil possesses sufficient precision and a tactical sense that is quite developed. The Master must, in his teaching, follow them with a defensive action.

