

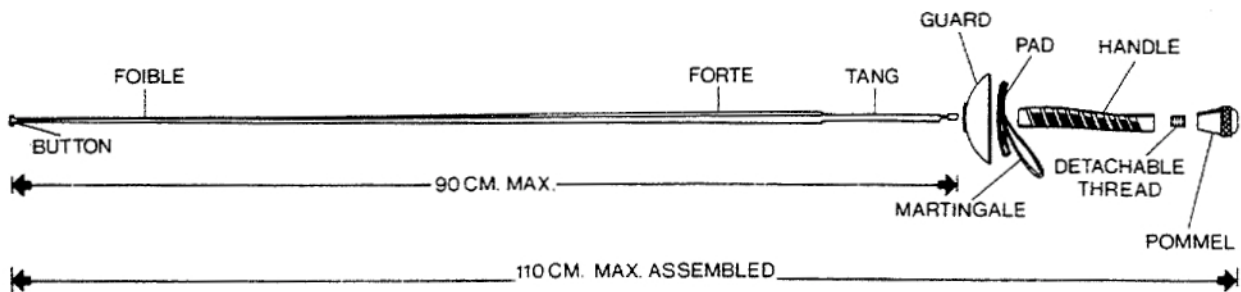
PART III  
FOIL  
**FOIL OBJECTIVES**

1. The coach will acquire the basic theoretical and practical knowledge concerning foil coaching:
  - basic technical information about the foil, its target, foil convention according to the FIE rules
  - foil terminology
  - group lesson
  
2. The coach will assimilate, practice and be up to date with basic foil technical skills such as:  
simple and compound attacks  
basic foil parries and their respective ripostes  
principles of counter-offensive actions and counter-time  
basic attacks on the blade
  
3. The coach will be able to teach any of the above actions covered in syllabus in a group lesson situation.

**FOIL SYLLABUS**

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## THE FOIL



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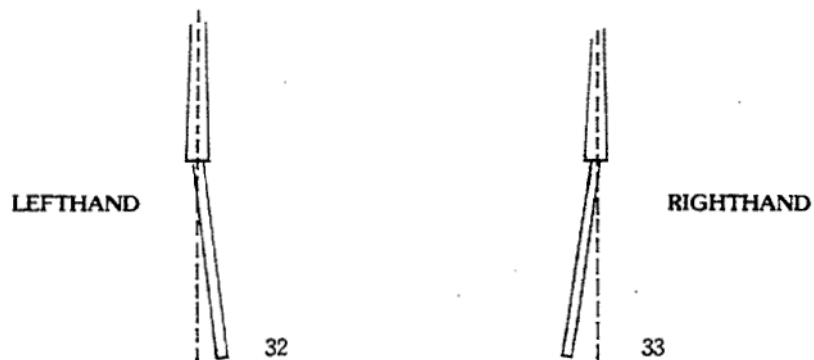
## THE FOIL

- the guard must pass through a straight cylindrical gauge having a diameter of 12 cm and a length of 15 cm, the blade being parallel with the axis of the cylinder.
- eccentric mounting is forbidden. That is to say that the blade must pass through the *centre* of the guard.
- the martingale is obligatory when the foil is not secured to the hand by an attachment (pistol grip) or body cord (electric foil).
- the point of the foil must be covered unless fitted with an electric point (electric foil). Plastic buttons are supplied which fit over the flattened point of the blade.
- the blade, which must be made of steel, is rectangular in section.

## Assembly

The foil is assembled by first bending the tang of the blade in a vice so that it will suit a right or left hander.

- This is done by placing the tang of the blade in the vice with the widest section of the blade horizontal and the top of the blade uppermost. (the top of the blade has the maker's name on it, close to the *tang*.)
- Now bend the blade slightly at an angle to the tang according to diagram 32-33.



- Now turn the blade in the vice so that the *top of the blade* is facing away from you and bend the blade towards you slightly.



- This set on the tang will mean that when the sword is held the blade is angulated slightly into the target and downward.
- The downward set aids in keeping the point down when attacking.
- Having set the blade, hold the blade in one hand, top of the blade uppermost and Tang towards you.
- Take the Guard and slide it on to the tang with cup facing you. Make sure that the guard sits right down on the shoulders of the blade. It may be necessary to file the tang slightly if it is not a good fit.
- Now take the pad and fit it into the cup of the Guard.
- Next slide on the martingale so that the loop is facing to the left for a right hander - to the right for a left-hander.

- The handle is next. Because of the set on the tang it should not be possible to fit the handle incorrectly. Again the widest section of the handle should be uppermost.
- At the -end -of the tang is a slot unto which the detachable thread is fitted and the pommel screwed on. Make sure the pommel is tight and that there is no play in any of the parts.
- The orthopaedic handle or pistol grip is much easier to put on but the procedure is approximately the same.
- The tang is much shorter, threaded, and once the handle is on the hexagonal nut is tightened down with a special tool.
- Sometimes the nut has a cut in the top which will take a screwdriver.

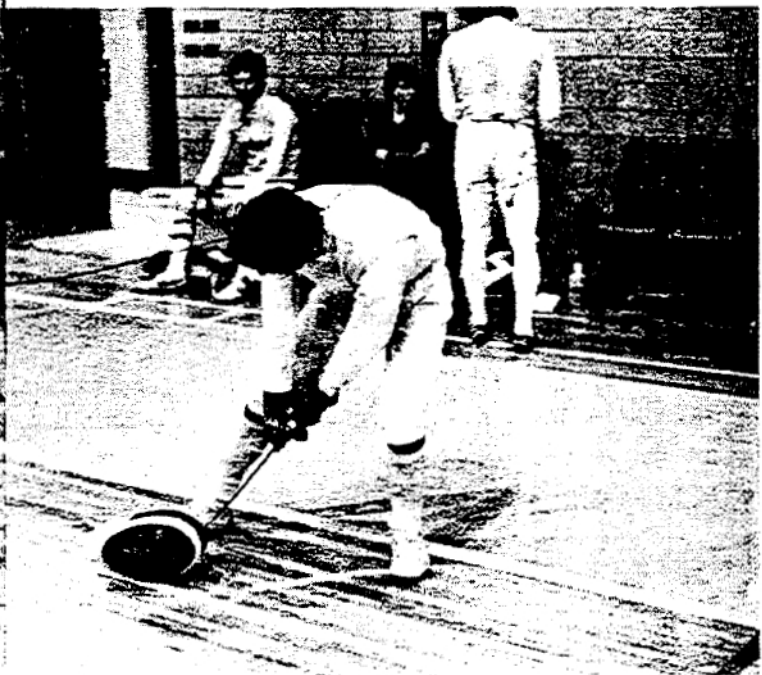
### **Straightening a Blade**

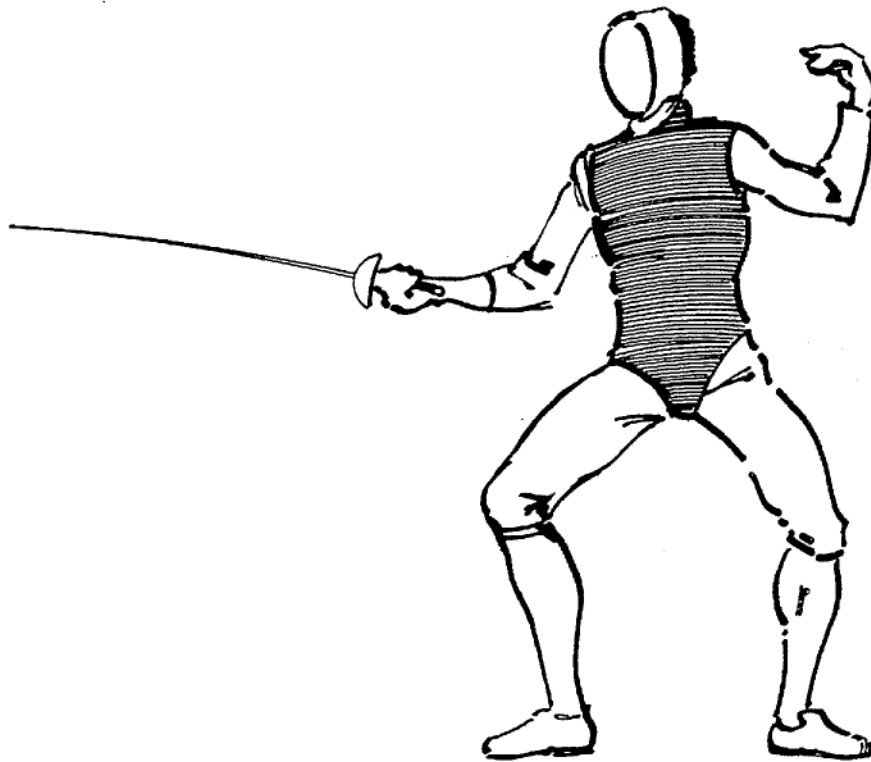
One of the tasks confronting the coach of a beginners' group is to straighten blades which have been bent by incorrect and clumsy hitting. Blades are expensive and great care should be taken in straightening them.

The beginner may try and straighten the blade by hand and when the weather is cold there is a good chance that it will break.

- The correct technique is place the blade under your foot, trapping it between your foot and the floor.
- Gently slide it backward and forward, without trying to straighten it, until the blade is warm.
- When it is really warmed up, smooth the bent part against the floor with your foot, gradually increasing the pressure while pulling the blade upwards by the handle.

This process should be sufficient to bring the blade back to its original curve. However, if the bend is too severe and does not easily straighten, replace the blade or give the beginner another sword. A severe bend will weaken the blade at that point, making it dangerous for continued fencing practice.





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## THE FOIL TARGET

### Definition

The limitations of the foil target for men and women exclude the limbs and head. It is confined to the trunk, the upper limit being the collar of the jacket up to 6 cm. above the prominence of the collar bones (clavicles); at the side where the seams of the jacket sleeves cross the shoulder (head of the Humerus); and the lower limit following a horizontal line across the back joining the top of the hip bones (ilium) hence following in straight lines to the junction of the lines of the groin when in the *en garde* position.

The bib of the mask is not part of the target (see diagram 36). The part of the bib that covers the neck line of the jacket, and the length is regulated.

### General

- Hits which arrive *off* target are counted as valid whenever, by reason of the fencer adopting abnormal positions, the target area is substituted or covered by a part of the body which is not target.
- **Substitution** can happen if a fencer jumps or ducks during an action and places a non valid part, legs or head, in the place towards which the valid hit was clearly directed prior to the displacement.
- **Covering** happens when a fencer places the unarmed hand and arm in front of the valid target.

## HOW TO SCORE

### Theory

The F.I.E. rules for Foil fencing emphasize that for a scoring hit **TO BE VALID** it must arrive **CLEARLY** and **DISTINCTLY** on the opponent's target with the point of the sword. Hits which arrive on any other part of the opponent are called **off target** and do not score although they do stop the fencing phrase. Hits which arrive after an *off target* hit cannot be counted.

### General

The foil is a thrusting weapon and all hits must conform to the principles of a 'thrust. The blade must be travelling forward, the point fixing clearly on the target. One can add also that the hit must have the character of penetration. That is to say that the mere touching of the point on the target is not sufficient to be called a valid hit. Penetration is denoted by the slight bending of the blade as the attack is followed through. An earlier definition of this penetration included, *the hit would have inflicted a wound were the swords sharp and the body unprotected by clothing.*

As the foil does not have a cutting edge, hits which arrive *flat* or *graze* along the target do not count and are called *flat* or *passed*.

The introduction of the electric *recording apparatus* for all foil competitions today has made the judging of a valid hit purely academic. The *electric foil* will only record a hit made correctly with the point travelling forward. Flat or grazing hits will not register upon the apparatus. The character of penetration is also provided in that the electric spring point will withstand a pressure of 500 grams before a hit is recorded.

Electric Foil will be more fully explained in the Level 3 Coaching Manual.

### Teaching

- Have the group stand at riposting distance and practice *placing the hit* on the opponent's target. This requires application of pressure to the thumb and forefinger upon the sword handle whilst keeping the other three fingers relaxed but firm.
- The fencer making the hit should feel that the hit is fixed onto the target with a slight throwing action from the hand, the arm following through and quite relaxed.
- The shoulder particularly should be kept in a natural and relaxed position and no attempt should be made to lift the shoulder as the arm is extended.
- Once the feeling of a relaxed hit and extension is acquired, try hitting at various parts of the target to develop accuracy. Slowly at first and then speed up.
- Now try hitting parts of the target which are open while the opponent is moving the body and trying to cover. Riposting distance is still maintained.
- The distance should now gradually be extended incorporating the use of the sword hand, arm and 'the legs until hits can be made accurately with the full lunge and fleche.
- All the time smooth, relaxed movement should be emphasized. It is only when the coordination and accuracy is mastered and *set* that emphasis can be applied to speed.
- Remember, one medium speed and accurate hit on target is worth any number of fast hits which arrive off target or miss!

## Engagements

An engagement is so called when the attacker contacts the opponent's blade in one of the fencing positions prior to making the attack. This is done with a firm action upon the middle or the foible of the defending blade for one of the following reasons:

1. To move the defending blade out of line so that the line is open for an attack *direct* or *feint* of attack.
2. To obtain *a reaction* from the defender, either lateral or circular, so that it can be deceived by an attack *indirect* or a feint of attack.
3. To invite the opponent to launch an attack or counter attack on this preparation (engagement) so that it may be countered by a parry and riposte (second intention).

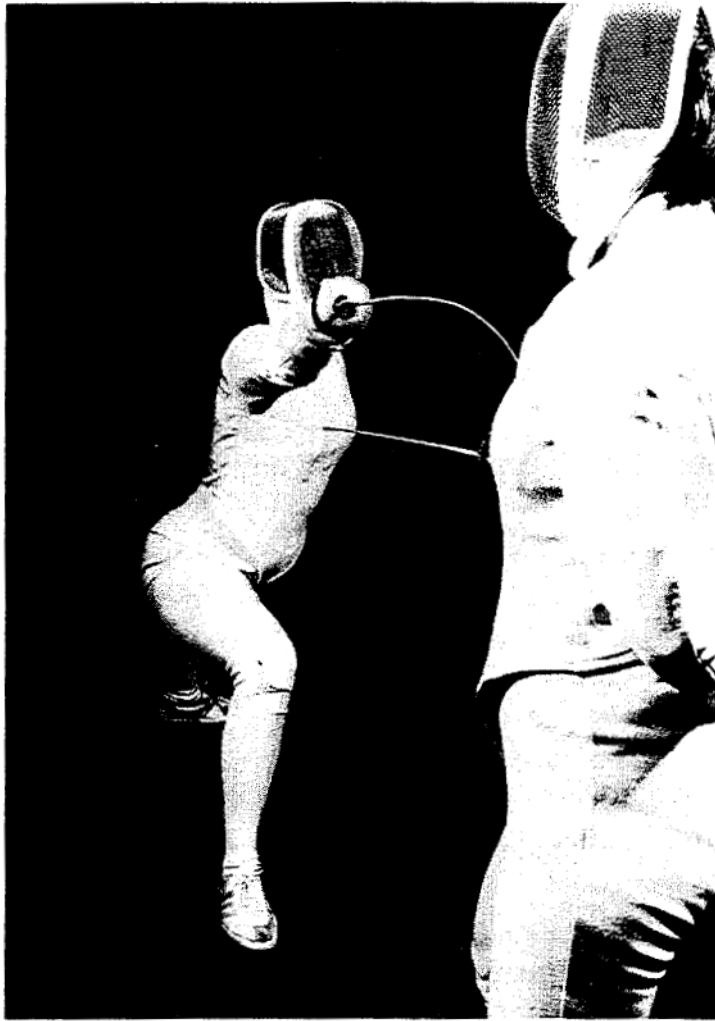
**Note:** second intention is described as any act of drawing a reaction from the opponent and overcoming it.

Engagements are made directly and without changing the line, i.e. from absence of blade in *sixte* to the inside of blade contact, or, from absence of blade in *quarte* to outside blade contact. They can also be done in the lowlines of octave and septime.

If a change of line is involved, i.e. from absence of blade in *sixte* to contact on the outside of the defending blade, or visa versa, it is called a **change of engagement**.

## Coaching

- all attacks should be practiced with engagements or change of engagements combined with a step forward after the basic technique has been learned.
- it is a very good way of disguising the intention of the attack and to gain distance on the opponent.
- undue pressure should not be exerted upon the defending blade as this will make deception and the second intention parry and riposte difficult.
- practice feeling the blade with a step forward several times before combining the engagement with an attack.
- if an indirect feint or attack is being used, practice feeling the return swing of the defending blade to the engagement so that the indirect action can be timed to the return swing.



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## SIMPLE ATTACKS

### **Definition**

A simple attack is one which comprises one blade movement and scores in the same or different line in one period of fencing time.

### **Description**

**DIRECT:** An attack which scores in the same line as the original (Figure 37).

**INDIRECT:** An attack which finishes in the same or different line by passing under or over the opponent's blade.

There are three:

**Disengage:** An attack which scores in the **opposite** line to the original by passing around the guard deceiving a **lateral** movement of the opponent's blade (Figure 38-39).

**Cutover:** An attack which scores in the **opposite** line to the original by passing around the point deceiving a **lateral** movement of the opponent's blade (Figure 40-41).

**Counter Disengage:** An attack which scores in the **same** line as the original by passing around the guard deceiving a **circular** movement of the opponent's blade

## Teaching simple attacks

### Direct:

The direct attack, although the easiest to execute comprising only the extension of the sword arm and the lunge, is perhaps the most difficult to score with in competition.

- It requires no deception on the part of the performer and if correct fencing distance is maintained, the distance required to reach the target is so much greater than the distance required to effect a parry that it is virtually impossible to use effectively.
- However, if the opponent makes a mistake in distance and comes too close, or there is a momentary lapse in concentration, it may then be successful.
- In modern fencing, fencers remain in **absence of blade**, that is to say, not in contact or engagement.
- The direct movement is often used as a feint in order to draw a **parry** which can then be deceived by one of the indirect movements (see compound attacks, page 50).
- The direct attack, because it is so uncomplicated, is usually the first one taught to the beginner and is excellent for learning the co-ordination of the arms and legs. These two are combined together so that they become one, simple action.
- The coach must always be aware that the foil rules give priority to the fencer whose arm is extending first.
- The timing between the arm and legs may be extremely fine and beginners do tend to start lunging long before the arm begins to extend.
- At its best, the arm and front leg should begin together and by the time the point of the sword strikes the target, the sword arm should be completely extended.

## Indirect

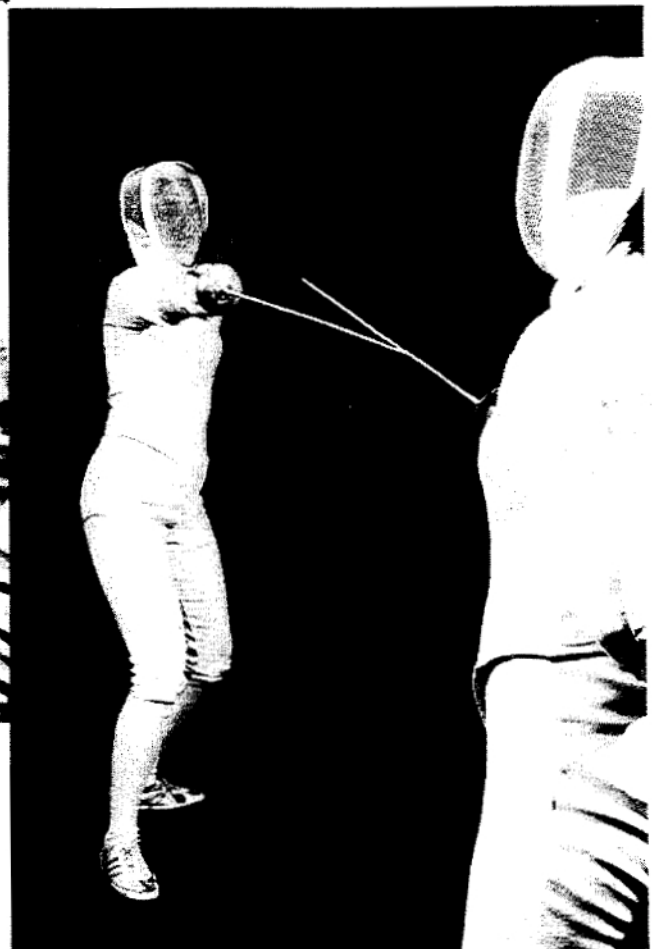
### Disengage:

This attack deceives the opponent's attempt to engage the blade by passing around the guard and scores in the **opposite** line e.g. from quarte to sixte or sixte into quarte.

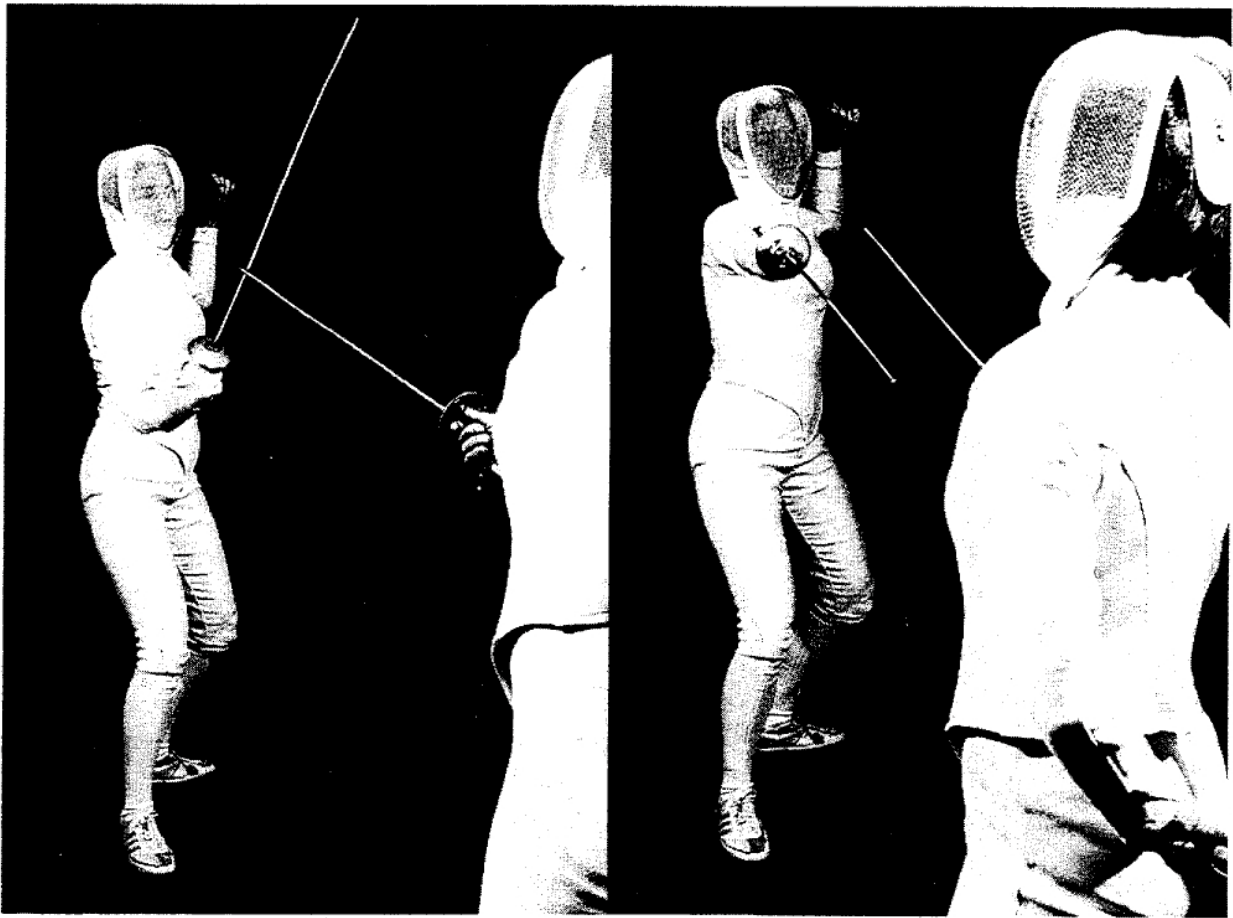
- As the lateral movement of the opponent's blade is being deceived, the sword arm is stretching, with the lunge, to create a movement in one period of fencing time.
- It must also be remembered that the sword arm is in the way when disengaging into the sixte line. Therefore it is necessary to raise the point over the opponent's arm before placing the point onto the target.
- From sixte into quarte it is possible to slip the point through.



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### Cutover

This attack passes around the opponent's point while an attempted engagement is being made. The cutover necessitates a slight bending of the arm backwards in order to clear the blade. Then it is quickly straightened into the new line before hitting the target.

- Even though the opponent momentarily contacts the blade in the engagement, it is still possible to make the cutover.
- The act of successfully contacting the blade in the engagement does of course give the *right of way* to the opponent, but should he/she not immediately take up this priority the fencer making the cutover will again have priority to attack.
- Of course, this requires prior knowledge that the fencer making the engagement is not going to attack and is making the engagement to *feel the* blade.
- There are many reasons why a fencer should do this and it happens time and again during combat.
- If the cutover is made from contact with the opponent's blade, it is advisable to add a slight pressure against the blade so that when it is released the opponent's blade will react in the opposite direction to that of the attacking blade.
- This is achieved by slightly *prorating* the hand if attacking from quarte into sixte and *supinating the* hand slightly when attacking from sixte into quarte.
- Having turned the hand to gain the added opposition it must be remembered to turn the hand back into the normal position before hitting the target.
- This is normally done as the sword arm is straightened into the new line.

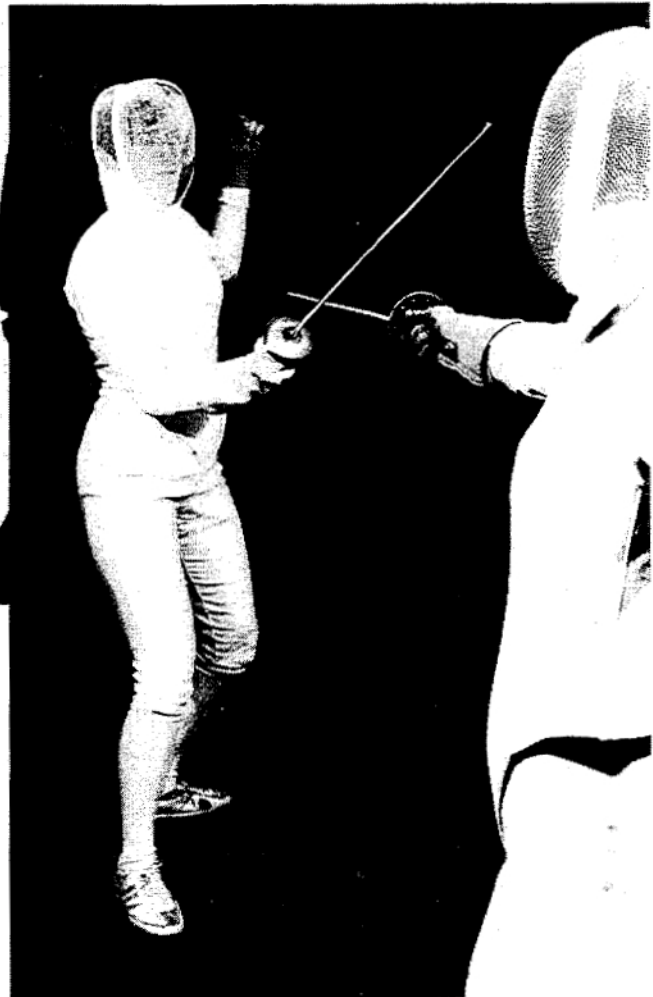
## Counter Disengage

The counter disengage is a movement similar in execution to the disengage in that it goes around the guard deceiving an attempted **change of engagement**. The change of engagement is so called when the opponent tries to engage the blade in the opposite line to the original one. The deception is made the split second before the change of engagement contacts the blade. Delaying the attacking deception until the very last moment avoids signalling the move.

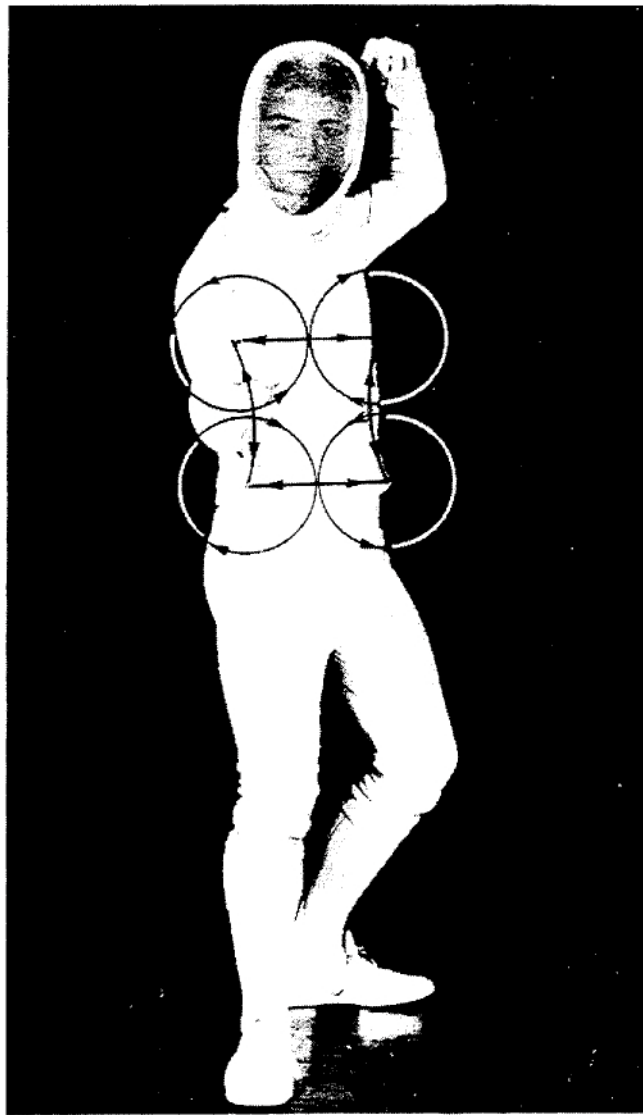


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Change of engagement  
from  
◀ sixte  
into quarte  
▼



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## DEFENCE AND RIPOSTES

### Theory

The principle of defence is the opposition of the forte of the defending blade to the foible of the attacking blade deflecting the attack clear of the target.

### Explanation

This principle may be applied in three basic ways. (figure 44).

- **LATERAL** or simple parries.
- **CIRCULAR** or counter parries. Called also acquired.
- **SEMICIRCULAR** or indirect parries.

The name of the parry describes the motion and direction the blade takes in effecting the parry. This basic concept is complicated when one realises that all three types of parry can be taken from each of the fencing positions (starting positions). For instance, a parry may start in one fencing position, and in the attempt to deflect the attacking blade, finish in another, or, in the case of the circular parry, come back into the same line.

- A **Lateral** parry starting in *sixte* will finish in *quarte*.
- A **Circular** parry starting in *sixte* will finish in *sixte*.
- A **Semicircular** parry starting in *sixte* will finish in *octave*.

It is a good mental exercise to work out for yourself the finishing position for each of the three types of parry using the starting positions of *quarte*, *septime* and *octave*.

The most important point when considering defence is the opposition of the defending **forte** to the attacking **foible**. We already know that the forte of the blade is the stronger part and the foible is the weaker part. This application of forte to foible provides the defender with the domination over the attack without using undue physical strength.

No matter how strong the attack is, providing the defender achieves the correct domination of blade, the parry will be safe and sure.

### **Opposition parries**

If the contact of the blade during a successful parry is momentarily held in order to *feel* the attacker's blade and response, it is called a parry by opposition. A fencer would do this deliberately in order to get the correct timing for a riposte, particularly if the riposte is to be indirect such as a disengage, cutover, and particularly in the case of the counter disengage.

### **Detached parries**

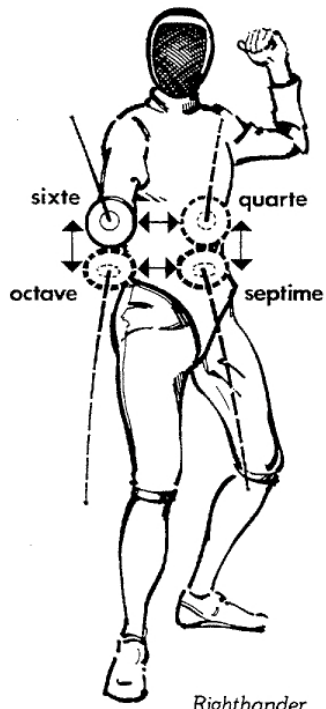
When the parry is effected with a type of **beat** action it is called a detached parry. Detached parries are used when speed of riposte is essential, i.e. a direct riposte.

**Note:** These definitions of opposition and detachment in defence are of course a generalisation and both may be used under varying conditions. However, it is an excellent way of introducing the use of opposition and detachment to beginners. Often, coaches teach the opposition parry first as it emphasizes the need for control and precision in defence. The principles of opposition also facilitates the act of taking successive parries against compound attacks.

### **Ripostes:**

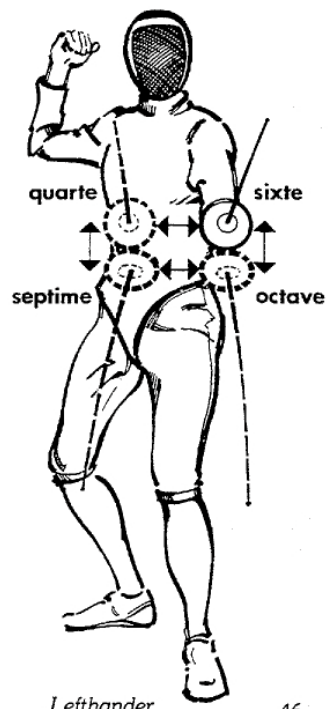
Having successfully parried the attack, the *right of way* passes to the defender who may then make a riposte. The riposte therefore, is the offensive action which follows the successful parry of the attack. The riposte, just as the attacks, may be simple or compound, direct or indirect.

It is imperative that coaches understand the foil principle of *right of way* as it is basic to foil fencing and it is this that makes the tactics of foil so different from epee.



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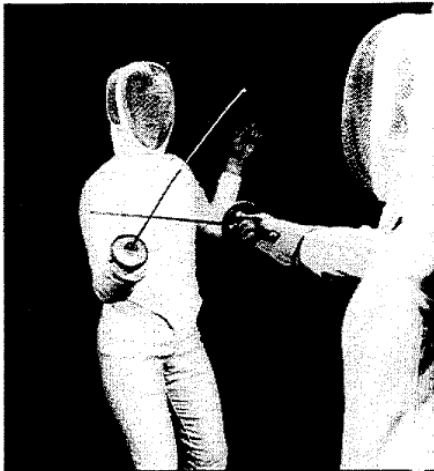
*Righthander*



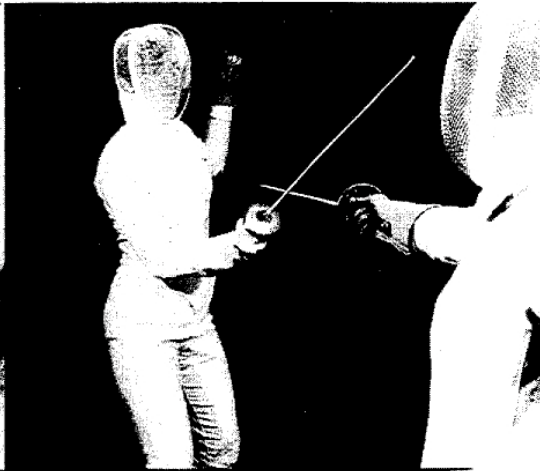
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*Lefthander*

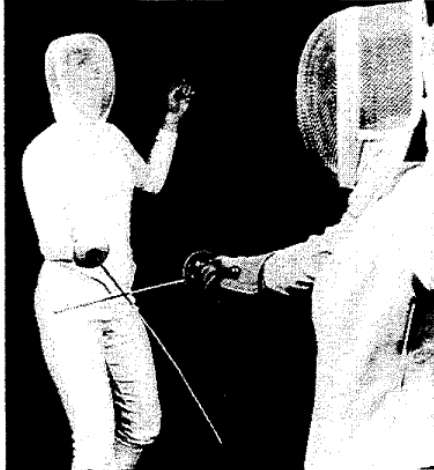
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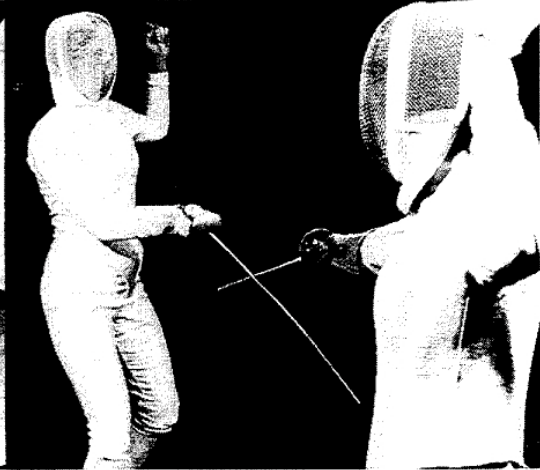
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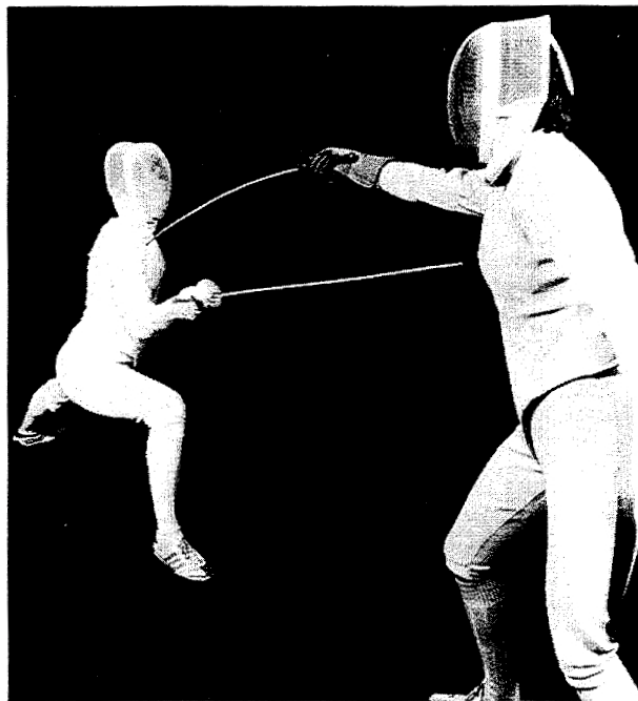


One must compare these two weapons in order to clarify the position. With the epee, for instance, an attack may be parried by the defender but, unless the riposte is immediate and fast, it is possible for the attacker to renew the attack and win the hit *even* though the riposte may arrive, providing the renewal arrives 1/20 to 1/25 of a second before the riposte. This shows that epee fencing is governed by chronological time. The faster you are, the more chance you have of scoring.

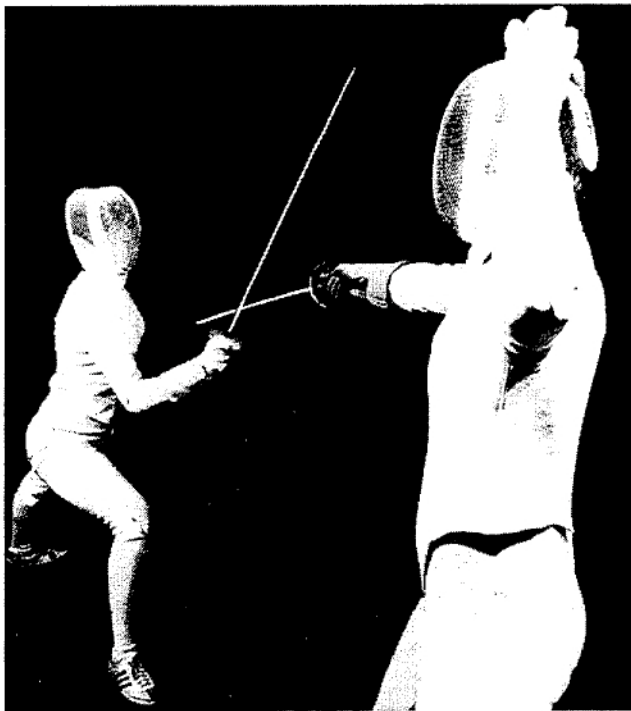
This is not so with the foil. Having parried the attack successfully, the defender has the right to reply (riposte). This *right will* remain with the riposter until the riposte is delayed, parried or misses, in which case *the right will* return to the original attacker. Providing this right to reply is taken immediately by the defender, the original attacker must fall back upon defence and try to parry the riposte before attempting to score again.

It should now be obvious that there is a sequence of events in foil fencing rather similar to that of tennis. In tennis the rally is started by one player serving the ball across the net. It is then returned by the opposing player and so on until the ball is played out of court or one of the rules contravened. So with fencing;

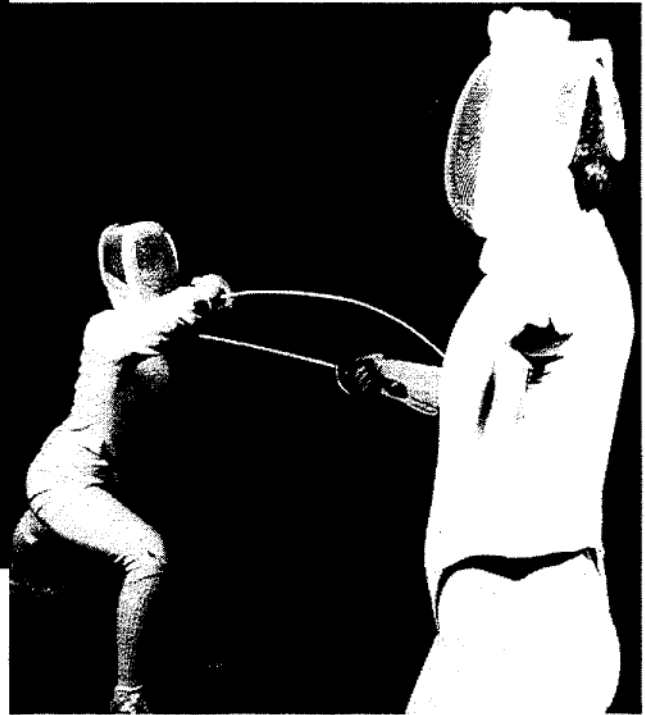
- One starts by launching an attack. It may be either fencer as there is no prescribed order of attack.
- Once the attack begins, the other fencer must defend by parrying the attack.
- Having succeeded, the defender will riposte and the attacker now defends.
- Once the attacker has parried he will then have the right to riposte and so on, each fencer parrying and riposting in turn until a hit is scored or a fencing rule is contravened, or the fencers choose to terminate the phrase.
- The fencing phrase is then ended and the President starts them again.



*The fencer on the right makes a riposte, having first parried the attack.*



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*The fencer on the left parries the riposte and make the 1st counter riposte.*

### Counter Ripostes

All parries and ripostes after the one made by the original defender are called counter ripostes.

They are numbered, the **odd numbered** ones are made by the original attacker and the **even numbered** ones by the original defender. Hence the sequence or fencing phrase is built as follows:

#### **Attacker**

Attack

Parry - 1st Counter Riposte

Parry - 3rd Counter Riposte

#### **Defender**

Parry and Riposte

Parry - 2nd Counter Riposte

and so on.

Because of the great variety of parries and ripostes and the human error in anticipation, timing and technical performance, counter-ripostes rarely go beyond the 1st or 2nd counter riposte. Consequently, we will only deal with these in this manual.

## Teaching - Defence

Here are some important points to remember when teaching defence:

- the parry must be just large enough to deflect the attack clear of the target.
- always insist that the defender gains domination over the attacking blade (principle of defence).
- the point should finish over the attacker's shoulder in the parries of quarte and sixte.
- the point should finish outside the attacker's lunging leg in septime and octave.
- circular parries describe a clockwise action when starting in sixte and a *counter* clockwise action when starting in quarte.
- semicircular parries describe a counter *clockwise* action when starting in sixte and a *clockwise* action when starting in quarte.
- opposition parries hold the blade momentarily to *feel* the attacker's response.
- opposition parries are used for *indirect* or *compound* ripostes.
- detached parries employ a beat action on the attacking blade and *knock* the attack away from the target.
- detached parries are used for *direct* ripostes.

## Teaching - Ripostes and Counter Ripostes

- in order to gain right of way the riposte must be taken up immediately following a successful parry.
- after teaching the direct riposte, try the indirect ripostes.
- the disengage riposte deceives around the guard during the attacker's lateral parry.
- the cutover deceives around the point during the attacker's lateral parry.
- the counter disengage deceives around the attacker's circular parry.
- unlike the attacks, the riposter's sword arm stretches after the deception of the parry.
- when disengaging into the attacker's sixte line, lift the point over the sword arm as the arm is extending.
- first develop the rhythm of counter ripostes direct before attempting the indirect actions.
- successful 1st counter ripostes are usually premeditated. In other words the original attack is deliberately short to ensure sufficient time and distance in which to parry the riposte and score with the 1st counter riposte.
- make sure that the attacker, when attempting a 1st counter riposte, keeps the parry on the lunge well forward to facilitate a speedy counter riposte.
- when taking a parry, don't make it too wide in case it is deceived by an indirect action.

## Successive Parries

**Theory** - Successive parries are two or more parries taken in order to parry compound attacks.

**Explanation** - When the first parry is deceived by a compound attack, the defender must take a second parry to deflect the attack clear of the target.

Because the defender has always the choice of the three types of parry - lateral, circular and semi circular - on any one offensive action, this principle will also apply to each successive parry when the first parry is deceived.

Therefore, on the three types of compound attacks mentioned in this manual, the following combinations of successive parries are possible.

Note that the first parry is dictated by the type of compound attack.

| <b>Feint Direct - Disengage</b> | <b>Feint Direct - Counter Disengage</b> | <b>Feint Low - Disengage</b>  |
|---------------------------------|---|-------------------------------|
| Lateral-lateral                 | Circular-lateral                        | Semi circular - Semi circular |
| Lateral-circular                | Circular-circular                       | Semi circular - Circular      |
| Lateral-semicircular            | Circular-semicircular                   | Semi circular - Lateral       |

**Note:** It is not possible to parry a low-high attack with a semicircular - lateral parry as the attack finishes in the high line whereas the lateral parry after a semicircular lowline parry would finish in septime or octave.

If there are three movements in the compound attack there are of course three movements in the corresponding defence. As three movement compound attacks are uncommon in modern fencing, we will only deal with two movement attacks and defence in this manual.

## Teaching

- as a common fault in defence is to withdraw the sword arm, great care must be taken to keep successive parries well forward of the defending target.
- insist on parries being taken just wide enough to cover the target. The wider the first parry, the wider and therefore less controlled the successive parries.

## COMPOUND ATTACKS

### Theory

A compound attack is an attack comprising two or more offensive movements. These attacks *are* usually made up of a 'feint' to draw a parry followed by a deception of that parry. There can be more than one feint deceiving more than one parry.

### Explanation

Compound attacks are the logical progression to simple attacks and are made up of combinations of two or more of these simple actions.

Quite often a fencer will meet an opponent who cannot be hit by an attack of one blade action. Maybe the reason is that the opponent keeps the fencing distance too well and never comes close enough, or is quick enough on defence to parry.

The next stage in the game therefore, is to try and take advantage of the opponent by the use of deception. To make him think that he is going to be hit in one area of the target and when he tries to defend that area, deceive the parry and attack somewhere else.

This action of delivering a false attack is called **making a feint**, and is very similar to acts of deception in other sports. The fencer seeks to conceal the real intention of the attack and so gain time and distance.

The main problem confronting the attacker if the opponent keeps good fencing measure is the distance he/she has to travel from the point of the sword to the opponent's target compared to the relatively short distance the defender has to travel to effect a successful parry. The attacking distance averages about three or four times greater than that in defence. It is extremely rare to find a fencer who is that much slower than the opponent and this is the main reason why simple attacks are so difficult to use effectively in combat. Coupled with this inequality of distance between offensive and defensive actions is the association of time.

One way of equalising the time and distance problem is to trick the defender into believing that the initial action made by the attacker is the real attack. This will induce the defender to move the blade in a specific direction - across if it is a lateral parry. The attacker will start to deceive as the parry begins and is therefore one move ahead. Providing there isn't contact of blade the attacker will remain ahead of his opponent no matter how many deceptions or parries are made. This act of deception gives the attacker the necessary advantage of time. The gaining of distance is achieved by starting the lunge with the feint. Assuming the defending blade has not started to move at the precise moment the feint begins, the attacker, lunging with the feint, tries to get his point as close to the opponent's target as possible before the actual deception begins. If the attacking point can manage to get past the defending coquille, for example, the distance the point has to travel in deception and to reach the target is approximately the same as that of the defensive parry. Being one move ahead as already explained, the attacker should hit the target before the defender realises that he/she has been deceived and can effectively take a second parry.

This gaining of time and distance in compound attacking is called a *progressive attack* because it progresses continuously towards the target from the moment of inception. It must not be assumed that this is the only way to deliver a compound attack.

An alternative is called the *two time* compound attack. In this action the attacker does not start lunging with the feint but makes it at a safe distance from the *en garde* position. The strength of this type of attack is that the attacker is not committed until the parry is seen and can therefore discontinue the attack if the anticipated parry has been misconceived. Another strength, if the fencer is really well trained, is the ability to deceive no matter which parry is taken. (Choice Reaction page 103).

As with all fencing movements, there are weaknesses. The weakness of the two time attack is that whereas it deals with the problem of time, it does very little to overcome the problem of distance. The lunge has still to be made with the second move and the distance is still far greater than the distance travelled in the parry.

All of these statements are relative, after all. The success of any fencing action is so dependent upon the relative abilities of the two combatants, their relative physical abilities, reach, length of legs, speed, reaction time, analysis and anticipation of the other's tactics, that success can never be guaranteed. Knowledge and understanding, however, is the foundation upon which all of these attributes are built.



*The fencer on the left makes a feint and deceives the parry of quarte.*

## Coaching

It must be understood from the start that most compound attacks comprise no more than two movements in modern combat, the feint and the scoring movement. To extend the compound attack to three or more moves, though possible, gives the defender time to catch up and time and distance may be lost. Anyway, for Level 2 we will only concentrate upon three types:

- A **feint direct**, deceive the **Lateral** parry.
- A **feint direct**, deceive the **Circular** parry (illustration 56-57).
- A **feint low**, deceive the **Semicircular** parry (illustration 58-59).

**Note:** The feint may also be made by any of the **Indirect** actions providing they deceive an attempted engagement or change of engagement.

Basically, they are executed as follows:

### Deceiving the Lateral Parry

- The feint is made in the direct line, extending the arm with the point of the sword 'threatening the target.
- The lateral parry is made across the target.
- At the same time the attacker deceives around the guard of the defending blade with a disengagement, keeping the arm straight and point movement just large enough to negotiate the defending sword and sword arm.

### Deceiving the Circular Parry

- After the feint is made the defender this time tries a circular parry which the attacker deceives with a counter disengagement.

### Deceive the Semi Circular Parry

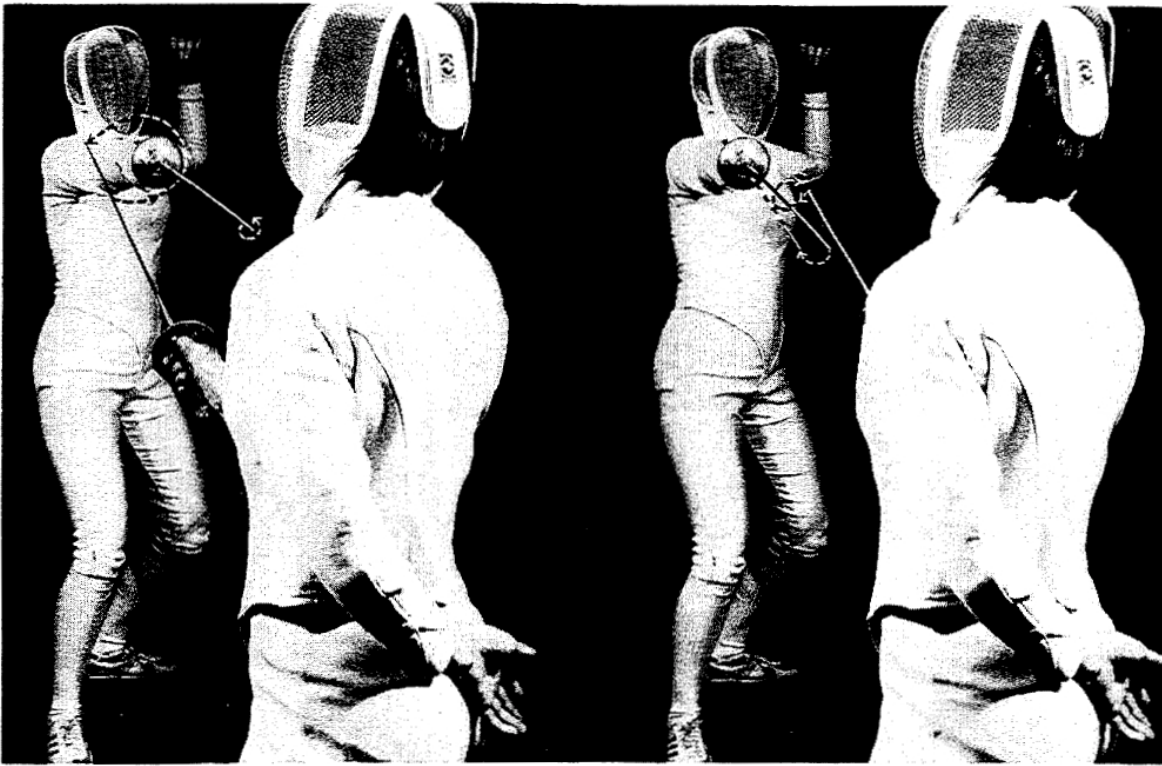
- This time the feint is made into the defender's low line. The low line parry is made and at the same time the attacking blade deceives by disengaging from the low line into the high line.

## PROJECT

If this method is used to introduce the group to compound attacks, explain to them that they have been using a simple attack - for instance, a disengage, and it is constantly being parried by a circular parry. Demonstrate this to the class, you taking the parry, now invite the class to practice and discover themselves how to make a feint and deceive the circular parry, give them one or two main points to remember such as:

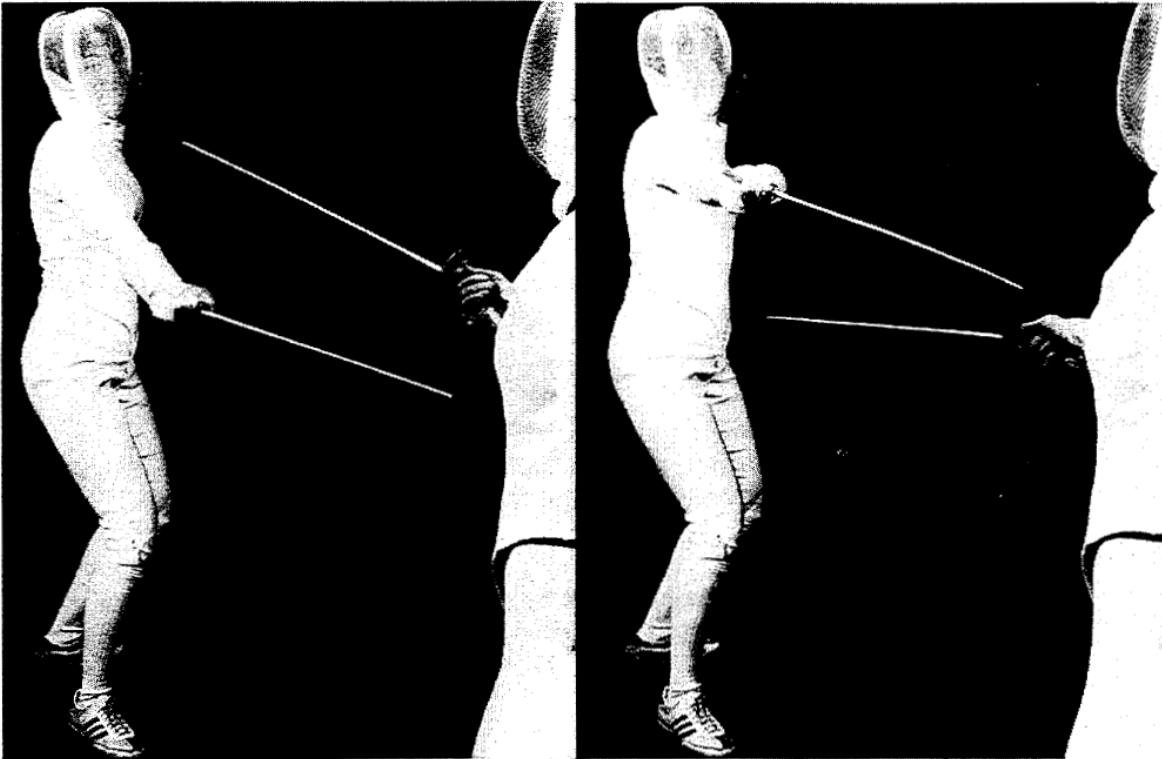
- the sword arm must be straightening during the feint and deception.
- make the deception just large enough to get around the opponent's sword and sword arm.
- at this stage of learning, do not lunge until the opponents' parry is deceived.

Much can be learned and retained by the students' working out the deceptions for themselves. Once they are conversant with the three types of parries; lateral, circular and semi-circular, and have the basic knowledge of the compound attack, they could spend a useful lesson on *discovering* all of the possible combinations of compound attacks.



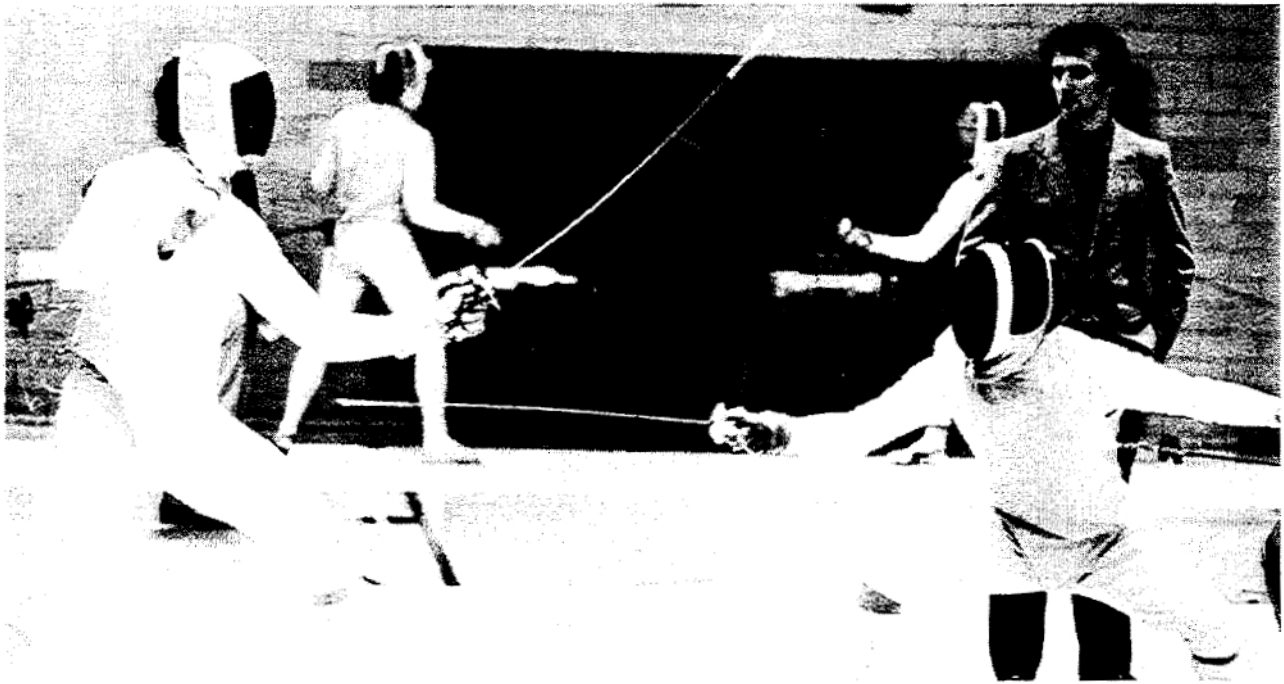
56 *Deceiving the circular parry of quarte.*

*Deceiving the circular parry of sixte.* 57



58 *Feint low — deceive the semi circular parry of octave.*

59



60

## COUNTER OFFENSIVE ACTIONS

### Theory

A counter offensive action is a counter attack made upon the opponents' attack rather than trying to parry. There are two:

### The Stop Hit

A stop hit is a counter attack the arrival of which, to be valid, must precede the opponent's attack by *one period of fencing time*.

**Note:** A period of fencing time is the time taken for a fencer to execute a movement of blade, arm, body or legs, or any of these simultaneously.

### The Stop Hit with Opposition

A stop hit with opposition is a counter attack which closes the final line of the opponent's attack and scores by deflecting the attack at the same time.

### Explanation

It is not always necessary to attempt to parry the opponent's attack. Sometimes fencers become so complicated or confused in their attacking actions that to attempt a parry is not possible. Other fencers, because of bad coordination, make their attacks with a bent sword arm or withdraw their arm in the middle of the attack. This withdrawn arm can often be deceiving and to attempt a parry can often be difficult.

The fencing rules allow for these sometimes unorthodox movements by stating that the defender may ignore the parry under these conditions and counter attack providing the defender's hit scores before *the final* attacking movement has begun. In other words, if the swords were sharp, the attacker could not have completed the attack without impaling himself on the defender's blade.

All attacks comprising one or more feints, or are delivered with a bent arm, even if the arm is straight initially but bends in the middle of the attack, are vulnerable to the stop hit. However, the stop hit is not an easy move to bring off in combat and requires excellent observation of the opponent's game and anticipation of when the opponent is going to make the mistake again. There is not sufficient time to actually see the attack begin and then counter attack when the bent arm is observed. Reaction time is such that unless the attack is exceedingly slow, waiting to see the bent arm, although safe, will invariably mean that the counter attack is made as the last movement of the attack begins and is therefore out *of time*.

The stop hitter usually gambles on *a calculated* risk. This risk is based upon previous knowledge of the opponent's movements. It is a premeditated action, based upon the fencer's estimate of when the fault will occur again.

When it does, the stop hit must be made immediately and without hesitation. If the gamble is correct and the timing right, the stop hit is in *time*. If wrong, the stop hit is out of time. It is not possible, except on rare occasions, for the stop hitter to change the action or attempt a parry. Simply then, if a stop hit is made on a two-time attack it must *arrive* on the first movement. If made on a 'one-two-three' it must arrive on the first or second movements.

A correctly executed beat attack *direct* is an attack in two periods of fencing time but the stop hit can only be made effectively by deceiving the *beat*. F.I.E. rule 422 shows that the would-be attacker is at fault if deceived in a preparation. The beat is a preparation of the attack and not the attack proper. Consequently, the defender must anticipate *the beat* and be prepared to deceive it. If successful in the deception, the defender acquires the priority of attack and will score the hit even though the hit of the would be attacker may arrive at the same time.

This particular fencing phrase is incorrectly executed if the deception of the beat and extension are hesitant, especially if the beat is made with an extending arm. If the attack and the deception then arrive at the same time it may appear to the President to be a stop hit out of time. Nevertheless, the attacker is at fault if deceived in a preparation and the would be deception has right of way.

The stop hit with opposition is *even* harder to use effectively in combat. This move requires the same observations and anticipation but also requires knowledge of where the attack is going to finish and excellent timing to extend the sword in that line, deflecting the attack at the same time as the hit is scored. One slight mistake in anticipating the final line of the attack or in slightly mistiming the extension, and the defender is hit by the attack at the same time as the counter attack is made. The counter attack is then definitely out of time, being made on the final movement of the attack.

## Teaching

Teaching counter attacks in a group is rather limited as the element of surprise is obviously missing, each fencer knowing what the other is doing. However, the basic technique can be taught, i.e. the extending of the defending blade into the opponent's bent arm attack. The distance is adjusted by making the attacker take a big step forward with the bent arm. This will bring them into distance and will avoid the defender leaning forward too much in order to reach. Once the act of stop hitting is learned, the timing and opportunism which makes it so successful may be acquired in the combat.

The stop hit with opposition is best learned on a disengage attack into the sixte line of the defender, thus giving the added protection of the sword arm if the attacking blade should slip off the defending blade.

- As the attacker steps in with the bent arm disengaging into sixte, the defender extends the sword arm into the sixte line, covering at the same time the counter attack arrives.
- It should be remembered that the stop hit in opposition can only be made in the high line in sixte providing the attacker's sword arm is low and point high. Consequently, it will aid the practice initially by instructing the attackers to ensure that this happens. The low sword hand in the attack provides an uncovered area at the top of the attacker's target into which the counter attacking thrust is made.
- If a stop hit in opposition is to be made on an attack which is covered in the high line, it should of course be made into the low line of octave. In this action, one must ensure that the attacking arm is high but the point is low.
- Stop hits in opposition are usually made on the sword arm side and not in the open lines of quarte and septime. This is not to say that they cannot be done in these lines but the counter attack should be aware that those lines afford less protection than sixte or octave on the sword arm side.

## COUNTER TIME

### Theory

Counter time is to draw the opponent's counter attack (stop hit) parry it and riposte.

### Explanation

When one is fencing an adversary who is prone to making stop hits it may be anticipated when it is going to be made. In order to draw the stop hit the attacker must create the illusion that he is going for an *all out* attack by making a *false* attack.

This will induce the defender to make the stop hit providing the false attack has all of the character of a real attack and is convincing enough. Once the defender is committed to the stop hit it should be easy enough to parry it and riposte.

The great skill in this movement, which is an obvious act of *second* intention, is to make a false attack which is convincing but to not get too close to the defender thus avoiding being hit by the stop hit. Having parried the stop hit, the attacker must now know whether the riposte must be delivered with a lunge or not. It is reasonable to expect that, having failed in the stop hit, the defender will try to escape by moving backwards and, at the same time, failing back on the defensive. Many fencers have correctly drawn the stop hit and parried it but failed to score a hit because they did not anticipate the defender's automatic defensive response and select the riposte that deceives that response.

If the counter attacker comes in very close then the riposte may be direct and without a lunge. If distance has been maintained then it may be anticipated that the defender will respond with a parry, usually a lateral parry, and an indirect riposte with a lunge is necessary\_ To deceive a lateral parry the riposte would of course be by disengage.

All of this shows that although counter time is technically made up of very simple movements, great perception and anticipation are required for it to succeed in combat.

- Anticipation - to know when the counter attack is going to be made.
- Deception - to make a false attack which is convincing enough to draw the stop hit.
- Distance - not to get so close as to be hit or so far away as to lose time on the riposte.
- Timing - to coordinate the parry and riposte with the defender's stop hit and reaction.

### Teaching Points

- first, practice the group in making a preparation which is convincing. It will add emphasis if the blade movement is made with a jump forward.
- the blade movement is usually made with a bent arm to encourage the counter attack and to be in a good position to parry.
- next, practice the preparation concentrating upon the distance.
- in this exercise the defender will make the counter attack but does not hit because the attacker is slightly outside of riposting distance.
- at the end of the jump forward the attacker must be well balanced ready to riposte with or without a lunge.
- it will help if the attacker's feet are kept well apart and knees bent. This will overcome the tendency to sway forward and lose balance due to the effort put into making the false attack convincing.

- when the correct distance is acquired the parry and riposte are added.
- a very good exercise in control and balance is **choice reaction** for parries and ripostes.

The defender has the choice of:

1. executing a stop hit and remaining close, in which case the attacker must parry and riposte direct without a lunge.
2. executing a stop hit and moving backwards with a parry, in which case the attacker must parry and riposte indirect with a lunge.

The choices may then be increased by varying the parry, the attacker selecting the correct riposte for each parry.

The main points to look for when coaching counter time are:

- Emphasis on the false attack.
- Correct distance and balance after the false attack.
- Timing of the stop hit and parry.
- Correct selection of the riposte.
- Correct choice of lunge, or not, with the riposte.