

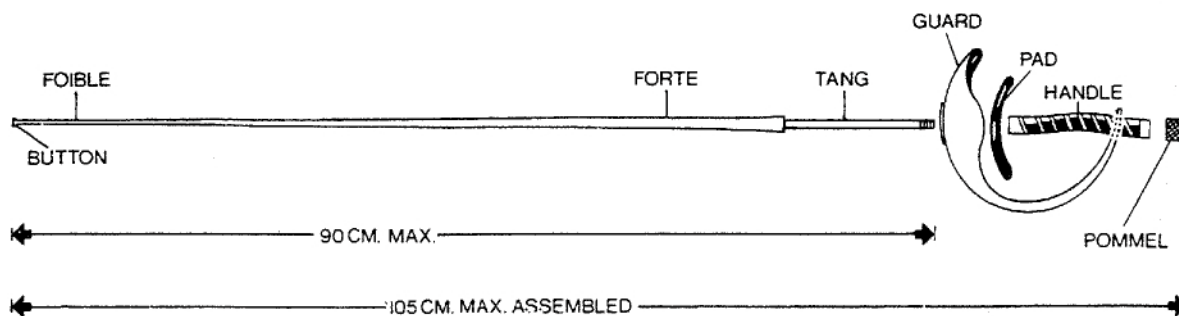
PART IV
SABRE
SABRE OBJECTIVES

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

SABRE SYLLABUS

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THE SABRE



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THE SABRE

F.I.E. Rule 404:

Total length, 105 cm. maximum.

F.I.E. Rule 405:

Total weight, less than 500 grammes.

F.I.E. Rule 406 - Blade:

Must be made of steel, approximately rectangular in section.

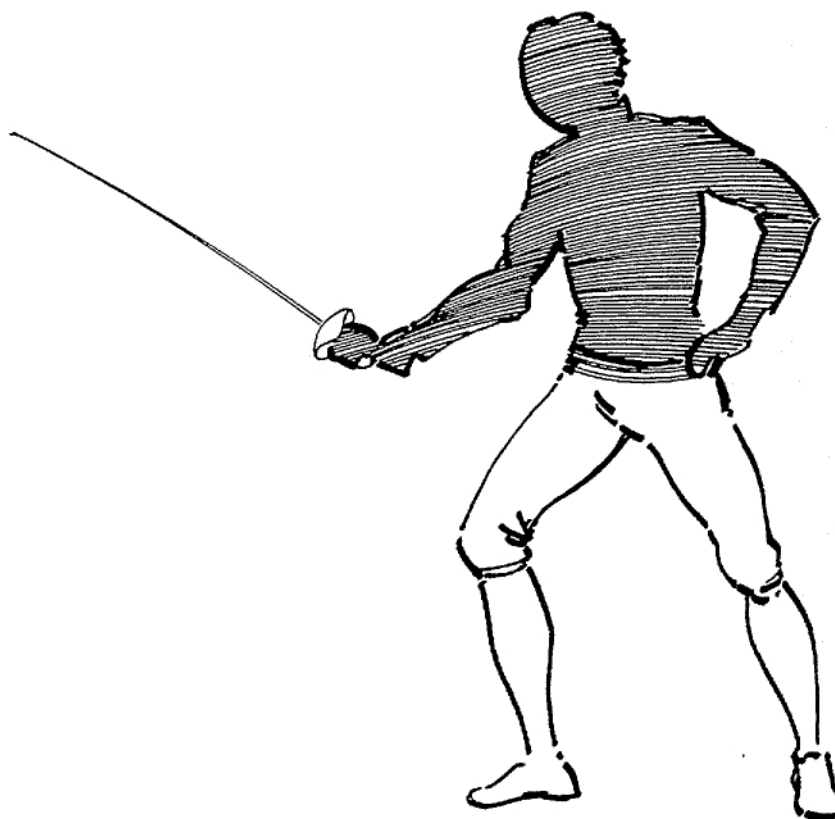
Maximum length - 88 cm.

Minimum width at point - 4 mm. Thickness at point - at least 1.2 mm. The end of the blade must be folded over.

Blades which are too whippy or rigid are forbidden. Sharply bent extremities or curve in the direction of cutting *edge* are forbidden.

F.I.E. Rule 407 - Guard (coquille):

The guard must be made in one piece and externally smooth. It must pass through a rectangular gauge measuring 15 x 14 cm. in section with a length of 15 cm. the blade being parallel with the axis of the gauge.



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SABRE TARGET

F.I.E. Rule 410

The target comprises any part of the body above a horizontal line drawn between the top of the folds formed by the thighs and by the trunk of the fencer when in the *en garde* position (illustration 62).

F.I.E. Rule 411 - Hits Off Target

A hit made on any part of the body other than the target - whether directly or as a result of a parry - is not counted as a valid hit, but it stops the phrase and annuls all hits which were scored thereafter.

F.I.E. Rule 412 - Corps a corps

At sabre, when a fencer intentionally or systematically causes the *corps a corps* (body to body) he must be penalized by having a *negative penalty* scored against him after he has been warned during the same bout.

F.I.E. Rule 413 - Number of Hits, Duration of a Bout

At sabre, bouts are fought to five (5) hits, the duration of the bout being four (4) minutes. For direct elimination and finals, the bout is divided in three periods of three minutes with 1 minute rest between periods.

HOW TO SCORE

Definition

The Sabre is a cutting and thrusting weapon and hits may be scored on the valid target with the point and cutting edge of the blade.

The rules concerning hits scored with the point are the same as foil. Hits with the cutting edge may be scored with the whole of the front edge of the blade and the first third of the back edge (back cut).

General

In order to facilitate the coming of the electric recording apparatus for sabre - sabre is the only weapon not yet controlled by this apparatus - cuts made with the flat of the blade are now recorded as valid. This means that any contact of the blade on the valid target delivered as a cut will score.

The exception is a movement made with the point which misses and grazes along the target area. These actions are still counted as passed and do not score.

Cuts which are made with excessive force or whip and hit the target even though a correct parry has been made are disallowed and should be regarded as *parried* by the judges. This should not be confused with cuts which hit the defending blade and the target at the same time. These are valid and should be called by the judges as insufficiently *parried*. The foil rule will apply in the case of hits off target. They will not be scored but will *halt* the phrase and hits arriving after the off target hit will not be counted.

Teaching

- The same principles of teaching will apply as for foil. Start at riposting distance and, when proficient, increase the distance to include the lunge and fleche.
- The sabre cut must be delivered with the sword hand and not the arm or shoulder.
- Develop the ability of carrying the sword with the fingers rather than gripping the handle tightly.
- The cut is delivered with pressure from the thumb and closing the little finger on the handle; the handle pivoting over the forefinger.
- The cut should have the quality of bounce rather than laying it on. This bounce is the result of a relaxed and supple hand.
- Practice cutting at the various parts of the sabre target, flank, cheek, head, left cheek and chest.
- A good practice exercise is to extend the sword arm and make cuts around the target without moving the arm.
- The sword arm should be extended in front of, and slightly below, the shoulder.
- The sabre guard should protect the sword hand at all times whilst the cut is being delivered.
- Speed should be developed through relaxed technique, timing and coordination.
- Practice using cuts on the sword hand and arm. Being the forward target area these are most useful as counter attacks.
- The back cut is useful for hits underneath the sword arm.

General (Target)

Every part of the fencer above the line defined is the sabre target. The general areas are called; the flank, the cheek, the head, the chest and the sword arm.

The lower limit of the target is some way below the waist line and the sabre jacket usually conforms to this target area. The rules concerning substitution of the valid target at Foil (page 35) still apply for sabre although covering the target is rarely possible.



BASIC OFFENCE

Definition

The basic structure of attacking with the sabre comprises Simple and Compound Attacks.

Simple Attacks - any attack comprising one blade movement and one period of time.

Compound Attacks - any attack comprising two or more blade movements or two or more periods of time.

General

Unlike foil, sabre simple attacks cannot be categorized so easily into direct and indirect actions. The extended distance, total absence of contact of blade under normal fencing conditions and the large variety of target area would make a very confusing picture if one attempted to follow this plan of definition. It has therefore been decided for this manual to simplify to the extent that all actions of one blade movement to any part of the sabre target will be called **direct** unless they deceive an attempted engagement by the defender. This is not too different from the definition in foil.

Imagine you are opposite a sabre fencer who is *en garde* in *tierce* - not *low tierce* - which would cover the flank area. You will see that it is possible to extend and threaten any of the five target areas i.e. flank, cheek, head, left cheek and chest, without having to go around, under or over the defender's blade. This means that any attack to these

areas would be direct. These will be the only simple attacks explained in this manual.

1 Armed with this knowledge, it is relatively easy enough to work out the *indirect* simple actions on the defenders' *engagement* or *attempted engagement*. The problem in defining sabre attacking actions is that there is such great variety that

it would require a manual on its own to cover them all. When dealing with compound attacks only a couple will be explained and these will be of two movements only. The reader will have great fun in working out and listing all of the various combinations for his/her own benefit when teaching.

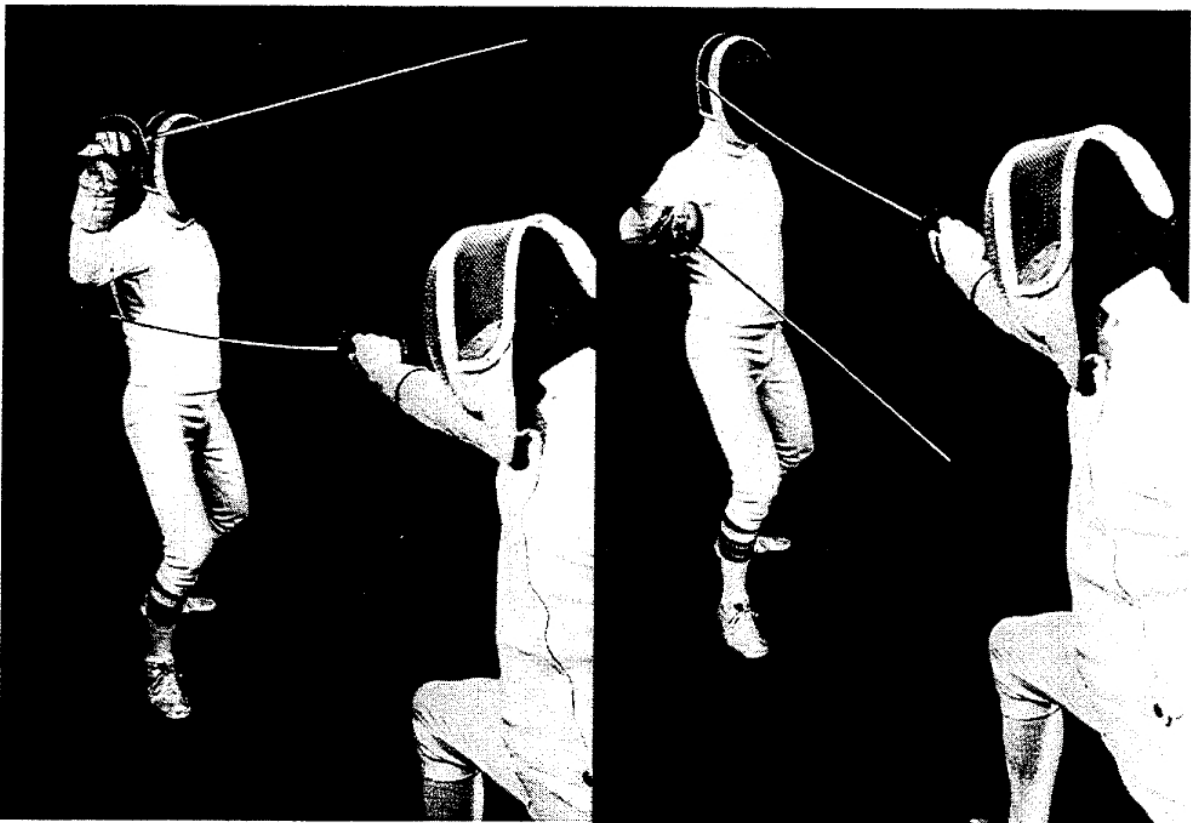
SIMPLE ATTACKS

Teaching

Look at the illustrations on page 65 and you will see the recommended positions for each of the direct attacks.

The following teaching points should be observed:

- When the sword arm is extended, great care should be taken to ensure that the sword hand is well protected by the guard.
- The sword arm should be extended slightly below and in front of the shoulder for all cuts. For left cheek and chest cuts the sword arm moves inward slightly to protect the inside of the sword arm.
- The blade must travel directly to the target area and never be brought backward once it starts on its forward path. It is common for beginners to bring the blade backward slightly in order to make the cut. This loses time and, if exaggerated, could develop into a two time attack rather than one time as it should be.

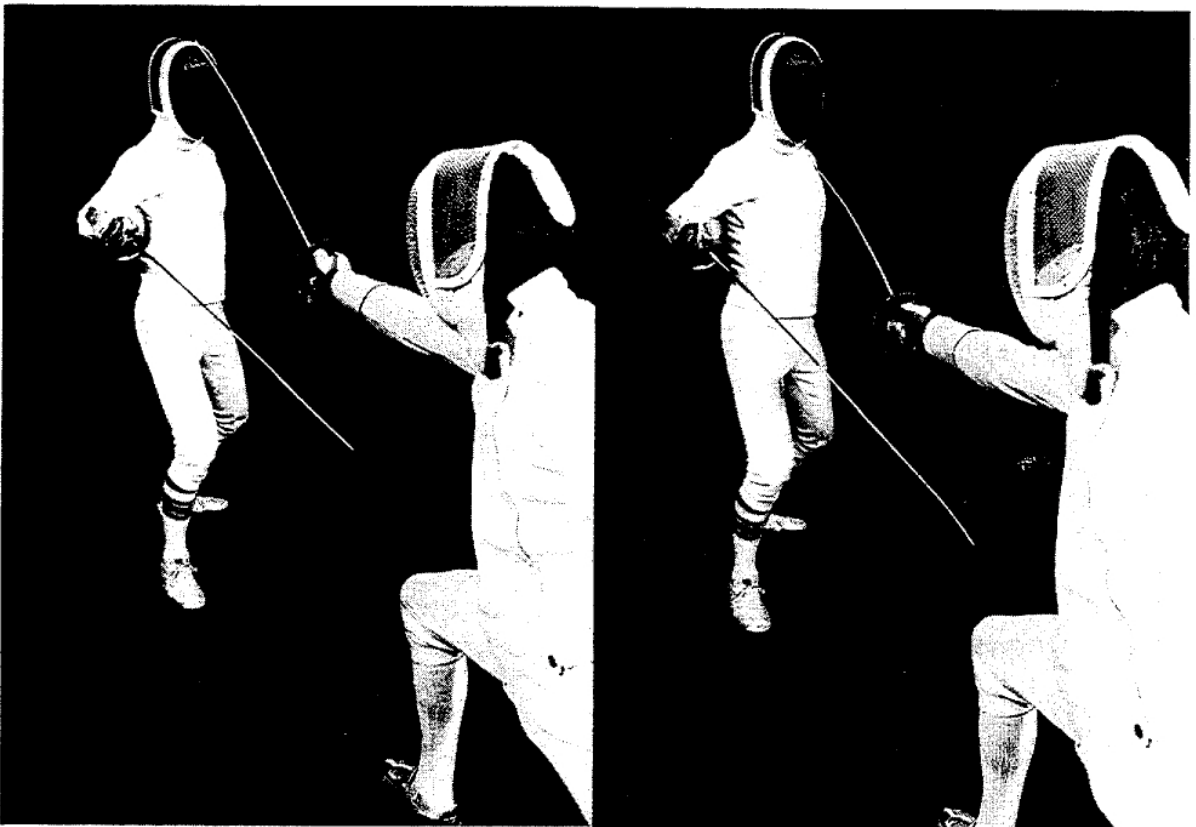


64

Flank

65

Cheek



66

Head

67

Chest



68

Lateral chest cut

- Once the attacks have been learnt, try to develop the ability of starting the sword arm and lunge together at fencing measure and, if possible, hit the target slightly before the completion of the lunge.
- This can be achieved by developing a feeling of throwing the blade to the target, without changing the grip on the sabre handle of course.
- Leave the sword arm straight until about half way back on the *recovery* or return to *en garde*. This will avoid the natural tendency in beginners to bend the arm too soon which inevitably develops a snatching action after the hit is made.
- The only time the arm is bent immediately is when the attack is parried and the attacker must parry the riposte.
- Remember to insist that the cut is delivered lightly and crisply and must have the character of bounce.
- Once the attack is on its way, the sword arm must not bend. It is common for beginners to try and make the cut from the elbow and so involve a slight bending of the arm.
- If this is allowed to continue, these direct attacks will become vulnerable to the stop cut.

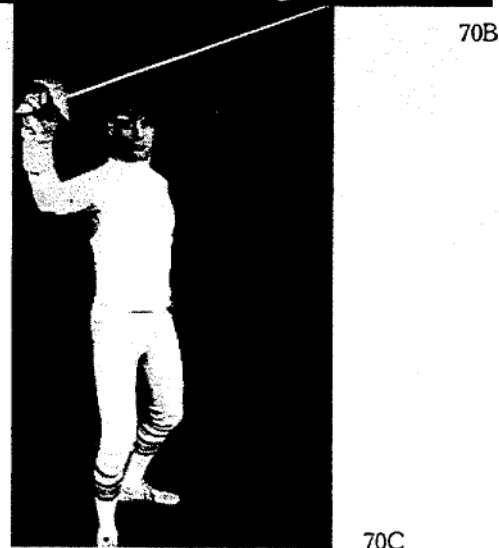
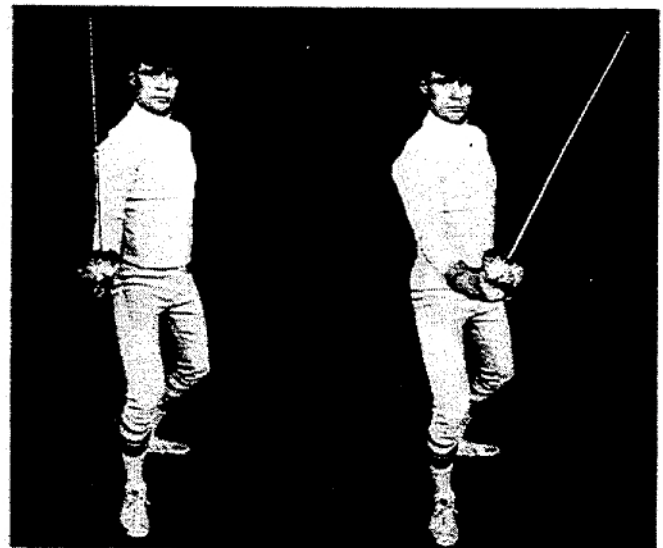
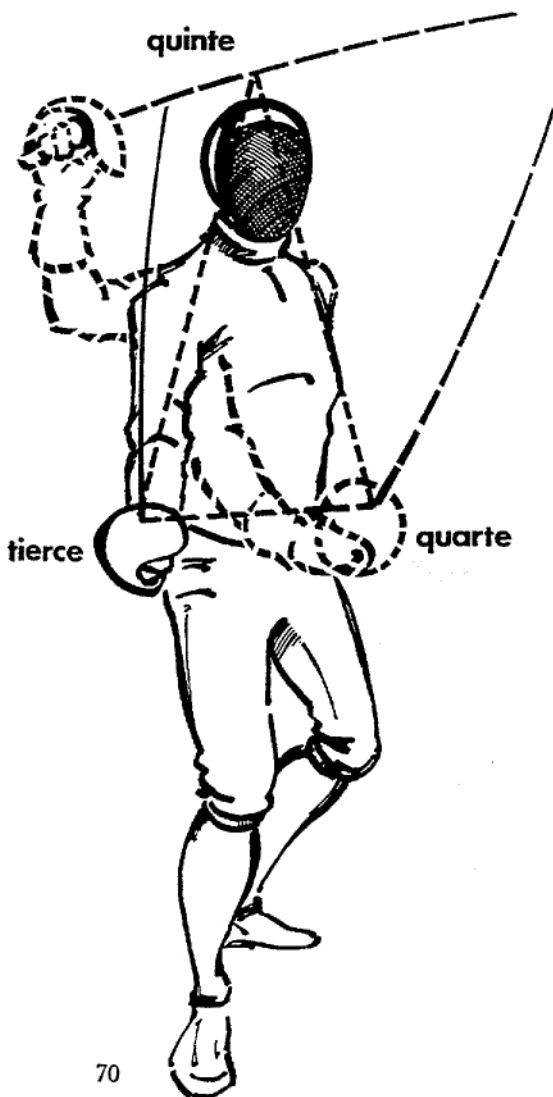
DEFENCE AND RIPOSTES

General: As the *principle of defence* explained in the foil section applies to all three weapons in fencing, there is no need to repeat this statement for each weapon. There is only the need to state that, because of the cutting action in sabre, it is perhaps more difficult to always apply the principle of opposition of the defending forte to the attacking foible.

Sabre cuts are often wide and may come from any angle, especially with the untrained fencer. It is therefore necessary to apply a more flexible approach to the teaching of sabre parries after the initial parry positions have been learned.

There are five (5) basic parries in sabre, six (6) if one includes the master's *parry* which has long been discarded as an inefficient competition parry. These parries are based upon the formation of two defensive triangles as follows:

- **1st Triangle** - Tierce (3), Quarte (4), Quinte (5) (illustration 70).
- **2nd Triangle** - Prime (1), Seconde (2), Quinte (5)



You will note that the triangles are not numerically based, the first triangle is so called because it is the first one to be taught.

You will also note that the apex of each triangle is the parry of quinte - or fifth parry, which defends against downward cuts at the head.

In practice, the selection of a particular triangle relies upon correct observation of which angle of cut the opponent favours. For instance, if the opponent favours lateral cuts left and right, then the selected base of the defensive triangle should be tierce and quarte.

If the opponent favours diagonal cuts, upwards at flank and downwards at chest, then the base should be prime and seconde. Some versatile sabreurs use all of the angles

in attack and riposte so the defence must be a combination of both triangles. Add to this the fact that all parries must have the quality of varying slightly up, downward, forward or backward to ensure that the defending forte does meet the attacking foible and one can easily see why sabre attack and defence can become extremely complex.

As levels 2 and 3 (Technical) are two parts of the same program, it is proposed to cover only the **first triangle**, Tierce (3), Quarte (4), Quinte (5) in this manual. The second triangle, Prime (1), Seconde (2), Quinte (5) will be included in Level 3.

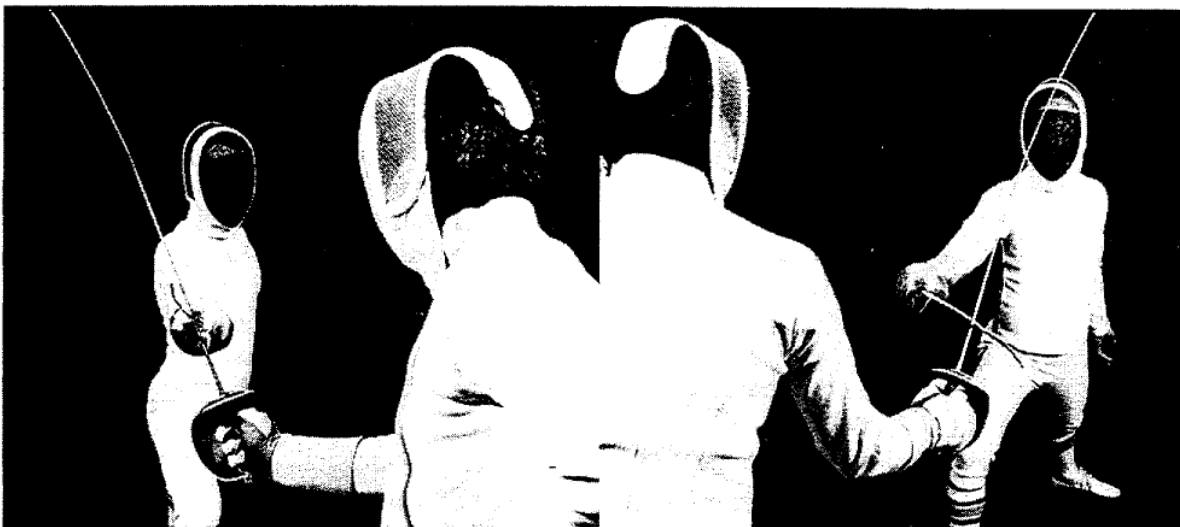
SABRE PARRIES

Tierce: Is the parry which protects the fencer upon the sword arm side e.g. for a right handed fencer the tierce parry is on the right and for a left handed fencer on the left. This parry defends lateral cuts at flank, cheek and outside arm (illustration 71).

Quarte: Is the parry which protects the fencer on the open side when *en garde* in tierce. It is the parry used on lateral cuts to the chest, left cheek (right cheek for left-handers) inside of the sword arm (illustration 72).

The points to remember are:

- The bottom part of the guard should be in line with the lowest part of the target.
- The attacking blade should be met by the forward cutting edge of the parry.
- To achieve this, the sword hand should be angulated outwards slightly - 45° to the front.
- To collect an attacking blade slightly high, for instance, a cheek cut, the point should always be forward of the guard. This will make the slightly high attack slip into the forte of the blade.

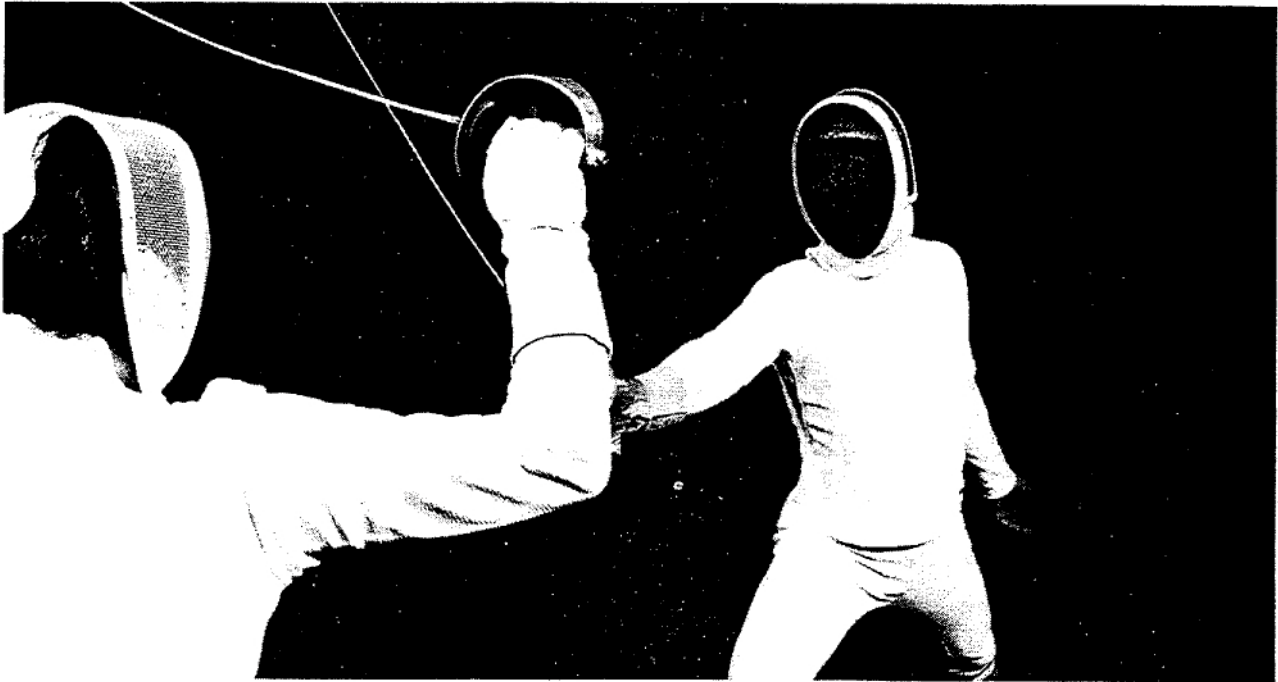


Quarte

Tierce

Quinte: Is the parry which defends against an attack at head (illustration 73). The following points should be considered:

- The sword hand and guard should be immediately above the sword arm.
- The cutting edge should be turned upwards to meet the attack, edge to edge.
- The blade should be angled slightly forward of the guard.
- The tip of the blade should be higher than the guard to collect the attack into the forte should it be slightly wide.



73

Quinte

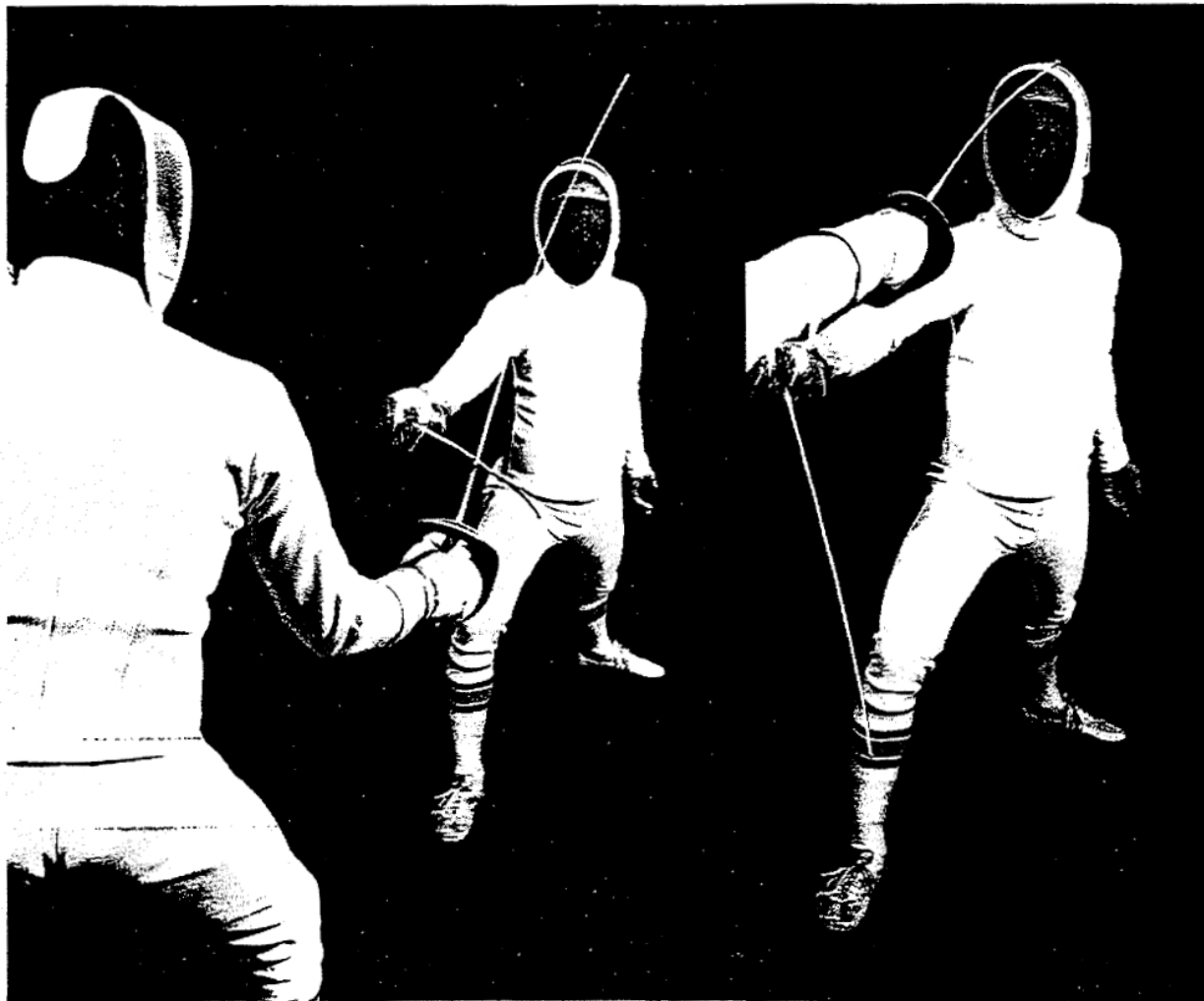
Teaching

- Have the group in two lines at riposting distance. The attackers *en garde* in tierce, the defenders with a relaxed sword arm and point touching the floor. From this position the defender can take any one of the three parries without too much effort.
- The attacker extends at flank and makes a lateral cut, the defender calmly places the sword in tierce and blocks the cut. Take a few seconds to adjust the position as described and both return to the starting position.
- This time the attacker extends at chest and makes a lateral cut, the defender raises the blade to block the cut with the parry of quarte. A few seconds to adjust the parry and both return to starting position. The exercise is again repeated for the quinte parry. This time the extension is at head.
- Once the defender has the feeling of a firm, safe parry which does not go too wide or too high in the case of the quinte parry, the attacker may now extend and make three cuts in slow tempo at the three positions with the defender taking the three parries in succession.
- At this stage, speed is not essential but precision and correctness of parry is.
- Once this is achieved, the speed can be increased and the defender practices the first triangle at speed.

Ripostes: Having established the defensive triangle, the group should *now* go back to the first practice of isolating the parries. Each parry should be followed by a direct riposte in the following order:

Parry	Riposte
Tierce	Head
Quarte	Cheek
Quinte	Flank

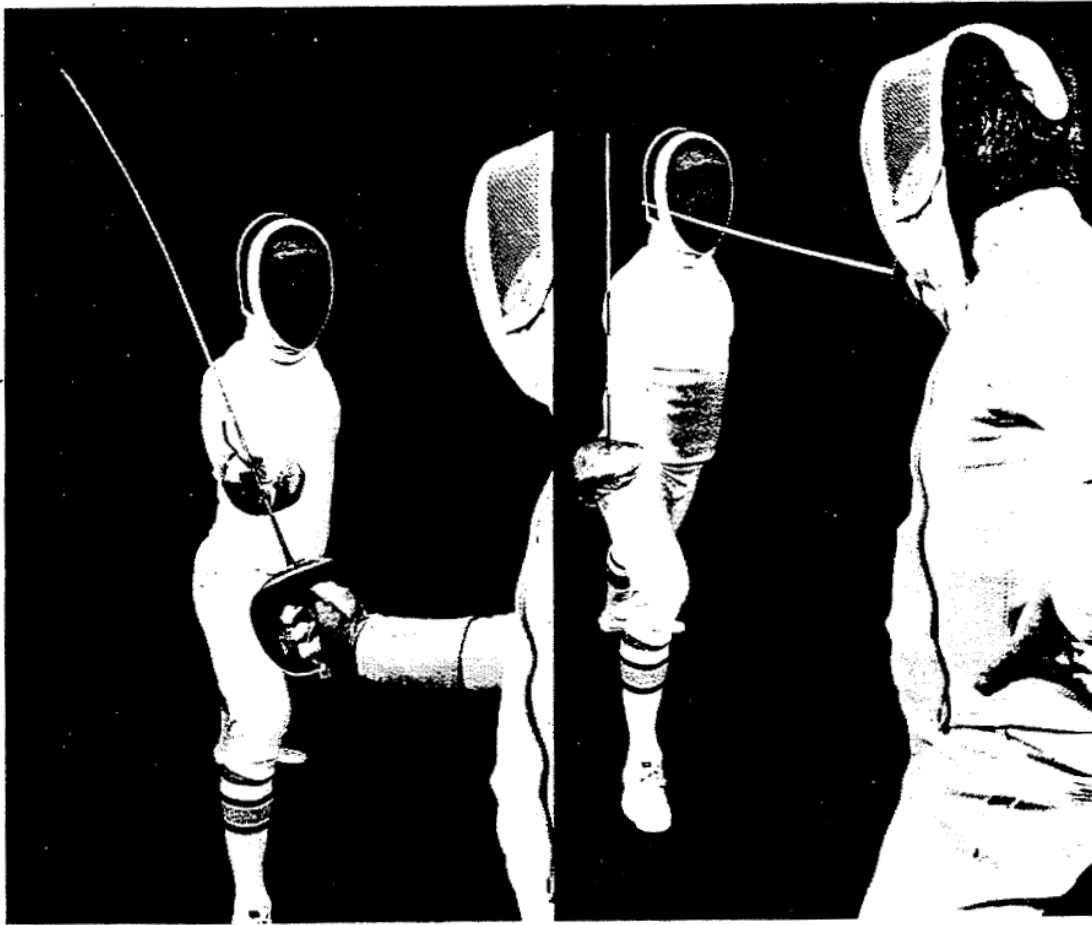
- Great care should be taken *in* developing the ability of placing the parry into position and waiting for the contact of blade in the parry before reacting to the riposte.
- Having made the parry, turn the cutting edge to the selected part of the target at the same time as the arm is extended for the riposte.
- During the riposte, the sword arm should be placed into the position in front of the leading shoulder to ensure maximum protection of the sword arm (see illustration 74).
- This protected position is the same for all ripostes.



74A

74B

Parry Tierce — Riposte — Head



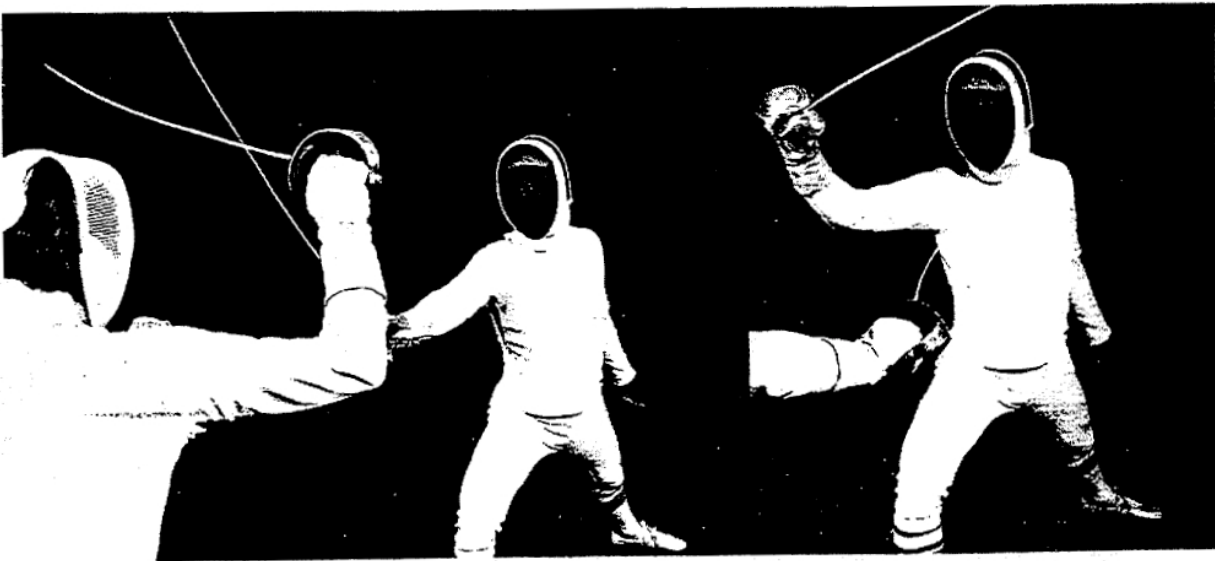
75

Parry Quarte

Riposte

76

Cheek



77

Parry Quinte

Riposte

78

Flank

COMPOUND ATTACKS

General

As with the foil, the composition of offensive actions with the sabre follows the same pattern. It is only the technique which changes. Hence, the definition of a compound attack is; any *attack* comprising *more than one blade* movement. In other words, a *feint* of an attack to draw a parry from the adversary and a *deception* of that parry to complete the compound attack. This would be a compound attack of two movements.

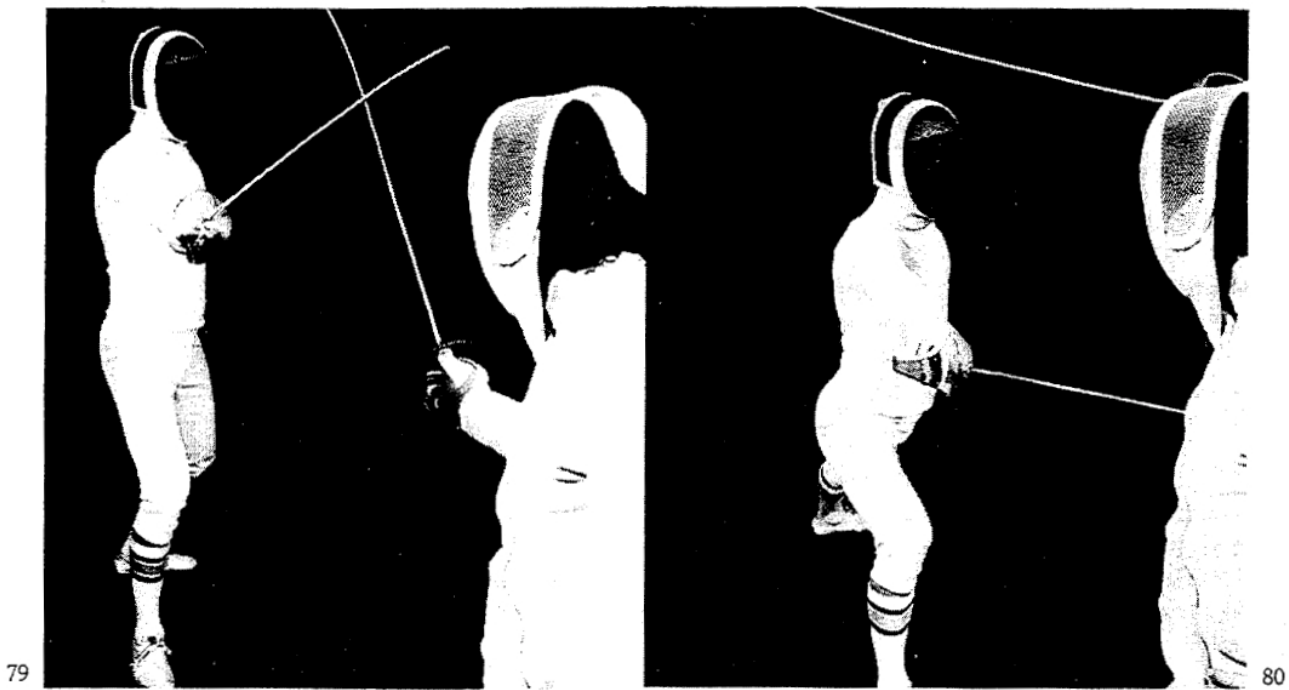
Compound attacks can be made up of any number of feints which deceives any number of parries but it must always be realised that by increasing the number of movements there is bound to be a delay in time, giving the defender more opportunity to catch up and parry. The chances of being caught up in the opponent's defence will increase in proportion to the number of feints being used.

To add to the general knowledge of the coach regarding compound attacks it is worth mentioning the *Beat Attack*. These will be covered fully in the Level 3 Manual but many coaches misconstrue the definition of a compound attack when it mentions *any attack* comprising *two or more* movements and include a *Beat Direct* attack as being compound. Analysis of fencing theory proves that this is not so.

An attack begins when the sword arm and blade begins to travel towards the opponent's target in an attempt to hit (simple attack) or make a feint to draw a parry (compound attack). The object of a beat is to knock the opponent's blade aside to open a line or create a reaction which can then be deceived by the attacker. This places the beat into the theoretical group called *Preparation of Attack*, the particular section being *Attacks on the Blade*. There are three of these, *Beat*, *Pressure* and *Froissement*, fully explained in Level 3.

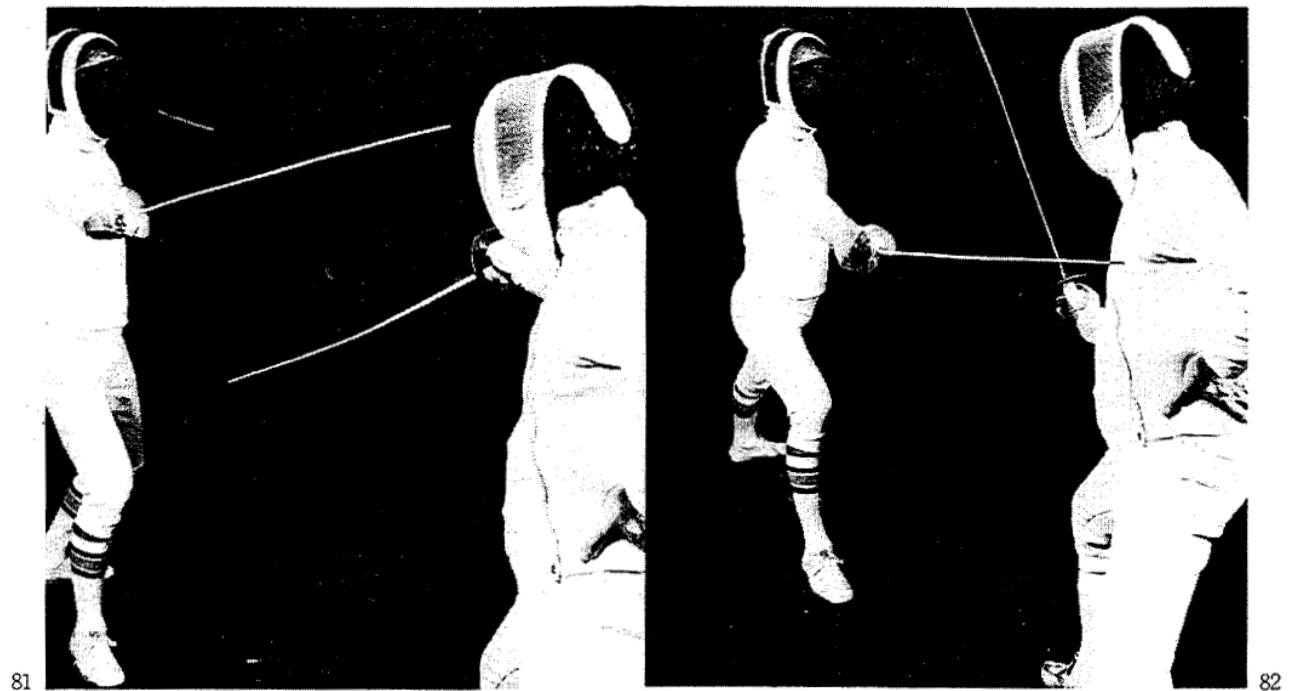
At sabre, the combinations of compound attacks comprising two or more movements is virtually endless, bearing in mind that there are five cutting positions on the trunk, several different angled cuts on the sword arm, and the actions made with the point. This totals ten orthodox attacking positions and could form the basis of some ninety compound attacks of only two movements. To go on with three or more movement compound attacks is pointless as they all conform to the same basic principles of attack.

We will only cover *three* compound attacks of two movements to illustrate these principles.



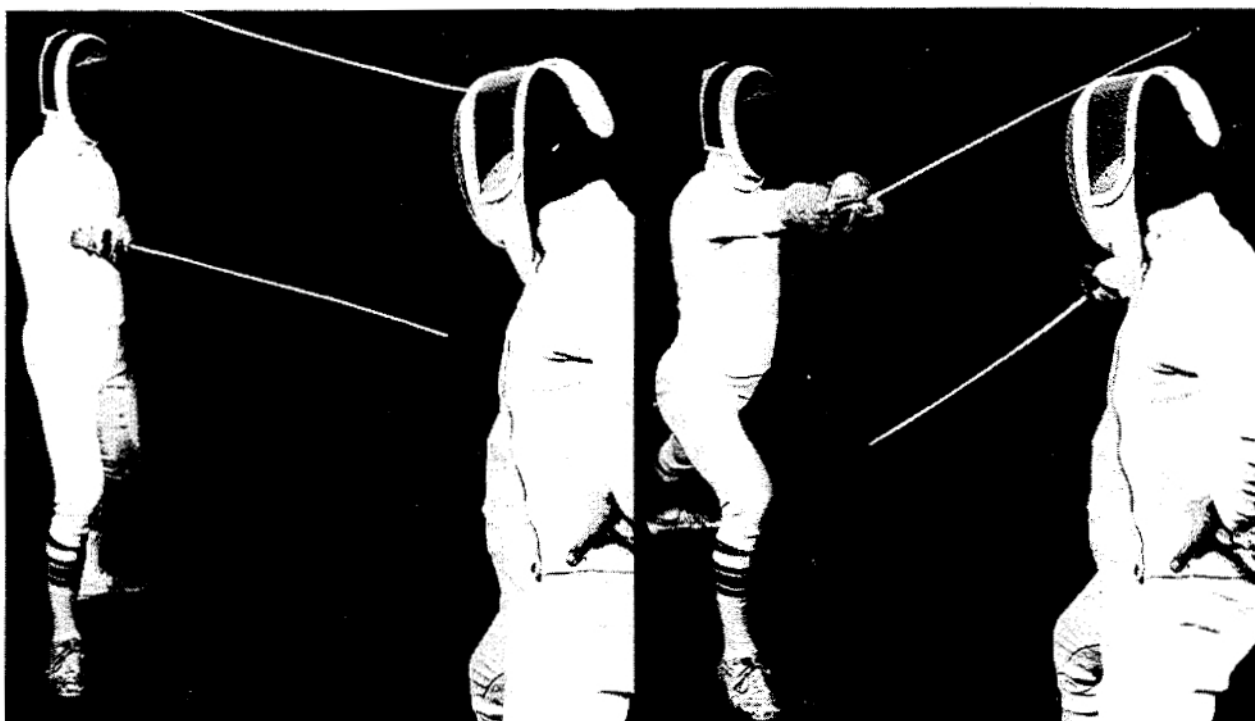
Head-Flank (illustrations 79-80)

The action is first started by extending the sword arm with a *feint at head*. The opponent starts the upward action of the parry of *quinte* and at the same time the attacking blade is rotated around the parry and the cut is delivered on *the flank*.



Cheek - Chest (illustrations 81-82)

The attacking blade is extended to *cheek*, which is uncovered due to the defender's position of *seconde*. The parry is drawn up to *tierce* and at the same time the attacking blade is rotated around the parry and the cut is delivered at *chest*.



83

84

Flank - Head (illustrations 83-84)

The feint this time is made at *flank*, the defender is still uncovered due to his *quinte* position. Again the parry is drawn to *seconde* but this time the attacking cut is delivered on the *head*.

Coaching Points

- The sword arm must *be* straight in the feint.
- Full protection of the sword hand is achieved by having the hand slightly below and immediately in front of the leading shoulder
- The feint must be made with the cutting *edge*.
- The angle between the blade and sword arm must be maintained in the feint.
- If the feint is made too deep the blade must be brought backwards when deceiving the parry, creating a loss of time.
- Ideally, the attacking blade should move forward continuously throughout the attack.
- When deceiving the parry, the attacking blade rotation from one line to another should be made with the fingers and wrist.

Coaching

- First practice the class in making the feint and deception concentrating upon manipulating the blade without arm movement.
- Next concentrate upon **timing** the deception with the defender's parry.
- Once the depth of feint and blade manipulation are acquired, the lunge and fleche can be included.
- When co-ordinating the sword arm with a leg action such as the lunge or fleche, make sure they both **start together** and **finish together**.
- Another rule worth considering concerning compound attacks is that if the feint contacts the opponent's blade, the *right of way* passes to the defender who will have the right to riposte. The continuation of the compound attack after such a meeting of the blade would be fruitless as this would be considered by the President as a *Renewed Attack* (Level 3).

STOP CUTS - PARRY AND RIPOSTE

General

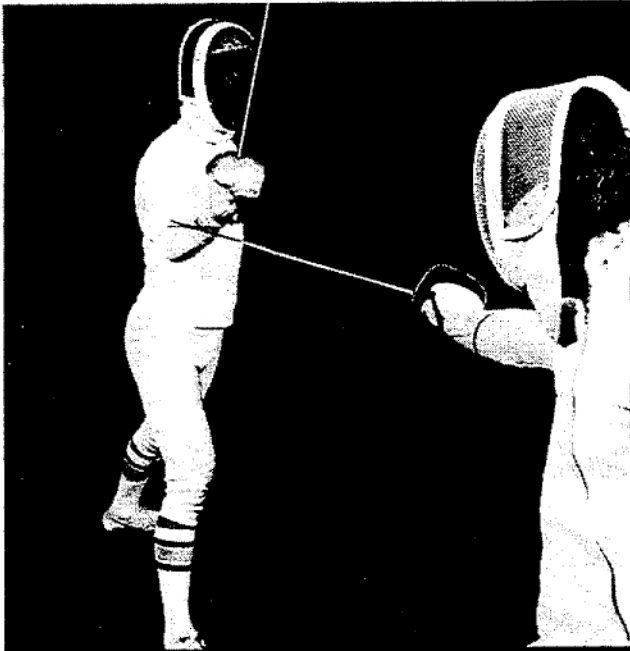
As the sword arm is considered part of the sabre target and is the nearest part to the adversary, counter attacks at the sword hand and arm are a constant hazard. This is why all attacking actions are made in such a way as to get as much protection from the sabre guard as possible.

However, it is a common fault with sabre fencers to expose the forearm during attacks thus leaving themselves vulnerable to stop cuts (illustrations 85-87). Of course, it is not possible to protect oneself against the well thought out, timed and executed stop cut. These often arrive even though the attacker is covered. The only answer to this type of fencer is to resort to simple attacks or use counter time.

If used indiscriminately, the stop cut will lose its effectiveness. It should be used with discretion and against an opponent who exposes the sword arm during attacks. Observation of the common forms of attack used by the opponent and which part of the sword arm is exposed is a prerequisite. There are four obvious angles when making the stop cut. Outside, inside, on top and underneath (illustrations 85-87). The stop cut must be premeditated to be successful. As with foil, it must arrive one period of time ahead of the attack, so, on a two time attack it must arrive on the first movement.

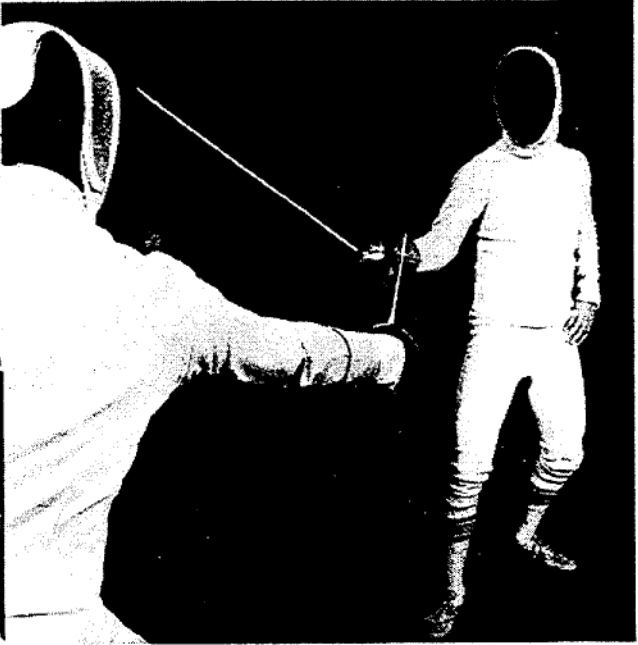
Coaching

- Technically, the stop cut is easy to execute.
- Have the group in pairs. One steps forward exposing the outside of the sword arm with a bent arm feint at flank. On this the defenders stop cut outside making sure that they do not expose their own sword arm during the process.
- Practice stop cuts on ail of the attacks in the following pattern. Remembering that the attacks must be made with a bent arm and are aimed at the body, while the stop cuts are aimed at the sword arm.

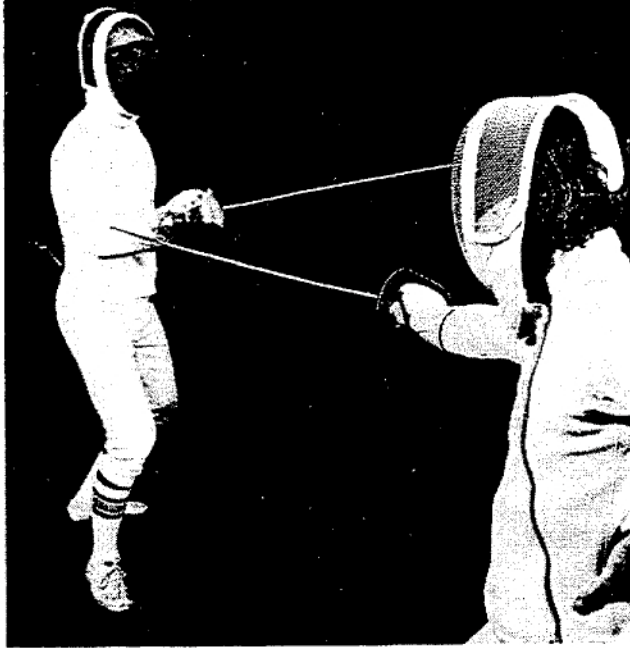


Underneath Arm

85



Inside Arm



Outside Arm

87

Attack

Head
Chest
Cheek

Stop Cut

underneath (illustration 85)
inside (illustration 86)
outside (illustration 87)

- Once the stop cut has been acquired, it is now necessary to practice the stop cut - parry and riposte
- Even when the stop cut is in time it is always wise to take the safety precaution of trying to parry the attack and riposte.

- Of course, if one is successful with the stop cut and the riposte, only **one hit** is recorded.
- The same group practice is organised but this time the bent arm attack is completed to allow for the defender to parry and riposte.
- Many combinations of stop cut parry and riposte can be devised, adding the lunge or fleche to the riposte.
- These exercises can be further advanced by including a step back with the parry and lunge or fleche with the riposte.
- Finally, stop cuts can be made by angulation upon correctly covered and straight arm attacks.
- The angulation is necessary to get around the sabre guard.
- These stop cuts are most useful inside, underneath and on top of the attacking forearm.
- It is unwise to angulate outside of the attacking sword arm as this will tend to expose the sword arm of the stop hitter.

COUNTER TIME

General

All of the theoretical definitions of these movements have already been made in the foil section. Counter time is the answer to the adversary who uses the stop cut indiscriminately and who can be drawn into making a stop cut on which the attacker can make a parry and riposte.

Reference to the foil section will clear up any problems of theory but as there are many more stop cuts used in sabre fencing due to the sword arm being target, there are many more opportunities of using counter time as a tactical solution to this type of opponent.

Along with more opportunity one must mention the greater risk factor due to the large variety of stop cuts. More care must be taken therefore in observing which stop cut is favoured by the opponent.

The technical process is as follows:

- Fencer A jumps forward exposing the sword arm.
- Fencer B attempts to stop cut outside.
- Fencer A is ready for it and parries tierce.
- Fencer A now ripostes with a lunge.

Whether the lunge is used depends upon the relative distance at the time the stop cut is parried.

The riposte is also selected to take into account the natural defensive action of the stop hitter after realising that the stop cut has failed. It would be foolish to develop an automatic riposte at *head* only to find that the opponent's automatic parry is *quinte*.

The teaching points mentioned under Counter Time - Foil (page 57) will hold good for sabre with the following modifications;

- substitute the stop point with stop cut.
- **use the sabre parries tierce, quarte and quinte.**

- the distance must be lengthened _____ can be made to the sword arm and not the body.
- the lunge should be included _____ in delivering the riposte to the target.

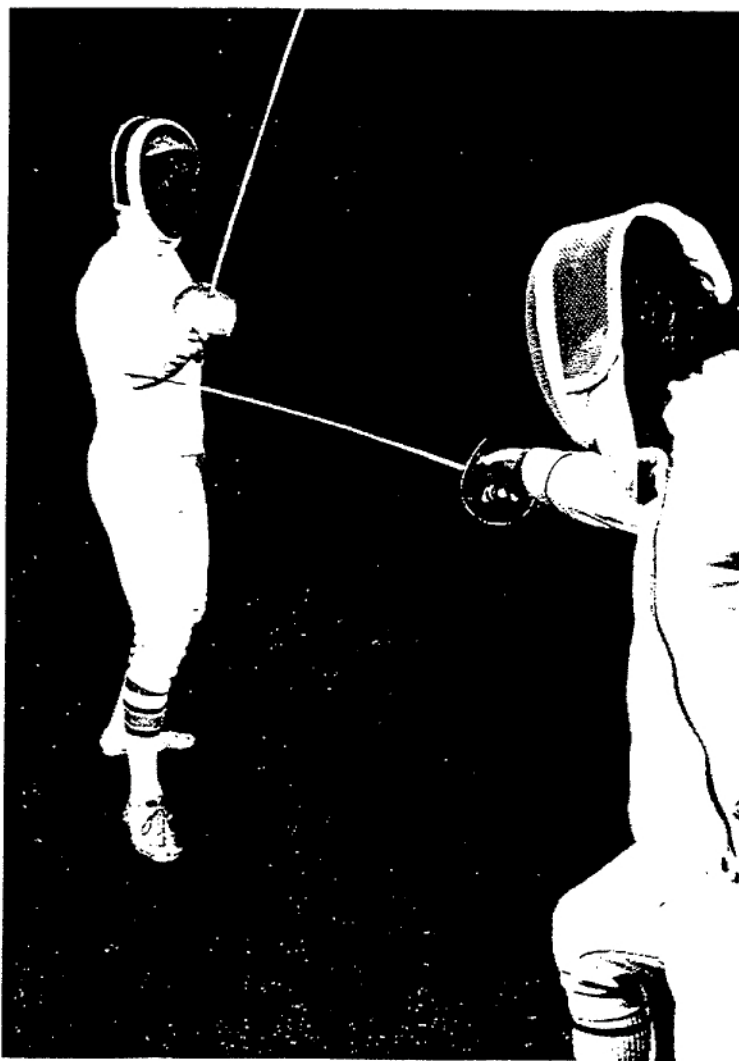
Choice Reaction

The choice reaction exercise mentioned under foil may be used to develop correct balance and timing for the lunge and fleche, i.e.

The defender will:

1. stop cut and remain close enough to be hit with the riposte with the lunge, or
2. stop cut and retire quickly so that the riposte can only be made with the step lunge.

Choices may be increased by varying the defender's stop cut and, consequently, the attacker's parry and riposte. The five main points mentioned in foil also apply to sabre.



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Stop cut with the back edge.

