

The Fencers' Workbook

III - SABRE

SABRE

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CHAPTER I

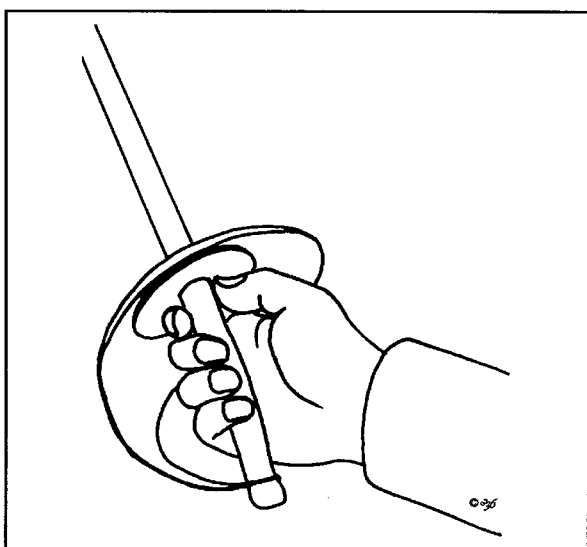
HOLDING THE WEAPON

I - DESCRIPTION

Grip the handle, the guard towards the front, the thumb near the guard, lightly flexed in opposition to the cutting edge and the second phalange of the index finger, the other fingers joined together and slightly folded, keeping the fingertips against the palm of the hand, at the level of the M formed by the folding of the skin.

II - TECHNIQUE

Contrary to the grip used with the foil or épée, the sabre grip is a natural position. In fencing with the point the hits are *carried* by the footwork; in sabre, hits are *launched* by the action of the fingers and arm.



The grip in sabre

- a) Role of the first two fingers
(thumb and index)

The first two fingers act on the handle by contraction, throwing the blade forwards, and are the principal agents for the precision of a hit.

- b) Role of the other fingers

The other fingers accompany and reinforce the action of the first two fingers and increase both the speed and power of the movement.

- c) Role of the wrist

The wrist functions as a hinge, extending and reinforcing the actions of the fingers either forward or backwards.

III - TACTICS

The grip detailed in the preceding paragraph allows the execution of all offensive, defensive and counter offensive actions without having to be modified.

The upper arm may not be completely covered by the guard, but this inconvenience is minor.

The old way a hit with the point was executed required a displacement of the index finger on the handle to bring the weapon into line with the arm. This method decreased the strength of the grip and led to disarming. The same applies if the grip is modified by loosening the aids to bring the guard into a 90 degree angle with the outer sleeve in the parry of quinte.

IV - FAULTS TO AVOID

- 1) *Thumb extended along the handle*: This position interferes with the action of the fingers and accentuates the movements of the wrist, which causes a loss of speed and promotes hard hitting.
- 2) *The bottom edge of the hand in contact with the guard*: This position uncovers the forearm, exaggerates the size of offensive actions and interferes with proper execution of parries.
- 3) *The handle held with the entire hand* (battle-axe grip): Fingerwork is impossible, actions are exaggerated and hits are launched from the elbow.

V - GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

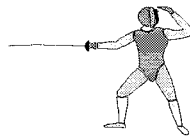
The correct execution of a hit depends on the right grip on the weapon. Correctly held, one can instantly respond to the changing circumstances of combat (offensive, defensive & counter-offensive).

The Hungarian sabre handle, by its very shape, responds best to the requirements of modern sabre fencing, and offers both a good grip while at the same time allowing lightness in the execution of hits.

All other ways of holding the weapon other than the one described above, reduce the speed of the fingerwork in both offensive and counter-offensive actions.

VI - TEACHING RECOMMENDATIONS

The Master must ensure from the beginning that the student holds the weapon correctly; the arrival of hits on the plastron allow him to judge where faults lie. Generally the beginner experiences some difficulty in maintaining the index finger in opposition to the thumb. To remedy this, the Master can, at the start, require that both thumb and index finger be in contact with the guard. Even though the sabre grip is more natural than that of the point weapons, it is also the source of many faults if the Master neglects fingerwork or tolerates an imperfect position.



CHAPTER II

THE ON GUARD POSITION

I - DEFINITION

Refer to the corresponding section of chapter II in Foil Workbook.

II - COMING ON GUARD

First Action and Second Action

Refer to the corresponding section of chapter II in Foil workbook.

Third Action :

Bend the right arm, the elbow at waist height, away from the body, the forearm slightly lower than horizontal. Sabre held in the hand cutting edge forward, wrist lightly flexed back, blade diagonally forward, point slightly inside and above the opponent's shoulder. The left arm is relaxed and down by the side, ensuring the torso is well effaced and minimising the target offered to the opponent. A traditional position of the left arm allows it to be bent, with the elbow to the rear and completely effaced, the hand placed at waist height.

III - TECHNIQUE

A) *The Feet:*

B) *Flexing of the legs:*

C) *The Trunk:*

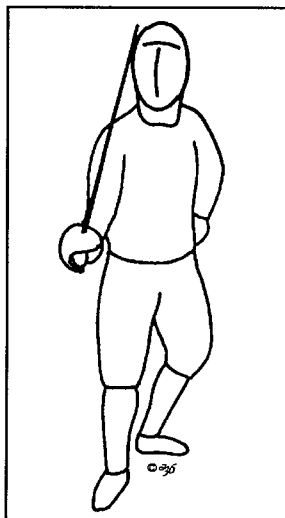
Refer to the corresponding sections of chapter II in Foil Workbook.

D) *The Rear Arm:*

Being a valid target area, it should be completely effaced.

E) *The Weapon Arm:*

The hand and forearm should be covered by the guard.



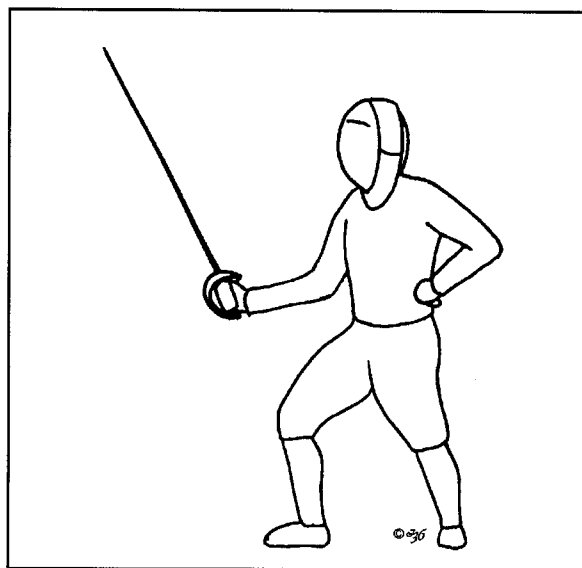
The tierce guard-face on

IV - TACTICAL STUDY

Great mobility is required in sabre because of the distance separating them as well as the size of their hand movements in defensive and counter-offensive actions. This mobility is most easily obtained if the on guard is correct. The weapon arm must be ready for three possibilities:

- 1) To protect the wrist against all classical direct attacks.
- 2) Allow the easy execution of counter-attacks.
- 3) Allow the immediate parry of quinte.

The sabreur must always pay attention to his balance, which allows him to easily and quickly adapt to the different phases of the assault.



The tierce guard - side on

V - FAULTS TO AVOID

Only those faults which are particular to the on guard position of sabre are discussed there. Those faults mentioned in Foil and common to the two weapons remain applicable.

- 1) *The weapon arm insufficiently bent*: brings a valid target area closer to the opponent and the protection provided by the guard becomes insufficient. The fencer is vulnerable to wrist attacks and attacks on the blade.
- 2) *Exaggerated bend of the weapon arm*: the fencer who comes on guard with his elbow up against his waist is forced to use larger defensive actions which are easier to avoid. He is more vulnerable to attacks on the body, and this position renders offensive actions highly visible.
- 3) *The hand higher than the elbow*: this position uncovers the underneath of the forearm and the valid areas of the trunk which are normally protected.
- 4) *"Broken" Wrist*: in general an exaggerated breaking of the wrist in either direction diminishes the protection offered by the guard.
- 5) *The blade too vertical*: renders the fencer vulnerable to attacks to the head (quinte) as well as certain attacks on the blade.
- 6) *The blade too horizontal*: while being vulnerable to attacks on the blade, the fencer is forced to exaggerate his offensive actions

(the point having to move backwards prior to launching an attack).

- 7) *Unarmed arm insufficiently effaced*: causes a rotation of the bust and an extension of the target area.

VI - GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

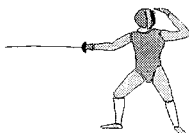
Sabre fencing has special characteristics. Although the conventions are identical to foil it nevertheless encourages offensive and counter-offensive actions typical of épée. The particular way in which the hits are launched, the speed of play, and the simplicity of defence are all reasons which oblige the fencer to adopt a classical on guard position.

As for foil & épée, tactical considerations can modify the guard position. However many sabreurs allow these exceptions to become the rule. An on guard position where the rear foot rests on the ball, with knee turned in, impedes the development, especially after an advance.

The classical on guard position imposes an inclination of the blade forward, facilitating the parry of quinte. Ignoring this principle exposes the fencer to attacks to the head which, under these circumstances, tend to be defended by using the parry of quarte. However this parry is often not successful because it is easy to deceive and does not naturally protect the shoulder.

VII - TEACHING RECOMMENDATIONS

Teaching concepts of Foil & Epée are valid for the sabre. When teaching sabre, the Master must pay particular attention to the position of the weapon arm. The beginner often has difficulty in maintaining the slight flexing of the wrist towards the rear. This must not be tolerated under any circumstance as it will later result in grave faults.



CHAPTER III

THE DEVELOPMENT

I - DEFINITION

Refer to the corresponding section of chapter II in Foil Workbook.

II - DESCRIPTION

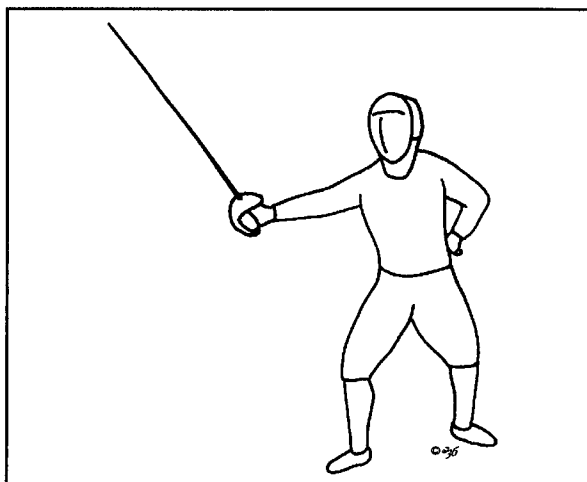
From the guard position, the development is executed by extending the right arm rapidly without stiffness while rotating the hand very slightly bringing the cutting edge to the front. The blade is vertical and the hand lower than the shoulder, with a slight rear flexing of the wrist. Carry the right foot forwards, foot grazing the floor and vigorously extend the left leg. Place the right foot down flat, knee along the vertical axis passing through the middle of the foot, body leaning slightly forwards and hand remaining lower than the shoulder.

III - TECHNIQUE

Foil technique remains valid for the Sabre, only those areas which are particular to the Sabre are covered here.

1) *Extension of the weapon arm*

The extension of the weapon arm must be very quick, complete and supple. The rotation of the hand to the right must be done during the extension of the arm, with the hand lower than

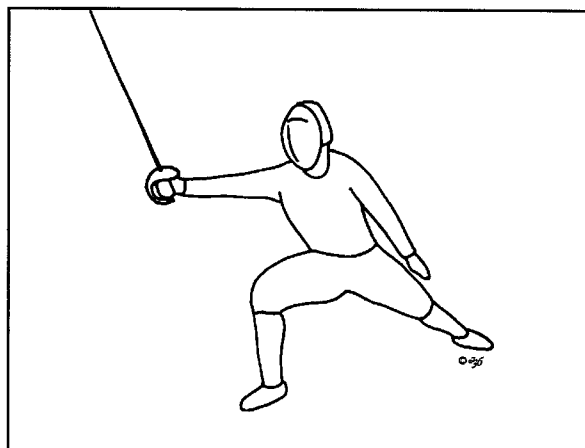


*Extension of the arm preceding the development
(attack to the head)*

the shoulder and slightly to the right. Wrist flexed back, weapon fairly vertical, cutting edge forwards, providing a position from which the hit can be launched by the action of the fingers.

2) *"Suspension" Time*

The action of the fingers which completes the extension of the arm must be executed simultaneously with the final extension of the rear leg, so that the hit reaches the target before the front foot lands on the ground. Only the end of the blade (last 2 cm) should reach the target, with maximum velocity provided by the pressure of the three last fingers (aids) on the lower part of the handle. The forward movement of the blade is accelerated even more by a slight flexing of the wrist.



The development in Sabre (attack to the head)

NOTE: The thumb and index finger are at the same time the lever point and the centre of the arc which the blade and forearm follow (as close as possible to vertical).

IV - TACTICAL STUDY

Even though the target area offers many chances to execute counter-attacks, the conventions of Sabre make them of secondary importance. However, it is indispensable that all actions be covered, and correctly executed.

The extension of the arm must be done while taking into account that:

The development in sabre (attack to the head)

- 1) the wrist is closer to the opponent
- 2) the protection offered by the guard is diminished

To limit the possibility of counter-attacks, the covering is towards the right (without exaggeration) leaving the inside wrist slightly open, though this can be easily covered by rotation of the guard to the left. During the extension of the arm, the rotation of the hand depends on the target to be hit. It is critical that the angle formed by the forearm and the blade is constant. However, since the development (the hit in particular) is a "launched" action, it must be fast and perfectly balanced, whichever target is chosen.

V - FAULTS TO AVOID

Those faults covered under Foil remain valid - only those particular to the Sabre are handled here.

- 1) *Exaggerated elevation of the hand:* uncovers the underneath of the wrist and diminishes the protection afforded by the guard.
- 2) *Blade leaning too far forward:* the fencer is obliged to bring the blade back to execute the hit. This warns the opponent and also makes the development slower.
- 3) *Finger action too early:* generally the attack falls short or doesn't hit until the blade rebound.
- 4) *Finger action too late:* the hit is "pushed" onto target and lacks clarity. It is made after the front foot has already landed.
- 5) *Raising the hand after delivering the hit:* this is not a problem if the attack hits, but in the

case of failure it renders the fencer vulnerable to all ripostes which can be directed to the flank.

VI - GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

The perfect coordination of all the movements which make up the development are indispensable to the success of the attack. The slightest imperfection in the extension of the arm and hasty start of the front foot render the development less effective and the fencer vulnerable. The major difficulty in the execution of the development rests in the coordination of the launching of the weapon arm and the extension of the rear leg. The end of the blade must reach the target prior to the foot landing on the ground. This essential condition is obtained by the simultaneous push of the rear leg and the action of the fingers on the handle at the instant the arm reaches full extension.

The work of the fingers and the weapon arm is not finished when the blade hits the target. The end of the blade bounces back by several centimetres and the handle, returning to its initial position in the palm of the hand, is held firmly. The arm relaxes while remaining extended.

Under no circumstance should the hit be pressed/pushed, nor should the blade maintain contact with the target. These situations demonstrate a lack of control and balance which impede the continuation of the fencing phrase.

Not using the rear arm noticeably reduces the speed and power of development and removes this arm's function as a means of balance. The position of the rear arm can vary, the forearm is bent at the fist at the level of the hip, without the hand leaning on it. During the development the forearm is thrown forcefully backwards, taking a final position parallel to the rear leg, but open, with the thumb underneath.

VII - TEACHING RECOMMENDATIONS

Those items discussed in Foil and valid to Sabre are not treated here, only those particular to the sabre are discussed.

Coordination of the different movements in Sabre is difficult to achieve. The Master must do this progressively and even though Sabre movements are more natural than those of Foil the actions must still be broken down at first.

Most difficulty resides in the lack of speed in the extension of the weapon arm compared to the start of the lunge; the development is therefore often executed while the weapon arm is not fully

extended. The Master must pay particular attention to the speed of this extension and the actions of the fingers in the final part of the movement.

The following procedure has been found to give good results. The Master asks the student to hit a target (preferably the head) at short distance, for example at riposte distance which requires only extension of the arm. When the movement is correct and sufficiently fast, the Master breaks ground gradually and progressively; the moment the student feels that the extension of the arm (*the mechanics of which must remain the same*) no longer allows him to hit the target without leaning, he lunges. In this way the pupil learns the “starting time” of the development.

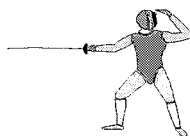
The Master progressively retreats until the

development is complete. Using this method he is able to teach his student to hit before the front foot lands.

The extension of the rear arm can be tolerated as long as it is thrown backwards (which gives it the essential function of balance). Any other movement which unduly affects equilibrium must be corrected.

The arrival of the hit on the target provides information to the Master about the action of the fingers. When the hit is pressed/pushed he must control the manner in which his student holds his weapon.

To educate the fingers, the Master can, while placing himself at riposting distance, request the pupil to repeat the hit two or three times to different target areas, before returning to guard position.



CHAPTER IV

THE FLÈCHE

I - DEFINITION

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

Note: The use of the flèche in Sabre was forbidden by an amendment to the FIE Rules For Competitions in 1994. Its inclusion in the manual is for historical interest only.

II - DESCRIPTION

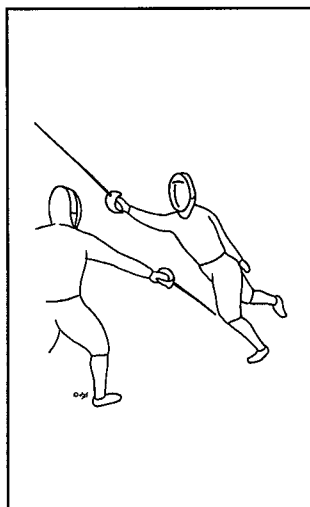
Starting in the on guard position, extend the right arm rapidly, without stiffness, while effecting a slight rotation of the hand towards the right, to bring the cutting edge forwards, blade vertical, hand lower than the shoulder, and wrist broken slightly towards the rear. Move the body's centre of gravity forwards till there is a total loss of balance, the body at an angle, front leg remaining bent. Extend the front leg rapidly while stretching the rear arm towards the rear, hand open, thumb underneath, arm more or less horizontal, the rear foot leaves the ground and is placed in front of the leading foot at sufficient distance to regain equilibrium.

III - TECHNIQUE

Only those aspects particular to the Sabre flèche are treated in this paragraph.

- 1) *Extension of the weapon arm:* Refer to description of development in Foil (Chapter III).

- 2) *"Suspension" Time:* The action of the fingers which completes the extension of the arm is carried out at the end of the extension of the front leg, so as to take advantage of the



*The fleche
(attack to the head)*

gain in distance. The front foot, leg, the body, the weapon arm and the weapon are in the same line at the time when the hit arrives on the target.

- 3) *Action of the unarmed arm:* The forearm is rapidly deployed towards the rear and the arm is raised into the line of the shoulders in the same vertical plane. Its action balances the "Suspension Time" and allows the fencer to keep his body in the fencing axis.

IV - TACTICAL STUDY

The valid target area in Sabre, its conventions, and the manner with which hits are executed, requires that the fencers maintain a greater distance (step & lunge) from one another.

The flèche allows an attack to the body without having to gain additional ground, since the opposing fencer is within hitting distance. However, its use depends on tactical intentions. The action of throwing the arm and the fingers forwards, which also tends to pull the body forwards, aids the loss of balance required as a preparation to the flèche. The natural displacement of the weapon arm allows the sabreur, in case of failure of the attack, to continue the phrase during the final movements of the flèche, and even to counter riposte.

It is therefore critical to stress the importance of choosing the side to which the return to balance will be made, in order to offer a reduced target, and maintain the ability to block an offensive action by a minimal displacement of the hand. The side chosen will be the one where the opponent is expected to parry. After the attack to head the side chosen matters little, however, the fencer would still be wise to lower his hand to reduce the target offered in case of failure.

V - FAULTS TO AVOID

- 1) *Extension of the weapon arm*
Refer to the Sabre development.
- 2) *In the loss of equilibrium phase*
- 3) *During the flèche*
Refer to the corresponding sections of chapter V in Foil Workbook.

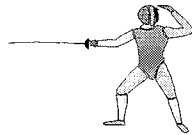
VI - GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

The extreme mobility and speed of the footwork in Sabre, allows the sabreur to easily conceal the loss

of equilibrium preceding the flèche. Defence does not require firm contact with the floor and, compared to the development, offers variants which are capable of enormous speed. Actions of second intention are possible using a flèche; for example, against an opponent's counter attack the defensive action can be made during the flèche.

VI - TEACHING RECOMMENDATIONS

The procedure described for the study of the development in Sabre can be used in teaching the flèche. The Master applies the same principles for the study of the loss of balance as in foil and epee.



CHAPTER V

THE RETURN TO GUARD

I - DEFINITION

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

II - DESCRIPTION

Refer to the corresponding section of Chapter V in Foil - except for the action of the rear arm; "then add".... progressively bend the right arm, keeping the blade at an angle to cover the return to guard.

III - TECHNIQUE

1st part:
2nd part:
3rd part:

Refer to the corresponding section of Chapter V in Foil Workbook except for the action of the unarmed arm.

IV - TACTICAL STUDY

The return to guard in Sabre is intricately linked to the tactical requirements of the assault, conventions, and the valid target areas, which must be placed out of reach of the opponent when an attack has failed.

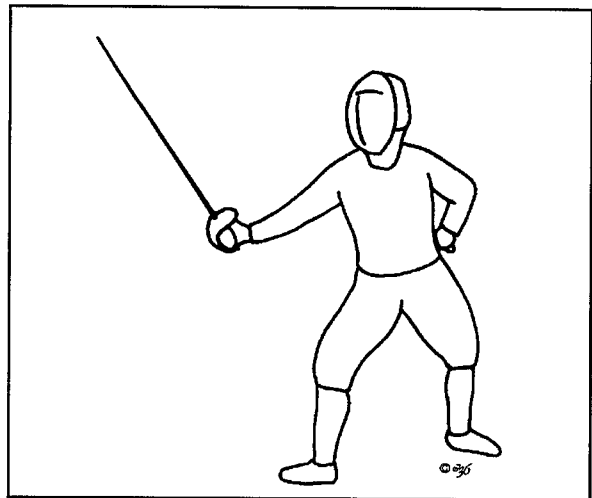
It must be rapid so as to remove the head from the opponent's offensive action, since the head is a target easy to reach and hard to protect. The return to the position of guard by the weapon arm must respect the following requirements :

- 1) Withdrawing the blade at an angle, to obtain instant protection in case of an opponent's offensive action directed towards the head at the end of the return to guard.
- 2) The progressive shortening of the weapon arm to protect, through minimum displacement of the hand and blade, the threatened target.

- 3) Angling the blade forwards, to facilitate the counter attack by the action of the fingers only on the opponent's offensive action.
- 4) Maximising the cover afforded by the guard in the angled movement of the blade; the point rising, to protect the forward upper target (top of the forearm).

The return to guard forwards:

This manner of returning to guard is used in the same tactical circumstances as Foil. It is, however, often followed in many cases by a new offensive action executed with a step/jump lunge.



The delay of the arm during the return to guard

The return to guard by jump:

This is used in Sabre to place the fencer quickly out of reach after the failure of the attack, especially when the opponent's offensive action is executed with a balestra/lunge. It requires very good balance and quick execution by the legs.

V - FAULTS TO AVOID

Those faults mentioned in Foil are valid; only those which are particular to sabre are mentioned below.

- 1) *Weight carried by the rear leg*: the fencer leans backwards to put his head out of the opponent's reach. However this affects his balance and makes any subsequent retreat slow and difficult, thereby exposing him to compound offensive actions.
- 2) *Arm extended on the return to guard*: makes the opponent's offensive action to the advanced target (arm) easier. The protection afforded by the guard is insufficient.
- 3) *Blade within a vertical plane*: renders ineffective the defence against the opponent's actions to the head and also facilitates the opponent's attacks on the blade.
- 4) *Arm drawn back (close to body)*: allows the opponent's offensive action to penetrate deeply and aids the opponent in defensive actions.

VI - GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

Modern Sabre requires the fencer to have powerful and supple legs and the mobility of the game requires a quick return to guard. The unarmed arm returns to its position by bending rapidly, the hand towards the hip. Its role has only a relative importance. The principle muscular effort is by

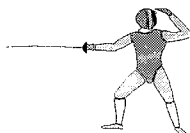
the legs and the muscles of the back which act to pull the hips rearwards.

The conventions of the game, and the extension of the valid surface area to include the weapon arm, dictates the return to the position occupied previously. In case of failure of the offensive action, the weapon arm returns progressively, the forearm covered by the guard.

VII - TEACHING RECOMMENDATIONS

A correct return to guard allows the mobility required for modern sabre. The Master must always take into account the difficulty of this movement and must not seek to obtain a rapid execution too early. If the unarmed arm has an important role to play in the return to guard in fencing with the point, in Sabre its immobility causes some difficulty. Often the beginner throws the trunk backwards before flexing the rear leg, causing the first stage of the return to guard to be poorly executed. As a result, the position of guard to which he returns is poor; the student has all his weight on his rear leg, which hampers all consecutive retreats. The Master must pay attention to the first stage of the return to guard and make corrections where necessary.

When the student bends his weapon arm too early, the Master, as in fencing with the point, can ask him to return to guard with the arm extended. The return to a correct position, without useless movement of the hand and the point, takes place afterwards. The Master controls the covering of the advanced target and the position of the blade with his weapon.



CHAPTER VI

THE LINES

I - DEFINITION

II - OBJECTIVE

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

III - CLASSIFICATION

The valid target area of the body, the manner in which hits are executed and the various defensive movements necessitate the division of the valid surface area into 3 sections, determined by:

- the vertical line passing through the middle of the trunk

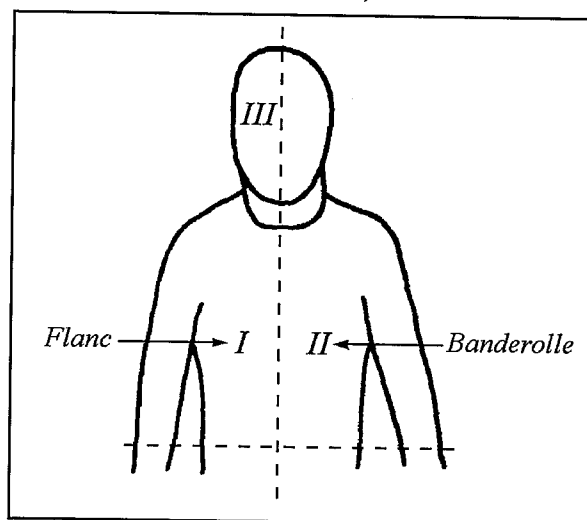
- the horizontal line passing through the waist while in the on guard position

These are termed:

1) Right line (flank, right cheek and right arm)

2) Left line (chest cut (banderolle), left cheek)

3) High line (head, shoulders)



THE FENCING POSITIONS

I - DEFINITION

II - OBJECTIVE

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

III - CLASSIFICATION

The blade can, in relation to the hand, have the following positions:

- 1) Point higher than the hand
- 2) Point at the same height as the hand
- 3) Point lower than the hand

The hand can also take three positions:

- 1) Thumb on top, nails turned towards the left
- 2) Thumb towards the left, nails turned forward
- 3) Thumb underneath, nails towards the right.

The combinations of these positions of the

blade and the hand constitute the fencing positions, which serve as the basis of all parries.

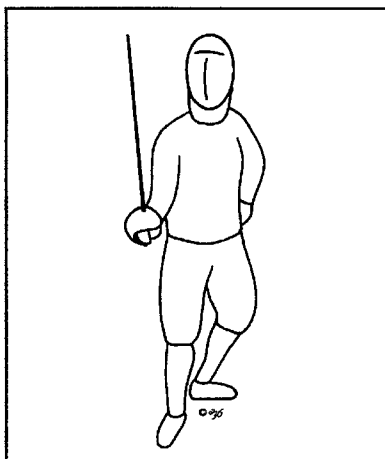
1 - Position with the thumb on top, nails towards the left

a) *Tierce*: Hand to the right, thumb on top, nails turned slightly towards the left, point higher than the hand.

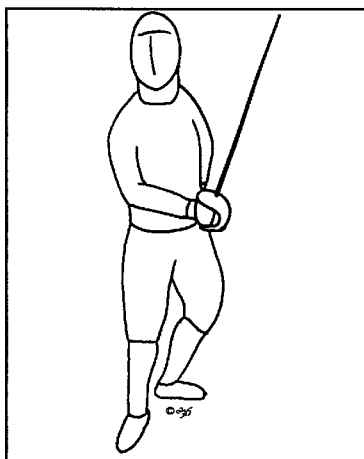
b) *Quarte*: Hand toward the left, thumb on top, nails slightly turned towards the left, point higher than the hand.

2 - Position with thumb to the left, nails forward

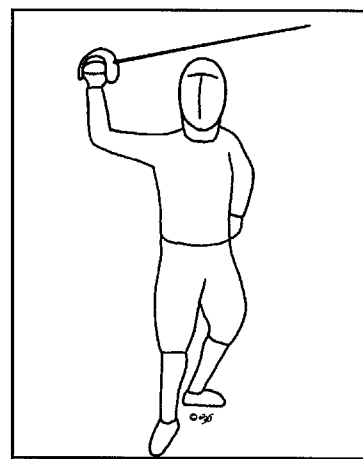
a) *Quinte*: The hand to the right, slightly higher than the head and forwards, the arm horizontal, the thumb to the left, the nails forwards, point slightly higher than the hand.



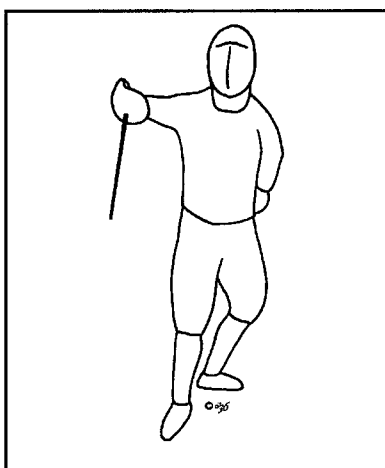
The position of tierce parry



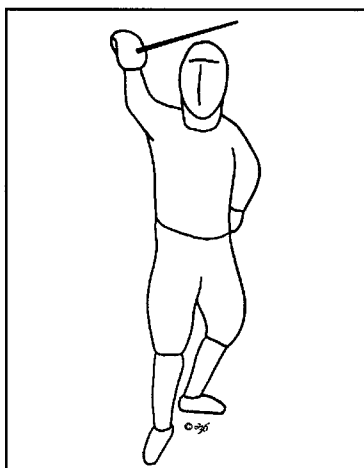
The position of quarte



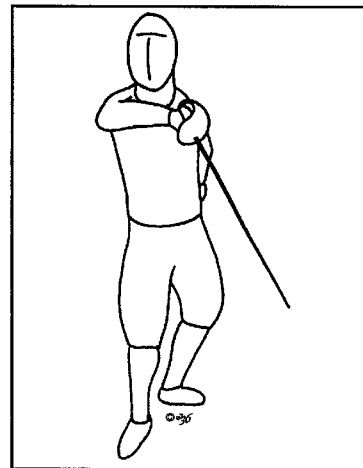
The position of quinte in the first system



The position of seconde in the second system



The position of quinte in the second system



The position of prime

3 - Position with thumb underneath, nails turned towards the right

a) *Seconde*: Hand towards the right, arm horizontal, thumb underneath, nails towards the right, point lower than the hand.

b) *Prime*: Hand towards the left, arm horizontal, thumb underneath, nails turned slightly to the right, point lower than the hand.

The extension of the valid target area to include the weapon arm, as in *Epée*, requires the definition of four lines:

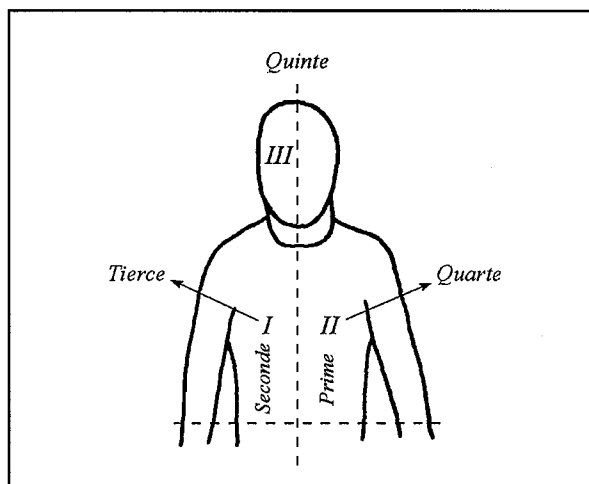
- 1) Top line, also called top cuff
- 2) Right line, also called outside cuff
- 3) Bottom line, called bottom cuff
- 4) Left line, called inside cuff

IV - GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

The fencing positions give their names to the parries. There are five of them and each have their counter parry, the use of which is extremely rare.

A parry is a defensive action which prevents an opponent's hit arriving by closing the line in which the blade is presented. A counter (circular) parry catches the opponent's blade in one line and moves it to another line.

The valid target area is divided into a number of areas which take the name of the parts of the body corresponding to them: head, flank, right cheek, etc.



CHAPTER VII

OFFENSIVE ACTIONS

The method of teaching the French Sabre was abandoned several years ago. This method, which had a practical military objective, has been replaced by the Hungarian method, which has given its character of codified fencing discipline to modern Sabre technique. The techniques and tactics of Hungarian Sabre are far removed from the ancient concepts of French technique; in attack, defence and counter-attack.

Sabre fencing shares characteristics with both Foil (conventions) and Epée (advanced target). Consequently the tactics employed in Sabre are influenced by both these considerations.

The attack in Sabre is governed by the following principles:

- a) the conventions
- b) the extension of the valid target area
- c) the distance between the fencers.

A - The conventions

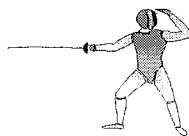
Respect for the conventions obliges a fencer to parry or completely avoid all correctly executed attacks. Simple attacks may be made with the cutting edge or by point but they must be done without exaggerated movement of the sword arm or blade at a distance which allows the movement to be performed as one action, in a single period of fencing time.

B - The extension of the valid target area

The extension of the valid target area, to include all parts of the body above the waist when in the "on guard" position, influences offensive actions because the weapon arm is a valid target. The guard in Sabre ensures sufficient protection to the advanced target (hand and forearm) against classical attacks, but it leaves these same targets vulnerable to attacks made with angulation, using the cutting edge or the back cutting edge.

C - The distance between the fencers

The manner in which strokes are executed and the vulnerability of the advanced target means a sabreur should be at a distance which offers sufficient security: his opponent should only be able to reach the nearest target by a full development, whilst attacks to the body require additional displacements. The need to be at this distance can provide counter attacks with the opportunity to gain a fencing time on the attack. To minimise this risk, the attack must be preceded by an appropriate preparation.



CHAPTER VIII

SIMPLE ATTACKS

I - DEFINITION

The simple attack is an offensive action , executed by lunge which takes one period of fencing time.

II - CLASSIFICATION

A - Simple attacks to the body using the cutting edge

- a) Attack to the head
- b) Attack to the right cheek
- c) Attack to the flank
- d) Attack to the chest (banderolle).

B - Simple attacks to the body using the point

C - Classical simple attacks to the advanced target areas

- a) Top cuff
- b) Inside cuff
- c) Underneath cuff
- d) Outside cuff

D - Simple angulated attacks to the advanced target areas

- a) With the cutting edge, cuff top
- b) With the rear cutting edge, underneath cuff

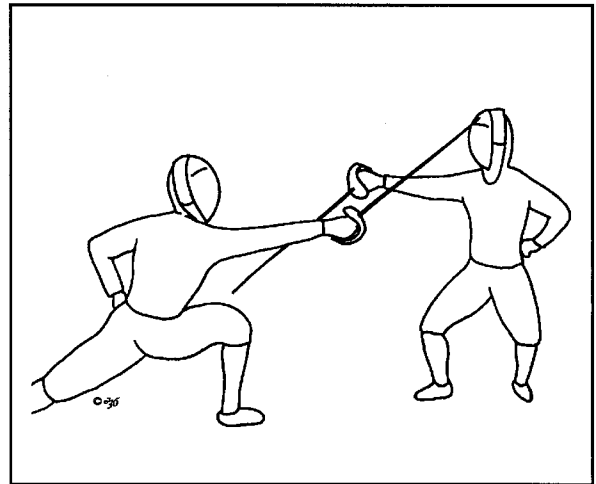
III - TECHNIQUE

A - Simple attacks to the body with the cutting edge

The description of the technique for the execution of different simple attacks assumes that they are carried out on a fencer who uses the same hand as the student. When facing an opponent who uses the opposite hand, the technical execution remains the same, though the names of certain target areas are reversed: for example, an attack to the flank on a right-handed fencer becomes an attack to the chest on a left-handed fencer.

1) *Attack to the head*

Extend the arm while slightly rotating the hand and the wrist to bring the cutting edge towards the target, hand lower than the shoulder and to the right, the blade forming an angle of approximately 120 degrees to the arm. Launch the hit using a contraction of the fingers and a slight flexing of the wrist towards the front while lunging - all executed in a single fencing time.



Attack to the head

2) *Attack to the right cheek*

Extend the arm while slightly rotating the hand to the left to bring the cutting edge towards the target, hand at the same height as the shoulder the blade forming an angle of about 120 degrees to the arm. Launch the hit by using a contraction of the fingers and a slight flexing of the wrist towards the right while lunging - all executed in a single fencing time.

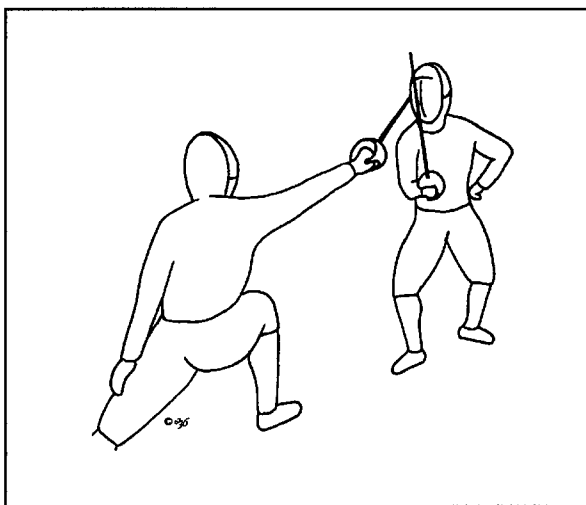
3) *Attack to the flank*

Extend the arm while slightly rotating the hand towards the left to bring the cutting edge towards the target, hand slightly lower than the shoulder, the blade forming an angle of about 120 degrees to the arm. Launch the hit using a contraction of the fingers and a slight flexing of the wrist towards the right while lunging - all executed in a single fencing time.

4) *Attack by chest cut (Banderolle)*

Extend the arm while rotating the hand towards the right to bring the cutting edge towards the target, hand lower than the shoulder and towards the right, blade forming an angle of about 120 degrees to the arm. Launch the hit using a contraction of the fingers and a slight flexing of the wrist downwards and to the left while lunging - all executed in a single fencing time. The blade and the arm quickly return to the same final position as for the attack to the head.

Note: In the execution of all simple attacks, the end of the blade should strike the target before the front foot contacts the ground and should rebound by several centimetres, *the arm completely relaxed.*



Attack to the right cheek

B - Simple attack to the body using the point

Extend the arm while rotating the hand towards the

left, point towards the target, cutting edge in slight opposition to quinte, the hand in complete pronation slightly higher than the shoulder and considerably to the right. The blade and the arm should form an angle of about 120 degrees. The fencer should then lunge. All these actions are executed in a single fencing time as one smooth action. Towards the end of the move, the hand is higher than the shoulder and the arm is completely relaxed.

Note: The rotation of the hand is made in relation to the displacement of the thumb.

C - Simple classical attacks to the advanced target

The technical execution of the attacks to the advanced target are related to the attacks to the body. The changes made to the position of the hand or blade depend upon the accessibility of the targets, their reduced surface area, and their distance and location. The angle formed between the blade and the arm, when the sword arm extends, is wider, but should leave sufficient freedom of action to the fingers and wrist.

1) *Classical attack to the top cuff*

Related to the attack to the head. Extend the arm to bring the blade in line with and on top of the target, hand slightly to the left so as to provide sufficient cover.

2) *Classical attack to the inside cuff*

Related to the chest cut. Extend the arm to bring the end of the blade towards and above the target without covering the hand.

3) *Classical attack to the underneath cuff*

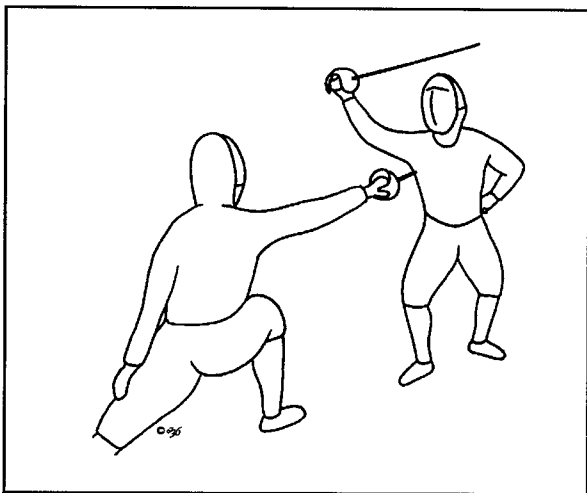
Related to the attack to the flank, however extend the arm slightly lower.

4) *Classical attack to the outside cuff*

Related to the attack to the right cheek, however extend the arm slightly lower and more to the left.

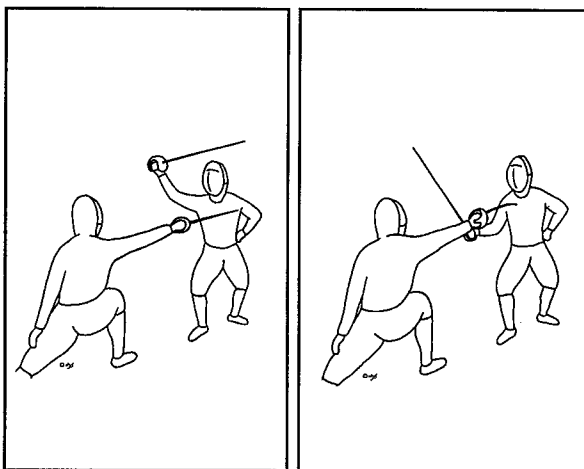
D - Simple attacks with angulation to the advanced targets

The guard position in Sabre does not allow effective attacks with angulation to any targets other than the top and bottom cuff.



Attack to the flank

- 1) *Simple attack with angulation to the top cuff*
Extend the arm to bring the blade in line with the target but slightly higher, hand exaggeratedly to the right and lower than the shoulder.



Attack to the banderolle

Attack with the point

- 2) *Simple attacks with angulation to underneath cuff*
Extend the arm while letting the point drop so as to bring it in line with the target and slightly below it, hand exaggeratedly to the right and lower than the shoulder. Make the hit with the wrist by a quick upwards movement.

IV - TACTICAL STUDY

A - Simple attacks to the body with the cutting edge

- 1) *Attack to the head*
The attack to the head is one of the most effective simple attacks for the following reasons:

- a) The simplicity of the action does not make it immediately perceptible.
- b) The extension of the arm, contraction of the fingers and flexing of the wrist are natural movements which can be delivered with great speed, often surprising the opponent.
- c) Executed on a strange or negligent guard position, it can reach the target in spite of any defensive actions which, under these conditions, require large movements of the hand.

2) *Attack to the right cheek*

A good guard position stops any direct action to this target. This move is therefore preceded by actions on the blade with either of the cutting edges, to impede defensive actions and reduce the risk of counter attacks.

3) *Attack to the flank*

The attack to the flank is another action which cannot be used directly, since this target is protected by the blade while in the guard position. It is therefore executed when the opportunity arises; for example on preparations which uncover this target. To provoke the opponent's move out of the guard position, any attack to the flank must be preceded by effective preparations.

4) *Attack by chest cut (banderolle)*

Several factors make the chest cut very effective.

- a) The guard position (tierce position) leaves the target uncovered.
- b) The beginning of this move is similar to the attack to the head and therefore does not provoke the correct corresponding parry.
- c) Most fencers react to the opponents preparations by fixing themselves in tierce position, which slows their defence.

B - Attack to the body with the point

The attack to the body using the point is less effective and therefore used less than those with the cutting edge. The latter (launched hits) are more

natural and have greater speed. Due to its comparative slowness (direct hit), this move rarely surprises the opponent, giving him the chance to avoid or block the attack. This little used action does, however, allow the rapid return to the parry of quinte in case of failure. Also, the corresponding classical parry (quarte) is often insufficient to deflect it. However it is more useful in counter attacks to the body and in ripostes after the parry of quinte.

C - Classical attacks to the advanced targets

Simple classical attacks to the advanced target are of limited use due to the protection provided by the sabre guard. However the circumstances of combat require movements of the hand and blade, offering occasions for the use of these attacks. The development distance allows attacks to the cuff to be executed with great speed. Preparations by the opponent which require the extension of the arm, bring the advanced target closer and, at the same time, reduce the protection afforded by the guard. Executed at the right moment, when an opportunity arises, attacks to the cuff require only a small lunge.

D - Attacks with angulation to the advanced targets

1) *Attack with angulation to the underneath cuff*

Of all the attacks with angulation, this is the most commonly used. A correct guard position is not enough to protect the underneath cuff. This particular attack should be prepared by a guard position with the hand and blade low, to avoid any overly visible movements and diminish the distance which the end of the blade must travel.

2) *Attack with angulation to the top cuff*

This is used on fencers who come on guard with the hand too low and blade not crossed in front of the body. Launched quickly, it allows the fencer to defeat counter attacks.

V - FAULTS TO AVOID

Those faults mentioned in the development remain valid in the execution of simple attacks. Those faults which apply to the attack itself are discussed below.

- 1) *Releasing the fingers after delivering the hit:* creates a habit which is very difficult to break. Causes a contraction of the arm when the attack is parried and as a result hinders the following parry.
- 2) *Weapon arm tensed after the hit:* precludes any immediate action in case of the attack failing.
- 3) *Insufficient cover:* provides the opponent with the chance to easily execute counter attacks, especially if the attack is made at long distance.
- 4) *Not hitting the target with the last few centimetres of the blade:* caused by a poor judgement of distance and/or poor coordination delaying the arrival of the hit. This fault can be seen especially among fencers whose hit reaches target after the front foot has landed on the ground.
- 5) *Exaggerated or insufficient rebound of the blade after the hit has reached the target:* caused by poor action of the fingers and wrist. In both cases, correct continuation of the fencing phrase is difficult.

VI - GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

The simple attacks in Foil are named according to their execution, whereas in sabre they are named depending on the target area to be reached. For two fencers of opposite hand (left hander with right or vice versa), this principle remains valid. Only the technical execution of the move is reversed for the flank and chest cut. The attack to the flank is executed like a chest cut and vice versa.

The distance separating the fencers during a bout leaves the advanced targets within reach of the development. However this simple action is insufficient to reach the body, which is more distant. A fencer must therefore precede his development by one or more steps, which means the attack is made up of two or more fencing times and is therefore susceptible to counter attacks. However, it does provide the fencer with perfect balance till the final moment of the attack, allowing him to either react as anticipated, or by conditioned reflex.

The cover which a fencer should seek to protect himself from counter attacks, can only protect one side of the arm. The choice of attack and covering

therefore depends on the position of the opponent's blade. Complete elimination of risk is not possible because even the best covered attack can be counter attacked by angulation.

The hit with the point to the advanced target is not recommended. The position of the forearm in relation to the blade does not offer sufficient perpendicularity for the hit, which usually has a tendency to slip past the target. On those rare occasions when a hit is achieved in this manner, a fencer rarely benefits from it, due to the difficulty in seeing such a hit by the Jury. However, this has changed with the electrification of Sabre fencing.

Only the simple attacks with angulation to the top and underneath of the cuff have a guaranteed effectiveness. Attempts to hit the outside or inside cuff with angulation requires a large unnatural move which is easily perceived and countered-attacked by the opponent.

Fencers of opposite hand have a persistent problem: how to protect both head and outside cuff. Complete cover of one uncovers the other. For this reason, the attack to the outside cuff with angulation is very effective, because it defeats the best of "covers". Between right and left handed opponents, attacks to the inside and outside advanced targets follow the principles laid out previously for reaching the flank and chest.

VII - TEACHING RECOMMENDATIONS

The Master should first teach the attacks to the body, which are easier than the attacks to the smaller advanced targets. Each simple attack should be studied in the following order:

A - Study of the hit at short distance (riposte distance, feet fixed)

The student should concentrate solely on the action of the arm. The Master must watch that the hit is given by the contraction of the fingers, amplified by a slight flexing of the wrist. Each time the Master deems it necessary, he should break the action down into the extension of the arm and the action of the fingers, to obtain perfect execution of the move prior to the development.

B - Study of the hit at middle distance (development distance)

The difficulty here is the coordination of the weapon arm and the extension of the rear leg. The Master should not waste time by breaking down the movement, but should rather seek good

execution through repetition. For perfect execution the hit should reach the target just before the foot lands on the ground. The Master should require this from the very first lesson. The essential co-ordination of arms and legs is only achieved after many long hours at the plastron.

C - Study of the hit at long distance (step forward/ jump forward, lunge)

When the attack by development is well executed, the Master can start teaching an attack at long distance. Two methods are taught: either precede the development by a classical step forward or by a jump forwards. In both cases, the arm is progressively extended, and reaches full extension only upon the regaining of balance following the step forward or jump (ie when the rear foot, or both feet reach the ground respectively). The Master should concentrate on the coordination of the extension of the arm in conjunction with the step forward or jump prior to the lunge, and should return to it whenever required.

D - Study of timing and opportunity (d'apropos)

When the execution of the simple attacks is satisfactory, the Master can start to develop the pupil's sense of timing and the ability to take advantage of opportunities. To this end he should vary his invites and require the student to immediately hit the target exposed. These exercises should be done at the three distances, in order to increase their difficulty.

E -Study of rhythm

To get the student used to changing the speed of his actions, the master should also vary the speed of his invites, and change their rhythm. The student will have difficulty in reaching targets momentarily opened or closed at a varying cadence, but this teaching method quickly improves his ability to deal with the realities of bout situations.

Method of teaching the chest cut (banderolle)

Special attention should be paid to the study of the chest cut. The specialised skills required for this move are quite difficult. The Master should require that the student reaches the target with a movement

started at the moment when the weapon arm and the blade form a straight line, and not by retracting the arm.

Several methods of teaching encourage the perfect execution of this hit. The simplest method consists of breaking the move down into four parts, and to gradually remove a part at a time, until the entire movement is made in one single fencing time. The covering of this movement is critical, and the Master should check that it is controlled by using counter attacks if necessary.

The study of the simple attacks to the advanced targets should be made according to the technique used for the corresponding simple attacks to the body. They should be executed on invites, extensions of the arm, and on preparations by the Master. The development of timing, rhythm and speed is essential for attacks to these targets. Indeed, their mobility and reduced surface area, require greater precision by the student.

The Master should only teach attacks with angulation after having insured that this student has mastered all the classical attacks to the body and advanced targets. Attacks with angulation are less used, they require a lower level of effort, and risk provoking faults if taught too early, due to the unorthodox positions they require.

First part: extension of the arm towards the target

Second part: carry the stroke by finger action only

Third part: bring the blade back into the position of the stroke to the head

Fourth part: progressively retract the arm to return to guard

F - Invites corresponding to attacks

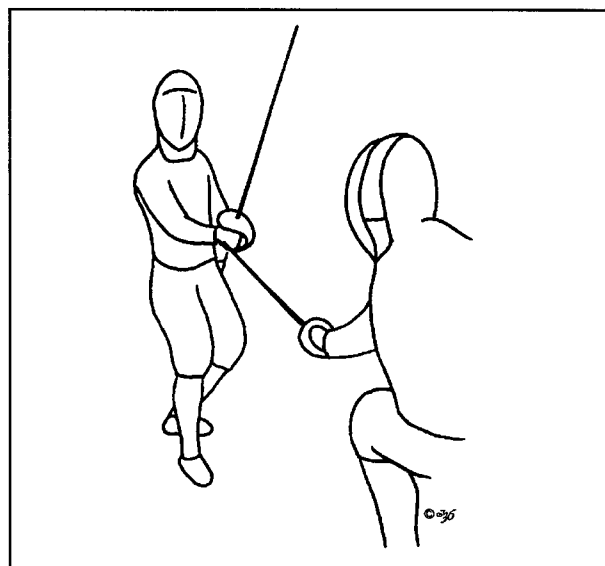
1) Attacks to the body

- Invite in seconde position:
Attack to the head

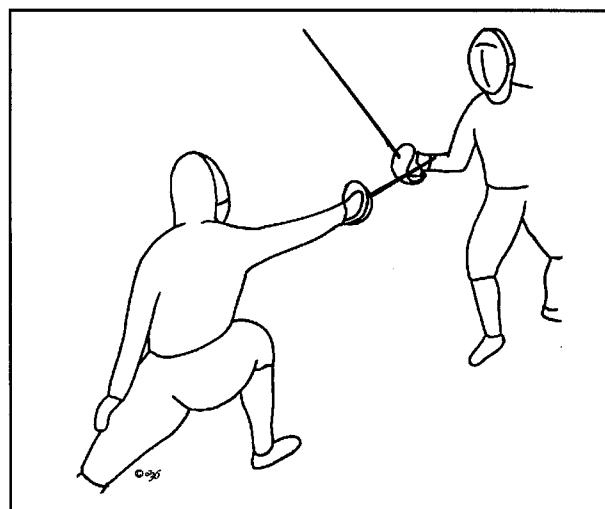
- Invite in quarte position:
Attack to the right cheek

- Invite in quinte position:
Attack to the flank

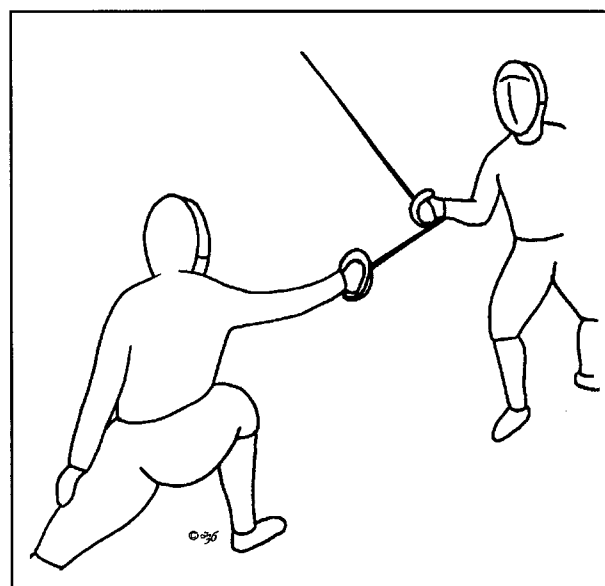
- Invite in quinte position:
Attack by chest cut



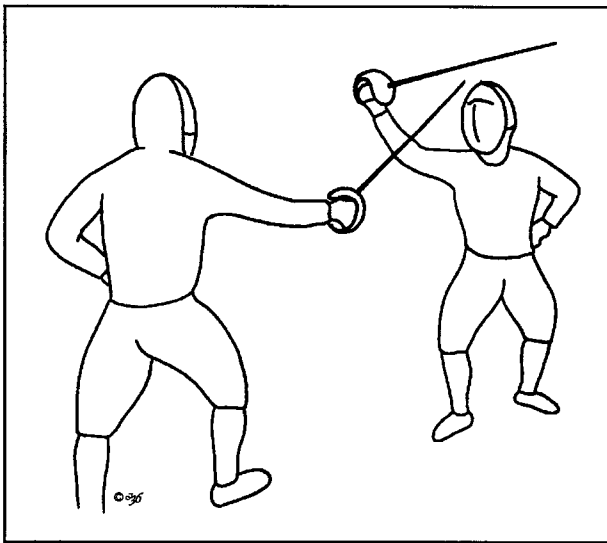
Classical attack to under the cuff



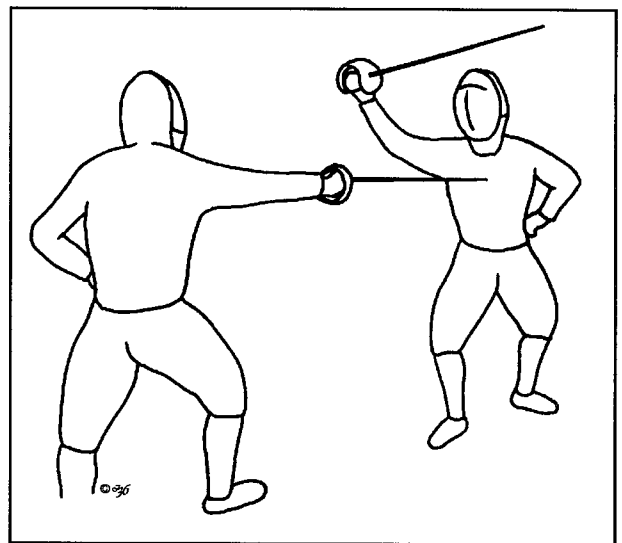
The angulated attack to the top cuff



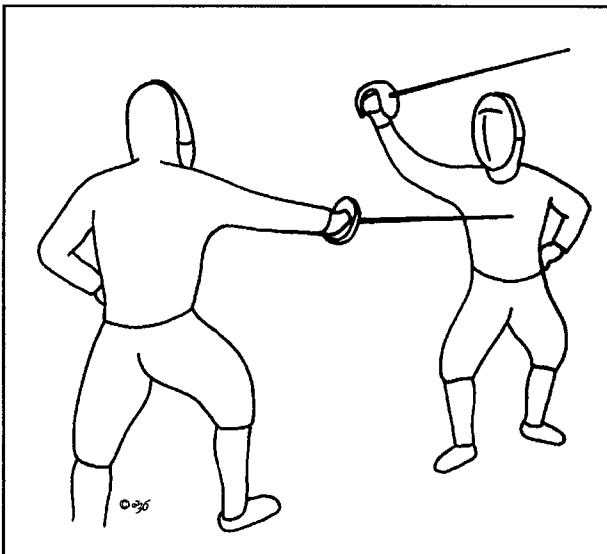
The angulated attack to under the cuff with the false cutting edge



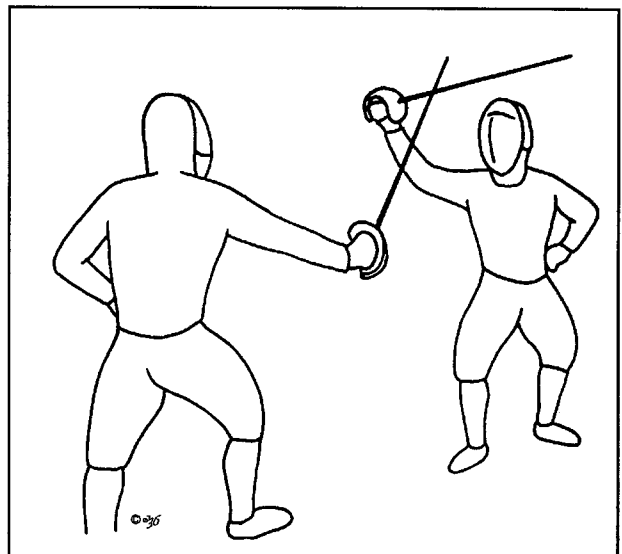
*The study of the banderolle
(first movement)*



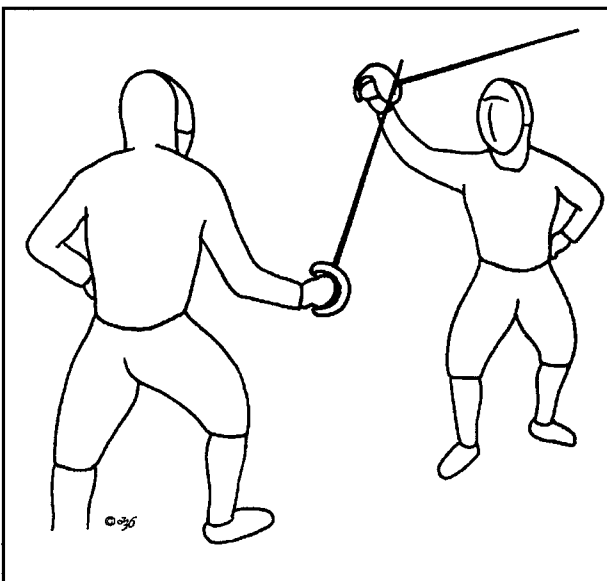
*The study of the banderolle
(beginning of the second part)*



*The study of the banderolle
(end of the second part)*



*The study of the banderolle
(third part)*



*The study of the banderolle
(fourth part - return on guard)*

- Invite in tierce position:
Attack with the point

2) *Attacks to the advanced target*

- Invite in seconde or feint with the point:
Attack to top cuff

- Slight invite in quarte or feint to flank:
Attack to outside cuff

- Invite in exaggerated tierce or feint to chest:
Attack to inside cuff

- Invite in quinte or uncovered feint to head:
Attack to underneath cuff

CHAPTER IX

DEFENSIVE ACTIONS

The conventions, the valid target area, and the manner in which strokes are carried out, give great importance to the parry, which is the basis of defence in sabre. Counter-offensive actions, which are limited by the conventions, add variety to defence. If well judged and executed, a counter-offensive action can thwart the offensive action and generally reduce the risks of compound attacks, because they leave the opponent uncertain as to the reflex he may provoke.

The character of defensive actions is not, as in Epee, influenced by the difference in distance between the advanced targets and the body, but rather by the nature of the opponent's offensive action. Defence must respect the following principles:

- 1) Use of the simple parry on any simple attack destined to hit the advanced target or the body. The counter-offensive action cannot gain time except perhaps in the case of bad technical execution of the offensive action.
- 2) Use of simple or successive parries or a counter-offensive action, according to tactical demands, for any attack consisting of two or more periods of fencing time.

Parries are preferable because they offer the possibility of executing an effective riposte. Counter-offensive actions used systematically risk being exploited by the opponent, and require sure judgment in order to gain a fencing time over the offensive action.

Two defensive systems are used. They differ in technical execution and tactical use, but it is important to combine them in order to have a complete and effective defence.

These two systems, which have historical bases, have been adapted to the modern sabre game.

1 - BORSODY DEFENSIVE SYSTEM

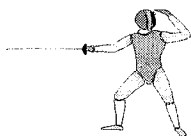
The use of three basic parries taken with the arm shortened; *tierce, quarte, quinte*. Originally this system was taught at the Austrian-Hungarian School of *Wiener-Neustadt*; it then was perfected by *Maître Borsody* who was director of Sabre teaching at the Academy of Sabre in Budapest.

2 - SANTELLI DEFENSIVE SYSTEM

The use of 3 basic parries with the arm 3/4 extended; *seconde, prime, quinte*. This system is similar to the old French method, but originates from Italian fencing. It was brought to Hungary by *Maître Santelli*, who perfected it and taught it in Budapest, where he settled.

Nowadays it is difficult to determine which of the two systems is in favour with Fencing Masters. They mainly end up by using them both in their teaching, with a more or less marked predominance of one or the other depending on their personal preference.

In fact the best defensive method contains the judicious use of both systems as a function of the opponent's offensive action, and will be further discussed in the following chapter.



CHAPTER X

SIMPLE PARRIES

I - DEFINITION

A parry is an action, made with the blade, which prevents the attack from landing by blocking the line in which the attack finishes.

II - CLASSIFICATION

A - First defensive system or basic system

- 1) *Tierce*: completely covers the outside of the body.
- 2) *Quarte*: completely covers the inside of the body.
- 3) *Quinte*: covers the head and shoulders.

B - Second defensive system or secondary system

- 1) *Seconde*: covers the outside of the body to the shoulder.
- 2) *Prime*: covers the inside of the body to the shoulder.
- 3) *Quinte*: covers the head and shoulders.

C - Complementary Parries

- 1) *Counter of tierce*: deflects the blade outside the body.
- 2) *Counter of seconde*: deflects the blade outside the body.
- 3) *Half counter of quinte*: deflects the blade upwards.

III - TECHNICAL STUDY

Whichever system is used, the following principles must be respected in the execution of simple parries:

- 1) Predominance of the rotation of the hand in order to immediately bring the cutting edge in opposition to the stroke and protect the hand during its movement.
- 2) Move the blade and hand in the same plane, to obtain complete closing of the line.
- 3) Block the parry by completely closing the line without pushing on the blade.
- 4) Opposition of the thumb in relation to the cutting edge of the opponent's blade; to give more firmness to the parry and resist the force and shock of the blades meeting.
- 5) The point of the blade slightly outside the line of the hand; to reinforce the parry done with the middle part of the blade.
- 6) The parry must be made, as much as possible, with the strong part (*forte*) of the blade to give maximum authority with minimal displacement of the hand.

A - Description of the simple parries

With the exception of the position of *quinte* (in the two systems) which is taken with the point slightly higher than the hand, the differences in execution allow them to be classified in one or the other system.

First system

The parries are taken with:

- a) The arm bent.
- b) The blade forming a near right angle with the forearm.
- c) The point much higher than the hand.

Second system

The parries are taken with:

- a) The arm 3/4 extended.
- b) The blade forming a very open angle with the arm.
- c) The point slightly lower than the hand.

I - FIRST DEFENSIVE SYSTEM OR BASIC PARRIES

1) *Tierce*:

Lateral or vertical parry depending on whether it is taken from quarte or quinte; blocks the attacks directed to the targets on the outside of the body.

2) *Quarte*:

Lateral or vertical parry depending on whether it is taken from tierce or quinte; blocks the attacks directed to the targets on the inside of the body.

3) *Quinte*:

Vertical parry. Blocks the attacks directed to the head (or shoulders).

II - SECOND DEFENSIVE SYSTEM OR SECONDARY PARRIES

1) *Seconde*:

Lateral or diagonal parry depending on whether it is taken from the position of prime or quinte, blocks the attacks directed to the flank.

2) *Prime*:

Lateral or diagonal parry, depending on whether it is taken from the position of seconde or quinte, blocks the attacks directed to the lower chest or those by banderolle.

3) *Quinte*:

Diagonal Parry. Blocks the attacks directed to the head (or shoulder).

III - COMPLEMENTARY SIMPLE PARRIES

The position of the blade at the moment of the offensive action does not always permit the use of the basic or secondary parries. Defence can be reinforced and varied with the following parries:

1) *Counter of Tierce*:

Circular parry; starting from an extended position of tierce, it takes the blade and deflects it to the outside against an attack to the upper forearm or to the head.

2) *Counter of seconde*:

Circular parry starting from a momentary position of seconde; it takes the blade and deflects it to the outside on an attack under the forearm or on an attack by point to the body.

3) *Half-counter of quinte*:

Semi-circular parry, starting from an extended tierce position; it takes the blade and deflects it upward by a movement of the hand from tierce to quinte. It defends against an attack to the head.

B - Execution of simple parries

The parry in Sabre is an action which blocks the opponent's blade before it reaches the target.

1) *Parries of the First system*:

The forearm, hand and blade move simultaneously; an angle of 120 degrees, formed between the blade and the forearm, is maintained during the execution of the parry.

2) *Parries of the Second System*:

The forearm, hand and blade move simultaneously; an angle of 160 degrees, formed between the blade and the arm, is maintained during the execution of the parry.

Note: To parry an attack with the point, the defensive action *deflects* the opponent's blade, similar to a parry in Foil. Whether it is a parry of

quarte or tierce, it is preferably executed as a beat to give greater speed to the riposte.

3) *Counter or half-counter parry:*

As in Foil, the action of the fingers must give predominance to the movement of the point; the hand moves in the desired line to deflect and block the opponent's blade.

Parries must be combined with displacements. For this reason they change in length, width and height.

- 1) The simple parry is short, larger or higher:
 - a) On a deep attack.
 - b) When it is executed with a step forward.
- 2) The simple parry is long, narrower and lower:
 - a) On an attack to the advanced target (cuff).
 - b) When it is executed with a step back.

IV - TACTICAL STUDY

Each defensive system has a tactical use that is well defined and each has advantages and disadvantages. The circumstances of the bout sometimes obliges a fencer to use the less classical, complementary parries. These are most effective when they benefit from the element of surprise.

A - First defensive system - tierce, quarte, quinte (short).

- 1) *Advantages:* They cover one complete side of the body. Performed with the arm shortened, they are authoritative and easily resist even a forceful stroke.
- 2) *Disadvantages:* The size of the movement in passing from the parry of tierce or quarte to the parry of quinte (or vice versa), makes the action easy to deceive.

B - Second defensive system - seconde, prime, quinte (long).

- 1) *Advantages:* They allow the fencer to catch the blade after a parry of quinte which has been deceived (successive parries). Taken with the

arm 3/4 extended, they only require a slight lateral displacement of the hand.

- 2) *Disadvantages:* The parries of seconde and prime do not cover the face to the left or the right. The parry of quinte exposes the outside cuff.

Parry of tierce - protects the outside cuff, the flank and the right cheek.

Parry of quarte - protects the inside cuff, the stomach, the chest and the left cheek.

The circumstances of the bout often force the fencer to leave *tierce* position which can make the parry of quinte difficult when an attack to the head is made. In this particular case, as in the following two cases, the use of quarte is justified:

- 1) When the fencer is in a position of tierce with the arm shortened and the point towards the outside: the deep attack to the head is difficult to parry with the parry of quinte, which first requires a semi-circular movement of the point before the hand moves. This requirement means that the parry takes longer to complete.
- 2) When the attack to the head is preceded by an action on the blade, for example, beat of quarte: this carries the blade past the outside line, shocks the hand, and places the fencer in a similar situation to the previous case.

However, the overuse of quarte for protection from attacks to the head exposes the fencer to an easy and rapid deception. Wherever practicable, it is preferable to use the parry of quinte with a step back.

Parry of quinte - protects the top of the cuff, the head and the shoulders. Of all the parries it is the easiest to execute. However, often in a bout a fencer is not able to parry quinte by simply raising the hand and blade to block the line of the opponent's attack.

A shrewd, tactical opponent takes into account the position of the defender's blade and chooses a moment to attack when the defender will have the greatest difficulty parrying quinte.

In these situations (mentioned in the two cases above) the defender must pass his blade under the opponent's blade (or in front of his point) in order to close the line, and sometimes he is unable to do this before the attack arrives.

Counter of tierce - Protects the same targets as quinte. This parry lacks strength and does not stop the attack reaching the head. It is used mainly for protecting the top cuff, but is easily deceived by a cutover to the head.

The parry of quinte remains the ideal parry for the attack to the head. If it is deceived it allows the parries of the second system to be used, which is practically impossible after the parries of quarte or counter of tierce.

It is always useful to vary the type, execution and timing of parries and combine their use with classic counter attacks. In this way the opponent's compound attacks can be thwarted. However, it is obvious the overuse of this method of defence will eliminate the element of surprise, and an alert opponent can quickly exploit a systematic or an habitual defensive pattern.

V - FAULTS TO AVOID

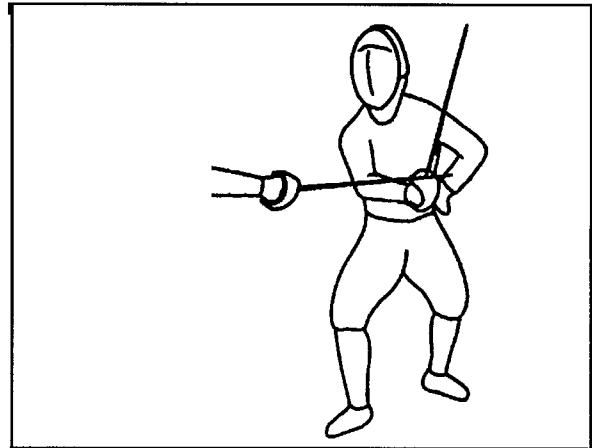
- 1) *Delayed rotation of the sabre guard:* the hand and the wrist remain uncovered and risk being reached by a stroke directed to the body.
- 2) *Delay of the blade or the hand:* found in sabreurs who do not maintain a constant angle between the arm and the blade. The parry is insufficient.
- 3) *Insufficient opposition of the cutting edge to the attacking stroke:* the parry lacks authority and the riposte lacks speed.
- 4) *The point of the blade drawn back (rentree):* the parry is often insufficient and lacks authority, especially when the attacking stroke is directed to the cheek.
- 5) *Insufficient covering:* often comes from a bad position of the sabre guard; the attack reaches the target before or at the same time as blade contact.
- 6) *Parry not blocked:* the fencer tries to push the blade away instead of blocking it and thus becomes vulnerable to the trompement. The riposte lacks speed and precision.

VI - GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

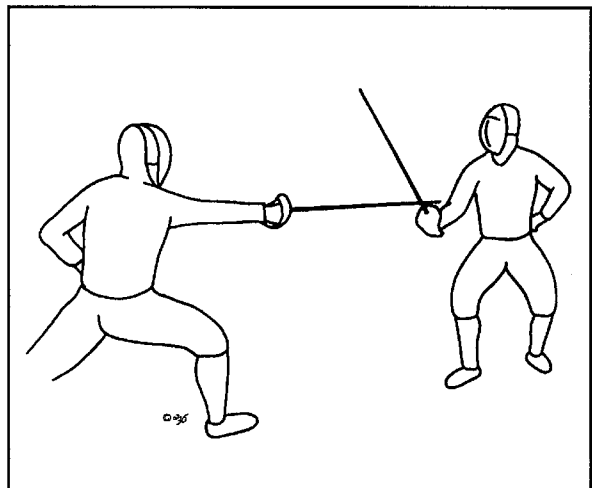
Defence in Sabre consists of natural movements. These movements, which seem in fact to be easily

executed, require much hard work for eventual faultless execution.

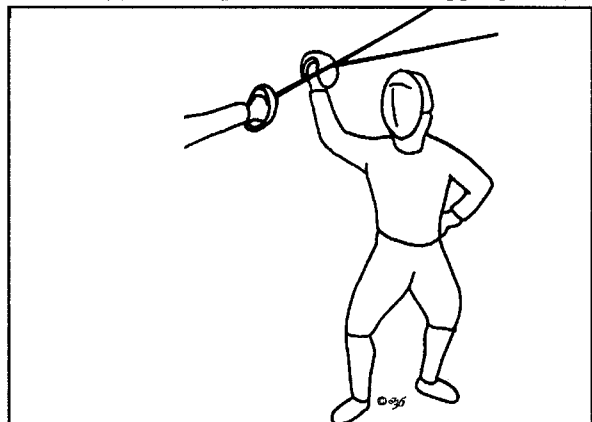
In particular, the correct displacements of the hand and the blade that the parry of quinte requires make it a difficult move to master. When coordinated with a retreat it is easier to execute, but still presents other difficulties, such as its involuntarily substitution in the bout by the parry of quarte, which is insufficient in most cases.



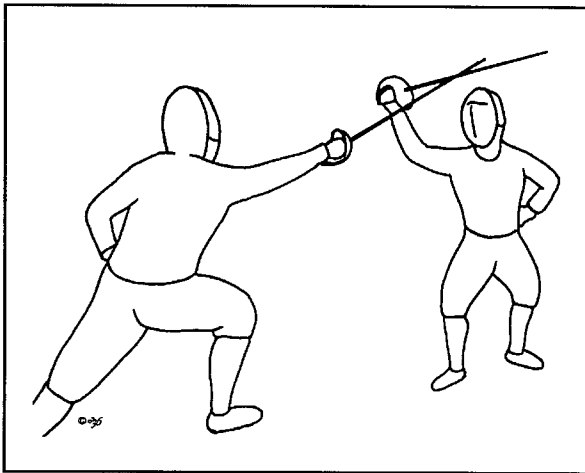
The shortened parry of quarte



The long parry of quarte (taken with stepping back)



The short parry of quinte



The long parry of quinte (taken with stepping back)

Generally, the first defensive system is used by calm fencers, possessing sure judgment and perfect technique. They parry at the final moment of the attack and thus obtain complete security. For this reason the first defensive system is called the *tactical system*. The second defensive system limits the movements of the hand and blade, particularly when another parry is required after a deception of quinte. It does, however, facilitate counter ripostes; its main advantage is that it allows a quick defensive reaction if an attack is parried. This system is called the *mechanical system*, or compound system. Flicked hits impose great mobility on the game of Sabre, since it is difficult to determine the length of the attack. This is why parries are often coordinated with displacements, and change in height, length and width, not only to block the opponent's offensive action, but also to prepare and ensure the riposte. The size of defensive movements does facilitate trompements which, in certain cases, can be executed at the end of the lunge. As in Foil, the parry must be executed in time. It is much more effective when the attack has been well judged, allowing the opponent to be hit with the riposte before he regains balance.

It is important to vary the defence by using counter-offensive actions. This must be the result of sure judgment and not caused by habitual or poor reflex reactions. Ill-judged counter attacks do not respect the conventions of sabre fencing, are easily exploitable and expose the user to simple offensive actions.

VIII - TEACHING RECOMMENDATIONS

All parries must be followed by an immediate riposte - the contact of the blades must trigger this offensive reflex. The quality of the parry dictates the immediacy and effectiveness of the riposte. The

Master must require that the student block the parry by contracting the fingers, bringing the cutting edge of the blade as perpendicular as possible to the attacking blade.

The contact of the blades must be clean. Any sliding resulting from a technical fault or a bad grip of the weapon, impedes the speed and precision of the riposte.

To obtain a correct parry in each exercise, the Master must control:

- the angle formed between the forearm and the blade.
- the grip on the handle.
- the position of the cutting edge.
- the blocking of the parry.
- the position of the hand and the blade.

When the execution of the parry is correct at a fixed distance, the Master varies the depth of his attacks, obliging the pupil to extend, contract, raise or lower the parry in order to obtain perfect covering and clean blade contact. As the pupil progresses, the parries are executed by combining them with a step back, always making sure that the blade contact takes place at the precise instant that the second foot lands on the ground. This gives a maximum of authority and sureness to the parry and allows the pupil's balance to be controlled. It also enables the riposte to be launched at a variety of distances without preparation.

In order to get the pupil used to feeling cuts and to develop his grip, the Master must vary the intensity of his actions. Occasionally he can simulate a cut to check:

- the position of the parry
- the blocking at the instant of blade contact
- the covering.

To develop a sense of distance, the Master must vary the rhythm of his actions, and the speed and size of his footwork. He avoids monotonous exercises that require only a little attention from the pupil and which limit his progress.

Parries must be taught from different starting positions, not only from tierce and seconde. The Master must vary these positions to simulate bout conditions and to develop the pupil's classical defensive reflex, regardless of the position in which he may find himself.

Because attacks on the preparation are numerous in sabre, the Master must condition the pupil to parry attacks executed:

- on a preparation of the feet or blade
- or on an extended arm (feint).

The parry of quinte is easy to execute from tierce guard position. However the Master must ensure that its execution corresponds to bouting conditions as often as possible: that is from the short parry position of tierce, which exposes the head, or from an extended arm (a line or a feint).

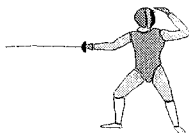
When the pupil becomes a confirmed sabreur, the Master teaches without speaking (attacking different lines without announcing the parry to be taken). The Master varies the distance, rhythm and intensity of his actions.

Certain imperfections in the lesson may not always come from the pupil. The Master must be

sure to:

- attack with his arm extended
- block his lunge
- make the stroke as perpendicular as possible in relation to the parry to be taken
- not push on the pupil's blade after contact
- always be at exact riposting distance
- present an immobile target for the riposte.

Different exercises at close distance (riposting distance) are suitable for a beginner. However, the training of a confirmed fencer who is preparing for competition must be composed of exercises at long distance, in circumstances that resemble as closely as possible bouting conditions.



CHAPTER XI

RIPOSTES AND COUNTER RIPOSTES

I - DEFINITION

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

II - CLASSIFICATION

Ripostes and counter-ripostes are classified in three categories:

- simple direct
- simple indirect
- compound (consisting of one or more feints)

For two same-handed fencers they are direct:

1) *After the parry of tierce:*

- a) Top cuff
- b) Head
- c) Right cheek

III - TECHNICAL STUDY

A - Description

1) *Simple direct:*

A riposte or counter-riposte is simple direct when it is executed from the line of the parry to all those targets left open by the final position of the opponent's attack.

2) *Simple indirect:*

A riposte or counter-riposte is simple indirect when it is executed from the line of the parry and avoids the opponent's blade either by a disengagement or by cutover.

3) *Compound* (of one or several feints):

A riposte or counter-riposte is compound when it deceives one or several parries.

B - Execution

Whether they are direct, indirect or compound, the ripostes are executed:

- 1) *Tac au tac:* in which the riposte immediately follows the parry.
- 2) *By broken time:* when one or several fencing times separate the riposte or counter-riposte from the parry.

2) *After the parry of quarte:*

- a) Top cuff
- b) Head - right cheek
- c) Banderolle
- d) Point hit

3) *After the parry of quinte:*

- a) Underneath cuff
- b) Flank
- c) Point hit

4) *After the parry of seconde:*

- a) Outside cuff
- b) Flank
- c) Point hit
- d) Head - right cheek

5) *After the parry of prime:*

- a) Underneath cuff
- b) Point hit
- c) Flank

The other simple ripostes or counter-ripostes are indirect because they require a displacement of the blade and the hand to reach the desired target while avoiding the opponent's blade and arm.

According to the distance at which simple ripostes and counter-ripostes are executed, they respect the technical principles relating to simple

attacks. Compound ripostes and counter-ripostes, at close distance are made with a slight delay in the extension of the weapon arm in the first, or subsequent feints, to avoid meeting the opponent's blade and to deceive parries more easily.

The ripostes and counter-ripostes are done:

- from the position of guard
- with a step forward
- with a jump forward
- with a lunge
- from a lunge forward
- with a step forward and lunge

IV - TACTICAL STUDY

Ripostes and counter-ripostes are executed on different targets ranging from the advanced targets to the body. Displacements combined with the parry determine the choice of the target for the riposte. It is important to choose advanced target whenever the bouting circumstances permit, especially when the distance to the body requires a step and lunge. The precision required for ripostes and counter ripostes to the advanced target does not favour the use of step/jump forward and lunge. It is preferable to riposte to body if an opponent quickly returns to long distance after the failure of his offensive action.

A - Simple direct riposte

The simple direct riposte can be executed with great speed, but must not be launched without judgment. Its use is justified by:

- 1) *The position of the blade* of the opponent at the moment of the parry.
- 2) *Exposed targets: choosing the target the furthest from the hand* of the opponent, obliges him to make a larger movement if he wants to parry.
- 3) *The defensive reflex*: the least natural parry and riposte that the opponent can attempt after the failure of his attack.

However, it is not always possible to determine the riposte that should be used by relying on these principles. Also the riposte directed to the head is

generally favoured by most fencers because it is difficult to protect this target at close range, after the failure of an attack. However, the position of the hand and blade after the attack to flank does allow the head to be quickly and effectively protected.

B - Indirect riposte

Similar to the direct riposte, the indirect riposte can also be executed very quickly. Its use is justified by:

- 1) *The position of the opponent's blade and arm* at the moment of the parry; they should be avoided as rapidly as possible.
- 2) *The exposed targets: choosing the target furthest from the hand* without allowing the redoublement of the offensive action.
- 3) *The defensive reflex* that provokes the parry.

The parries of tierce, quinte and prime favour the use of indirect ripostes, as they allow them to be delivered at great speed.

C - Compound Ripostes

The riposte can be preceded by one or several feints. The feint has the aim of forcing the opponent to cover one line so a hit can be made in another line. The feint must be:

- 1 - Thrown out and blocked.
- 2 - Executed with a slight delay of the arm and the blade.
- 3 - Followed by a trompement consisting of minimal displacement of the blade, allowing for maximum speed.

The compound riposte can consist of several feints. This forces the opponent's hand "to be taken up" in the feints, but it also gives the opponent the chance of executing a remise or a redoublement. It is recommended after the parries of quinte and more particularly after tierce, as it often makes the opponent react instinctively.

When two opposite handed fencers are fencing, the tactical principles should be reversed as follows:

- 1 - The targets offered to the direct riposte after the parry of tierce are the same as after the parry of quarte for two same handed fencers.

- 2 - The riposte to the flank becomes a riposte to the chest or vice-versa.
- 3 - Indirect ripostes are recommended after the parry of quarte but not advisable after the parry of tierce.
- 4 - Compound ripostes are executed more easily after the parry of quarte than after any other parry.

D - Counter-riposte

The counter riposte is executed after having parried the opponent's riposte. They are used often in Sabre and must, in principle, be directed to a different target than the attack. The parry preceding the counter-riposte is taken from a position with the arm extended. Therefore it is important to use a parry of the second system because it permits:

- 1 - Blocking the opponent's riposte without exaggerated withdrawal of the arm.
- 2 - Parrying with minimum displacement of the point.
- 3 - A fast and easy counter riposte, the point needing only a slight displacement to reach the target.

The first defensive system can be used when the fencer has parried the offensive action by staying in the guard position.

Many fencers return to tierce by reflex after the failure of their offensive action. Obviously, in this case, it is preferable to launch ripostes and counter ripostes in other lines, particularly to the head.

V - FAULTS TO AVOID

Only the faults specific to ripostes and counter-ripostes are discussed here. Those concerning the technical execution of additional movements have been dealt with in the chapter on simple attacks.

- 1) *Riposte too short*: results from an exaggerated retreat, or one not followed by an appropriate displacement, permitting the return to correct distance by the opponent.
- 2) *Riposte done with the forte of the blade*: this fault often follows an opponent's deep attack.

The extension of the arm must be a function of distance - if too accentuated, the stroke cannot be given with the fingers.

- 3) *Withdrawal of the arm followed by an indirect riposte*: results from a parry that is too large or an incorrect grip on the weapon. Is vulnerable to remises and redoublements.
- 4) *Feint not blocked or well positioned*: often meets the opponent's blade, which provokes an immediate counter-riposte.
- 5) *Bad grip on the weapon*: the inability to use the fingers properly prevents a correct parry, and in the case of failure of the riposte, does not allow the effective continuation of the fencing phrase.

VI - GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

The defensive actions in sabre are natural movements which facilitate ripostes and counter ripostes. They are essential for defence, unlike counter-attacks which are limited by the conventions governing the weapon. Ripostes and counter-ripostes should also be varied and combined with appropriate footwork to ensure their effectiveness.

Fencing in Sabre competitions requires sure and quick judgement. Every fencer is an individual with reflexes which allow him to execute his favourite parries and counter ripostes. Therefore the choice of ripostes depends upon:

- 1 - the parry taken by the opponent after the failure of his attack
- 2 - the ever possible remise or redoublement.

These reactions can be exploited. In the first case use indirect or compound ripostes with broken time. In the second case use parries executed as a beat followed by direct ripostes.

The coordination of ripostes or counter ripostes with footwork requires an exact notion of distance and perfect balance. These qualities allow them to be executed immediately the opponent's blade is found.

It is very unusual to see the execution of ripostes and counter-ripostes that dominate the opponent's blade. However, the parry of seconde, followed by a riposte by point direct, can sometimes be executed with opposition. The rarity of such actions, even though not technically impossible, suggests they should be used sparingly.

VII - TEACHING RECOMMENDATIONS

These teaching recommendations complete those already given in the chapters on simple attacks and parries. The quality of ripostes and counter-ripostes as offensive actions naturally depend on the quality of the parry.

It is more difficult to hit the target with precision after having parried the opponent's offensive instead of starting from a guard position. The Master must insist, during the lesson, on the precision of the ripostes and counter-ripostes, and require *the complete extension of the arm without unnecessary movement of the blade and point; as well as controlled covering in each action:*

To have the riposte correctly executed the Master must:

- 1 - make his attack with his arm completely extended and without pressing on the student's blade (finger action).
- 2 - make the invitation which corresponds to the desired riposte without facilitating or impeding the pupil's movement.
- 3 - whatever the distance, present a stationary target.

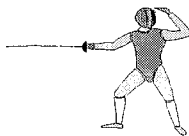
To have the counter-riposte correctly executed the Master must:

- 1 - parry the pupil's riposte with a precise parry, without pressing on or pushing away the pupil's blade.
- 2 - counter riposte to hit, with a complete extension of the weapon arm.
- 3 - make the invitation which corresponds to the desired counter-riposte and keep exact distance.

In both cases the Master can:

- 1 - accelerate the invitations and reactions to obtain quick execution of the riposte and counter-riposte.
- 2 - vary the rhythm of his actions to attract ripostes or counter-ripostes executed from beat parries or executed with broken time.

The Master varies the distance as often as possible, moves the pupil around and controls the neatness of the actions by requiring that the strokes reach target with only the last centimetres of the blade. As soon as the pupil possesses good technique, the Master makes the pupil practice the ripostes and counter-ripostes while developing the ability to assess and exploit a favourable situation at a glance. In this way he develops the pupil's hand/eye coordination and timing in conditions resembling bouting situations.



CHAPTER XII

THE FEINTS - COMPOUND ATTACKS

I - DEFINITION

- A) *Feint of the attack.*
- B) *Compound attack*
- C) *Deceptions*

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

II - CLASSIFICATION

The manner in which strokes are carried out and the variations of distance, allow the feints to be classified in three categories, as a function of their technical execution:

- 1) Feint with the guard
- 2) Flicked feint (extremely fast extension of the arm)
- 3) Feint with the "foot raised".

The feints of the attack can be simple or compound.

A - Simple feints of the attacks

There are as many simple feints as there are simple attacks. They can be directed to:

- 1) The advanced target
- 2) The body.

B - Feints of the compound attack

The combination of different simple feints of the attack, either to the advanced target or to the body, create the compound feints. As for the simple feints they can be directed:

- 1) *To the advanced target:* these are extremely rare, as the position of the target does not justify them.
- 2) *To the body:*
 - feint head - flank
 - feint head - banderolle
 - feint head - flank etc.

- 3) *To the advanced targets and to the body. Some examples are:*

On the tierce guard - feint to the outside cuff, head.

On the guard of seconde - feint to the top cuff, flank etc.

III - TECHNICAL STUDY

A - Description

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

B - Execution

- 1) *Feint with the guard:*

The feint with the guard is only executed at close range (riposting distance). It consists of a rapid half-extension of the arm, the hand being carried towards the desired target to attract the parry, the blade vertical.

The displacement of the guard which is clearly visible by the opponent, triggers his defensive reflex. The retention of the blade and the action of the fingers avoids the opponent's attempt to find the blade.

- 2) *Flicked feint:*

The flicked feint is executed at middle distance. It is an exact simulation of a corresponding simple attack. A fast extension of the arm and correct finger action projects the end of the

blade towards the target; this triggers the opponent's reaction. In the first part of the action the feint is blocked, so that the end of the blade does not contact the opponent's blade and the *trompement* does not require a withdrawal of the blade or a bending of the arm.

3) *Feint with the "foot raised"*:

The feint "with the foot raised" is executed at middle distance and long distance. Like the flicked feint, it is a directed action. The opponent's defensive reflex is triggered by the start of the front foot in the lunge.

The differences in execution of the feints mentioned do not exclude certain general principles which must be respected so that each feint is capable of triggering the opponent's defensive reflexes and exploiting them. These principles are:

- 1) *Timing*: the feint must be made at the right moment and in a way which obliges the opponent to take a parry and not to use a counter-offensive action.
- 2) *Speed*: the feint must give the illusion of a simple stroke destined to hit.
- 3) *Acceleration*: the opponent's defensive reactions often fall, involuntarily, into the same speed as the feint. For this reason the *trompement* must be even faster than the feint in order to deceive the feint.
- 4) *Precision*: the precision and direction of the feint provokes an expected defensive reaction by menacing an appropriate target.
- 5) *Inclination of the blade*: the inclination of the blade varies according to the distance at which the feint is executed. In order to give it the feint as much realism as possible and to enable the deception to be made whilst progressing towards the desired target it must be:
 - a) Nearly vertical at close range.
 - b) Slightly inclined at middle distance to make it more threatening while maintaining the facility to deceive.
 - c) Inclined towards the target at long distance in order to position the feint as far forward as possible and thus oblige the opponent to take a parry without giving him the possibility of

using a counter-offensive action, which is ever possible on actions with a step forward and lunge.

- 6) *The conventions*: as in Foil, the contact with the opponent's blade gives the right of the immediate riposte. It is therefore necessary to deceive the parries without the slightest contact.

In order to deceive parries in Sabre the attacker must place the end of his blade sufficiently far from the anticipated trajectory of the opponent's blade. The *trompement* is executed in two ways:

1) *By cutover*

The blade passes over the end of the opponent's blade. The path that the blade follows is quite long and should not leave the line in which the parry is made except in the final part of the *trompement*.

2) *By a disengagement*

The blade goes in front of the parry, which requires quite a large movement particularly when the *trompement* is made on a parry of the first system. Because of this, its execution is slower than the cutover.

The use of different *trompements* depends upon:

- the feint
- the opponent's parry
- the target to be reached.

Certain technical principles should be respected whilst taking the shortest route to reach the desired target. These are:

- 1) Deceive the parries of the first system by cutover, when the hand of the opponent is low and the blade is inclined towards the front.
- 2) Deceive the parries of the first system, by disengagement when the opponent's hand is high and the blade nearly vertical.
- 3) Always deceive the parries of the second system by disengagement, since the position of the arm and the opponent's blade require too large a movement backwards to use a cutover effectively.

- 4) The trompement by cutover is executed by a flexion of the wrist backwards, helped by the action of the fingers, without any retraction of the arm.
- 5) The trompement by disengagement is done with the arm extended, the extremity of the blade should progress forward with acceleration.
- 6) The initial feints are developed with the arm extended but with a slight reserve, which allows the deception of the blade to occur progressively without bending the arm.

The effectiveness of the feints is reinforced by footwork. The various combinations of blade and feet are dependent on distance and the nature of the feint.

-The feint with the guard: is executed exclusively at close range and can only be combined with an "appel" of the foot.

-The flicked feint: can be combined with the "appel" of the foot, the start of the front foot, the final action of the step forward, the jump and the half-lunge.

-The feint with the foot raised: does not require any combination.

Attacks consisting of one feint are generally done with acceleration to reach the target with maximum speed. When they are composed of several feints, the change of rhythm can be used to opposite effect, *for example:* the first feints are very rapid to disorient the opponent and provoke wide parries; the final action is slower, to the exposed target.

IV - TACTICAL STUDY

A - Feints with the guard

Feints with the guard are not used much when attacking as they expose the fencer to counter-attacks to the head. They are used in compound ripostes and counter-ripostes, but at distances which only require the extension of the arm. The initial movement of the arm which begins a feint with the arm retracted is sometimes sufficient to

provoke a parry; the arm only extending with the trompement. The risks of counter-attacks are reduced by the guard which effectively protects the advanced targets.

B - Flicked feints

The flicked feints are technically the most difficult to execute. They are used at middle distance and must possess all the qualities of the corresponding simple attack until the moment of the trompement. A fencer who remains well balanced can very easily deceive the provoked parry and attack with great speed. If executed from long distance these feints lose their effectiveness and give the impression of a simple attack that lands short without threatening the opponent or provoking a defensive reaction.

Generally, they are used on nervous fencers who can mistake them for simple attacks.

C - Attacks with the foot "raised"

Contrary to flicked feints, the feints with the foot raised are guided movements, and are more effective, in general, on calm fencers. The fast extension of the arm is not sufficient to make them react and they wait to parry the development of the attack. The trompement occurs during the lunge when the feint, which by now is sufficiently deep, provokes a parry. The trompement of the parry during the lunge hinders the use of the flicked feint, which usually meets the opponent's blade or requires a flexion of the arm to deceive it, making the latter vulnerable to counter-offensive actions.

The feints with the "foot raised" are used at long distance.

The use of feints obviously depends on the opponent's defence. An attack consisting of only one feint can be parried quite easily. Therefore, it is usual to see compound attacks consisting of two feints, having the aim of disorienting the opponent.

The multiplicity of feints sometimes allows a fencer to benefit from a favourable opening, but these actions require a certain time to execute and give the opponent a chance to recover and counter-attack before the attack finishes.

When a fencer is faster than the opponent, he must use the entire range of simple attacks and only use compound attacks after being sure of the opponent's defensive reflexes, which he does by executing false attacks. The overuse of compound attacks is a tactic that can quickly lead to failure.

Two opposite handed fencers do not use the same compound attacks for the following reasons:

- 1) The movements of the blade required for parries hamper classical *trompements* which become difficult to execute.
- 2) A left handed fencer rarely reacts in *quinte* and only occasionally uses the parry of *seconde* which does not offer sufficient protection.

The most natural reflex defensive action for a left handed fencer is the parry of *quarte*. In this case, the most effective compound attacks are:

- a) Feint chest - head
- b) Feint chest - hit with the point
- c) Feint head - head (by deceiving the parry of *quarte* if this is used in place of the parry of *quinte*), etc...

V - FAULTS TO AVOID

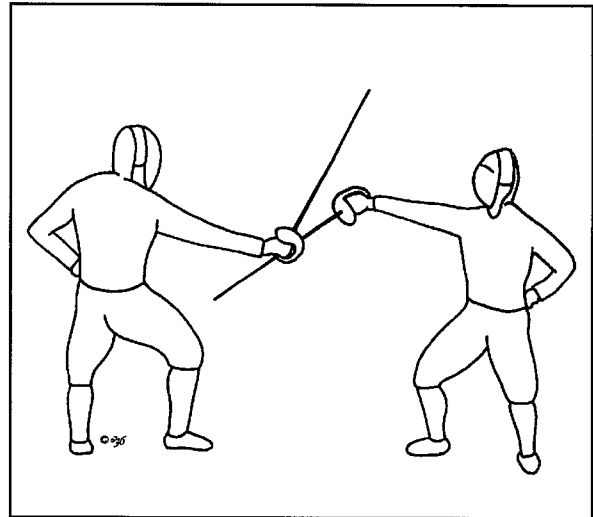
The general faults discussed in Foil remain valid and only those specific to compound offensive actions in Sabre are dealt with here.

- 1) *Feint not blocked*: the blade often falls into the opponent's parry and gives him the right to the riposte. Also the deception of the opponent's parry requires a backwards movement of the blade.
- 2) *Blade angulated too far forward*: same inconveniences as 1)
- 3) *Arm stiff in the first feint*: requires a muscular reaction for giving the hit, either by unlocking the elbow or by a flexion of the forearm.
- 4) *Arm retracted in the feint(s)*: lack of realism in the feint; exposes the fencer to counter-attacks to the body or the head.
- 5) *Lack of covering*: exposes the fencer to counter-attacks to the advanced targets.

VI - GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

The inclination given to the blade in the execution of the feint is very important. It must:

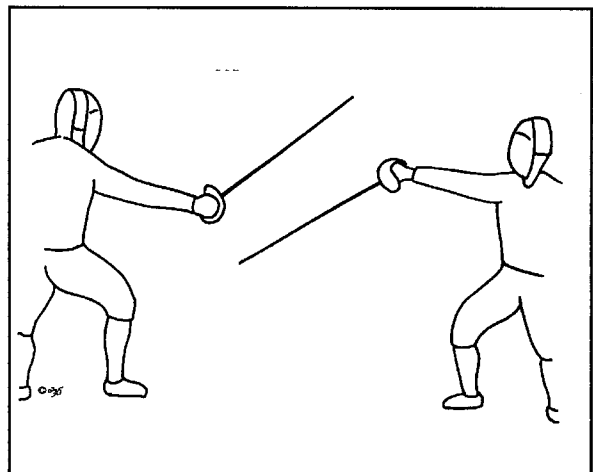
- 1 - sufficiently threaten the opponent and provoke a defensive reflex
- 2 - avoid the defensive reflex action and quickly exploit it.



The angle of the blade for feints at close range

So that these principles are respected the angle between the forearm and the blade must be:

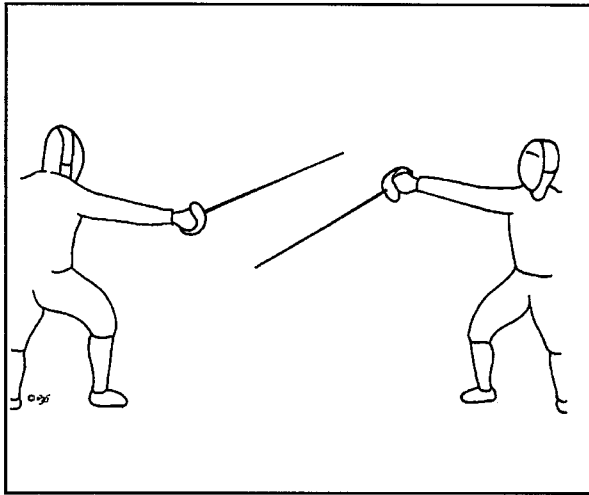
- 1 - variable according to the distance separating the fencers.
- 2 - constant for all feints executed at the same distance.



The angle of the blade for feints at middle distance

This angle is approximately:

- from 90 to 100° at close range
- from 110 to 130° at middle distance
- from 140 to 160° at long distance



The angle of the blade in the feints at large distance

When the feint is flicked, the angle of inclination of the blade is more difficult to control, but the main consideration, above all others, is to avoid the opponent's blade.

Some sabreurs execute compound attacks by executing several successive steps without preliminary extension of the weapon arm. The distance is thereby reduced and the feint with the guard can be launched by a small, brisk movement forwards and reinforced by an oscillation of the blade towards the desired target. This is generally sufficient to provoke the expected defensive reflex and the execution is similar to that of compound ripostes. It offers the following advantages:

- the blade does not risk meeting the opponent's blade during the feint.
- it allows the hit to be given in the final part of the action, when the target is exposed.
- it allows any counter-attacking action to the advanced target to be easily parried.

The disadvantages are:

- this tactic is ineffective on an opponent who retreats and keeps his distance.
- it exposes the fencer to counter-attacks to the head because the shortened position of the weapon arm makes the parry of quinte difficult.

In the case of a compound attack at long distance (step and lunge), the extension of the

weapon arm must be correctly coordinated with the step. Its extension begins slightly before the front foot moves and finishes at the moment the rear foot lands back on the ground. This coordination must be perfect in order to limit the possibilities of counter-attacks on the preparation, and also to avoid:

- counter offensive actions to the body when the weapon arm extends late or after the step forward.
- counter-offensive actions to the advanced targets when the weapon arm is completely extended before the start of the step.

VII - APPROPRIATE DEFENCE

The defensive actions vary according to the bouting circumstances and rely on hand/eye coordination, technique and judgement.

A - Reflex or successive defensive actions

These are used by a fencer who is attacked and who is uncertain as to the final part of the opponent's offensive actions. He should take successive parries the last of which must always be from the second system and *taken whilst retreating*. This defensive action is linked to mechanics and hand/eye coordination, as well as perfect balance.

B - Premeditated defensive actions

This defence is used when the opponent's attack has been anticipated. The defensive choices are:

- 1) *The use of the first defensive system:* consists of not reacting to the feint or feints, then parrying the final part of the attack with a parry of the first system.
- 2) *The use of the second defensive system* which consists of simulating defensive movements (false half parries) then parrying the final part of the attack with a parry of the second system.
- 3) *The use of counter-offensive actions. These are:*
 - a) execute a stop hit (with the point) if the

compound attack is executed with a step forward and lunge.

b) gain a fencing time on the compound attack by counter-attacking to the body with a half-lunge.

c) gain a fencing time on the compound attack by executing a counter-attack to the advanced target (cuff or forearm).

VIII - TEACHING RECOMMENDATIONS

The teaching recommendations given in the corresponding chapter in Foil are valid. Only those specific to the feints and compound attacks in Sabre are discussed here.

From the beginning, the Master must attach importance to the extension of the weapon arm in the feint and to the position of the pupil's blade, according to the distance in order to obtain:

- a supple movement without muscular contraction
- good covering
- a fast and progressive deception.

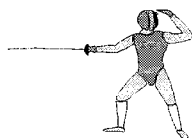
When the attack consists of several feints, they must be executed while progressing into the Master's defensive system and whilst coordinating the action of the fingers with the final *trompement*. The flicked feint, which is more difficult, must only be taught to pupils who already possess a well trained hand and good speed in the extension of the weapon arm. In actions composed of several feints, only the feint preceding the final *trompement* is flicked.

In order to get the pupil used to changes in rhythm, the Master must vary the speed of his parries. To be sure that the pupil deceives them at the correct moment, he varies the time of execution.

To develop the pupil's ability to assess and exploit a situation instantly, the Master makes him execute a simple attack with a step forward and lunge, sometimes taking the parry at the beginning of the feint which forces the pupil to deceive the blade and attack immediately.

All these actions must be executed with *perfect balance*. The Master must particularly watch that the pupil does not move his centre of gravity forwards when making the feint, because he will no longer be able to react appropriately if there is an unexpected response from the opponent.

The greater the number of feints that a compound attack contains, the greater must be the delay in launching the lunge.



CHAPTER XIII

SUCCESSIVE PARRIES

I - DEFINITION

A) *Successive parry*

B) *Feint of the parry*

Refer to the corresponding sections of chapter XV in Foil Workbook.

II - CLASSIFICATION

The classification of the successive parries is determined by the choice of the defensive system used for closing the final line of the opponent's compound attack.

- Basic system
- Secondary system
- Mixed system

III - TECHNIQUE

Whichever combination of successive parries is used, the execution of each one must respect the technical principles defined in the corresponding chapter on simple parries.

A - Description of the successive parries

- 1) *Basic system*: is composed of two or several parries taken with the arm bent.

E.G.

- From tierce position: quarte + tierce.
- From tierce position: quinte + quarte.

- 2) *Secondary system*: is composed of two or more parries taken with the arm 3/4 extended.

E.G.

- From seconde position: quinte + prime
- From seconde position: quinte + second + quinte

- 3) *Mixed system*: is composed of two or more parries taken in combination from the basic, secondary, and complementary systems.

E.G.

- From tierce position:
counter tierce + quarte + quinte.
- From tierce position:
quarte + quinte + seconde.

B - Execution of successive parries

The technical execution of each simple parry included in the successive parries is defined in the chapter on simple parries. The perfect execution of each of these dictates the quality of subsequent parries.

Some technical principles of execution specific to particular combinations of several simple parries are to be respected.

- 1) Always give predominance to the rotation of the guard in each parry so that it completely closes the line at the moment it meets the attack.
- 2) Maintain a constant angle (arm - forearm - blade) whatever system is used in order that the extremity of the blade is not advanced or delayed in relation to the movement of the arm or the forearm.
- 3) Block each parry that has been deceived so that consecutive parries are able to catch the opponent's compound attack.

- 4) Always take a secondary parry after a parry of quinte which has been deceived in order to catch the compound attack.
- 5) Coordinate parries with retreating to give more security to defence.

IV - TACTICAL STUDY

Of the three systems of successive parries used in bouts, the secondary system is the one that offers the greatest advantages. Sometimes the other systems can be used successfully, but in clearly defined situations. Below they are classed in a preferential order of effectiveness.

A - Secondary system

This is the most effective as it enables an attack of one or several feints to be caught. The movements done with the arm 3/4 extended are smaller. The opponent's blade is never very far from the defender's blade which makes it possible to catch the attack, especially when different parries are coordinated with retreats.

This system is used in the following conditions:

- 1) After a parry of quinte that has been deceived.
- 2) When the sabreur is on guard in seconde.
- 3) To defend oneself from attacks made on a preparation consisting of feints.
- 4) In all positions after compound offensive actions, such as riposte, counter-riposte, attack or reprise.

B - Mixed system

This consists of three varieties, however only one is recommended:

- 1) *Secondary Parry & Basic Parry* - This method allows the attack to progress deep into the defence because the defender's arm must bend to make a second or subsequential basic parry. Moreover, the forearm remains vulnerable throughout the entire execution and attacks intended to hit the body can inadvertently hit this target.

- 2) *Basic Parry & Secondary Parry* - this sequence often occurs because a fencer, who has come on guard in tierce, is provoked into quarte by a feint to the chest or by point. The use of a subsequent secondary parry is a justifiable defensive response.

- 3) *Complementary Parry & Secondary or Basic Parry* - this method of defence has little chance to succeed against a compound attack. The attacker's blade only has a very short distance to travel to reach the intended target (generally the head) before the second parry can be made. This defence is often used by foilists or epeeists who occasionally fence Sabre. An example would be counter or tierce - quarte.

C - Basic system

Its use is justified on compound attacks such as: feint - point hit - cheek; when the parrier is on guard in tierce.

However its use is not recommended starting from, or passing through, a position of quinte. Here the defensive movements are too large to effectively protect the lines of tierce and quarte and the problems that result are identical to those found in the first mixed system.

V - FAULTS TO AVOID

The faults mentioned in the chapters relating to simple parries in Sabre and successive parries in Foil are valid. Only the faults specific to the successive parries in Sabre are discussed here.

- 1) *Exaggerated size of the last parry*: highly visible and easy to deceive. It results from not blocking the preceding parries
- 2) *Progressive retraction of the arm*: comes from bad judgement of distance. Allows the opponent's offensive action to progress deep into the defence.
- 3) *Throwing the weight of the body on to the rear leg*: is the result of poor footwork. The defender cannot maintain correct distance and is obliged to parry earlier than otherwise necessary.
- 4) *Bad choice of successive parry*: is the result of poor technique. The sabreur is very vulnerable to compound attacks.

VI - GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

In spite of the emphasis sabreurs place on the use of counter-offensive actions against compound attacks, they are still caught out by well executed feints which provoke successive parries.

If a sabreur can provoke or anticipate the opponent's compound attack the use of successive parries which contain half-parries is an excellent tactic. The half-parry, or false parry, contains a hint of a real parry, giving the attacker the illusion that his feint has been successful. This ploy enables the final part of the attack to be parried with a degree of certainty.

Some sabreurs use the mixed system of successive parries. The first parry taken is usually quarte or counter tierce and they generally use this defence against the following actions:

- feint cuff, cutover to head
- feint head, attack to head.

The use of this defensive pattern sometimes allows the feint to be met, which gives the defender the right to riposte. However, if the first parry is deceived the compound attack is usually successful.

A fine appreciation of distance is of paramount importance in the use of successive parries, which must be used with small, fast retreats to hamper the progression of attacks with a step, or several steps, or a jump, followed by a lunge.

Only a few sabreurs use the secondary system to parry compound ripostes or counter-ripostes despite the advantages this system offers. Instead, most sabreurs rely on the basic system which obliges them to retract the arm to parry. These fencers lose precious time, both in making the parry, which in turn delays the start of the riposte, and in the riposte itself which has farther to travel.

Left-handed fencers have difficulty with the second system of successive parries. For example, the parry of seconde sometimes proves to be insufficient against attacks to the flank between two opposite-handed fencers. Instead they prefer to limit themselves to parries of the basic system which seem to offer them better overall security.

VII - TEACHING RECOMMENDATIONS

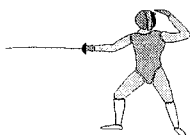
The teaching recommendations in this chapter are complementary to those previously discussed in the chapter on simple parries.

The study of the successive parries must follow

the following progression in the formation of a sabreur.

- 1) During the period of initiation, it consists of exercises without blade contact in which the pupil must follow the Master's blade in each feint, while clearly blocking each position through which he passes.
- 2) The Master coordinates his feints with advances, the pupil conversely coordinates his successive parries with retreats. When desired by the Master, each parry, or indeed several parries, can be combined with a step back.
- 3) The Master sometimes completes the final part of his action to hit. The pupil must close the threatened line correctly and riposte if required. It is understood that all these movements are combined with displacements.
- 4) The Master attacks, simple or compound, with the help of one or several feints. The pupil must riposte as soon as there is blade contact. To make the exercise easier, the Master can execute a simple attack with a lunge, and a compound attack with a step forward and lunge when it consists of several feints.
- 5) The Master executes a simple attack with a lunge or a compound attack with a step forward and lunge. The pupil must parry the simple attack and riposte, or counter attack to the advanced target on the compound attack followed by a parry with a retreat and riposte with a lunge. This final exercise is only recommended for sabreurs possessing a good technical level, it is very good for developing reflexes and the exploitation of a situation.

The Master must develop the pupil's ability to use the secondary system of successive parries for the execution of counter-ripostes. Practically no sabreur possesses this system as a reflex, so the Master must devote time to it in each lesson. Particularly recommended are counter ripostes after an attack or a riposte to the head, finishing to the flank or by *banderolle*.



CHAPTER XIV

ATTACKS ON THE BLADE

The beat is the only effective attack on the blade that can be used in Sabre and therefore is the only subject discussed in this chapter.

I - DEFINITION

The beat is a stroke which is executed, blade against blade with a sharp, crisp, striking action. According to its intensity, it has the aim of preparing or facilitating attacks.

II - DEFINITION

In the absence of the engagement in Sabre the different positions of the blade and hand from which the beat can be executed are classified into two categories:

- point higher than the hand
- point lower than the hand

A - Beats from positions with the point higher than the hand

1) *Beat of quarte:*

Starting from tierce position, the wrist is rotated inwards to bring the cutting edge towards the opponent's blade. At the same time contract the fingers and slightly flex the wrist downwards, while moving the blade diagonally to strike the opponent's blade in the middle part (second 1/3rd) to middle part.

The beat of quarte can also be executed with the back cutting edge by rotating the wrist to bring it towards the opponent's blade.

2) *Beat of tierce:*

Starting from the classical tierce-position or even from a position slightly more open, rotate the wrist outwards to bring the cutting edge towards the opponent's blade. At the same time contract the fingers and slightly flex the wrist

downwards, whilst moving the blade diagonally to strike the opponent's blade, as has been described for the beat of quarte.

The beat of tierce can be done starting from a position of quarte. To achieve this, first move the hand laterally, coordinating the different movements described in the previous paragraph.

B - Beats from positions with the point lower than the hand

1) *Beat of seconde:*

Starting from seconde position, with the point turned slightly inwards, contract the fingers and reinforce this action by a slight flexion of the wrist outwards. Strike the opponent's blade on its middle section. The beat is executed laterally without any movement of the forearm or the arm.

The beat of seconde can be done starting from the positions of quinte or prime. In these cases bring the arm into the line of seconde and execute the beat, by coordinating the different movements, described in the previous paragraph.

2) *Beat of prime:*

Starting from seconde position, rotate the wrist inwards to bring the back cutting edge towards the opponent's blade, moving the forearm laterally in the same direction. At the same time, contract the fingers, and reinforce this action by a slight flexion of the wrist upwards. Strike the opponent's blade on its second 1/3rd with the back cutting edge.

The beat of prime can be done starting from the position of quinte, but it requires a movement of the arm initially in order to come into the position of prime.

C - Specific cases

The position with the point higher than the hand sometimes occurs (e.g. in a feint) and presents an opportunity of using the beat of quinte (counter-time).

Beat of quinte:

Starting from a position with the fingers under the blade that is almost horizontal and crossed (exposed tierce position) rotate the wrist upwards to bring the cutting edge towards the opponent's blade, then strike the blade with a contraction of the fingers and a movement of the forearm. The movement of the forearm upwards must be as small as possible, depending on the distance.

D - Technical generalities

The general principles of execution outlined in the corresponding chapter of the Foil Workbook are applicable to Sabre, however the threat of counter-offensive actions, especially to advanced target, justify the following considerations:

- 1) A correct position of guard is vital to facilitate speed and spontaneity in the beat, and to minimise the movements of hand and blade which can expose the target.
- 2) It is imperative that the execution of the beat begins with a rotation of the wrist to bring the cutting edge towards the opponent's blade. This allows for good fingerplay while obtaining correct covering with the guard.
- 3) The beat is executed with the cutting edge or the back cutting edge, according to the position of the blades, in order to increase the strength of the movement, limit the movements of the blade and the rotation of the wrist, and hamper any counter-offensive action.
- 4) To obtain a good reaction, it is important to make contact with the end of the second 1/3 of the blade onto a point that is slightly weaker, situated towards the beginning of the third 1/3 of the opponent's blade.

- 5) The beat must be blocked to allow a fast offensive action without taking the blade out of line.
- 6) The movement of the blade must be as short as possible and without backward movement ("forearm" beat) in order to hamper any derobement.

E - Execution of the beat at different distances

- 1) *Close range* (riposte): The beat is executed with the arm shortened and with a slight movement of the hand forwards.
- 2) *Middle distance* (lunge): The beat is done the instant the arm finishes its extension, that is, at the moment the front foot leaves the ground.
- 3) *Long distance* (step and lunge, jump and lunge): The beat is executed at the moment that the rear foot lands back on the ground, with the weapon arm arriving at the end of its extension as has been described in the simple attacks with a step forward. Combined with a jump, it is done when both feet land back on the ground.

Note: When the beat precedes compound actions, it is done slightly earlier to allow the execution of the feint(s) in a progressive manner, and so penetrate deep into the opponent's defence.

III - TACTICAL STUDY

In spite of the extension of the valid surface area to include the entire trunk, the rules remain the same as in Foil. The main aim of the beat is to delay the opponent's parry, without giving counter-offensive actions, which are easier to execute in this weapon, a chance of success.

According to the tactical intention, the use of the beat offers three possibilities: to open a line; to provoke a reaction; to fix the opponent's hand.

A - Open a line

While it is unusual to find a line that is completely closed in Sabre, it is often wise to deflect the opponent's blade before developing an offensive action. In this case, the beat is stronger, to open the line and at the same time weaken the opponent's hand.

The beats of quarte and seconde are recommended, as they can be strong without hampering the precision of the following offensive action which must preferably be direct. They can be followed by compound attacks if the fencer is certain of the opponent's defensive reflex or even made after having carried out a direct attack in order to execute a renewal.

The offensive action can be directed either to the body or to the advanced target. The most effective attacks are:

- Beat - quarte - head
- Beat - quarte - right cheek
- Beat - quarte - inside or top cuff
- Beat - seconde - right cheek

B - Provoke a reaction

This beat must be crisp, precise and quite strong without confusing the opponent's hand to the point of hindering the expected reaction. The following offensive action is either indirect or compound. However, it is necessary to take into account the possibility of a counter-offensive action. The beat of "tierce" obtains the best reaction while being easy to execute. The offensive action can be indirect or compound. Generally speaking, and according to the angulation given to the blade at the instant of the beat, the beat of tierce provokes two reactions:

- 1) *tierce parry* when the beat is executed with the blade nearly perpendicular to the opponent's blade.
- 2) *quinte* when the beat is executed with the blade nearly vertical and on a weaker section of the opponent's blade. The most effective attacks after the beat of tierce are:
 - a) On a reaction of *tierce parry*:
 - Beat tierce - thrust with the point
 - Beat tierce - head
 - Beat tierce - feint with the point - right cheek
 - Beat tierce - feint of the point - outside cuff
 - b) On a reaction of *quinte*:
 - Beat tierce - banderolle
 - Beat tierce - feint flank - head
 - Beat tierce - feint banderolle - head.

C - Fix the hand

This beat is executed very lightly. It is preferable to double or triple it. This succession of beats does not create an immediate defensive reflex and leaves the opponent indecisive as he tries to maintain all his defensive possibilities and is finally surprised by a simple offensive action. This can be direct or indirect, but preferably to the advanced targets. The most frequently used attacks are directed to the outside or underneath of the cuff with the back cutting edge, or even to the head.

D - Specific cases

1) *The beat of quinte:*

The beat of quinte can only be executed when the opponent's blade is horizontal. Modern Sabre forces a fencer to provoke, by the extension of the weapon arm counter-offensive actions to the top cuff. In this case the offensive action is with second intention (counter-time).

After the beat of quinte, the position of the blade and the hand allows underneath cuff or the flank to be reached quickly.

2) *The beat of prime:*

The beat of prime is difficult to execute correctly and at the right moment. It places the fencer in a position that is vulnerable to counter-offensive actions since it completely exposes the advanced target during the movement of the arm. It is sometimes used on an opponent who is momentarily on guard in the position of seconde. In this case it is then preceded by a light blade contact in seconde then a change of line. This action is, in reality, a "change of engagement - beat - prime" - head - or banderolle.

3) *The beats between opposite handed fencers:*

The use of beats between these fencers generally presents difficulties. The more powerful beats should make the opponent react, while the less strong should be used for opening the lines. Offensive actions are also different for the following reasons:

- The targets are reversed. For example: the flank is reached by a stroke executed

like that of the banderolle.

- The reactions are different: for example, fencers tend to cover the line of tierce on a beat of quarte.

IV - FAULTS TO AVOID

The general faults discussed in Foil for attacks on the blade remain valid. Only those specific to Sabre are dealt with here.

- 1) *Exaggerated movement of the hand:* exposes the wrist and facilitates counter-offensive actions.
- 2) *Insufficient speed:* the beat is visible and easily derobed.
- 3) *The cutting edge in a bad position:* results from a bad rotation of the wrist, the beat lacks clarity and might not provoke the desired reaction.
- 4) *Bad starting position:* the blade has to move backwards (exaggeration) or else make too large a movement. In both these cases the derobement is facilitated.
- 5) *Beat executed too early or too late:* the first case allows the counter-offensive action to gain a "fencing time". The second no longer allows the proper section of the opponent's blade to be struck, in order to obtain a good reaction.

V - DEFENSIVE ACTIONS AGAINST BEATS

This section only deals with the specific defensive actions which lead to the failure of beats and not the offensive actions that can follow them.

- 1) *Reflex defensive actions:*

Consists of parrying or counter-attacking the opponent's offensive action, depending on the quality of its execution.

- 2) *Premeditated defensive action:*

Resembles counter-offensive actions:

- derobements to the advanced targets
- derobements to the body with a half-lunge

A - Derobement to the advanced target:

This action consists of the withdrawing the blade (evading) from the beat of the blade and carrying out a stroke to the cuff with the cutting edge or the back cutting edge; this movement being followed by a retreat.

The derobement is made to underneath cuff, by disengagement when the opponent executes the beat with the hand high. On the other hand it is done above the opponent's blade, by cutover when the opponent has a tendency to lower both the point and arm. The beats of seconde and prime require this method of execution because the point is lower than the hand.

In all these cases the derobement must take the shortest route and finish to the target that is the easiest to reach.

B - Derobement to the body:

These are recommended on beats that are executed with a step forward and lunge. They can be done with the cutting edge, the back cutting edge or the point, but must be combined with a half-lunge, in order to clearly gain a fencing time on the opponent's offensive action, which sometimes continues without finding the blade.

As in the derobement to the advanced targets, the height of the hand and the beat used determine how the derobement is executed; either by disengagement or by cutover.

VI - GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

The two ways of executing the beat of quarte each have advantages and disadvantages:

- 1) When executed with the cutting edge of the blade, the beat is more powerful because it is natural and uses the abductor muscles of the arm. The position of the hand and the direction in which the fingers act allows the beat to be sharp and crisp. However, the movement of the hand and its initial rotation are visible and favour derobements.
- 2) When executed with the back cutting edge, it is much weaker because it uses the adductor muscles of the arm and may not sufficiently deflect the blade, therefore not disturbing or weakening the opponent's hand. It has the advantage of being done without preparatory movements of the wrist and hand. Therefore, it is practically impossible to derobe.

The use of the beat in a bout must, irrespective of any tactical ideas, be chosen with regard to the opponent's skill; timing, reactions, strength of hand, technique and notion of distance. The judgement of an offensive action preceded by a beat sometimes leads to serious controversies to such a point that some Hungarian Masters prefer not to teach them. In effect, the presiding sometimes disadvantages the fencer who executes them, as certain presidents of the jury give the name of reprise to the attack by considering that the contact of the blades can give the right to the riposte, without taking into account that a fencer who is attacked can sustain the action or parry it. To avoid the attack being mistaken for a reprise, the attack on the blade must exhibit the following qualities:

- 1) The beat must be done on the section of the blade mentioned in the technical study in order to provoke a reaction and prevent a successful counter-attack.
- 2) The developed attack must reach the desired target before or at least at the same time that the front foot lands on the ground in the lunge.

In spite of these principles of execution, beats do not prevent automatic counter-attacking. However, these do benefit from the presiding because the attack arrives before the counter-attack or at the least at the same time which, by convention, gives it priority.

VII - TEACHING RECOMMENDATIONS

The teaching recommendations outlined in the corresponding chapter in Foil remain valid, and only those specific to Sabre are discussed below:

The attacks on the blade must be taught in the following progression:

- 1) Study the beats against the positions of the opponent's blade where the point is higher than the hand. The natural position of the arm renders these relatively easy.

- 2) Study the beats against the positions of the opponent's blade where the point is lower than the hand. The position with the arm 3/4 extended and the hand at shoulder height is tiring and requires constant attention.

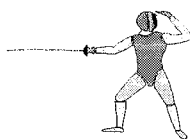
The coordination necessary for beats combined with offensive movements and the different displacements imposes the following progression:

- 1) Have the beat executed exclusively by the actions of the fingers and wrist whenever possible.
- 2) Have the beat executed with a step forward without extending the arm
- 3) At middle distance (lunge): beat, extension of the arm, lunge.
- 4) At long distance with a step forward or jump.
 - a) Simple direct attacks
 - b) Simple indirect attacks

The study of offensive actions preceded by a beat must progress according to the difficulty of execution of the different attacks.

- c) Compound attacks with one feint.
- d) Compound attacks with two feints. These are rarely used because they facilitate counter-offensive actions but they do allow trompements to be practiced.
- e) Direct and indirect attacks to the advanced targets. These are actions that require a great deal of precision.

When the Master presents the blade to the pupil he must watch the position taken by the pupil, whilst considering the attack on the blade required and the distance.



CHAPTER XV

COUNTER ATTACKS

I - DEFINITION

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

II - CLASSIFICATION

The manner in which strokes in Sabre are carried out and the different targets that can be reached give the following classification:

1) *Counter attacks to the advanced target*

- Classical
- Angulated
- By derobement

2) *Counter attacks to the body*

- Classical
- By derobement
- By esquivé (evasion of the attack by a displacement of the body)

III - TECHNIQUE

1 - Counter attacks to the advanced target

Counter attacks to the advanced target only require the extension of the weapon arm, following the technical principles given for simple attacks. They are coordinated with a step back and take the name of the target at which they are directed.

2 - Counter attacks to the body

The technical execution is dependent on the target to be reached and presents two different cases:

- stroke with the cutting edge
- hit with the point

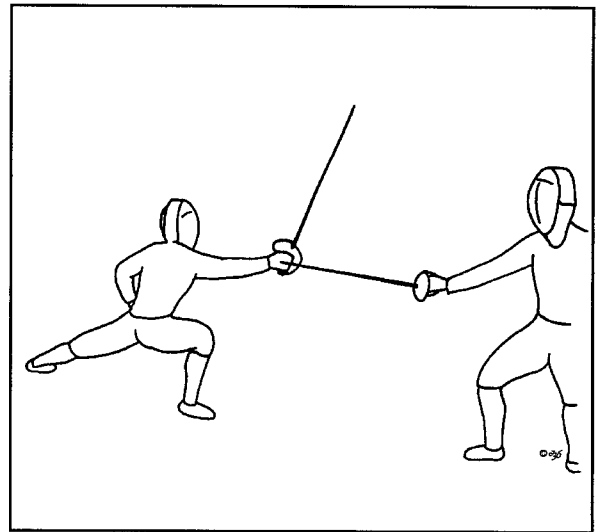
With the cutting edge:

The counter attack can reach any of the body targets. Its use is limited for technical and tactical

reasons to only one target, the head. The counter-attack to the head is executed following the technical principles given for simple attacks, but with a *half-lunge*.

With the point:

The counter-attack with the point to the body is carried out following the same technical principles as the simple attack of the same name, but with a *half-lunge*.



Classical counter-attack to underneath cuff

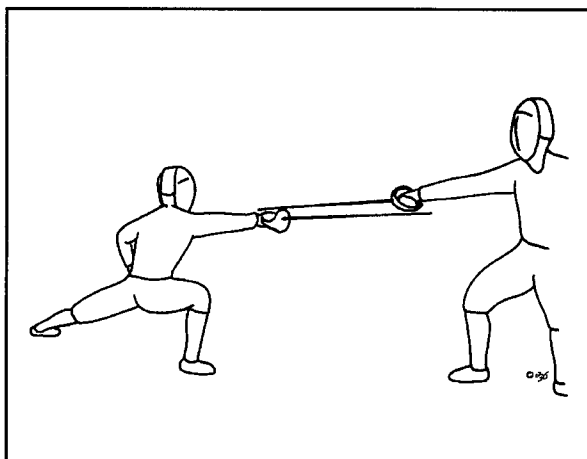
IV - TACTICAL STUDY

As in Foil, the counter-offensive action must gain a fencing time to be successful. It can be used in the following conditions:

A - Classical counter-attack:

- 1) on a simple attack that is not covered or is badly executed.

- 2) on a simple attack developed with a step forward and lunge when the extension of the weapon arm is premature or not covered.
- 3) on an attack consisting of one or several feints, before the final part of the attack.



Classical counter-attack to the top cuff

B - Counter attack with angulation:

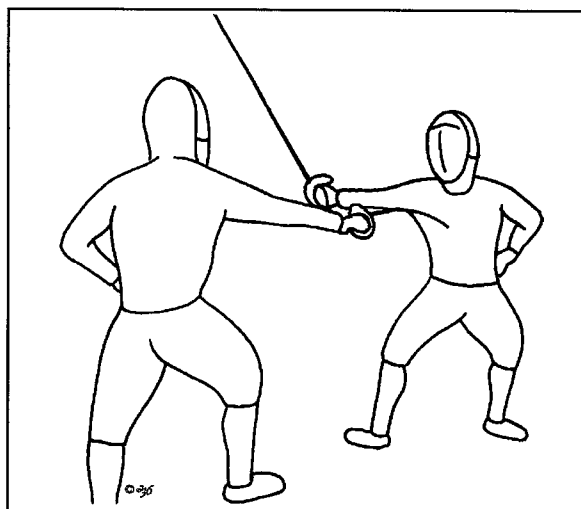
- 1) on a simple covered attack, even one well executed, while avoiding the attack with a step back.
- 2) on a simple attack developed with a step forward when the extension of the weapon arm is premature but covered.
- 3) on an attack consisting of one or several feints that are covered, and executed before the final part of the attack.

C - The derobement

The derobement is an evasion, by disengagement or cut-over, of the opponent's attempt to find the blade.

- 1) on a simple or compound attack preceded by an attack on the blade.
- 2) on a counter-time movement; in this case it consists of a feint of a counter-attack followed by a second derobement with the cutting edge or the point and is called "Finta in tempo" (compound counter attack).
- 3) on any actions having the aim of meeting the blade (engagement) to develop an offensive action.

Its execution is dependent on the preparation and the target aimed at.



Counter-attack by a hit with the point to the body (stop hit)

a) *With a cutover:* on actions preceded by a preparation in quarte or tierce. The counter attack is directed to the advanced target or the body.

b) *By disengagement:* on actions preceded by a preparation:

- in prime or seconde; the counter attack is made with the cutting edge to the advanced target or to the body with a half-lunge.

- in tierce; the counter attack is made with the back cutting edge to the advanced target or by the point to the body with a half-lunge.

- in quarte; the counter attack is made with the cutting edge to the outside cuff or with the back cutting edge to underneath cuff.

c) *Compound:* On an opponent's action with second intention. It consists of a feint of a counter-attack (either by disengagement or by cutover) followed by a derobement (by cutover or disengagement) and half-lunge.

D - The esquive (*A quick, evasive movement of the body, made to avoid being hit.*)

The esquive must only be used, in principle, on the attack to the head. It is executed following the general principles for Foil, either by the cutting edge to the head, or by the point to the body (in quartata). It can also be used on attacks that finish to the body (banderolle, flank) but only with the point (passata di sotto).

Counter attacks can thwart the opponent's compound offensive actions but they must not be the result of random reflexes. On the contrary they should be made after sure judgement and with clear and precise actions.

While a counter-offensive action can be directed to the body, it is however preferable to choose the advanced targets. Only in this case can it be immediately followed by a parry; actions which are facilitated by natural reflexes. Bouting circumstances do not always allow an offensive movement to be judged with certainty; the speed of the strokes increases the difficulty. This can lead to failure of the counter-attack. It can lack precision, not gain a fencing time, or even not benefit from a correct refereeing decision. The parry that follows the counter-attack ensures the attack is caught if the counter-attack fails.

The counter-attack must reach the target with the extremity of the blade and be coordinated with a retreat. The parry that follows is taken with the arm 3/4 extended to ensure the opponent's blade is found and the riposte is made with a step forward.

The counter-attack to the body, always delicate to judge and execute, does not allow the opponent's blade to be retaken in case of failure. Its use must therefore be varied, particularly when the opponent's offensive action is developed with a bent arm, as an invitation to make a counter-attack to the advanced target. Many fencers use this tactic which makes the counter-attack fall short. It is therefore preferable to counter-attack to the body, more particularly to the head, a target always difficult to protect.

The most common preparations in Sabre are the beats. There are also sometimes blade contacts that resemble engagements.

It is difficult to derobe a beat that has been well executed even when it has been anticipated. However, the choice of derobement must be guided by the position of the opponent's hand and blade, as well as by the target which is exposed at the moment when the preparation is executed. Generally, derobements are executed in the following manner:

- 1) Derobement by disengagement and with the back cutting edge to underneath cuff on the preparations of tierce and quarte, which are executed with the blade vertical and the hand high.
- 2) Derobement by cutover and with the cutting edge to the top cuff on the preparations of tierce and quarte executed with the blade at an oblique angle and hand low.

- 3) Derobement by disengagement and with the cutting edge to the top cuff on the preparations of prime and seconde executed with the blade and hand low.
- 4) Derobement by disengagement and with the cutting edge to the outside cuff on preparations of quinte executed with the blade and hand too high.

Esquives are used on fencers with a disordered game who attack without discernment or who commit large technical faults. They can naturally be used when the attack has been anticipated (preferably to the head).

In summary, the counter-attacks to the advanced target can be used on most attacks to the body, on the condition of being executed at the beginning of the action. They are not recommended on attacks to the advanced target.

Counter-offensive actions to the body must preferably be actions of second intention or actions which exploit a gross technical error on the part of the opponent.

V - FAULTS TO AVOID

Other technical faults are dealt with in the chapter on simple attacks. In this section only those faults concerning counter attacks are discussed.

- 1) *Retreat too early*: the counter-attack is too short or lands on the opponent's guard.
- 2) *Retreat too late*: the counter-attack is not made with the extremity of the blade and does not allow the attack to be avoided. The parry which follows the counter-attack is often late or insufficient.
- 3) *Bad position of the blade*: increases the time taken to execute the counter-attack.
- 4) *Bad choice of target*: obliges the fencer to go around the opponent's blade or arm; the counter-attack falls on the blade or has difficulty gaining a fencing time.
- 5) *Insufficient precision*: comes from a poor starting position of the hand or the blade, from an error of distance or from bad execution. The counter-attack meets the guard or misses the chosen target.

VI - APPROPRIATE DEFENCE

The appropriate defensive actions to counter-attacks vary according to their type. They can be executed by reflex or with second intention.

1) *As a reflex:*

This defensive action is executed in the line in which the counter-offensive action occurs. Often an opposition of the guard is sufficient when the counter attack is to the advanced target.

2) *With second intention:*

- "Simple attack" with actions that are well covered, to the advanced target or the head.

- Facilitate or provoke the opponent's counter-offensive action in order to exploit it (counter-time).

- Facilitate or provoke the opponent's counter offensive action, then move the target aimed at, and counter-attack with angulation (counter-stop hit).

An esquive which is executed on the final part of an attack is very difficult to defend against. However if this action is anticipated, it is important to attack with a simple, determined action to an appropriate target.

VII - GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

The "time" hit (stop hit with opposition) is a counter-attack that is not used much in Sabre, as its execution is more a question of chance than judgement. The counter-attack by point to the body on a compound attack consisting of a feint head - flank between two same-handed fencers is an exception.

The hit with the point to the advanced target is not used as a counter-attack. The hand is well protected by the guard and, because of the curve in the blade, the point does not fix on the forearm.

The counter-attack to the body by point is executed from the position of tierce. It is a natural action which effectively blocks the attacks whilst hitting target almost at right angles. This is important because the opponent's body is effaced and the perpendicularity of the hit prevents the point from sliding past target. In addition, the guard

completely protects the top cuff during the execution of the counter attack.

The counter-attack with angulation to underneath cuff with the back cutting edge is very difficult to parry, as the defensive reflexes are lateral rather than vertical, and sometimes they require an exaggerated movement of the hand downwards. This counter-attack sometimes lacks clarity due to the difficulty of executing the movements of the wrist which initially drop the blade below target before moving it upwards for the hit.

Counter-attacking a compound attack is sometimes debatable. Some fencers prefer to launch it on the feint at the beginning of the action - this is virtually a counter-attack on a simple attack. Generally the first feint is well covered, which leaves little chance for the counter-attack to succeed. It can more surely find the target when the opponent changes line.

When the counter-attack begins on the feint, the opponent is still balanced, and can therefore parry by reflex and continue the offensive action. On the other hand, if it is launched at the beginning of the final action, it is difficult, if not impossible, to parry it as it lands as the front foot leaves the ground.

It is dangerous to use esquives in Sabre, even when well judged on a classical fencer. The stroke in Sabre is not always steady and may reach part of the valid surface, in spite of the esquive.

The speed of the strokes in Sabre makes the judgement of counter-attacks difficult, in particular when the attack and the counter-attack are both directed to the advanced targets. The referee may, in addition to his visual impression, take into consideration his aural impressions when the strokes are clearly separated.

On the subject of judgement, all the counter-offensive actions are called counter-attacks, which sometimes leads to problems in the break down of the fencing phrase. An aware referee must clarify the phrase as much as possible for the judges, by giving each movement its specific name. This way of refereeing allows the public to more easily understand and be interested in the bout.

VIII - TEACHING RECOMMENDATIONS

The technical execution of counter-attacks is identical to that of the corresponding simple attacks from which they take their name. The Master must pay attention to the coordination of the movements of the weapon arm and the legs.

Whatever the counter-attack required, the emphasis in the execution always remains on the action of the fingers and the arm, and not on the retreat or the half-lunge. The Master must therefore attach considerable importance to distance and watch that the stroke reaches the target with the last two or three centimetres of the blade. Whether to the advanced targets or to the body, the Master must require the counter-attack to hit the target when his foot leaves the ground or at the latest before it lands again.

In order that the study of counter-offensive actions corresponds as much as possible to the realities of the bout, the Master must:

- 1) carry out his attack to hit, with acceleration.
- 2) uncover the desired target without exaggerating his movement.
- 3) remain covered on the counter-attacks with angulation.
- 4) execute covered feints and only give the target at the beginning of the lunge (compound attacks).

The study of counter attacks to the advanced target, which are a main part of counter-offensive actions, must follow the following progression:

- 1) Counter-attack by simple extension of the arm to the selected target - retreat.
- 2) Counter-attack by the extension of the arm coordinated with the retreat.
- 3) Counter-attack by the extension of the arm

coordinated with the retreat, then parry and riposte.

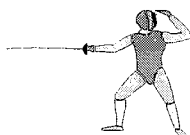
- 4) Counter-attack under the same conditions with a retreat or backwards leap, then riposte with a step forward, or by jump, or lunge.

The study of counter-attacks must be done as naturally as possible to all the targets. The Master must vary the ripostes (simple, indirect, compound). When the technical execution is satisfactory, the Master develops in his pupil instantaneous assessment and exploitation of a situation. To this end, he must choose two or three actions and attack his pupil by using them at random. The pupil must immediately hit the target which is uncovered and follow his counter-attack by a parry and riposte. Without neglecting the mechanics of the pupil's technique, the Master occasionally counter-ripostes.

Numerous exercises have the aim of developing judgement, hand/eye coordination and timing, which are the principle qualities in counter-offensive actions. For example, if the Master attacks "simply" (covered), the pupil parries and ripostes - if he executes a compound attack slightly uncovered, the pupil counter-attacks, parries and ripostes.

Counter-attacks to the body, which find their effectiveness from tactical deductions, are less studied in the lesson because the Master always maintains the initiative. In the bout, the pupil can provoke or exploit certain tactical or technical errors.

In developing the qualities of precision, speed, and those qualities mentioned above, the Master must combine, as much as possible, exercises for counter-attacks in all lines and with a variety of footwork.



CHAPTER XVI

REMISE - REDOUBLEMENT - REPRISE

THE REMISE

I - DEFINITION

II - CLASSIFICATION

Refer to the corresponding sections of chapter XIX in Foil workbook.

III - TECHNIQUE

As in Epée, the extension of the valid surface area allows the advanced targets to be reached, but as in Foil, the rules require the fencing phrase to be respected, and therefore the remise must gain a fencing time to be valid. In general, the remise is executed with the cutting edge of the blade, though some exceptions allow it to be executed with the back cutting edge or the point.

The coordination of the weapon arm and the legs is the same as in the other weapons. The necessity to give the hit naturally requires a slight flexion of the wrist backwards to allow correct fingerwork.

Remises can be executed to the advanced targets or to the body.

1 - To the advanced targets

- classically
- with angulation

As in Epée, the distance favours their execution preferably:

- from the lunge returning to guard
- from the position of guard on retreating, above all when the offensive action is directed to the body.

2 - To the body

They are executed classically.

IV - TACTICAL STUDY

As in Foil, the rules make the remise an action of second intention. It is difficult to use it as a reflex in a weapon in which ripostes and counter-ripostes are executed after parries by beat.

A - Remise as a continuation

- 1) *To the advanced targets*
 - a) *Classical*: this is used:
 - on an opponent who parries without riposting and automatically returns to the on guard position (tierce position).
 - on an opponent who parries without riposting and relaxes, uncovering target.
 - on an opponent who parries without riposting and maintains the position of the parry. This remise is only practical after the parries of quarte and prime.

- b) *With angulation*:

- 2) *To the body*
 - On an opponent who parries with the arm extremely retracted and leaves the blade or returns to the position of guard (tierce position).

B - Remise as a stop hit

- 1) *To the advanced targets*

- a) *Classical*:
 - on an opponent who ripostes or counter-ripostes indirectly, with a compound riposte or with broken time while uncovering target.
- b) *With angulation*:
 - on an opponent who ripostes direct and covered, but with a slight delay (broken time).

It is also wise to avoid the riposte by distance for additional security.

- 2) *To the body*
 - on an opponent who ripostes either direct with a step forward and lunge, or indirect or compound while holding the riposte back (arm retracted) or counter-riposting with the advanced targets covered.

THE REDOUBLEMENT

I - DEFINITION

II - CLASSIFICATION

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

III - TECHNICAL STUDY

The redoublement is executed starting from positions that are identical to those for remises. According to each case, the recovery can be forwards or backwards and must be coordinated with the movements of the weapon arm.

The redoublement can be:

- 1) *Indirect*
 - by disengagement
 - by cutover
 - with angulation
- 2) *Compound*
 - by feints of a disengagement or cutover.
- 3) *Preceded by an attack on the blade*
 - by a beat

As for the remise, the redoublement can be directed to:

- 1) *the advanced targets*:

executed with the cutting edge and sometimes by the back cutting edge.

- 2) *the body*:

executed with the cutting edge .

IV - TACTICAL STUDY

The redoublement executed as a stop hit on the riposte or counter-riposte is quite common in Sabre because many fencers use compound actions. It is rare to have the opportunity to execute them as a continuation because most sabreurs make an immediate, direct riposte after a successful parry.

The redoublement is used in the following cases:

A - Redoublement as a continuation

- 1) To the advanced targets

a) *Indirect* (disengagement, cutover):

on an opponent who pauses after the parry. The chosen redoublement must go around the opponent's hand and blade with a minimum of movement.

b) *With angulation:*

on an opponent who pauses after the parry. It is executed after the parries of quarte and tierce, particularly to underneath cuff with the back cutting edge and top cuff with the cutting edge, after the parries of prime and seconde.

2) *To the body*

a) *Indirect (cutover):*

on an opponent who parries with the arm very retracted and who does not immediately riposte. The body offers an easier target to reach than the advanced targets.

b) *Compound:*

on an opponent who parries and does not riposte and whose indecision forces him to react to the presentation of the blade in a new line.

c) *By attack on the blade:*

the beat either deflects the opponent's blade or provokes a reaction.

B - Redoublement as a stop hit

1) *To the advanced target*

a) *Indirect:*

on indirect or compound ripostes and counter-ripostes in which the beginning of the action is covered.

b) *With angulation:*

on an opponent who ripostes well covered but with slight broken time, or even on a covered feint.

2) *To the body*

indirect, in particular to the head, on an opponent who ripostes or counter-ripostes by a step forward and lunge with the arm retracted which does not offer the advanced targets.

THE REPRISE

I - DEFINITION

II - CLASSIFICATION

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

III - TACTICAL STUDY

The reprise is quite common in Sabre, especially when it is preceded by a return to guard forwards. Sometimes, sabreurs retreat while parrying without riposting: they remain on the parry and feel out of distance for riposting by just an extension of the

arm. These fencers offer an opportunity to immediately regain the offensive by reprise forwards. Moreover often their retreat lacks balance, with the weight of the body thrown on to the rear leg. This prevents consecutive retreats and makes them even more vulnerable to a second offensive action. The reprise with a compound action is very effective, especially if the fencer is unbalanced, as his defence is disordered.

The danger of counter-offensive actions against the reprise are of less consequence than in the other weapons. The natural movements of the arm, even as a reflex, allow the opponent's counter-offensive movement to be parried during the execution of the reprise with a lunge.

GENERALITIES

I - FAULTS TO AVOID

The technical faults discussed in the simple attacks in Sabre and the technical faults mentioned in Foil and Epée remain valid. Only those specific to Sabre are outlined below.

- 1) *Bending the arm in the remise or the reprise:* the action is not immediate and there is a risk of it not gaining a fencing time.
 - Parry the reprise
- 2) *Exaggerated flexion of the wrist:* the hit lacks speed and precision and is delivered with too much force
 - b) *Premeditated*
 - Counter-attack to the advanced targets depending on the action (direct or with angulation).
- 3) *Bad choice of remise or redoublement:* does not allow a fencing time to be gained.

II - APPROPRIATE DEFENCE

A - Remise

- a) *As a reflex action:*
 - Double the parry.
- b) *Premeditated:*
 - Parry and riposte direct, well covered.
 - Parry and riposte direct, well covered with a step forward.

B - Redoublement

- a) *As a reflex:*
 - Parry and riposte direct.
- b) *Premeditated:*
 - Parry the offensive action and riposte direct
 - Parry the redoublement and riposte direct
 - Counter-attack the redoublement whilst retreating (direct or with angulation).

C - Reprise

- a) *As a reflex:*

III - GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

Remises are not that common in Sabre because the parry is usually followed by direct, well covered ripostes. They are executed with more success on a parry of quinte that is not followed by an immediate riposte or on a technical fault of the riposte which allows a fencing time to be gained.

After the parries of quarte and tierce the advanced targets are very difficult to reach. The remise with angulation after a parry of quarte or tierce between opposite handed fencers is an exception.

The most common remises are those whose execution resembles counter attacks on a riposte. They are used quite commonly with angulation but distance is of great importance because the fencer must still be able to avoid the riposte in case the counter attack fails.

Redoublements in Sabre are common actions, especially as a continuation of the attack on fencers who do not riposte immediately or who are content to parry without a definite tactical idea. They are executed, in principle, to the advanced target: the easiest to execute is made with the back cutting edge to underneath cuff.

Generally there is no value in using compound redoublements to the advanced targets - they nearly always fall against the blade or onto the guard. On the other hand, when they are directed to the body they provoke a large movement of the opponent's hand which facilitates the *trompement*.

Redoublements using attacks on the blade require an initial retraction of the arm before beating the opponent's blade effectively. But quite often the beat provokes an immediate counter-offensive action which makes it dangerous to use. However,

on opponents who are very sensitive to change of rhythm, or who are indecisive, redoublements by attacks on the blade directed to the body can be used with success.

The reprise of the attack in Sabre allows the fencer to follow, quite naturally, an opponent who parries while retreating and does not riposte. It can also exploit the lack of balance of fencers who retreat with too much weight on the rear leg. This hinders any new retreat, reduces the value of any defensive action, and makes them vulnerable to compound offensive actions.

IV - TEACHING RECOMMENDATIONS

The Master only gives specific attention to the teaching of remises and redoublements when the pupil possess excellent technique and a quite developed sense of tactics. In Sabre, remises and redoublements are used with second intention.

The technical execution of remises and redoublements corresponds to that of simple attacks (according to the target and the distance), the only difference is they are executed with the arm extended. The Master therefore must watch the action of the arm and the wrist and require that the hit be given with lightness and without flexion of the arm, which should remain supple.

To develop timing he can base the exercises on the following protocol:

The pupil attacks a given target

- If the Master parries and relaxes his parry without riposting, the pupil remises by a continuation.

- If the Master parries and does not riposte, but maintains his parry, the pupil does a redoublement as a continuation.

- If the Master parries and ripostes indirect or compound, the pupil remises as a stop hit on the riposte while returning to guard, followed by a parry and counter riposte.

- If the Master parries and ripostes direct but with broken time, the pupil remises classically or with angulation while retuning on-guard.

Of course the Master can choose different tactical cases situations depending on the pupil's skill level.

The Master can familiarise the pupil with different preparations to allow him to determine the opponent's technical faults or tactical intentions and to exploit them using the remise or redoublement. For example: the pupil executes several false attacks that are very pronounced to discover a reflex or the Master's technical fault. He then attacks and remises, or does a redoublement, depending on his previous tactical assessment.

The reprise must be taught very carefully in Sabre. The mobility of the game enables it to be used, but the Master must, in the choice of actions that he teaches, take into consideration the threat of counter-offensive actions.

The reprise requires excellent leg work, but the Master must supervise the balance and coordination. In all cases, distance is of great importance and must allow reflex actions as well as actions of second intention to be used.

