

SABRE TRAINING 0

CLASSICAL SABRE TRAINING

One of the main themes of my sabre fencing approach is the importance of classical fencing. The classical style, one that seeks to promote personal control, where fencing actions are both economical and effective, has fallen on some pretty hard times lately.

Most fencers use only basic physical moves (toe-to-toe, bowl 'em over, hit-or-miss) exemplifying the modern approach to personal combat. For classical sabre fencing, mobility is obviously accomplished through the application of footwork. Establishing and maintaining proper foot placement during the forward or backward locomotion gives us stability. It is especially important for developing balance and distance.

Carrying this idea even further, footwork and bladework are ultimately joined in the evolution of that elusive component of fencing – timing.

If the feet tend to operate independently of your sword hand, the result will be that you are always too close or too far from the opponent you are attempting to score a touch against. A bad thing.

So, extra care should be exercised right from the start to focus on foot work and to practice it over and over and over again.

Luckily, footwork is one of those elements of fencing that can be repeated without a partner and hence, is accessible on a regular basis to everyone.

The riposte

An effective riposte must be made immediately following a successful parry. It can be executed as either a cut or a thrust. The most effective riposte in sabre moves into the nearest open target.

Examples include:

- Prime parry/riposte to flank or head
- Seconde parry/riposte to right cheek
- Tierce parry/riposte to head or chest
- Quarte parry/riposte to right cheek
- Quinte parry/riposte to the flank or head

Because the sabre is a conventional weapon with its well defined rules of right of way, hesitating to riposte after a parry may draw either the remise or redoublement.

Composed and feint attacks

Many modern sabre fencers depend heavily on straight cuts as the foundation of their offensive attack. But it is more sensible to employ a better practiced repertoire of composed attacks. That is, making a feint followed by a deception of the parry. You can combine the following:

- A feint to head with an attack to flank
- A feint of straight hit with a cut to the flank
- A feint to the flank with a cut to the head
- A feint to the right cheek with a cut to the left cheek
- A feint to head with a cut to chest
- A feint to the head, feint to the flank with a cut to head
- A feint to the right cheek with a cut to arm

Stop cut

The stop cut and time cut are the counter attacks – attacks launched against attacks – of sabre.

You see a break in timing or the validity of an opponent's attack – and attempt to claim right of way and land a touch first.

To be considered successful, these counter actions must be timed to land a full beat ahead of the final movement of the initial attack.

A stop cut is a cut made against an already attacking opponent. It is most often directed at his sword arm or hand. It is useful against a slower fencer or one who executes his attacks with exaggerated motions.

The fencer who lifts his sword arm high when attacking, is asking for a stop hit to be launched against him.

The stop point may be used successfully against a hesitant fencer or one with wide, careless movements.

Finally ..

It is important when attacking to always return to the on guard position as quickly as possible, whether or not you have a hit. This will improve your ability to be ready for counter attacks.

It will also lessen the chances of your being hit needlessly mistakenly lowering your guard after a supposed touch that wasn't.

I thank you for reading this, and hope that in some way it touches your mind.

F Koksis, 12th February, 2004.