

PART V

EPEE

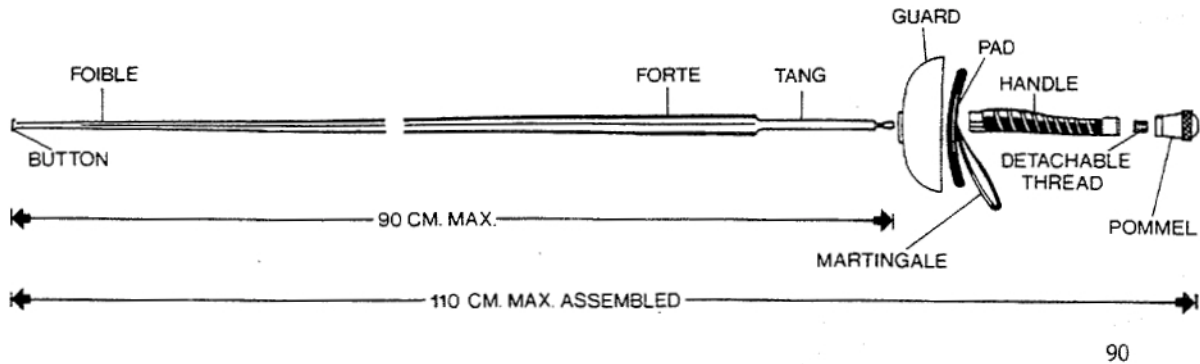
EPEE OBJECTIVES

1. The coach will acquire the basic theoretical and practical knowledge concerning epee coaching:
 - basic technical information about *epee*, its' target and principles of the epee bout according to the F.I.E. rules
 - epee terminology
 - group lesson
2. The coach will assimilate, practice and be up to date with the basic epee technical skills such as:
 - simple and compound attack and attacks with opposition
 - basic parries and ripostes
 - counter attacks and counter time.
3. The coach will be able to teach any of the actions covered in the syllabus in a group lesson situation.

EPEE SYLLABUS

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THE ÉPÉE



THE ÉPÉE

F.I.E. Rule 306 - Weight

The total weight of the *epee* ready for use shall be less than 770 grammes.

F.I.E. Rule 307 - Length

The total maximum length of the *epee* shall be 110 cm.

FILE. Rule 308 - The Blade

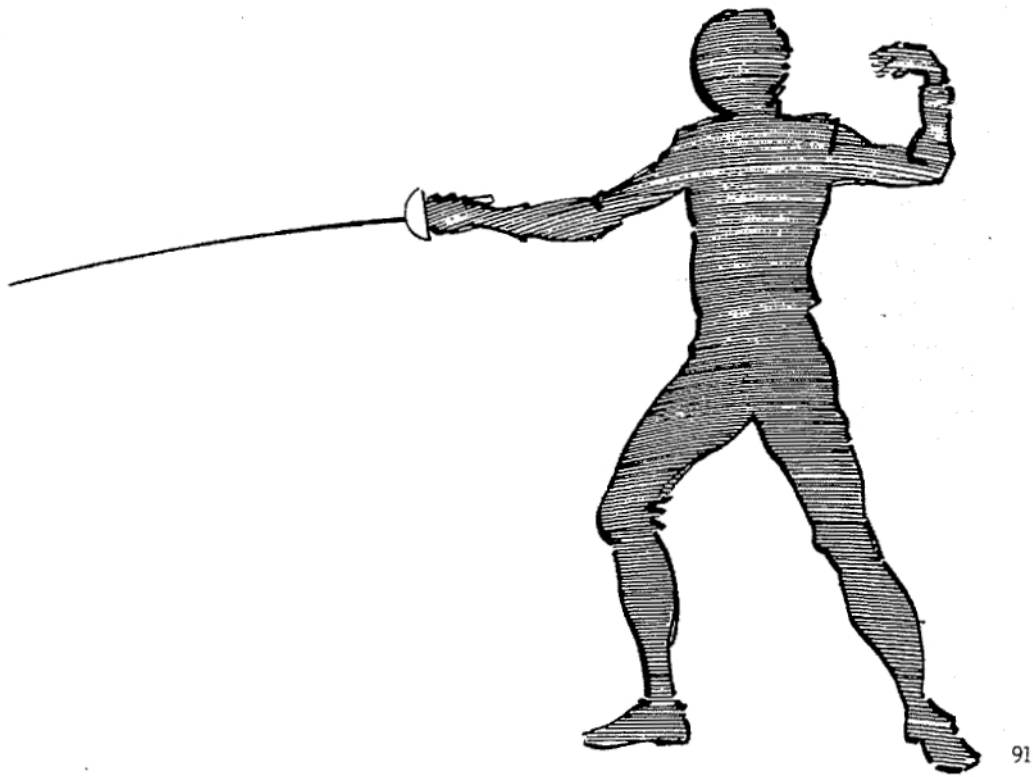
The blade which must be made of steel is triangular in section without cutting edges. It should be as straight as possible; it should be mounted with the groove uppermost. The curve of the blade must be in any case less than 1 cm. and is only allowed in the vertical plane. The maximum length of the blade is 90 cm. The maximum width of any of the three sides of the blade is 24 mm.

F.I.E. Rule 309 - Martingale

The martingale is obligatory when the *epee* is not secured to the hand by an attachment or by the body wire.

FILE. Rule 310 - The Guard

The guard, which must have a circular edge, must pass through a cylindrical gauge having a diameter of 13.5 cm. and a length of 15 cm. the blade being parallel to the axis of the cylinder. Eccentric mounting (the distance between the centre of the guard and the point where the blade passes through the guard) is allowed providing it does not exceed 3.5 cm.



THE EPEE TARGET

F.I.E. Rule 317:

At epee the target includes the whole of the fencer's body including the clothing and equipment. Thus any point which arrives counts as a hit whatever part of the body (trunk, limbs or head) the clothing or the equipment it reaches (illustration 91).

FIE Rule 318 - Corps a Corps

At epee a fencer who either by a fleche attack or by vigorous attacks brings about a corps-a-corps even several times in succession (without brutality or violence) does not transgress the basic conventions of epee fencing, and commits no fault thereby.

F.I.E. Rule 319 - Number of Hits, Duration of the Bout

Epee bouts are for five (5) hits, with a duration of six (6) minutes. For direct elimination, a single bout of ten (10) hits, with a duration of ten (10) minutes.

F.I.E. Rule 320 - Double Hits

If by reason of double hits both competitors receive the maximum number of hits being fought for, they must fence for one or more supplementary hits until the expiration of the time limit. Any further double hit is cancelled (when this occurs the fencers remain in the position they then occupy on the piste). In these circumstances the maximum number of hits for which the bout is fought must be entered on the score sheet against each competitor (for example when the bout is for five hits, the score entered on the score sheet will be D/5 and V5).

F.I.E. Rule 321 - Expiration of Time

When the allotted time limit expires before a result in the bout has been achieved:

- A. at epee for one (1) hit, both competitors are counted as hit and a double defeat is scored.
- B. at epee for several hits:
 - if one competitor has received more hits than his opponent, the number of hits required must be added to his score to bring it to the maximum being fought for and the same. number of hits added to the opponent's score.
 - if both competitors have received the same number of hits (or neither has scored a hit) they are counted as both having received the maximum number of hits being fought for and a defeat is scored against each, except in direct elimination, when the fight continues, without any limitation of the time, until there is a result.

HOW TO SCORE

General

The epee is a thrusting weapon. This means that hits can only be scored with the point of the sword.

Being uninhibited by convention or target limitations, defining how to score becomes very easy; a hit scored with the point of the sword, travelling forward, on any part of the opponent (trunk, limbs or head) will score a hit in a competition. Of course, the electrical recording apparatus is now quite universal for epee fencing and hits are faithfully recorded by this apparatus. The electric apparatus will be explained fully in the Level HI Manual, for now it is only necessary to know that two very important features of the electric epee are:

1. Electrical contact is not made unless a pressure of more than 750 grammes is applied to the spring point.
2. The point will not record hits which arrive flat.

These two facts ensure that the mere touching of the target with the point of the sword is not sufficient to score. The action therefore must have the character of penetration. Being a thrusting weapon, hits which arrive flat or are *laid on* also should not score.

Simultaneous Hits

A major departure from the other two weapons is also experienced in epee fencing. It is a complete departure from the *right of way* which separates hits that arrive together in foil and sabre.

At epee, all hits which arrive together are called simultaneous and are recorded against each competitor. The *right of way* which gives priority to the riposte and counter riposte in foil and sabre does not exist in epee and is replaced by chronological time. This emphasis on chronological time set on the recording apparatus at between 1/25 to 1/20 of a second, changes the whole concept of fencing tactics, emphasizing the importance of counter attacks at the sword arm and attacks and ripostes in opposition, described later on in this section.

Coaching

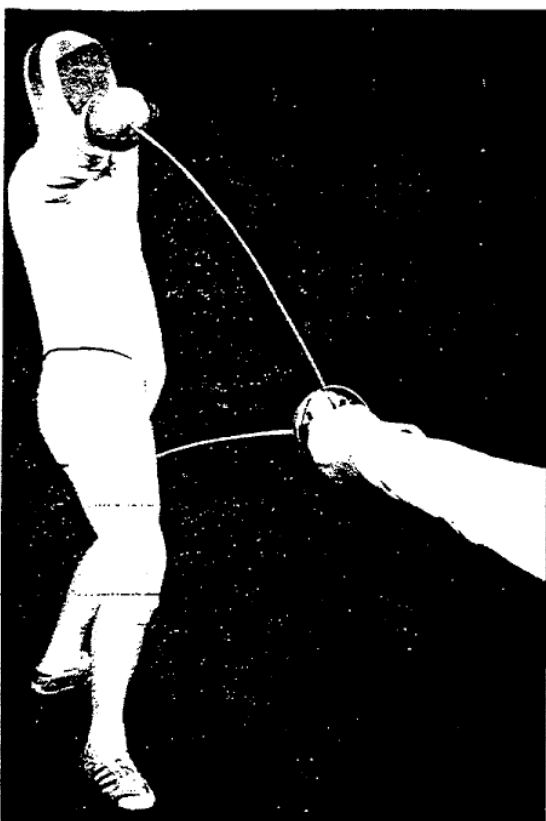
As a number of *epee* coaching points have been covered already in the Level I Manual, this section will concentrate upon two *epee* techniques:

1. attacks at the sword arm by angulation.
2. attacks at the trunk and legs in opposition.

ATTACKS

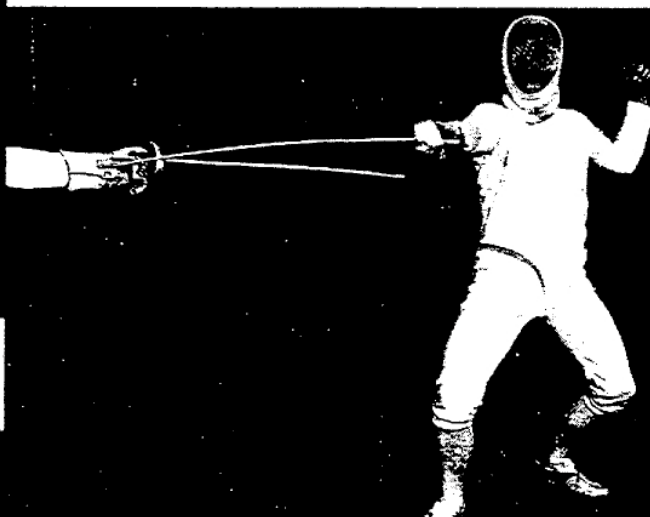
Attacking the Sword arm

- in pairs, practice hitting around the *epee* guard by angulating the sword.
- stand at riposting distance and angulate the sword so that the point hits on the wrist or forearm.
- angulation hits can be made inside, on top and underneath the opponent's guard.
- an angulated hit can be made outside the opponent's guard but it must be realized that in doing so one exposes one's own sword arm so this attack must be used sparingly and as a surprise action.
- once a fair amount of accuracy is achieved by the group, the distance can be increased until these attacks are made with the lunge.
- at lunging distance, all angulated attacks leave the attacker open to possible counter attacks at the sword arm, resulting at best in a simultaneous hit.
- because of this, the attacker should extend the sword arm well covered by the *epee* guard and only angulate at the very last moment, giving little time as possible for the opponent to see and react to the angulation.



92A

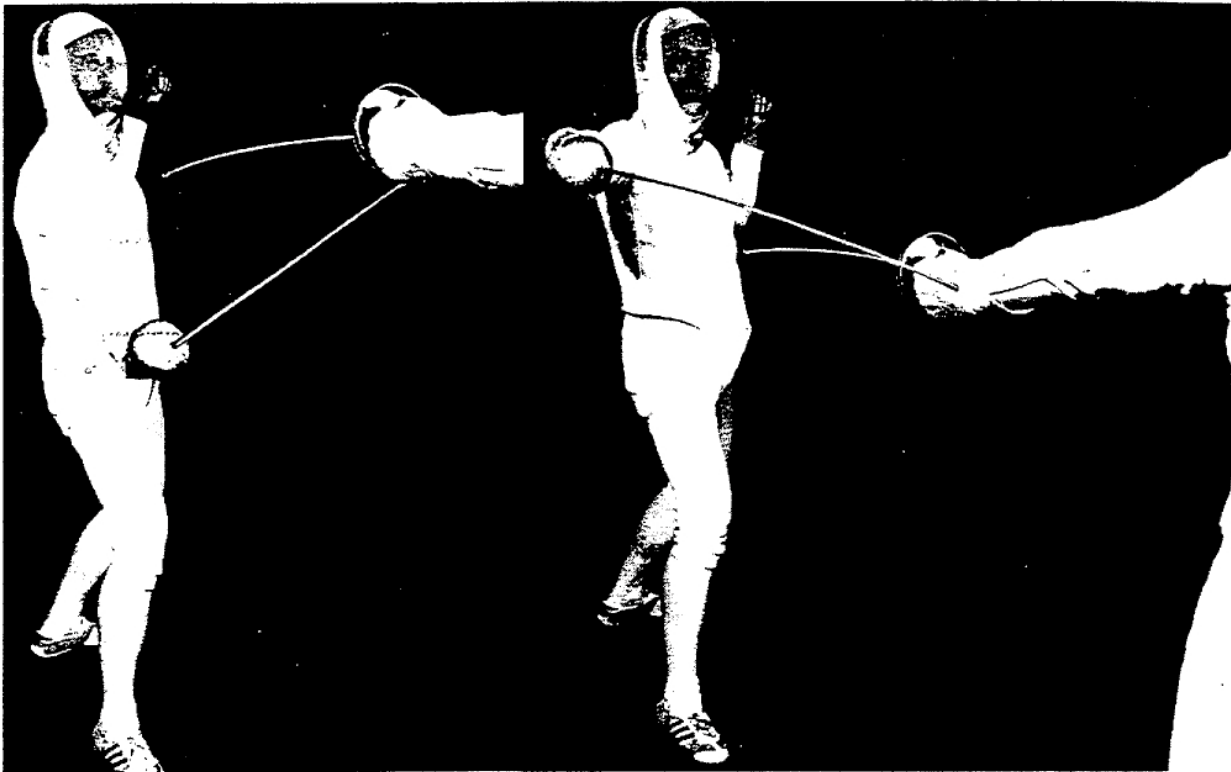
On top



92B

Inside

Angulated hits



93

94

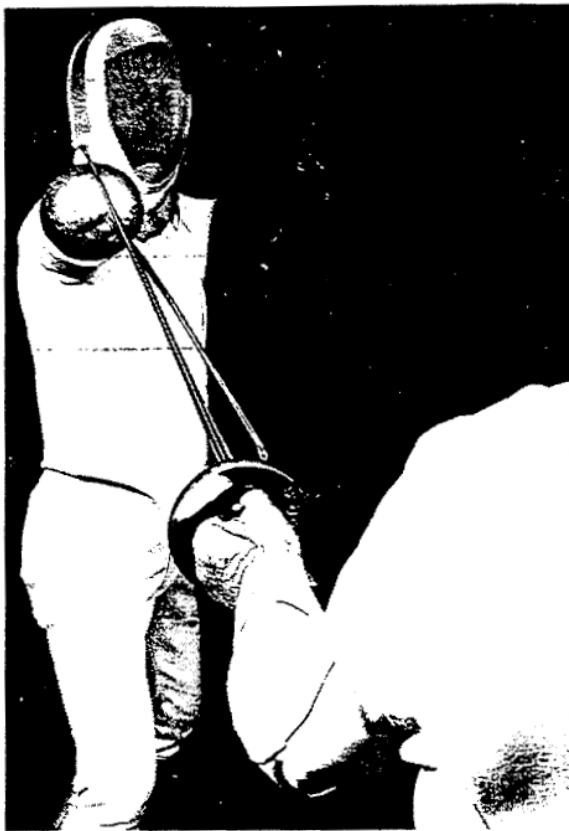
Underneath

Outside

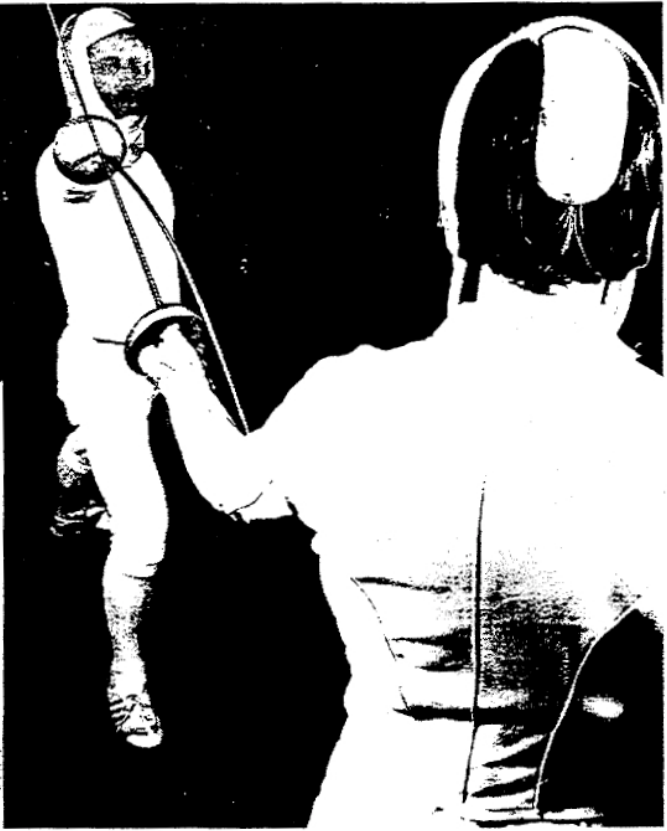
Angulated hits

Attacks at the Body in Opposition

- because of the extended distance in epee, attacks at the body or front leg can be easily counter attacked on the sword arm in time.
- it therefore follows that these attacks should, as far as possible, be made when the attacker has possession of the defender's blade.
- attacking in opposition means that the attack should be made well covered in the line of the opponent's sword, deflecting it throughout so that the attacker is not hit.
- the best line to attack in opposition at the trunk is in sixte. This line keeps the defender's blade outside of the sword arm, reducing the chance of the blade slipping off.
- the best line for attacks at the lower target or leg is in octave keeping the opponent's blade outside of the attacker's lunging leg.
- opposition attacks can be made in quarte and septime but there is a danger of the opponent's blade slipping off and hitting the sword arm of the attacker.

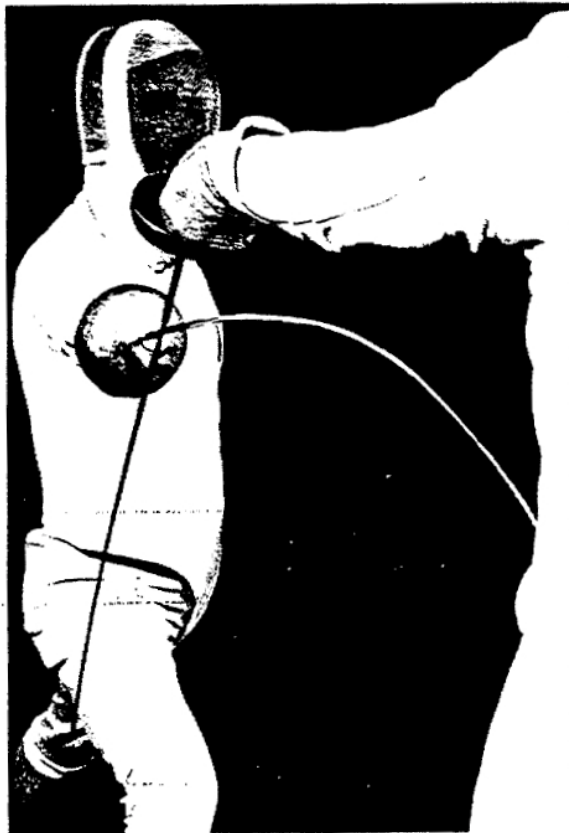


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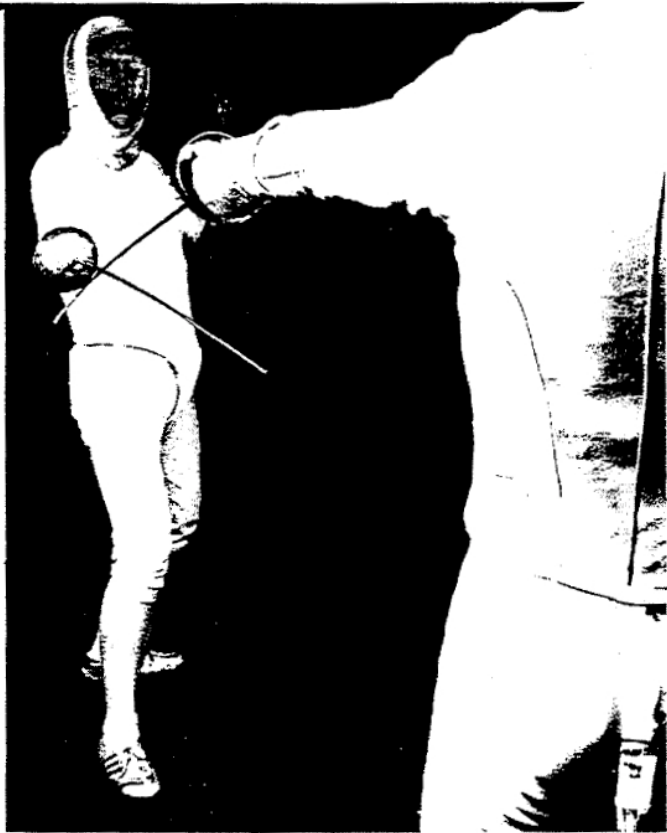


96

Extension in sixte — lunge at swordarm



97



98

Extension in octave — lunge at body

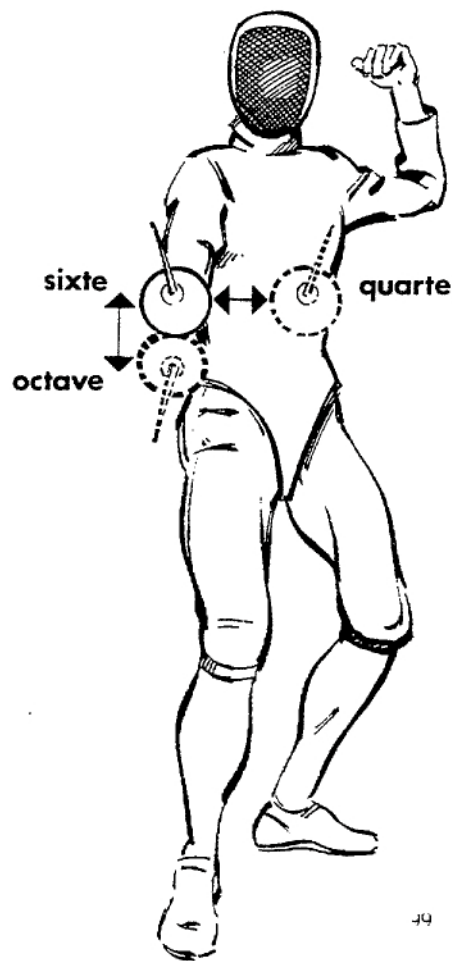
- have the group in pairs at riposting distance, the defender's sword arm slightly extended and in contact with the attacker's blade in sixte.
- the attacker practices hitting the trunk maintaining a covered position in sixte and contact with the defender's blade.
- the defender must have a slightly low hand so that the high line attack can arrive.
- now practice the same exercise but in octave and hitting the lower target or upper leg.
- opposition, is maintained in octave.
- in this exercise the defender's hand is slightly high to allow the hit to arrive.
- once the technique is achieved, the distance can be increased to include the lunge and fleche.
- for the lunge and fleche the defender must give way by stepping back *after the* beginning of the action.
- the best time to attack in opposition is when the defender steps in extending the sword arm.
- a very good **choice reaction** exercise is for the defender to step forward extending the sword arm high or low. The attacker has to choose between attacking *high* in sixte on a low hand or in octave on a *high* hand.

Finally, practice the group in preceding the attack in opposition by an **engagement** or **change of engagement** with a step forward. This is an excellent way of gaining initial control of the opponent's blade, disguising the intention of the attack and gaining ' distance on the opponent.

Compound Attacks

As compound attacks have been fully covered in the foil section, it is not proposed to go into further detail for epee. The basic technique and theory are the same for both weapons with the following modifications;

- if deceiving one of the basic parries, the final part of the attack can be directed to the sword arm, body or front leg.
- particular attention should be paid to ensuring that maximum *protection* is gained from the epee guard.
- this means that the sword arm should be **extended straight** during the feint so that the forearm is behind the guard.
- the deceptions should be made with the **point only**. Any movement from the arm and shoulder-will expose the attacker to a possible counter attack.
- the final part of the attack should be well *covered* and if possible in opposition to the defender's blade.
- the greater variation of epee target means that the attacker can take advantage of the element of surprise. A feint at the body, deceive the parry and attack at the foot is often successful.
- the feint low and attack at the mask is also a good epee stroke but it is wide open to a counter attack on top of the sword arm.
- if this counter attack can be anticipated, it will present an ideal opportunity for attacking in counter time, using an opposition in sixte rather than a sixte parry.
- all epee-attacks should be practiced with the fleche as well as the lunge.



DEFENCE AND RIPOSTES

General

The general principles of defence apply to epee, that is, the opposition of the defending forte to the attacking foible in order to deflect the attacking blade clear of the target. Because the whole of the fencer is considered target and no *right of way* is achieved by successfully parrying, epee defence must be positive and sure. Once control of the attacking blade has been gained by a parry, this control and domination must be maintained until the end of the riposte in opposition.

It is not always necessary to do every thrusting action in opposition, but it is the safest method of parrying and riposting, especially on attacks which are delivered very *deep* to the trunk. Releasing the opponent's blade after a successful parry, especially when the point is only inches away from the trunk or sword arm, is inviting a hit **in time** before the riposte can be made.

However, on short attacks at the forearm, it is possible at times to be successful with quick parries and ripostes without using opposition. Under these conditions the *detached or beat* parry should be used to sharply deflect the attacking point and gain speed on the riposte.

Epee defence for this Level 2 Manual will cover two aspects of elementary defence:

1. The **use of the epee guard** (coquille) as a defence against short attacks at the wrist or forearm.
2. **Parries of sixte and octave** on the sword arm side as a defence against deep, penetrating attacks to the body or front leg.

The Use of the Epee Guard

Against short, prodding attacks at the wrist it is not possible to effect a proper parry as the point has not come through enough to be deflected. The best form of defence is to use the *epee* guard to deflect the point by slight movement sideways, upwards or downwards.

If one compares the size of *the epee* guard to that of the foil, it will be seen to be considerably larger (13.5 cm. maximum diameter compared to 12 cm. for the foil guard). This larger guard gives adequate protection to the foremost part of the target if used correctly.

At times the use of the guard will block the attack rather than deflect it. Although it is an unusual feeling to the beginner epeeist at first, one soon becomes accustomed to the blocking action and will learn to control it.

Technical Considerations

- the amount of displacement of the guard must be kept to a minimum - just sufficient in the direction of the attack to deflect it.
- this displacement is effected by slightly bending the wrist rather than moving the forearm from the elbow.
- the point of the defending blade should be kept down and in line with the opponent's sword arm.
- this will ensure a speedy and accurate riposte.
- once the attack has been deflected the riposte must follow immediately making sure to keep covered at all times.

Coaching

- to get the feeling of moving the guard in the four directions, sideways, upwards or downwards, without moving the point, have one row holding the point of the opponent's sword while the others move the guard slightly in the four directions.
- concentrate upon making the movement with the wrist rather than the arm.
- now move back to riposting distance and have the attackers make attacks inside, outside, on top and underneath the guard while the defenders try to parry. Medium speed at first until the technique is mastered.
- because of the change of timing, some of these attacks will be blocked and some will be deflected.
- gradually increase the distance until the attacks are being made with mobility and the lunge. The defender should defend with *the guard* .end make a short, quick riposte at the attacker's sword arm.

Parries of Sixte and Octave

These parries have been chosen for epee because they are made on the sword arm side therefore exposing the sword arm as little as possible. As with foil, these parries may be lateral, semicircular or circular in the following patterns:

Starting Position	Attack	Parry	Movement
Uncovered Sixte	- outside upper arm	- sixte	- lateral
Covered Sixte	- inside trunk	- counter sixte	- circular
Covered Sixte	- thigh	- octave	- semicircular



Uncovered sixte

Parry sixte



Uncovered octave

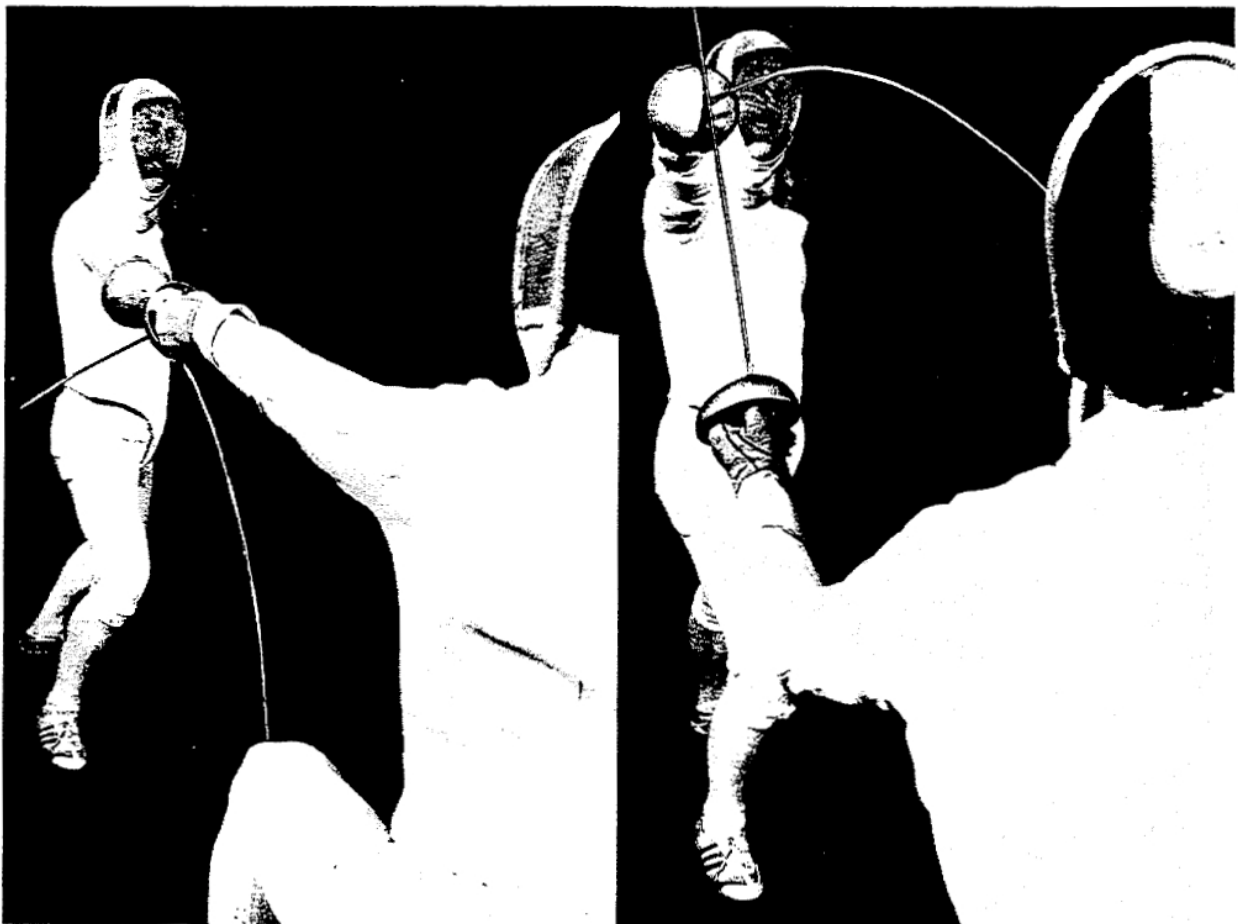
Parry octave

Technical Considerations

- the parry should be timed to move as the attacking point passes the guard.
- the movement in parrying should be as small and firm as possible, just deflecting the attack outside of the arm or leg.
- the amount of **point movement** should be minimal to facilitate a fast and accurate riposte
- the forearm should as far as possible be kept behind the guard for protection.
- against wide attacks it may be necessary to lift the point a little in order to gather the blade.
- the arm should remain **well forward** with all parries. This helps to minimize the size of the parry and keeps the point close to the opponent's target.

Coaching

- the same coaching pattern used for parrying with the guard can be adopted for these parries.
- in the final stages, the *fleche* attack with mobility can be introduced for these parries.
- on deep, penetrating attacks the blade should be **held** in the parry and the riposte made in **opposition**.
- another method is to hold the parry until the attack has passed the trunk, then release and make the riposte at the available part of the target.



104

Riposte at the knee

105

Riposte at the mask

COUNTER ATTACKS AND COUNTER TIME

General

Because the sword arm is part of the target, epee, like sabre, is a game of gaining time on the opponent. Counter attacks made by *stop hit* or *stop hit with opposition* to the sword arm are used frequently and present a constant hazard to the epee attacker. As mentioned already in the sabre, this frequency of stop hits allows the attacker many opportunities of attacking in counter time.

The timing on the electrical recording apparatus is set at 1/20th to 1/25th of a second. Hits arriving from each fencer within this period of time will register on the apparatus and are recorded as *double hits*.

However, although this is a very short period of time, it is sufficient for a stop hitter with a keen eye and quick reaction time to deliver a stop hit inside the attacker's guard and retire out of distance before the attack can reach the body.

There are two basic types of **stop hit**.

1. **stop hits** at the wrist and forearm, gaining time on the attack.
2. **stop hit** with opposition at the upper arm and body of the attacker, removing the attacking blade at the same time.

Points to remember about the first one are as follows:

- most good epeeists are fairly well covered around the wrist and forearm by the epee guard so stop hits must be made with **angulation** if they are going to succeed (see attacking the sword arm - page 85).
- premeditation and timing are two very important contributions to successful stop hitting.
- watch for favourite attacks and the open part of the forearm then premeditate when this will happen again.
- it will usually be necessary to stop hit as soon as the attack begins, remembering that the stop hit must arrive before the attack starts on it's way to the body.
- always maintain correct distance when counter attacking at the forearm.
- this is where the stop hitter can just reach the forearm with a fully extended sword arm.
- only use angulated stop hits on attacks at the body or upper arm.
- when fencing attackers who precede their attack by *preparations on the blade* such as engagements or change of engagements, stop hits by deceiving the preparation (disengage or counter disengage) are most useful as they gain more time over the attack.
- always keep the point of the epee well in line with the opponent's sword arm so that the action of stop hitting or deception is as small and as quick as possible.
- the front leg and foot are always vulnerable to attack, consequently a good epee move is to stop hit and withdraw the front foot back to the rear foot, this move is called a *stop hit by rassemblement*.
- because of the extra height gained by standing up, the stop hit is best made by angulating over the top of the attacker's guard.

Stop Hit with Opposition

Generally these are made on short attacks at the forearm which cannot be parried as they are not deep enough, or, on deep attacks when the defender can anticipate where they are going and doesn't want to take a chance of parrying and riposting.

A stop hit with opposition is rather like a parry and riposte executed in one action. The counter attack is made and at the same time the line of the attack is closed, deflecting the attack as the counter attack arrives.

The added advantage of this movement is that it scores at the same time as the attack is deflected. If the timing is correct, there is very little chance that the attacker can do anything about it.

The technical points are as follows:

- instead of angulating, extend the arm covering with the guard to deflect the attack.
- if the attack is outside, extend in *sixte*.
- if inside, extend in *quarte*.
- if low, extend low in octave.
- if *high*, extend high in *sixte*.
- if there is any possibility of the attack coming through to the body, the safest form of defence is to parry, especially on attacks which are directed to the inside or low lines.

Counter Time

As with the other weapons, counter time in its classical form is an offensive action executed after successfully parrying the opponent's stop hit.

It is almost always premeditated and is delivered with a step forward, lunge or fleche depending upon the distance at the time of execution.

The stop hit and where it is going to be delivered should be anticipated; the preparation is then made to draw it. It can then be dealt with in one of three ways:

1. **Blocked** with the guard if a short stop hit at the wrist.
2. **Parried** with one of the three parries if deep enough for the blade to be taken.
3. By making a stop hit on it at the wrist. This stop hit on a stop hit is called a **stop hit in counter time**.

Whenever the stop hit is parried, the riposte should be made covered and in opposition.

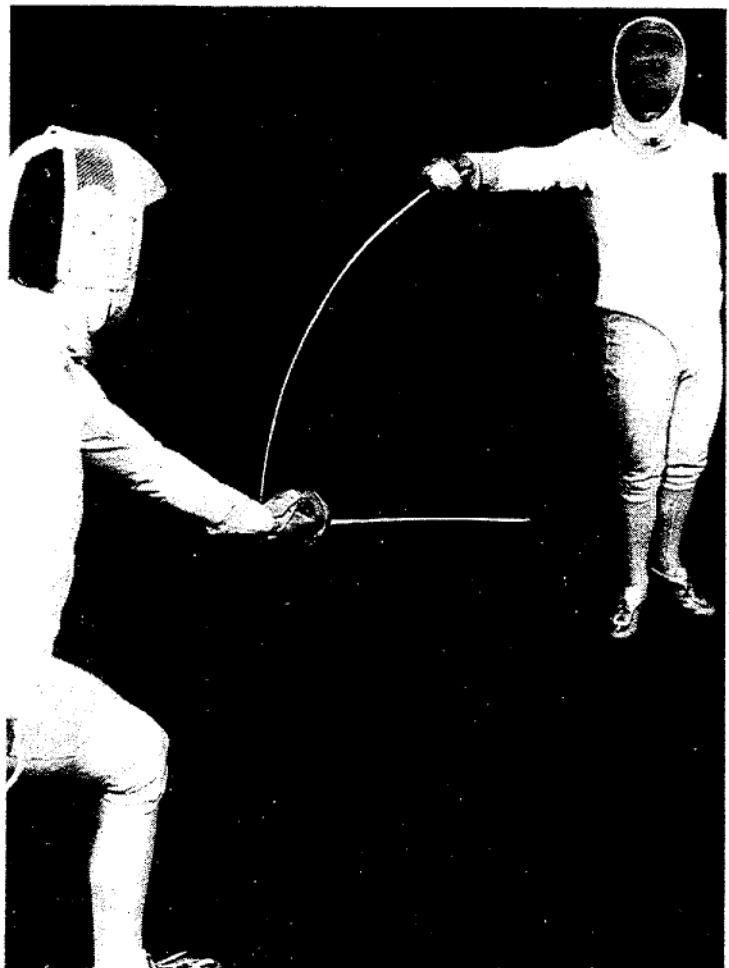
Coaching

- the initial practice for stop hits is similar to learning angulated attacks (see attacking the sword arm - page 85) a considerable amount of practice is required before accuracy is acquired
- when the distance is extended, it is the attacker who lunges while the defender delivers the stop hit by angulation. Remember, the attack should be aimed at the body.
- when practicing the stop hit at lunging distance the defender should quickly step back after delivering the stop hit.

- now try the stop hit by rassemblement remembering to stand up straight and angulate the stop hit over the guard of the attacker.
- this counter attack is best made on attacks at the front knee.
- having gone through the practices of the different types of stop hit, change to practicing stop hits in opposition, starting at close distance and gradually increasing to lunge distance.
- the final practice should be with mobility and the attack delivered with the fleche with the defender retiring rapidly after making the stop hit.
- all new practices should be made fairly slowly so that control and accuracy can be practiced before trying them out at speed and with mobility.

Counter Time

- practice of counter time should be included in the lesson on stop hits.
- first draw the stop hit from the defender and try out the block or parry, without riposting.
- some time should be devoted to this practice to get the feel of making an *emphatic* preparation, to maintain good balance after the jump forward, to adjust distance so as not to get too close.
- once this is acquired the riposte in opposition should be added.
- first practice the whole move with the lunge with the stop hitter staying within reach.
- then practice the whole move with the fleche, the stop hitter trying to retire quickly out of distance.
- the final practice can then be a choice reaction exercise based upon the attacker assessing the correct movement relative to the distance.
- this practice is controlled by the defender who will decide whether to stay within range, on which the attacker will lunge, or, try to retire on which the attacker will fleche.
- the *rhythm* of counter time should also be emphasized throughout the lesson.
- as one can assume that the stop hit will be delivered quickly, the rhythm should be 1-2 - 3.
- the 1 and 2 being the preparation, stop hit and parry, the 3 is the riposte.



Stop hit by rassemblement