

COACHING SABRE - a few thoughts

The standard of the student will to some extent reflect the abilities of the coach. The student will learn from the coach's knowledge, sense of rhythm, reflexes and blade presentations. The coach works predominantly with absence of blade.

More time tends to be spent teaching the hit than is the case with foil, because the various target areas each require a different hand position.

Cuts are studied separately and at various distances:

- straight arm
- short lunge
- longer lunge
- short step and lunge
- two steps and lunge
- balestra
- balestra lunge
- step balestra lunge and many other footwork combinations

The angle of the coach's guard, when presenting a feint or cut, gives an early indication of the line to be defended when teaching defence at sabre. This is a kind of language between the coach and student.

If the guard is presented vertically, the feint or cut is being presented to the head. If the guard is horizontal, with the knuckles turned up, then the feint or cut is being presented to flank, and so on.

Counter-riposte training is good for developing control of the hand. Do this sequence slowly, gradually gaining speed. The parries should be made with the blades only lightly making contact, the riposte following spontaneously without a pause, starting at lunge distance for a cut to the flank.

Give clear, unambiguous openings and concentrate on economic, precise hand and foot actions that are well coordinated.

Keep the legs bent. Do not allow your weight to move forward or backward. You cannot do a balestra after a small step forward if you are leaning forwards. There are two types of balestra; a short one, the same length as a step; and a larger one that takes you a little closer to the opponent. To change direction requires footwork.

At sabre, it is still acceptable to crossover when stepping backwards. A large step backwards is required after delivering a stop-cut to the wrist. Go back with a small step if you wish your opponent to attack.

F Koksis, 29-Sept-05