

# Ansteorran Academy of the Rapier

A.S.XXXV

HL Isobel Grace Hadleigh and Ly. Amerinda di Praga, Editors

## Introduction

**“...Writing preserves the words and submits them to the judgement of the reader, who has time to give them his considerable attention.” (Castiglione)**

Ansteorran Rapier fighters have a fine history of publication. Our articles have been used to enrich...and even help begin....rapier programs throughout the Knowne World. This booklet contains revisions of fine articles of the past, how-to information from garb to fighting techniques, as well as reports about another Ansteorran innovation, Youth Rapier combat. We feel that the articles in this booklet compliment and build upon our Ansteorran Rapier literary foundation. We would like to thank all of you who generously submitted articles for this booklet.

Isobel and Amerinda

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# **Constitution Of The Order Of The White Scarf Of Ansteorra**

## **I. Establishment of the Order**

A. There shall exist in Ansteorra an Order unto which the Crown shall select persons who have demonstrated all of the following qualities:

- 1) Exceptional skill and chivalry in combat with the weapons of the duello;
- 2) Service to Ansteorra and its people;
- 3) Knowledge of the courtly graces; and
- 4) Obedience to the laws and ideals of Ansteorra and of the Society for Creative Anachronism.

This Order shall be known as the Order of the White Scarf of Ansteorra, hereinafter referred to as the Order.

B. Companions of the Order shall be entitled to place after their names the letters "WSA" to designate their membership in the Order, and shall be styled and announced in procession as "Companion of the White Scarf of Ansteorra."

C. Companions of the Order shall be entitled to use the prefix title, "Don" or "Doña," and within Ansteorra, these titles shall be reserved to Companions of the Order.

## **II. Arms and Precedence**

A. The Order shall carry with it, at the pleasure of the Crown, a Grant of Rank. Companions of the Order shall take precedence after all Nobility and Peerage, but before simple Grants of Rank. The precedence of the White Scarf shall be combined with that of the Orders of the Star of Merit and the Iris of Merit of Ansteorra.

B. If the Order is given to a person who is already higher in precedence than stated above, then his/her precedence shall remain unchanged.

C. If the Order is given to a person who does not hold higher precedence, then his/her precedence shall date from his/her elevation to the Order.

## **III. Investiture in the Order**

A. The selection of a member to the Order shall be publicly proclaimed by the Crown at an official event of the SCA, after consultation with the members of the Order.

B. Persons being selected must be present to receive the Order.

## **IV. Membership in the Order**

A. The number of members in the Order shall not be limited.

B. Companions of the Order shall retain their membership in the Order despite any later changes in residence.

C. Companions of the Order shall have the duty to advise the Crown on the advancement of candidates for membership.

## **V. Principals of the Order**

A. The King and Queen of Ansteorra shall be the Principals of the Order.

B. Principals of the Order shall share all the rights, privileges, and responsibilities of membership in the Order.

## **VI. Insignia of the Order**

A. The badge of the Order shall be Sable, on a pale argent between two rapiers, guards to center, proper, in chief a mullet of five greater and five lesser points sable (reg. 7/88).

B. Companions of the Order shall be entitled to wear a white scarf about the left shoulder or tied above the left elbow.

Created by Duke Jonathan deLaufyson Macebearer and Duchess Willow de Wisp in their first Ansteorran reign.

Revised by Duke Lloyd von Eaker and Duchess Joselyn Allyne Reynard in their first reign.

Revised by Inman Rex and Athena Regina in his sixth reign and signed on this 21st day of June, Anno Societatis XXIX, being 1994 Anno Domini

## White Scarf Treaty

We, the Crowns of the Kingdoms of Ansteorra, the Outlands, Trimaris, Atenveldt, and An Tir do by these letters publish and proclaim our intent to create an order in our kingdoms to be known as the Order of the White Scarf. Further, we do mutually recognize that this order shall be chartered in our own kingdoms as custom allows. We pledge to honor the styles and precedence as shall be established by charter and to allow and encourage those of our royal cousins who may wish, to establish this order in their own kingdoms. By this document, we command our heralds to present the title and badges of this order to the College of Arms, that it may be registered to the titularies of our kingdoms. Done by our hands, on this, the [N] day of March, anno societatis XXIX, being 1995 Gregorianis, at [event].

## A History of Rapier Combat in the SCA

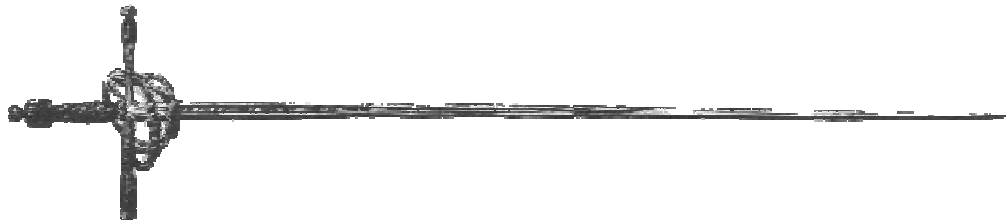
By Tivar Moondragon Premier Member of the Order of the White Scarf  
Champion to HRM Tessa of the Gardens etc.

A caveat: this is from my perspective; based on my memory and material in the Society Rapier Marshallate files. As such, I'm sure there are things that I've either forgotten, or was never aware of in the first place.

### *The Birthplace of Rapier Combat*

That depends on how you define it. There were bouts fought at the First Tournament, using foils and modern fencing rules. Rapier combat in some form persisted on the fringes of the SCA as the organization grew. At my first tournament, in November of AS X (1975), there was a "swashbuckling list"; it was one of the things that attracted me to the SCA. Arguably, I was the one who pushed hardest for rapier combat in Ansteorra, although there were also groups in the East, the Outlands and Atenveldt (possibly other places, but those I know for sure).

In September of AS XIV (1979), the Board officially recognized rapier fighting as an ancillary activity of the SCA, so that date could also be used.



### *Chronology*

Several kingdoms never officially recognized rapier combat, it just grew. I guess you could define "official recognition" as when their first set of rules was approved, but I know there was fighting in Atenveldt (when Ansteorra and the Outlands were still principalities) for years before there were any "official" rules. The same is true for the East.

Also, some groups had rules and organized tournaments well before the BoD approval in 1979. Another factor is that in some areas (like Atlantia and Trimaris) rapier combat started, died out, and started again.

May 1966	First SCA tournament. Some bouts fought using modern fencing rules and equipment.
AS III or IV (1969)	Poul Anderson mentions "some people are experimenting with rapier and dagger" in a fanzine article about the SCA. ("Richard the Lionhearted is Alive and Well in California")
November AS X (1975)	My first event, in Bjornsborg (San Antonio TX). I fought in a "swashbuckling list"--modern fencing rules, <i>no</i> armor requirements beyond a fencing mask, about 7 fighters. In the car on the way home, I said to myself "This could be fun, if it was done right". I started researching period sources and fighting styles.
November AS XI (1976)	Tournament of the Queen's Grace in Bjornsborg. Things were still in their infancy. Due to the cold weather, the rapier list was canceled, but we fought a couple of demo bouts for the King and Queen of Atenveldt.

March AS XI (1977)	The Society Marshal, Andrew of Seldom Rest issues a ban on all "kendo, wrestling, fencing and archery at human targets." I start a letter-writing campaign to get the ban lifted.
June AS XII (1977)	Duke Andrew issues the first (as far as I know) set of SCA rapier fighting rules. They are about ¾ of a page long, and extremely primitive.
September AS XII (1977)	I become deputy marshal for rapier combat for the Barony of the Stargate (Houston TX). At this point, there are maybe two or three dozen rapier fighters in the Texas area; there's also a group in Colorado and one in Phoenix.
November AS XII (1977)	Ansteorra becomes a Principality, I am named Principality rapier marshal.
December AS XIII (1978)	Investiture of Simonn and Tessa as Prince and Princess of Ansteorra. They ask me to put together a proposal for an award to recognize rapier fighters.
March AS XIII (1979)	First White Scarf made.
May AS XIV (1979)	First Ansteorran Crown Tourney. During a rapier list on Sunday, a fighter's epee breaks. It looks like his opponent was hit in the armpit, but closer examination shows it's just a bruise, the skin was not broken. Nevertheless, I am asked by the Earl Marshal to develop better armor standards--something that will stop a broken blade. (With Ansteorra's elevation to kingdom, I'm now the Kingdom Rapier Marshal.)
June AS XIV (1979)	Experimentation shows that 4-oz leather will stop broken blades. I rewrite the rules accordingly.
August AS XIV (1979)	As a result of rumors about the broken blade and "serious injury" in May, Atenveldt bans rapier combat. The Society Marshal, Earl Kevin Perigryne, decides to bring the matter up to the Board.
September AS XIV (1979)	I attend the Board meeting, and persuade them that rapier combat can be done safely in the SCA. the Board makes a Governing and Policy Decision to allow rapier fighting as an ancillary activity of the SCA.
October AS XIV (1979)	Earl Kevin publishes a set of SCA-wide rapier rules, based on the existing Ansteorran rules. These rules are the basis for all subsequent SCA rules. Although the wording has changed several times, the basic elements are almost the same to this day.
March AS XIV (1980)	First Ansteorran Queen's Champion Tournament, beginning of a tradition. Thirty or forty fighters compete.
August AS XV (1980)	I attend my first Pennsic (#9). I met about a dozen rapier fighters from the East, their fighting style was quite different from what we were doing in Ansteorra: sort of saber-fencing using epee blades.
February AS XVI (1982)	Alaric Greythorne introduces the first Trigger-cloth armor
January AS XVII (1983)	First Academy of the Rapier held in Ansteorra.
January AS XVII (1983)	An Tir publishes their first set of rapier rules, using fiberglass buggy whips instead of steel fencing blades.
January AS XX (1986)	First Trimarian rapier rules. Don Robin and Baroness Adelia had moved to Trimaris sometime in 1985. They organized a rapier group there, but it died out after they moved back to Ansteorra.
April-May AS XX-XXI (1986)	SCA Twentieth Year Celebration. A Rapier Academy is held as part of the event.
March AS XXI (1987)	Dons Iolo and Dupre demonstrate The Machine at Ansteorra's third Academy of the Rapier.
August AS XXII (1987)	Pennsic 16, The East Kingdom gives out the first of their Gold Cords. Earliest set of Eastern rules in the files.
September AS XXII (1987)	Oldest set or Outlands rapier rules in the files. I <i>know</i> they were fighting rapier for quite a while before this, however, as they helped in the letter-writing campaign to Duke Andrew.
October AS XXII (1987)	Ansteorra and the Outlands sign the first White Scarf treaty.
July-August AS XXIII (1988)	Beginning of rapier fighting in the East Kingdom's Principality of Drachenwald.
December AS XXIII (1988)	Rapier group becoming organized in Atlantia.

January AS XXIII (1989)	Oldest set of Atenveldt rules in the files. As with the Outlands, I know there were rapier fighters there well before this date.
June AS XXIV (1989)	I attend the first Atlantian Academy of the Rapier. I believe this movement wilted, and re-started a couple of years later.
November AS XXIV (1989)	First mention in the files of schlager blades being used in Atenveldt.
January AS XXIV (1990)	The East Kingdom's Principality of Drachenwald inducts the first two rapier fighters into the Silver Guard, their Principality combat order.
August AS XXV (1990)	Pennsic 19, Crown Prince Dag of the Midrealm wanders past the rapier fighting area. He is asked what it would take to get rapier fighting accepted in the Middle Kingdom. He said "Maybe a petition with 200 signatures?"
October AS XXV (1990)	Trimaris re-starts rapier combat.
January AS XXV (1991)	John & Mairi, having recently moved to the Middle from Ansteorra, start a petition for rapier combat in the Middle Kingdom. With the help of Baron Ælfred and others, in a few months they have their 200 signatures and more.
March AS XXV (1991)	SCA Twenty-fifth Year Celebration. The rapier area sees lots of action, with fighters from throughout the Known World participating in classes, informal discussion groups, and kingdom-sponsored tournaments.
July AS XXVI (1991)	Don Robin of Gilwell from Ansteorra travels to the Midrealm to demonstrate rapier fighting. This is the beginning of the Middle's highly successful "rent-a-Don" program, where various experts are brought in from other kingdoms to help teach rapier fighting.
August AS XXVI (1991)	Oldest set of Caidian rules in the files. Strongly based on the Atenveldt rules, using epee and schlager.
November AS XXVI (1991)	Calontir begins discussing rapier combat.
June AS XXVII (1992)	Trimaris signs on to the White Scarf Treaty, at the first Gulf War.
August AS XXVII (1992)	East Kingdom makes the first 14 Companions of the Golden Rapier, an award from the Crown recognizing fencing.
March AS XXVII (1993)	Rapier rules approved for the West Kingdom's Principality of Lochac, using fiberglass blades.
August AS XXVIII (1993)	Meridies writes a set of experimental schlager-based rapier rules. Unfortunately, the following Crown cancels the experiment before it really gets off the ground.
December AS XXVIII (1993)	Calontir holds a kingdom-wide meeting on rapier combat. The proposed weapons are fiberglass blades, and the technique includes slashing. The Crown's decision, published in March of 1994, is that they will not allow rapier combat.
April AS XXVIII (1994)	Middle Kingdom hosts first Known World Academy of the Rapier, in Chicago. Also, Middle fully allows rapier combat.
June AS XXIX (1994)	Atenveldt and An Tir join the White Scarf Treaty.
April AS XXIX (1995)	Second Known World Academy of the Rapier, in Phoenix.
June AS XXX (1995)	Rapier rules approved for the West Kingdom's Principality of Oertha, using steel blades.
January AS XXX (1996)	Meridies begins a year-long "rapier experiment." It is abruptly canceled in November, after an injury in Trimaris.
January AS XXX (1996)	Atlantia joins the White Scarf Treaty.
August AS XXXI (1996)	West Kingdom bans all rapier combat by Royal Proclamation.
October AS XXXI (1996)	Third Known World Academy of the Rapier, in Dallas.
November AS XXXI (1996)	Caid joins the White Scarf Treaty.
May AS XXXII (1997)	West Kingdom signs the "unified rules" they are promptly suspended for further study by the following Crown. Also, East Kingdom hosts Fourth Known World Academy of the Rapier, in western Massachusetts.
June AS XXXII (1997)	West Kingdom allows rapier fighting using <i>only</i> fiberglass blades.
August AS XXXII (1997)	Meridies begins their third rapier experiment, again using schlager only.

October AS XXXII (1997)	The new kingdom of Æthelmearc joins the White Scarf Treaty, and makes their first members.
January AS XXXII (1998)	The new kingdom of Artemisia joins the White Scarf Treaty and makes their first members.
February AS XXXII (1998)	Introduction of the Del Tin "practice rapier" blades.
May AS XXXIII (1998)	West kingdom allows schlager blades in addition to fiberglass blades.
July AS XXXIII (1998)	I step down as Deputy Society Marshal for Rapier Combat. Don Giovanni di Fiamma from Trimaris is my replacement.
November AS XXXIII (1998)	An Tir hosts the fifth Known World Academy of the Rapier.
March 10, AS XXXIII (1999)	Twentieth anniversary of the Order of the White Scarf.
July AS XXXIV (1999)	Ansteorra begins a Youth Rapier Program, allowing kids of 12 and older to compete against other kids.
November AS XXXIV (1999)	Atlantia hosts the sixth Known World Academy of the Rapier.
Spring, AS XXXIV (2000)	The reigning King of Trimaris, King and Queen of Caid, Queen of the Outlands and Queen of Ansteorra *all* happen to be members of their respective kingdoms' Orders of the White Scarf. Although there have been White Scarves sitting the throne before, this is the largest number at any one time.

### ***Awards***

As of this writing, there are White Scarves in Ansteorra, the Outlands, Trimaris, An Tir, Atenveldt, Atlantia, Caid, Æthelmearc and Artemisia. I believe all of these carry a Grant of Arms.

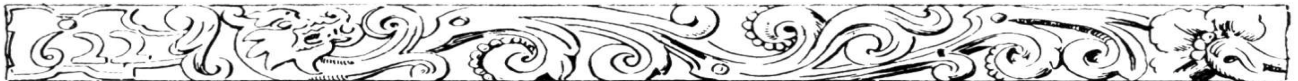
The East has the Order of the Golden Rapier, which was briefly allied with the White Scarves, but the treaty was abrogated by their Crown in October of 1996. They also have the "Gold Cords" which are unofficial awards, more like guild rankings than anything else.

The Middle Kingdom has the Order of the Cavendish Knot and the Order of the Bronze Ring.

Ansteorra has the Award of the Queen's Rapier.

Caid has the Order of the Duelist.

Drachenwald has the Order of the Dragon's Steel.



## **A Family's Comments on Youth Rapier**

**By Lord Duncan MacConacher of Dunheath**  
**Cadet to Don Tivar**  
**Youth Rapier Marshal, Barony of Bryn Gwlad**

**Jennifer MacConacher**  
**Ian MacConacher**

### **A Father's Comments**

The Anstoerran Youth Rapier program has been a godsend. It is probably the only reason we will be able to continue participating in the SCA until they are 18. We have 2 teenagers. They are both at the ages when independence and boredom



compete for attention on a daily basis. To put it bluntly, they were bored with the SCA. Not with the concept, but there was nothing for them to do. They were stuck in that age-old window—too old and too young. They had other things to do: Recreational Soccer League, High School activities (i.e.: sports, band, choir, dances, homework), and just plain hanging around complaining how boring life is when you are 15 and 16. If you drag bored children to events time after time, neither of you will have a good time. The mundane activities I mentioned above take on an even greater importance when they begin to compare spending an afternoon with the soccer team with going to a tournament in which they cannot participate. Which event will win? The SCA will lose because they had nothing to do.

What!? Nothing to do, you say? What about the Arts and Sciences? What about Heraldry? What about helping out in the kitchen or serving feast? Once again, I say—I have 2 teenagers. They have had no interest in A&S or Heraldry until very recently. As to the kitchen—I have trouble getting them to do their chores at home—why would they want to be near a kitchen unless chained in place?

Are my children typical? I don't know. My daughter, Jennifer (16) and son, Ian (15) are currently the eldest active teens in the barony of Bryn Gwlad. Their closest friends are right behind them in ages (House Moondragon). Although, they have literally grown up together in the SCA, it does not mean that their interests lockstep together.

Like any young man, Ian, has had an interest in the martial side of the SCA. I have fought Rapier in the SCA since 1984 (longer than he has been alive). Ever since he was big enough to pick a blade, he has asked me to teach him how to fight. Of course, he wanted to use a foil like a stick of rattan. I managed to delay things until he got older and a little more in control. I hesitated to teach him a skill that he could not “use” in the SCA context. There is nothing worse than giving someone hope, then yanking it away by saying “Now that you can do this, wait until you're 18 to do anything with it.” Ian has taken to Youth Rapier very well. It has given him a focus. We are working on discipline and control.

Jennifer on the other hand was a little timid about it at first. It did not help that early on in the program, she broke her arm (mundane birthday party, not Youth Rapier). This put her behind the power curve so to speak. She did not want to try working with her off-hand. She missed the big “coming out party” at ATYC, but has made up for it since then. She started with a heavy “flinch reflex”. Training and experience have minimized the problem. She is known locally as the “Parry Queen”. She is gaining confidence....now we just have to work on the riposte!

### Jennifer's Comments -

I like Youth Rapier a lot. It gives young people a chance to fight with adults (when we are practicing with the adults). Now we don't have to stay to one side watching the adults fight, and not being able to join in the fighting with our friends. Youth Rapier is a lot of fun and it is something new to learn. I am so glad that I'm a part of it because while we are learning something from the adults (when we are watching them), they can also be learning something from us as well. I think that it's a neat idea that we can learn something from each other.

### Ian's Comments

When I started out in the Youth Rapier program it was just fun, something to do. Before Youth Rapier I had nothing to do, I was bored! All of a sudden, there I was and people were looking at me.

It took me a while to learn the basics. I am still trying to improve my skills. It is getting easier and at the same time more challenging. There is always a challenge in this game, because no one person is undefeatable (including me). I have learned this many times in every fight.

Being in Youth Rapier has brought me closer to the SCA. Now I have been doing more participating in a lot of the fields, such as archery; I've since become the Baronial Archer. I have also been doing service such as set up and tear down. With out Youth Rapier I would have not gotten in to the SCA like I am in now.



## Ansteorra Youth Rapier

By Lord Pieter Rausch

About a year and a half ago, there was a move to begin a youth boffer program in the Kingdom of Ansteorra. Several kingdoms have well-established programs, which begin training youths for armored combat using for the youngest ages elbow pads, hockey helmets and gulf-tube swords, to full youth chivalric combat using armor and swords equivalent to those of the adult armored combatants in the late teenage year.

With the popularity of rapier combat in Ansteorra, I asked Sir Kief av Kiersted, the Ansteorran Earl Marshal, if we might somehow integrating our fighting style into this youth program; could we make the equivalent of boffer rapier? However, circumstances soon snowballed beyond this, with Kief receiving requests that a separate youth rapier program, in which youths would use a fighting style and weaponry similar to that of the adult rapier combatants, be established.

Support for a youth rapier program was high, and ideas were generated both online and at a breakout group at a Red Tape event, the Kingdom business meeting. The questions that were raised and rules suggestions that were given left three major categories to be decided:

1. How can we do this safely and minimize liability issues?
2. How do we handle playability issues specific to youth combat?
3. Where will we integrate the program into the marshallate?

The first, safety issue encompassed several smaller issues:

1. What ages will participate?
2. What weapons, secondaries and fighting styles will they use?
3. What armor will they wear?

It was decided that it would be best to begin the youth rapier program with more mature youths; we would serve those 12 and older. To do this, permission was granted by the Deputy Society Marshal of Fence, as the existing Society rules dictated that participants in rapier combat had to be 14 years old or older. To minimize potential differences in size and maturity, two age groups (12-14 and 15-17), which would not fence with one another were established.

Through considerable discussion, it was decided that the primary weapon used by Ansteorran youths would be the foil. Leading up to this were discussions of teaching them pure "USFA style modern fencing, to letting them fight with the full complement of adult rapier weaponry. The foil does not generally hit as hard as the epee. In 20 years of use, there is a considerable track record of foil safety in Ansteorra. Also numerous children participate in USFA "modern" fencing using this weapon with few ill-effects. To counter the influence of our greater "three-dimensionality" of fencing in the round, we added that a gorget must be worn by all participants. The armor standards otherwise conformed to those recently established by SCA corporate.

To isolate our adult marshals from any possible liability issues that arise from youth rapier, and to ensure that our new program is not neglected in the presence of an active adult program, a separate marshalate was developed for youth combat.

There are several playability issues inherent to youth rapier combat. Primarily this involves parental participation. For a child to participate in youth rapier, a parent must be present during all combat activities. In addition, the parents are encouraged to take an active role in running youth rapier by becoming marshals and assisting during tournaments. Finally, parents must maintain a certain level of decorum; a parent losing control of his/her emotions will result in the child being removed from the tournament.

Youth Rapier was signed into law by HRM Daffyd and Octavia in 1999. In the past year, we have observed the program grow steadily, a growth that is assisted by the ease with which youths could play by augmenting normal rapier loaner equipment with a gorget. I have observed a family joining the SCA just to participate in youth rapier. Other SCA families report a greater satisfaction with the SCA in their teens, and greater family unity at events.

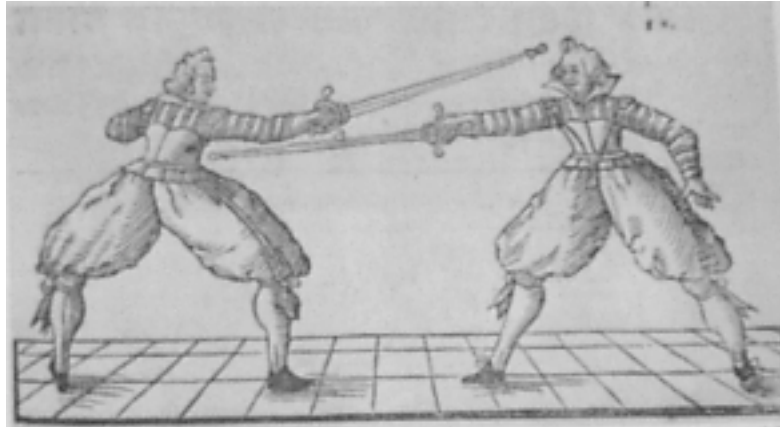
There have been quite a few youth rapier tourneys since the program was passed into law. Many groups have chosen youth champions or defenders.

At her Queen's Champion, HRM Kayleigh selected a Guardian of the Queen's Hope, from both age ranges. The first were Faith Owlette and Rosylyn Moondragon. These two youths have the honor of serving the Queen in court and at events.

As deputy Kingdom Youth Rapier Marshal, I have had a chance to watch this program grow from the beginning. I personally feel that this is one of the most exciting times that our rapier community has seen in a long time. Watching these kids fighting, chatting, laughing and having fun reminds me that "playing with swords is fun" (Thanks for the new quote Avery) and that no matter if you win or lose, you're out there to have fun. That is what these kids are doing. I find myself watching them fight and dreading facing them three years from now. The level of skill and youthful energy is off the charts. If this is the future of the Ansteorran Rapier Community...look out Trimaris!

# PRACTICE AT BLUNT

By Martin FitzHugh



## HISTORY:

Joseph Swetnam tells us in his *Schole of the Noble and Worthie Science of Defense* published 1617, “Button both thy foiles and staves before practice with them, for otherwise the unskilfull may thrust out one anothers eyes”. He goes on to tell us we might accomplish the bating of our blades for practice by taking wool or flock, wrapping it round with leather until its the size of a tennis ball, and tying it to the sword with shoemakers ends. He suggests notching wooden blades and riveting an iron button the size of a two pence to the end of iron blades. Castle mentions the use of cork instead of wool. All the above resulting in a ball then covered in leather. Swetnam cautions that, “two leathers might be used one atop the other, as one will be worn through with little practice”. All this then attached to the end of ones weapon so as to keep us from killing each other while we learn a gentleman’s art.

You can view a fine example of men fight at blunt in *Patterns of Fashion*, by Janet Arnold, page 25 bottom center. A woodcut from *Ein new Kunstliches Fechtbuch im Rappier*, by Michael Hundt, 1611 (pictured at top).

George Hale reasons in his *Private School of Defence*, 1614, that “...at blunt, a man comes boldly on, and is not troubled with any such considerations, as at sharpe...” he criticizes those who gain bad habits in practicing with blunt weapons which bounce off their target instead of penetrating. He is however possibly the first fencing master to claim that a man may fight equally well at sharpe or blunt if he is properly trained.

Please note the above refers to fencing manuals published slightly after period, yet reflect I believe, techniques and opinions practiced within our time frame. Both Swetnam and Hale were building on Di Grassi and Saviolo.

## TECHNIQUE:

Having viewed the above mentioned woodcut I remarked to Don Eisen how I liked them and thought we should have them. Don Eisen returned to my home on a Sunday afternoon to fence with friends and produced all the supplies to accomplish the task. You will need: a rabbit blunt, a spent .25 rifle shell (optional: Pete got these for us), fishing cork (small for epee and large for Del Tin or Schlager), leather, sinew, tape.

Using the rabbit blunt,.25 spent shell, and tape, tip your blade as usual. Next hollow out about 1/3 of your cork so your rabbit blunt fits just inside it. Mount the cork onto your tipped blade. Cut a piece or two of supple but thick leather. A small square about 4” x 4” works well. Bind the leather around the cork with the sinew, winding the sinew several times around the base of the cork and about an inch up the blade. Test to make sure all is secure and Enjoy.

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## **Practice Made Palatable**

Drills for the Modern Duelist

By Lord Elyas MacCrae  
AS XXXV

There are many schools of thought about Rapier combat in the SCA, from those who strive to recreate the techniques of period to those who use more modern fencing styles. These groups, and everyone in between, do have at least one thing in common, the need to practice the techniques that they are using. To many of us, this means drilling.

This article will strive to provide a series of simple drills for the single blade that can easily be adapted to whichever style that you choose. To explain every drill that might be of use would take a book in and of itself. Instead, this article will provide some simple, solo drills, which are useful to both beginner and experienced fighters alike.

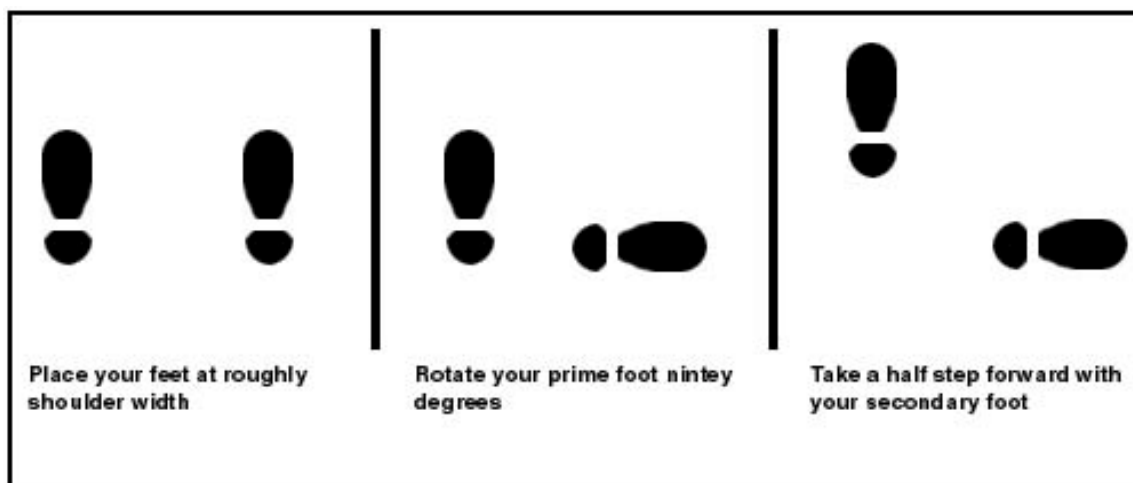
Remember, drills and practice yield the best results when done on a regular basis (daily if possible). If you only drill once a week you won't receive the full benefits that practice can bring.

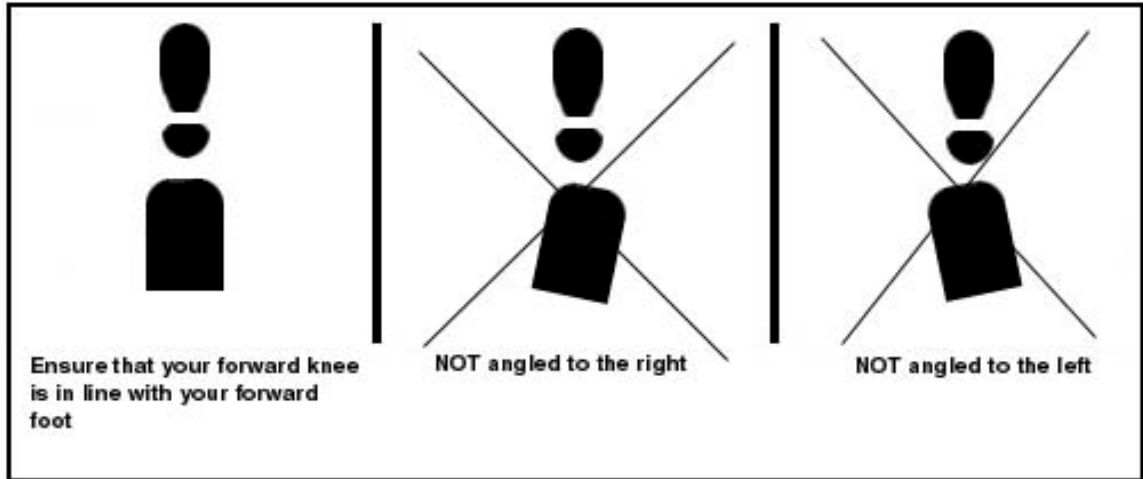
These drills will be presented in the Dormouse school of fence (named for Hans Durmust von der Vanderlust, the sixth White Scarf of Ansteorra) for simplicity, but are applicable to almost any style you choose.

### **Guard**

Regardless of what school of thought you follow, your guard (or guards) is (are) the foundation of your fight. Everything that you do, both attack and defense, comes from your guard. Without the ability to maintain your guard regardless of your position on the field you are, by default, vulnerable. This simple drill is designed to help you find and maintain your guard at will.

Perform this drill in front of a mirror if possible.





Once your feet and legs are in place, bend your prime arm forty-five degrees and point it along the line of your forward knee. Straighten your back and pull your secondary arm slightly back at the shoulder to present the narrowest profile possible.

Flex your legs at the knee, lowering your torso and evening your weight between your front and back feet.

Once you feel that you have found your guard, take one step forward and return to guard at your new position. Take one step backwards and return to your guard position.

As your confidence in your ability to return to your guard increases, vary your steps with simple lunges and attacks before returning.

## Range

Knowing how to judge your opponent's effective range as well as your own is an absolute must in our game. Tall or short, long armed or not, knowing when you are in the "danger zone" and when you can reach your opponent is key to surviving a fight.

This drill is designed to help you find that key.

With blade in hand, stand roughly twice your body length from a convenient wall or other immobile object.

Come onto guard facing the wall.

Lunge.

Holding your lunge, judge the distance between the end of your blade and the point that you targeted on the wall.

Leaving your back foot planted, return to guard.

Once you are comfortably back in your guard, close exactly *half* the distance you think you need to bring your target into range.

Lunge again.

Repeat this process until you feel that you can regularly strike your target with minimal force.

Once you have accomplished this, vary your steps with lateral movement and different angles of attack.

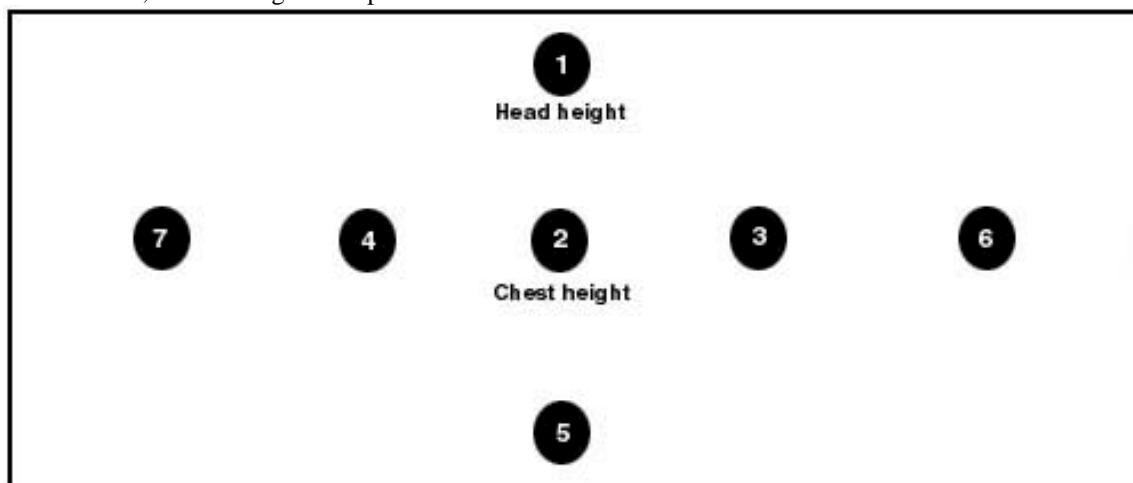
## Point Control

The need for point control seems to be a universal constant in the Rapier community. All of the speed in the world will accomplish nothing if you can't hit the opening in your opponent's defenses. Simply practicing striking an immobile target from a fixed position will only teach you how to hit a target when *standing still*. Not, I think you'll agree, a great habit to get into on the field.

Many fighters advocate practicing on a tennis ball suspended from a string. While this can be fun, most opponents you face will not be swinging back and forth from your ceiling.

Instead, practice hitting *multiple* targets from different angles.

Place some three-inch, circular targets in a pattern as shown below:



Start off by maintaining a guard from a centered and fixed position and striking the targets in sequence at one-quarter speed.

When you've done this a few times vary your position and range to the targets.

When you've grown more comfortable with your point control, begin to strike at higher speeds and *while moving*.

Remember, no one hits all of the targets, all of the time, but the more you practice, the better you'll get.

## Parrying

This is a tough one to practice on your own. To my knowledge, there's no way to hone your reaction time without an incoming shot to parry. You can, however, train *how* you'll react.

There are many schools of thought and many different parries available to the modern duelist. In the interests of simplicity, this article will deal with four of the most basic and effective parries.

Note: The terms "Inside" and "Outside" refer to the non-directional orientation of the fighter's body. (I.e. Inside = towards the fighters stomach Outside = towards the fighter's back) These terms are used to give a constant reference regardless of whether or not the fighter is right handed.

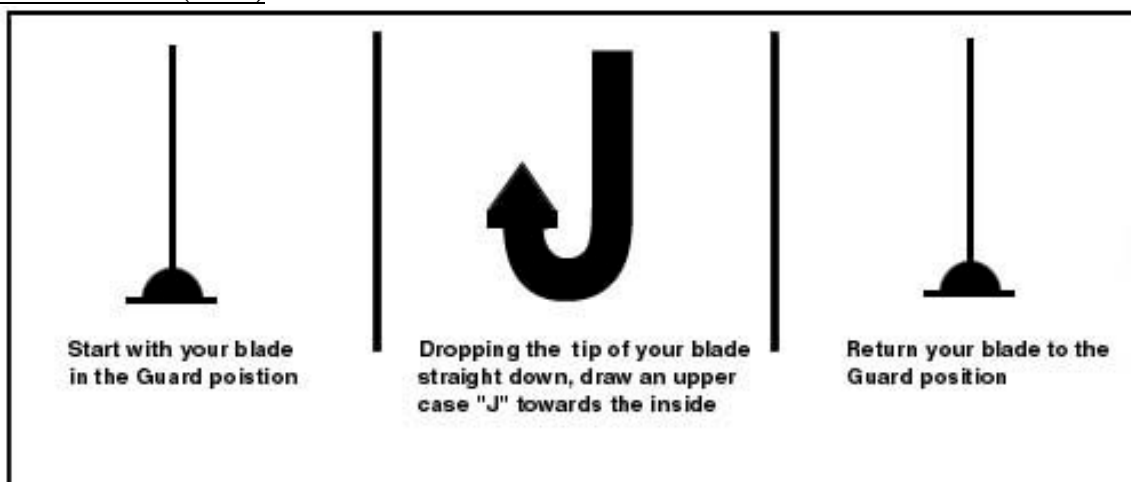
Parry Number Six (Sixte)



Parry Number Four (Quarte)

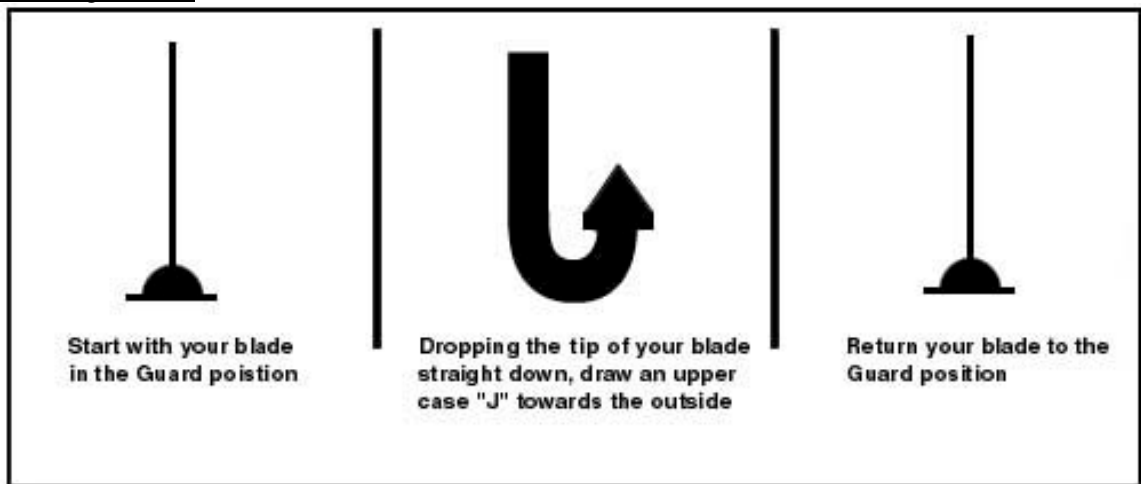


Parry Number Seven (Siete)



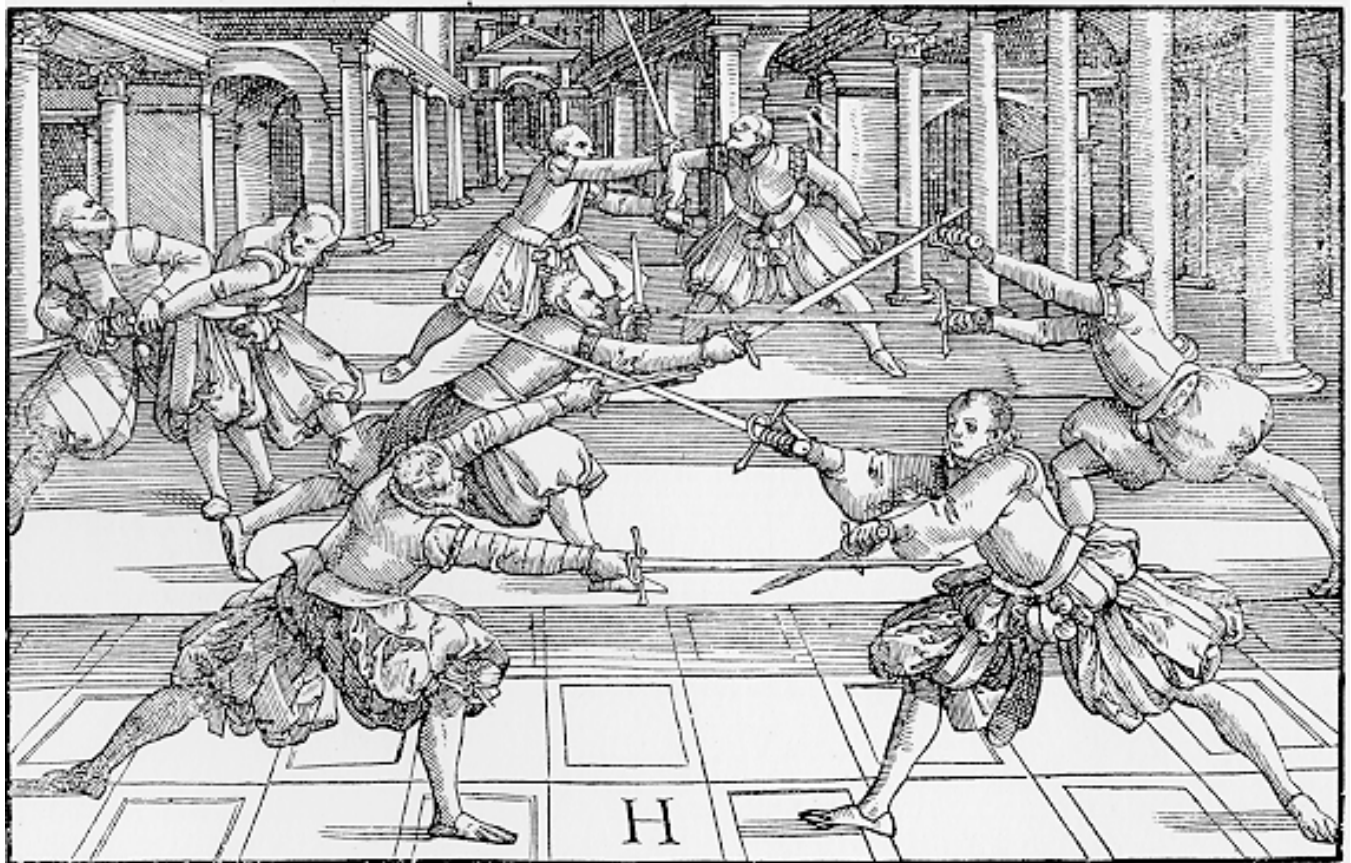


### Parry Number Eight (Octe)



It's often difficult to overrule the instinctive reaction to "swat" your opponent's blade away, dropping your guard in the process, but with sufficient practice, these movements can become reflexive.

In closing, remember, there is no drill or technique that will allow you to win every fight you have. As long as you give the best fight that you can, your opponent may win, but you will never lose.





## A letter of Marque

By Xenio della Lama (Xeno of the Blade) Ancient Guildmaster of Fence

I wanted to craft a letter of Marque to inspire like minded nautical enthusiasts to take up arms and defend the kingdom (for profit!). I found many references that mentioned letters of marque but never any that included the actual wording of such a document. Many hours (days?) of library hunting and web tracking later, my efforts were rewarded.



My references /inspiration for this document are two letters of marque. The first letter, a letter of marque by Henry VIII (England) against Scotland and France, 1543.

(<http://www.geocities.com/Tokyo/Garden/5213/engl1543.htm>), provided the basic frame work and style. The second letter by James I ( England) against Spain in 1625.

(<http://www.geocities.com/Tokyo/Garden/5213/engl1625.htm>), while out of period, provided a few sentences and phrases that suited the situation better. This 'site had other letters in other languages, but I am unable to read then sufficiently to provide an accurate translation. ( If you do translate them, please send me a copy).

I most heartily thank their Majesties for allowing this document to be created.

*Their most royal Majesties of Ansteorra,*

being informed that their loving and obedient subjects inhabiting the sea coasts or who traffic by sea being desirous to put sea, at their own expense, such ships to harass, annoy, and disrupt the trade and ships of their Majesties' enemies, so as they might obtain license for that purpose, Hath, of their clemency, love, and zeal, which they beareth to their subjects, have resolved and determined as hereafter followeth:

Their Majesties are pleased, and by the authority hereof giveth full power and license to any of their loyal subjects to prepare and equip to the seas such and so many ships furnished for war, to be used and employed against their Majesties' enemies as they shall be able to think convenient for their advantage and the annoyance of their Majesties' enemies.

It pleases their Majesties that any who would equip to the sea under this commission shall giveth bond that they and every one of them shall bring any ships and goods, which they soe take, to some such porte of their Majesties' realm to be accounted and appraised. Providing that the Lord Admiral of the Royal Navy hath passed judgement upon the said goods, it further pleases their Majesties that six tenths shall be given to the Royal coffers for the gracious granting of this most generous license.

And seeing now that it hath pleased their Majesties, all and every of their said subjects which upon publication of this proclamation will sue to the Lord Admiral for a duplicate of same under the great seal of Ansteorra with the name of the ship, the name of the captain or owner, with the number of mariners, and also their ordinance that there may be a accounting made thereof at their return.

Provided always that no man go to sea by virtue hereof to take any thing from any of their Majesties' subjects or from anyone having their Majesties' safeconduct, upon pains of the laws provided for same. Their Majesties are further pleased that no manner of officer, or other person, shall take any mariners, munition, or tackle from any man thus equipping himself to the sea, but by his own consent, unless their Majesties, for the furniture of their own ships, do send for any of them by special commissions, and where need shall require.

It pleases their Majesties further that Xenio della Lama, captain of the ship Ashford's Revenge, navigated by 40 mariners, mounting 18 carriage guns, having applied to the Lord Admiral of the Royal Navy, is given commission to set upon by force of arms, and to take and apprehende upon the seas or upon any river, or in any porte or creek, the ships and goods of their Majesties' enemies or any of their enemies subjects.

# The Art of Single Blade Fighting

By Lady Sosha Lyon's O'Rourke



Fencing is like a live chess match, with many moves and openings each depending on the other person's response, but ultimately with only one outcome possible at the end. Some would say that a fighter should not worry about the attack until the parries and defense are second nature, then the openings for the thrust of the blade can be seen clearly. Others will say that every time an opponent moves they are making a mistake which opens them up to the attack. Then there are those who have said that no matter the grip, the stance, or the training, an opening can always be made by the right attack for the perfect killing thrust. If the parry is not there, the fight ends with your loss or a double kill. If a fighter does not pay attention to the little details, i.e. which grip their opponent holds their blade in, which stance they are in, or even the posture/body language, the fighter can miss those little clues of how their opponent will attack. Anyone can be made to grant the opening wished for when fighting. It just requires the right combinations of thrust, parries, and outthinking of your opponent. There is actually no ONE way in fencing. It is a combination of all these things that are taken and used in a blend of styles which gives each person their uniqueness in fencing.

Beginning with the grip and then guards, there are several variations of how to hold a blade. Each grip has its pros and cons. It is really a matter of personal preference and, in some cases of exceptionally different grips and/or odd guards, training. The most popular is *supination*. This is grip is with the hand wrapped around the hilt of the blade, palm and finger tips up, with the thumb on the upper outer edge. If the blade has quillons, a better grip and better control is had with the curling of the first two fingers over the quillon bar with the thumb wrapping over the Ecusson (quillon block). The handle and the pommel should be resting in the palm and wrist of the hand. This grip allows anyone, novice or experienced a good range for thrust, parries, and ripostes.

Turning the wrist and palm on the handle to the extreme upward position, so that they are facing the ceiling of the salle, and then wrapping the first two fingers on either side of the quillon blocks will give you another choice. This grip will hold the blade at a higher plane than the supination. The easiest seen benefit of this grip is that the blade is easier to extend either for thrusts or ripostes, in a straight line. It is also a good guard in which to face an opponent who is holding his blade in a low line, below the waist. Their head and chest will be more exposed with a slower time in returning the parry. This grip, however, does not give easily to lower body parries and is susceptible to low line sniping at the wrist. Note: Most people, while using the guard, will over compensate a head parry leaving the body open to a disengage. This is something to be aware of and again to work on in practice.

The next grip is the same as the supination, yet it is with the palm and wrist facing the floor. The finger placement, to either side or on the same side of the quillon blocks works just as well, and is a matter of preference. This grip gives one very good low line attack and parry option. It is good to take this guard when facing an opponent with a high guard. The opponent, with a high guard, is vulnerable to leg and wrist sniping. However it should be noted that this guard is much slower in upper body parries, i.e. the head or chest will be more open and this needs to be taken into account. No matter which grip you decide upon, keep the tip of the blade pointed towards the upper chest. Gravity is a constant and will pull your blade down during a thrust. If it is a little high i.e. pointed at the head or upper torso your blade has a better chance of reaching a killing target. When trying out an odd grip with a very high guard (i.e. the hand up by the head with the elbow tucked into the side) or using a low guard (i.e. with the hand held slightly below the waist), make sure you practice with the styles at a regular fighter practice. Consult with those who use said styles on a regular base before entering a tournament with a new guard you just saw. Fighter practice is where new moves/guards should be worked upon, to work out all the bugs and wrong steps.

After the blade has been gripped, a few modifications to the body will help to keep snipers from taking the wrist and forearm or even floating over your arm and delivering the coup de grace into your chest. With your blade in hand stand in

front of a mirror. Make sure that the pommel of the blade is held against the wrist. This check is to see if the pommel is floating away from the wrist and palm, meaning that the bell guard is not going to be covering an optimal area of your hand. This grip will eventually become comfortable. Tuck the elbow into the side of your body. If the elbow is not tucked it will throw your wrist and hand off from a midline (chest level) position. Even if adopting a high or low guard, tucking the elbow into the side of the body is good practice in denying the opponent an easy and open target. (Note: there are a couple of blind sniping moves for the wrist that occur when your opponent knows about where your hand and wrist are but does not see these targets. They will take an off line (to the side of the body) shot that does not require sight of the wrist just general knowledge and skill. The bell guard would not help when the shot occurs. The best defense for these attacks are good parries or a retreating step.)

The next area to work on is the torso and the off hand. No matter which grip and guard a fighter choose or stance, defensive or offensive always turns your shoulders and torso to the side. This will present the smallest area to the opponent. Squaring up will occur during the course of a fight. (Note: Period manuscripts do portray fencers with both their fronts to each other and in side profile. Each style does have its use and is useful.) However in the course of training, while practicing lunges or even hitting a tennis ball to give a side profile, it will become automatic and even feel natural. The off hand should be held about mid chest height, with the pinky edge outwards. The flatter the hand, again the less of a target is presented. If the hand is also floating or moving in a small up and down motion it is harder to hit. With the hand in this motion, the muscles are already working smoothly when it actually comes time to avert an incoming blade down and out to the side or up and over the shoulder. (Note: the off hand parry needs to be smooth and complete to keep the opponents blade from actually being guided into a tender area from a half hearted or choppy block.)

The last body posture, before moving into attacks and parries, is stance and movement. It should not be considered the least when training the body. There are three main stances that will be covered. The first one is the offensive stance i.e. for those who are right hand dominant, that side of the body is edge on to the opponent with the right foot forward as well. There are two ways to get into stance. The first is to place the heels touching at 90% then step forward with the dominant foot, about shoulder width. In this stance you will want to step with the right foot (if this is your forward dominate foot), front or two the side, then with the left foot

The second is to stand naturally with the torso turned in profile to the opponent. This is a more period stance. Defensive stance is just the opposite i.e. the retiring side is actually placed forward, with the foot position of choice. In the defensive stance lead, either forward or to the side with the left foot. Do not cross the left foot over the right. If you cross step, and your opponent rushes you, you are hard pressed to keep your feet under you while retreating so much so that defenses are more sloppy and open.

The first two stances describe themselves fairly well for their best use. The twisted stance, however, can be either offensive or defensive depending on the torso. The feet for the twisted stance are much closer together than the other two stances. For the offensive twisted, place the right foot forward of the left foot so that they are separated by only an inch or two with the left side of the torso forward. This stance is good for drawing in an unwary opponent then untwisting, stepping of with the right foot while extending the blade at the same time as the left foot takes the weight of the move. (Note: In the twisted stance, with the legs hidden, it looks defensive and is usually a total shock when the right foot/right blade snaps forward with that extra reach from untwisting of the feet. This is also a very good stance for women in skirts.)

The last section to cover will be attacks and parries. There are four major areas for attacks and parries. An opponents body can be viewed as a being divided down the center and across the waist. The right upper quadrant is the high outside. The left upper quadrant is the high inside. The right lower side is the low outside and the left lower side is the low inside. This division of the body does not mean that your blade has to or will follow a straight line.

First, we will start with the most basic of bread and butter shots, then moving to several more advanced moves of attacks and parries working the high outside. The attack is started in stance, with your blade on the outside of the opponent's blade, aiming for the opponent's head or chest. Your target, as the attacker is to a) kill the fighter or b) to incapacitate them with out bodily injury (kill) to yourself. The parry is a wrist move to the right, knocking the incoming blade off line. This is the most basic of that shot. Lets look at this on the next level. With your blade still on the out side of other blade the closest and easiest target to reach is not the torso or the head but the wrist (if exposed) or the inside pocket of the elbow. This shot is accomplished by waiting for their attack. When your opponent attacks with a straight-line shot, merely lift your blade slightly up at the bell while pointing the tip down. You can follow their blade in (putting pressure against their blade and sliding yours down it with full contact) or merely uses point control to hit the wrist or the elbow pocket as it is exposed at their attack before they come back on guard. This is a very fast but controlled maneuver. If it is done correctly, you will not have to parry since the opponent blade will slide by the right



side of the body as you turn your upper torso inwards, committing to the shot. You still have to watch the other fighter for the small tell tale clues that this could be a feint or just the beginning of something more than a straight line shot. (Note: a feint is only a feint if it does not land on the body but opens up the other person to an even better shot i.e. feinting for the wrist, they parry wide, you disengage under and thrust with full commitment to the body.) This attack is still easily parried. Parries for the right side are dependent on the grip but different styles suited better to one grip can be made to work for another with practice. One standard parry is a small C shape, either the size of the bell or only slightly larger, to the out side of your body. (Note: when parrying always come back on guard to maximize coverage to the wrist and body. This does require practice.) Another parry is just a small twist of the wrist, utilizing quillons, to push the other blade aside. A good thing to practice when doing parries is to do a riposte. This is attacking after every time you have parried. This can be the difference between a good fight to a winning fight.

The next set of attacks and parries are to the high inside quadrant. Placing your blade on the inside of the opponents, using a beat attack (a quick snap of your blade against theirs pushing them off line) will give you a clear inside shot with minimum amount of work or worry. This is a quick move require timing. It is suggested that your off hand still be ready for when/if the opponent recovers in time to parry and riposte. The parry for this shot is again a C parry but to the inside and downward or to the far out side. (Note: going to the far outside with a parry will cause a cross up in arms and make recovering into a guard position more difficult. This is not a beginners move and will fowl up even a more experienced fighter. This is, however, some thing to watch for if opponents. Attack while their blade(s)/arms are all to the opposite side.) Another part of this parry, is a replacement. A replacement is moving the opponent's blade from your main blade to the hand or another blade. I.e. A parry is made to the high inside, this causes the blades to move towards the shoulder or the waist, sweep your hand/blade a few inches from yours until you encounter the edge of the other fighters (do not grab the blade). Then move your hand to the side maintaining contact with their blade and pulling your blade back and clear. This gives you the perfect opening for a shot.

The next series of attacks and parries are for the lower outside and the lower inside. The leg shot is an excellent attack to add to the repertoire of shots, yet it is not as utilized as regularly as it could be. This shot starts on either side of the opponent's blade and is executed by tilting the wrist downward in a lunge. The parry is a twist of the wrist either to the right or to the left to knock the blade to either side of the body. The feint to the leg is started with the blade on either side of the opponents, then a forward thrust aimed for the body. As the blade closes in and the parry is made the other person breaks the wrist downward and the shot is continued into the leg. (Note: The hand/blade needs to be ready for the parry that will more than likely be coming aimed at the head.) This shot can also be done in reverse with the start aiming for the leg then ending with a body or head-shot.

This leads into the next part. If you feel that you are fast enough and can commit to the shot, you can ignore or merely lift your leg at the knee at the incoming attack, take your attack straight down the middle to the other person's head.

This is only a sketch of fencing techniques. There are many more parries and attacks to be learned. There is no one way but many paths for fencing.

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# Fighting with Sword and Buckler

By: HL Isobel Grace Hadleigh

Sword and Buckler is a fighting combination that has a long and distinguished history. In fact, the oldest surviving manual of swordsmanship (manuscript I.33, known as the Tower Fechtbuch) is a 13<sup>th</sup> century German publication that deals entirely with unarmored civilian combat with Sword and Buckler (Singman). From these and earlier times until the 1600's, buckler use expanded from a training tool for "knightly" warriors, to gain more popular acceptance among those of more mean birth in both Northern Italy and England (Singman). Sword and buckler combat became a popular way of settling disputes.



Figure 1. Two monks practicing with buckler. From the I.33 Manuscript. Late 13th Century

In about 1560, the term "Swashbuckler" came into use to describe "swaggering or ruffianly fellows or adventurers", who were associated with the crack of sword upon buckler (Webster and American Heritage Dictionaries) to possibly challenge opponents. However, no matter this ruffian association, buckler use was firmly embedded in civilian martial practices of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. "Buckeler" was the standard secondary for the "sworde," for those playing their prizes for the London Masters of Defense (Berry). Lovino, Marozzo, and di Grassi, all 16<sup>th</sup> century fencing masters, include buckler as a commonly used secondary to rapier in their various manuals of defense. George Silver even propounded it as a secondary superior to the dagger.

Period bucklers were round and relatively small. They could be smooth-faced, slope to a central point or "umbo," or have protruding spike or "stert" of iron. Di Grassi recommends always having a metal boss with a space between it and the general surface of the buckler, to trap and snap rapier blades. He also speaks of the "mustachio" that one may give an opponent, by striking him in the face. Less harmful moves still included trapping the opponent's weapon between our buckler and their body.

Needless to say, although Ansteorran bucklers can be made of period materials and are appropriately sized, for safety reasons, we employ them in an exclusively defensive manner. We cannot intentionally break blades, or press someone's weapons against their body, much less smash someone with them (the "mustachio" move is -right- out). As yet nobody has come up with a fully workable and safe central spike. We also take no advantage of their ability to block hacking blows, as these blows are illegal. However, for someone who knows how to use it, a buckler provides excellent protection. Below, I use information gleaned from period manuals, as well as personal observations, to provide the reader with some useful hints on how to use a buckler effectively (or at least not blind oneself with it!).

## How and Where to Hold a Buckler:

To maximize your buckler's effectiveness, there are several general buckler orientation properties that must be considered: 1) Distance from the body, 2) Position in front of the body, and 3) Angle to the body.

1) The distance of the buckler from the body plays a strong role in determining how effectively you can use a relatively small object to guard a majority of the

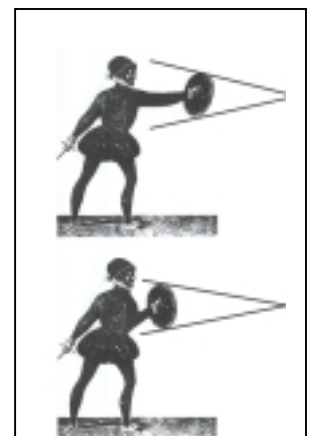
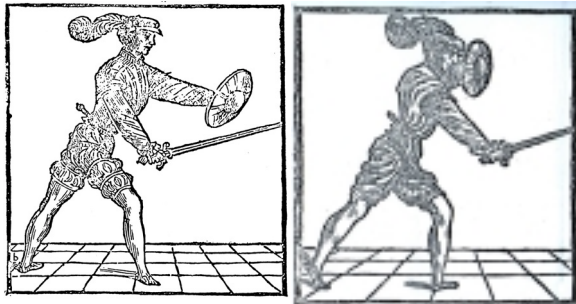


Figure 2. Effect of buckler distance on blade displacement.

body. In this circumstance, as shown in Figure 2, with a buckler of a given size, the further it is from the body, the more of the body is protected from an opponent's blade. Of course, the further out the buckler, the more your own visual field is blocked, which may influence the size of the buckler that you choose to use. di Grassi suggests that the buckler be held "as far off from the body as the arm may possibly stretch forth, moving always the arm and buckler together, as one entire and solid thing, having no bending." An examination of Figures 3 - 7, however, reveals fighters who generally, but not always, have bucklers extended; some appear to have a residual bend in their arms. Overall, however, it is important to train yourself to maintain the buckler-to-body distance even during the fight; when your buckler creeps nearer, you are much more readily hit.



Above: Figures 3, 4 and 5. Lovino. Below, Figures 6 and 7. Morozzo. - Various period buckler orientations and stances, from a period perspective.



2) The angle of the buckler in front of the body can play a significant role in your buckler fighting style. Di Grassi recommends that the buckler be held perpendicular to the arm, so that the arm is fully behind the buckler and completely protected. However, in addition to this perpendicular position, the Tower Fechtbuch (Fig. 1), Marozzo's and Lovino's figures show bucklers with varying degrees of tilt, even to the

point of contacting the lower, outside region of the forearm.

3) The position of a buckler in front of the body is important when you initially face your opponent, as well as during the active portions of a fight. The position you choose depends on the buckler angle, distance from your body, and the handedness of your opponent (a buckler must be moved more towards a left-handed opponent's sword side to be fully effective. This adjustment to lefties is particularly important with an angled buckler, to prevent shots to the buckler hand or down the slot behind the buckler, into the body). During a bout, a buckler should be positioned in such a way that it does not interfere with your bladework or your vision, while maintaining maximal protection of the body. Di Grassi recommends that the buckler be moved only far enough to protect down to the knee and the upper part of the lower leg. This relatively large buckler movement works well with slow, heavy blades. Even with these blades, however, care must be taken to maintain buckler position. To the extreme, a buckler moved too high will block the eyes from a follow-up attack. To a lesser extent, particularly if a buckler has moved near the body, even small displacements will allow an effective disengage around the buckler, into your body.

### My Personal Opinions on Buckler Orientation:

Because we do not normally encounter hacking blows, I keep a slight residual bend to my arm; I have greater speed and mobility when I can easily bend my elbow. I use a buckler with my hand held open through a single handle that fits quite firmly, and hold it on an angle, rather as is shown by the

fighter on the right, in Figure 4. The buckler contacts the back of my hand, and a slight bend in my wrist creates a small gap between it and the buckler, slight wrist moment will refine the position. I try to find an angle at which my hand is protected behind the buckler, while still maintaining a glancing surface to displace blades outwards from the buckler side of my body and upper arm. When movement is necessary, rotating it in a simple, “wax on, wax off” motion originating in my wrist and elbow, minimizes buckler displacement while maximizing my parrying ability. I can also rapidly move it upwards, over my head and horizontal, to parry blows upwards while I close on an opponent. I move the buckler across my body to the sword side only in cases of emergency. Finally, I’ve found that an angled buckler can quickly be moved against the buckler side of my own body, to get under and prevent nearly all draw cuts to the buckler side of the body.

I normally avoid moving my buckler into a perpendicular position because I like to maintain as much of my visual field as possible. In addition, it minimizes the possibility of blow-through; when struck on its upper or lower edge by a forceful blow, a buckler will often tip towards the body, allowing the blade to carry through. However, with this buckler arrangement and my fingers free of a second strap, I can close my hand firmly and have my buckler instantly become perpendicular to my hand, if needed. As a result, I can get control of a blade using the face of my buckler against the length of the blade. Although I cannot then “do the period thing” and smash it against my opponent, I –can- try to maintain control of it and move it where I want it, including upwards (see Fig. 5, fighter on left). In this position, I can also keep a dagger held by a closing opponent, away from my head (more on this, below).

### **Other Playability Issues:**

When using epee, from personal experience, as well as conferring with some exceptional buckler fighters, I recommend parrying as much as possible with the blade, rather than buckler. Don Brendan estimates a 70% blade-on-blade response. My experience is similar. I attribute my originally unconscious adoption of this strategy as an attempt to minimize buckler movement away from its most protective area, and certainly to keep it out from in front of my eyes. It also allows you to set yourself up to suddenly substitute a normal blade parry with buckler-on-blade displacement. There are only a few circumstances in which I intentionally move my buckler to any great extent, the most common of which is when I try to gain control of my opponent’s blade or blades during an attack. In case of an emergency (in my case, it generally involves massive retreat), all edges of the buckler may be used to parry...but care must be taken to not parry the blade into your legs and to minimize buckler displacement. Finally, initial intentional extreme placement of your buckler can influence where your opponent will strike, allowing you to more accurately anticipate the nature of your opponents next attack and increasing the chance that you will prevail (di Grassi).

Stance is another playability issue, with which you can experiment. I enjoy using a defensive stance with buckler, in which my buckler is over my leading (left) foot. Lovino, di Grassi and Marozzo all commonly show fighters using this stance. It's very period and can be used to great effect. I encourage everyone to try it, minimally, by dropping into it by stepping back with the sword side foot when pursued; this is a very good way to kill someone. Most of the techniques that I describe below can be adapted for either offensive or defensive stance.

### **Favorite Strategies Against Various Weapons Combinations:**

I will now describe a number of attacks that you can use in a bout when both you and your opponent are using a buckler. I will also discuss general survival strategies to use, and things to avoid doing, against a number of other weapons combinations. These lists certainly are not extensive and will, of course, evolve in the future.

### Buckler vs Buckler

*Things to avoid:* Letting your opponent control your blade with their buckler, blinding yourself or moving your buckler out of position.

*Approach to fighting:*

1. Make an exaggerated shot towards the top of your opponent's head, to see if he will draw the buckler up in front of his eyes. If so, immediately shoot lower to the body.
2. Shoot high or low, to see how far they will move the buckler, and whether they are keeping it in a good position in front of the body. If they move it out of place, throw a double shot to the now-unprotected region (leg is particularly good).
3. If they allow the buckler to creep towards their body, throw a shot towards the upper or lower medial region of the buckler (10:00 o'clock or 7:00 o'clock), and then disengage down or up (respectively) around the buckler, into the body, when they try to originally follow the blade.
4. Throw feints at the inner and outer edge of their buckler to try to get them to move it enough so that you can either snake your blade behind the buckler to take the hand, or hit the arm above the buckler.
5. Come forwards and close with a shot below the waist, to the sword side of the body. Then, rotate your sword upwards, so that you can shoot up and over the buckler, to their head or buckler side shoulder.
6. Hold your own buckler very low. Look for any telegraphing on their part, immediately close on them, riposte the high shot that they were probably throwing as you move in, then kill them.
7. If your opponent is closing, you can use the buckler to push on their blade and get it out of the way. Pushing it high and then coming in with a low shot, is particularly effective. You can also draw cut them, if they are very close and don't have control of their blade.
8. If you have messed up and your opponent is going to draw cut any where on the buckler side of your body, block them out by pulling your buckler in the way. Then drop low and stab them.
9. When your opponent moves towards you, step to the side with your trailing foot, behind your leading foot, while leaning back, and thrusting. Your opponent's blade should miss you (di Grassi).

### Buckler vs Single Sword

You have an advantage here, if you take control of the fight.

*Things to avoid:* Do not let your opponent control the fight. Particularly, they will look for ways to use your buckler against you, or cause you to get rid of by sniping your buckler arm.

*Approach to fighting:* You are ahead by one buckler. Use it to its greatest effect. In particular, gain control of their blade with it, and then stab them with yours. To do this, you can close, or wait until you see them beginning to close. Don't fall for the tricks listed above, for buckler vs buckler.

### Buckler vs Rapier and Dagger

This is a fun fight. You are probably at a small disadvantage.

*Things to avoid:* Absolutely, positively, do not let your opponent close on you. Do not let your opponent get control of your blade with either of his, as he then has one remaining. Keeping your blade low, and somewhat back, can help you to maintain control of it. Note...you do not want to control only one of your opponent's blades with your one blade- this is as bad as your opponent gaining control of your blade; there's still one left, coming your way.

*Approach to fighting:* You are down by one offensive weapon. Keeping your opponent at a distance makes it an even fight. Your opponent's dagger can parry nearly as well as your buckler. Continuously threaten your opponent with your long blade to prevent closing, while keeping it out of their control.

1. Look for an opening to control his long blade with your buckler, and use your long blade against his dagger side. Use all of the tricks you know for getting around a dagger [see Don Brendan's paper on Attack Sequences].



2. If your opponent controls your rapier and closes, intent on using the dagger, extend your buckler fully, perpendicular to your hand, just below eye height, in the path of their incoming blade (you might have to step back to not hit your opponent with the buckler). Move your hilt/bell to about head height, above your buckler. Make sure that your combined guard is greater than a dagger blade's distance away from you. In this case, follow the advice of di Grassi and stiffen your buckler and arm. Catch or deflect their blade. You may also need to reposition your buckler, to protect against a draw cut...but generally they forget to use their long blade. They may shove on you...collapse one leg a little and pivot them around you. Try to drawcut them on the way out. You survived. Retreat and set-up again.

Buckler vs Case or Florentine:

A glorious fight. You will often lose...but, oh, what fun. Please note, I'll call their buckler side blade their "right" blade.

*Approach to Fighting:* You are down one offensive weapon, and can be killed from a distance.

Closing, yourself, will do you little good. If they are dead set on a double-kill, there is almost no way for you to win.

1. Do NOT allow your opponent to control your only blade. I hold my blade low and back.

2. Don't let your opponent rush you and overwhelm your defenses, draw-cutting you to your death. Keep your guard up and move!

3. Don't let their right blade get to the inside of your buckler. Keep forcing it out. Concentrate on parrying it, extensively with your buckler (forget the 70% rule) and keeping your distance. Take care of their left blade with your blade. Stay alive and wait for an opening, or try to make one.

6. Favorite way to kill my opponent: Get both buckler and blade between their two blades. You can close or meet them in as they close, push their right blade up and/or out, catch their left in a large, scooping outside parry (parry IV, in modern terms), and riposte to the center of their chest.

7. Next most favorite way to do it: Stay alive and mess with them until they make a mistake and allow you to force both of their blades across their body toward their sword, with the buckler (note...not INTO their body, just near it). Come up and over the resulting mess with your sword and hit their head or upper chest, or draw cut the neck.

8. A less exciting way to do it: Try to arm them to even things up.

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In conclusion, I encourage people to experiment with this very effective, and quite fun, period secondary.

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## Case of Rapiers

By Ld. Stephen Hawkins, Cadet to Don James Francis Navarre

Case of rapier, or Florentine, is often a new fighter's favorite combination. So why do so many experienced fighters hate to see it? Case is a fun combination which can be pretty to watch, but is often not. A few hints can dramatically improve florentine work. I will discuss some of the basics, some of my techniques, and some material sent to me by others.

First, though, I will answer the question: why is case worth working with if it becomes ugly so quickly and so often? Case, at its best, is poetry in motion. When a good case fighter takes the field, both swords function with more unity than the best melee team. Both hands block, stab, and the fight often assumes a fluid offensive speed that is a joy to watch. I have never questioned the effectiveness of case. Unfortunately, even poorly used, case is very effective, providing incentive to fighters who aren't completely ready to take it to the tourney or melee field. Case offers two equal opportunities for attack. Very commonly an opponent will have a counter for the first attack, but the second will slip through while the first occupies his defense. Case also offers two equal chances at defense. In a melee, case is valuable just for the volume of thrusts it provides and the thicket of blades the enemy must go through. Finally, case is period. As recreationists, to avoid case because it is sometimes poorly used would leave us with an incomplete picture historically.

In case more than in most offhand combinations, lack of skill translates directly to an ugly fight. Practice of some basic points will prevent this. Aim every thrust. It sounds simple, but many fighters use Florentine as a license to throw as many shots as possible, hoping some will hit, or to fall into a mechanical "swimming" pattern of parry and thrust. Direct every shot to a specific target or opening, like a hand or portion of the chest. If you find yourself blindly thrusting at the opponent in general, extricate yourself and set up for a specific attack again. Do not hold your swords close together, as the likely outcome is that both will be swept by your opponent. As a newer fighter I won a tournament bout against a more experienced fighter, whom I expected would win, because she left her swords together.

Use both swords! While you are busy remembering not to attack wildly, mechanically, or leave your swords together, remember that both are useful and, against a good fighter, necessary. Generally you will use one sword at a time to attack and you can still parry, feint, beat, or anything you normally do with it. Now, however, you have a second sword. You can sweep your opponents swords, especially if he forgot and left them close together, with either sword to set up an attack with the other. You can parry with either, leaving the other for an attack. You can also simply use one sword to menace, holding it in a threatening position or throwing a shot you know is not likely to land in order to distract your opponent or break a pattern he is setting. The menacing sword may not be the most dangerous one, but it can surely draw attention from the sword you are planning an attack with. Remember, though, in all of these uses, that your "off hand" is often not as coordinated as your primary hand. Be cautious not to whip or slap with the second sword. If you do these, attack with a specific target or result in mind, hold your weapons apart, and use both swords, you will already be an acceptable case fighter.

An experienced fighter will have a distinctive style. My primary case stance is strong foot forward, strong hand extended slightly, the off hand and sword relaxed by the off side hip. The second sword is ready, but it is often unnoticed giving one surprise attack, especially if I fight with the forward rapier alone for a time. Very rarely I bring the off hand up almost into a high guard, menacing my opponent. This is a good technique against someone who will pay undue attention to the obvious menace, allowing attacks with the primary sword, but is an awkward position for the off hand. Lastly, I can pivot, putting my off hand forward and making it the primary. This leaves the strong hand back for very quick surprise thrusts, aided by parries or sweeps from the forward off hand.

Case has specific advantages and disadvantages against each other style. Against rapier and dagger, case offers two long range attacks. It is easier to entangle yourself with the extra long blade, however. If the opponent with the dagger closes, he will reach a point inside effective sword range, but at perfect dagger range. Case must retreat to stay at effective sword range, or, preferably, move to the side away from the dagger and back into sword range.

Against a defensive style, I feel case is mostly advantage. Against scabbard, case offers the same long rigid defensive secondary with the advantage of an edge and a point. A buckler has the advantage of not hindering the strong hand sword as easily, but it has a similar disadvantage of blocking vision. Case offers a sword to tie up the opponents rapier and another to slide past the buckler, or one sword to feint (perhaps at the face to provoke a blinding buckler parry?) and another to strike unnoticed. Cloak opposes with one great peril - it is quite possible to tie up both swords if they are left near each other. Still, if case keeps only one sword free of a cloak sweep, the result is neutral because each fighter has one sword free.

Lord Andrew Selwyn contributed this technique, similar to my leaving the second sword as surprise, but adding a new dimension:

I have only recently begun playing with the idea of "unequal case". With the growing popularity and availability of longer weapons, the case can be given a new dimension by using weapons of unequal length. It

almost seems a standard length blade in the weak hand and a longer one in the strong hand is an "extension" of rapier and dagger. If your opponent hasn't realized that they are not identical this allows you to play the range game. Get him/her looking at/parrying the shorter weapon and then reach further with the longer one. Simply keep them moving and don't fully extend until you're ready (remember, don't let your opponent know he is within range until he is hit). For the fighter who likes to fight in close, reverse them: short weapon in the strong hand and longer weapon in the weak hand. Use the longer weapon to reach out and get steel on steel. Parry or press your opponent's blade(s) out as you attack with the other.

I don't have much more on this but I am learning as I go. The best advice I ever got for fighting case is this: Movement IS life. Keep moving about the field, make them adjust to you. Switch stances and guards. Keep your weapons moving to avoid sweeps.

Ld. Vilhelm Silberhammer sent me this advice to prevent entangling both swords and to fulfill both tasks of attack and defense:

First and most importantly is what I call the one or the other approach. Each sword is either Offensive or Defensive. Which blade is doing which can change at any given time. The important thing is to remember not to use both blades for the same thing. This is what kills more novice case fighters than anything else, particularly when in a defensive mode. The tendency is to use both blades to defend which does nothing but cross yourself up and give your opponent one more point than you have. The other major point (you did ask to keep this brief) is to try as much as possible to keep the blades on two different lines of attack. Doing this helps cut down on point number one being such a problem. it also gives you a much better tactical position basically covering twice as much target area.

Michael Sean Ian McGee sent this, again showing how to accomplish the vital task of avoiding entangling your blades and also how to most effectively position each sword to keep them separate and most effective:

There are two main points to this style(Florentine)

1. Always control the center line of your opponent. By this I mean make sure you have one of your blades squarely between your opponents. This may seem common sense, but if you find your opponent consistently pushing your blades to the outside, he is controlling the middle 2/3 of your defense and can then pick and choose the pattern of his attack according to your defense.

2. Never allow the blades to come to less than 15" apart. the reason for this is that a sweep by your opponent can easily catch two blades if held closely together.

Visualize a square in front of you. The square should be slightly wider than shoulder width. The corners of the square will be where the tips of your blades reside. The blades can be either in a horizontal line, or the tips in opposite corners. This way the blades are never close enough to catch in a sweep, nor do they always reside in a horizontal plane. Moving the blades vertically from corner to corner will force your opponent to modify his defense accordingly.

Parries in florentine should be to the outside from the center-line of the body. While it might be flashy to cross-block to the opposite side, the length of your blade will occlude the other and you will open a wide line of attack for your opponent.

On offense, Florentine should be used in a series of multiple attacks of varying number, to keep your opponent from discerning any pattern to your attacks. The series of attacks should be to locations that will create a 'hole' in your opponents defense.....for example, a high-left, low-right, center attack has the advantage of concentrating your opponent's defense to the corners with the first two shots, thus allowing a wider center location to be attacked with the third

Chandranath Mitra contributes the following, extremely relevant due to his viewpoint. Chandra's points summarize the reasons why case is tough to learn, but still attractive. He also reinforces my point to train well before using case extensively:

A student's view on fighting case

"Love-hate relationship" may be a cliché description, but it aptly describes the feelings I have for fighting case, and from what I've seen, I'm not alone. When told to pick up the second sword in tournament, I groan, but

the instance I get a chance to grab one in melee, I'm there. I want to take a moment, then, and consider why this might be.

Even empty, the off hand is a hassle to new fighters. If using both hands independently at once were easy, we'd all play piano; as it is, the off hand tends to flop about unused at first. Worse yet, put a dagger or a buckler in that hand, and you've got actual encumbrance and potential entanglement with no benefit until the off hand becomes a practiced technique.

Put a sword in that hand, however, and you've got a recipe for disaster. The truth is that we love the second blade in melees because we are counting on having to deflect blades from different directions, and that means we're just fighting single blade twice over, so to speak. This in itself is much easier said than done, but the real complication of fighting case comes in when fighting against a single opponent attacking from a single direction. A moment's confusion as to which hand is parrying and where, and you've blocked your own sword and are a wonderful target.

The older fighters, of course, have learned at least the basics on successfully fighting case. I don't claim to be one, so I can only share the obvious: if you keep your two blades in the same horizontal plane, they are going to entangle every time. Best even to draw an imaginary line on your body to separate which blade you intend to parry with (thanks to Don Timothy for teaching me that when I was first learning dagger). If you're not going to actually make use of the second blade, just drop it; an active empty hand trumps an inactive sword. Like with dagger, remember that both can defend and both can attack; be ready to shift roles between hands and you are really making use of the style.

All that is fine and good -- most of it has served me well recently -- but the heart of the matter is back where I started, the off hand. If you want to learn to fight case, learn dagger first. Learn buckler. Best yet, learn to use your off hand empty -- not as a reflexive instrument for doing a beat on nearby blades, but as a genuine defensive tool for controlling the opponent's blade. We really do use both hands independently, after all; I am typing this using both hands, and earlier this evening I played mandolin with both hands. In both instances, I use both hands as controlled implements, and so it is when we fight. It took me several months to believe it, but now that I do, case isn't so frightening, after all.

Case of rapier is an extremely strong off hand combination and can be a beautiful, aggressive fight if used well. The ideal, as I mentioned before, would be two swords used as an experienced two man melee team, each creating openings, blocking attacks, and in all ways aiding the other while not inciting each other to flurries of ugliness and slashing. The closer we can get to this ideal the more everyone will look forward to watching a fast paced fight with case of rapiers. The key is good practice. Find someone knowledgeable to instruct, or at the least to occasionally critique your progress.

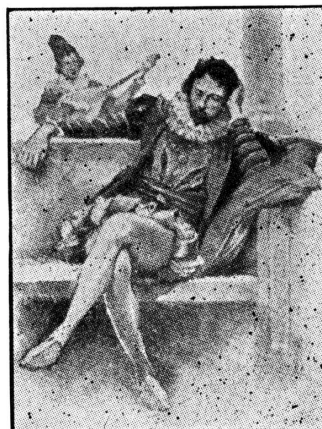
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# Some Thoughts on Teaching the New Fighter

By Lord Iago

With Added Commentary from Don Christoforo, and Lady Adella

Let me begin by stating that there is no single correct way to train a new fighter. Mine is just one method that tends to work. I am sure there are others that work as well or better. In this light I've ask for commentary from some with differing viewpoints to add their own ideas. Comments by Don Christoforo will be in **bold face type** and Lady Adella's comments will be in *italics*.

## *Before You Start*

An important issue in any teaching situation is prior knowledge: what the student already knows about the subject, whether he or she (hereafter I will simply refer to he/him/his for simplicity's sake) realizes it or not. With fencing prior experience is more relevant. For example, someone with experience in martial arts, dance, or Olympic style fencing already has a base to build on that someone with no "movement experience"<sup>1</sup> doesn't have. Even the type of movement experience makes a difference. None of these are absolutes, but observations based on my experience and that of others.

The martial artist will usually have little problem with hitting someone, but will often start off being too aggressive. He usually will have very good body discipline, and is more likely to grasp the importance of drills. Someone with experience in only one martial art often will have trouble adapting to a new stance and movements, while someone with experience in several martial arts can usually adapt more easily. A common roadblock I've run into when training some with a martial arts background is an insistence in doing it their own way. Some work out well, and some don't. I usually ask the one who insists on doing it their own way why he's asking me to teach him if he already knows what to do. I can be a jerk at times however, and you may be nicer than I am.

The single fastest learner of fencing movement I have ever seen was a young lady with an extensive background in dance. She had by far better control of her body and grasp of new movements than anyone I've met before or since. While this won't be true for all, or even most who come learn to fence, it is a factor. I've often heard of NFL linebackers and running backs getting involved in ballet in order to improve their agility, and can't see how it could hurt.

The strip fencer (get your mind out of the gutter!) can be at either end of the spectrum. One may come in and be totally lost when faced with lateral movement, off-hand weapons, and no right of way, while another may pick it up easily. This person usually comes in already knowing much of the basics, and just needs to learn the differences between our game and the one he's used to, or often get back in practice. Lateral movement and off-hand use may pose a problem for this person. Be careful if he's still competing on the strip, though, because what we do may mess him up when he gets back on the strip. Most USFA judges have no humor when it comes to off-hand parries.

The most challenging new fighter to teach is often the one that comes in with a blank slate. He often has nothing to build on and has a hard time learning the movements and parries. He will take more time to get going, usually, and will often advance slower at first. He is often more likely to get frustrated when not doing as well as he thinks he should. **However, given proper instruction they frequently finish the initial learning curve the quickest since they lack the bad habits the others may have.**

## *Starting Off*

One of the primary concerns with training a new fighter is keeping him interested. Since few will have the temperament to drill for weeks on end without any sparring, I try to get the new fighter into armor and stabbing someone as quickly as is reasonable. After some basic instruction (described below) I will do some controlled sparring with him.

Basic stance is usually a good place to start. The stance I teach is with the feet about shoulder width apart, lead knee and toe pointed at the opponent and back foot at a ninety-degree angle to the front one. The back foot is pulled about three to five inches out from the line created by the lead foot. The knees are bent slightly with the butt tucked under. Their weight is centered on both feet. The blade is pointed at the opponent's upper chest, with the wrist straight. This should hide the lower arm behind the bell. The elbow is tucked in, in line with the body. The off-hand is held at about mid-torso, ready to parry. The back shoulder is pulled back, narrowing the target profile. Be aware that most women require a more open stance due to the difference in male and female hips. A suggestion is to have a woman turn her back toe a bit in (toward the opponent), *this allows her to turn her hips at an angle as well; and with the hips, it allows the lead knee to be more easily pointed at their opponent.*<sup>2</sup> I have heard more than one teach "whatever's comfortable..." and it makes me cringe. I do not subscribe to that theory. What is comfortable usually is not very effective and will develop into bad habits. Though no one stance is right for all people, this one stance can be adapted to fit most needs. After showing your new fighter the basic stance, go on to moving forward, backward and sideways without crossing his feet. Most of us could use the work in movement anyway so go ahead and do it with him.

After basic movement, throwing shots is a good area to move on to. The idea is to teach the new fighter to throw a good shot without maiming his opponent. At our local practice, we use one of the large trees nearby to stab slowly, both from extension and lunge distances. Next, a little controlled stabbing of a real opponent is a good idea. Then, combine this with the movement. A good way to do this is in a circle, with two people moving with one trying to throw shots **and the other acting as a pell. Have them switch roles and reverse directions to keep things interesting.** I usually teach people

to point at the target with their thumb. With the grip I teach and use, and the one I am experimenting with, this tends to improve point control. Your mileage may vary.. **It is also important to remind them to point the knee and toe, at their opponent, while maintaining the alignment of their feet, so their hips won't rotate uncontrollably when making attacks.**

**This is a good time to start adjusting arm position on women since their elbow is canted slightly for better clearance around the hips. This is most evident when women are at full extension during a thrust with the palm up. Once they have learned "attacking from the circle," add defense to the person acting as the pell and introduce the concept of the counter strike or riposte. This point is also a good time to introduce the concept of "time" and the "timing" of movements.** All of this can be run through the first session in armor, before sparring occurs, but should be revisited often.

Blow calling should obviously be introduced before sparring. I usually start by showing a minimum killing blow and one on the edge of too hard to the palm of the new fighter's hand. It is important to remind him to give feedback on all blows received, good or bad, during a bout or sparring session. This is so that the opponent will know that he is acknowledging the blows. I also teach new fighters that when in doubt, call the shot. The main reason is that I feel it is better to have a reputation for calling too light than too heavy. Also, more and more opponents will question a new fighter (or an old one) for calling a blow they believe is too light. As well, none of us are perfect, and he will miss a shot sooner or later. How it is perceived will depend on his previous conduct.

Parrying seems to be a frequently overlooked area in the training of a new fighter, despite its obvious importance. A good plan is to show the new fighter the four basic opposition parries first. (I quit wasting time with the numbers a long time ago.) Then throw some slow shots at him while holding his tip on line with your hand; get the arm used to making that motion and parrying fully. It should be stressed that the fighter only needs to parry far enough to make the attack miss and no more. Wide parries make for slower recoveries and ripostes. I've quit teaching beat parries because they work best against foils, which we have all but moved away from. They are less effective against epees and even less so against the heavier blades we are moving toward.

I always start a new fighter off with a single blade. Some prefer an off-hand dagger or buckler, but I do not. I believe that the single blade is the basis for all other forms and is therefore the most important one to learn. Off-hand weapons are a wonderful addition, but often become a crutch. I find it better to teach off-hand weapons once a fighter is comfortable with a blade in hand. I will not, however, have them go for six months using only a single blade, as I did when I started. I'll introduce them early, but not really teach them till later. (Again, your mileage may vary.)

I'll not go into specific drills in this document, simply because of my inability to explain them without showing them. I will strongly recommend their use, however, especially by newer fighters. I know they are no fun and you hate them. I do too. They work though.

#### ***Other Random Concerns***

One problem that many new fighters face is aggression, either too much or not enough. An over-aggressive new fighter is usually a bigger concern, simply from a safety standpoint. Adrenaline gets going and whatever he has learned goes out the window and his entire focus is on stabbing something, anything. He will often go through blades quickly, and have problems with hitting and/or calling too hard. All of these things should obviously be fixed early on. Uncontrolled aggression has no place on the list field, and needs to be reigned in. Slowing the fighting down or stopping it at times are good tactics. Most will respond to being reminded to slow down. Preach control, control, and control. Eventually he will get tired of everyone stop-thrusting him, but it shouldn't come to that (although that does usually work, and can be amusing). If it comes to that, you've let it go too far.



An under-aggressive fighter is often either afraid to hit or get hit. One who is afraid to hit can usually be shown that he is not going to hurt anyone. A good way to do this is to stand there and let him stab you for a while. *They need to be taught to keep their eyes open when they attack.* **This is of particular importance with many women since they are taught from day one that hitting is not good. Period! We have to teach and constantly remind those who have this problem that hitting in a bout is OK.** Someone who is afraid to get hit needs to be shown he is not going to get hurt. Have him spar with someone with very good blade control for a while. Keep your over-aggressive one away from this one for a while. One or both will likely get over their respective issue soon. (I usually try to keep the new ones from sparring together for a while anyway.) A related issue with some new fighters is flinching as they are about to get hit. One method I've seen work to help with this is to have the new fighter stand on guard and receive shots repeatedly without parrying. Make sure you have someone with very good control doing this, as the point is to convince him that he's not going to get hurt. If you hit him too hard while doing this, it only reinforces the idea that it is going to hurt. There is a big difference between lack of aggression and fighting defensively. Make sure he knows that there is nothing wrong with letting a fighter bring the fight to him, but if he doesn't ever attack or counterattack, then it is a problem. *Slowly build up their confidence in their fighting. This is a very slow process and it cannot be rushed. One bad session with a zealous fighter can destroy weeks of work.*



Another issue often faced by new fighters is frustration. Most need to experience some success, or they will often lose interest. One of the worst things for a new fighter is to have some self-important hotshot “teach” by trashing him over and over again. The old “fresh meat” attitude is not as popular as it was 10 years ago, so this is not as much of a problem, but it still happens. There is almost no good reason for an experienced fighter to go all out on someone who has just started while at practice. All the new fighter is learning is 1) that he can get stabbed, and 2) that his opponent is a horse’s ass. *Not to mention that it can be very demeaning to the student.* I’m not saying throw any bouts. He needs to earn it, but you need to make it possible for him to earn. Counting coup on “newbies” impresses very few people. Try to keep your new fighters away from these people. **If anything, this is a very good time for the experienced fighter to refine their control, and it doesn’t hurt to remind them of this.**

One key you the instructor must remember is that the new student will not remember everything you teach him. If he walks away from practice and can use and remember ten percent of what you went over that day, your doing good. It can be very overwhelming to remember all of the stuff that we are throwing at them all at once.

### *In Conclusion*

One thing I am stressing more now to new fighters, and I would encourage all who teach new fighters to promote also, is that while there is no one right way to learn to fight, learning one way at a time is likely best. Learn basic fighting from one person, or two who use similar methods, and then go out and learn from others. Try new things. Learn from as many sources as you can, and evaluate it as you try it. Use what works and file away what doesn’t for later evaluation. If you have the patience to read the period masters, go for it. However, start off with the basics. It’ll be easier in the end.

This is by no means exhaustive, as that could take up a book in itself. Of all of this, very little is actually stuff I came up with on my own. Except where noted, it is a conglomerate of my own experience as a public school teacher, teaching in the SCA and learning fencing from some very good instructors.

1. The phrase “movement experience” was shamelessly stolen from Don Aeron Harper.

2. While I’ve known there should be a difference in stance for men and women for a while, Don Christoforo pointed out the stance modifications last week. This idea was brazenly stolen from him. He and his lady also cleared up any unclear wording in the description and it is appreciated.

Thanks go to Don Christoforo and Lady Adela for adding their ideas and to Don Aeron, for pointing out spots where my wording and or meaning wasn’t clear.

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## **Tipping any Epee**

By Ld Walter Robin, Shire of Mooneschadowe

There are two types of epees available for fencing, standard and electric. A standard epee has a flattened "button-head" tip. An electric epee has a threaded tip, which is intended for an electric switching mechanism. There are several acceptable ways to tip both blades.

**Standard Epees:** For Standard epees, you may use a standard epee tip (costing \$1-1.50), which will give your tip the required diameter<sup>1</sup>. I actually prefer to fit a foil tip (costing \$0.20-0.40) onto my epees.

Many people simply tape these types of tips in place using a contrasting color of duct tape. I prefer to apply several layers of tool dip to it (Plasti-Dip is a readily available brand). Tool dip can be a bit tricky to work with, but it is handy because it secures the tip very tightly, and comes in various colors, which will meet the contrasting color requirement. It also enlarges the striking surface of the tip. The only drawback to this method is the possibility the tool-dip may obscure wear to the internal tip and that that the epee tip might blow through [editors note: some people use a different color for the most internal layer of tool dip, so that wear to the tool dip layers can be judged].

**Electric epees:** Do not put epee or foil tips on an uncapped threaded epee. The thin thread point will push through the rubber tip in fairly short order, even when backed by leather. It is an unnecessary maintenance expense, as you will be continually replacing and re-dipping your rubber tips. The standard method for capping a threaded epee is to use a barrel cap, which is designed to screw on to the end of the epee before a standard epee tip is put on.

A convenient and durable alternative method for tipping these epees, is to use a 1/4" cap nut. This will fit the threads. Screw it onto the blade, and fit an HTM rabbit blunt (soft rubber arrow tip used for tipping schlagers costing \$2-3) over the cap nut. It will fit quite snugly, providing a durable epee tip that can even be unscrewed from the blade. There is almost no risk of the blade ever punching through the tip, because it is capped by the metal nut. This tip will outlive the blade! If you are using larger diameter tips, try using an 8/32" cap nut (with a smaller profile), instead of 1/4".

**1. Rules for Ansteorran Rapier Combat - April 2000;** Tips on FENCING class blades and flexidaggers will be at least 3/8 inch (9mm) in diameter.

# Teaching SCA Rapier

By Ld. Stephen Hawkins

Teaching can be a difficult job. No two students are alike and most teachers in the SCA have no formal training as teachers. I want to share some of what I have learned as an instructor pilot for the Air Force, as I have found much of it seems to apply to SCA rapier.

The first point is that rapier teachers do not do this as a job, it's our hobby too. Every teacher is trying to have fun with their free time and is usually trying to improve their skills with the rapier. The compromise between fun and teaching often leads to sparring being the primary means of instruction. Instead of sparring, try going into a practice with a definite set of learning objectives based on your students' skills and needs. Start by breaking the instruction down into parts and teach the parts, usually by drilling. Once the students begin to improve on the parts, put them together into the whole move or technique and practice just that technique. Finally, do some practice bouts and have the student try to apply the lesson in a realistic manner. Retouch on the skills in later lessons to keep building proficiency. Teachers should take time to work on their own skills, too. Work with more advanced fighters to keep your skills sharp.

In my job, we sit down and brief what we are going to accomplish, offering instruction on the tasks at hand, and afterwards we debrief how the instruction went, re-instructing points the student may have missed and critiquing their application. Fencing does not generally need to be that structured, but it does not hurt to talk about what you are going to teach beforehand. Tell students what the technique is and how it is normally applied. First hand stories work really well for this. After the lesson, tell the student how they did. Be honest, but not brutal. Verbally re-instruct any points the student seemed hazy on. Sometimes verbal instruction, with no weapon in hand, can provide some missing piece the student needs to grasp the technique.

Sometimes you will see a student not learning what you are trying to teach. The problem is sometimes that they do not benefit from the specific way you are trying to teach. Always have a few different ways to teach each technique. If the student doesn't understand one explanation or benefit from a particular drill, try to find an alternate way to teach the same skill. After you have exhausted all of your tips and different approaches, try handing the student off to another teacher who knows how to do what you want to teach. If your student hits a plateau, try letting them work with someone else for a few practices. Often a student may learn from another teacher's approach. This is another good reason for teachers to work on their own skills frequently, you may learn someone else's way of doing something that you knew how to do very well, just in a different way. Adding to your repertoire improves your teaching range.

It's hard to judge progress accurately in a student you work with constantly. A variation on sending your student to other teachers is to send your students to other fighters in order to hear their judgment. Talk to experienced fighters your student faces in tournaments. Even better, watch the tournament and see how your student is doing and where they need work. Watching a student perform against fighters with whom they are unfamiliar is valuable to see how the student reacts to the unexpected. Do not let your ego cloud your judgment, listen to other objective opinions and fix any problems that may arise early before your student makes problems into habits.

Once you get into more advanced instruction, take the time to revisit the basics. Often you will not have to work on the basics as intensely as you did the first time, but working on one basic skill per practice keeps those skills from decaying. This is another way to overcome a plateau and you may experience improvement in your own fighting as you teach techniques you had thought you had mastered. Improvement in the basics and elimination of small bad habits that may have crept in can often lead to strides in more advanced skills.

We all end up teaching at some point in our SCA career, improving our teaching is worth the time and energy. New fighters are an invaluable asset to our game, they keep us growing and improving. I have shared a few techniques I picked up in the modern world, some of them will help, some of them may not in all cases. The main thing to remember is teaching is like fighting, different situations call for different techniques and you do not learn by yourself. Learn from other teachers and learn from your students.

Ld. Stephen Hawkins

mka Chris Backus, 1Lt, 8 FTS, USAF





# How to Train a Youth Rapier Fighter

By Don Valentyn Drake

## Confidence

*Step 1 in training a youth rapier fighter: Determine whether or not confidence is an issue.*

This is absolutely crucial to training. The most common obstacle in **any** youth endeavor is lack of confidence. Particularly with the 12-14 year old age group. Kids at this age are often unsure of their abilities, afraid to be perceived as less skilled than their peers, and often feel that one setback constitutes abject failure. If your fighter lacks confidence, you'll have a hard time getting him/her anywhere.

How do you overcome a lack of confidence? By projecting your own faith in the youth's ability. Observe verbally when the fighter is doing something correct, even if it's as minor as maintaining good form during target practice. Don't assume that a teen-ager knows you're pleased with him or her -- the sentiment needs to be stated out loud.

Find something good whenever possible. This doesn't mean that you should overlook things that need correcting -- it means that good news should always soften the blow of bad. When your young fighters get knocked out of a tourney with no wins, they're going to feel bad. Find something positive to pass on -- their honorable display on the field, their good attempts to attack, or simply their style.

Keep in mind that a child who wins does not automatically feel confident. Stand by the field when your trainee is fighting in his first tournament. Win or lose, I guarantee that he will look for your **initial reaction** when he leaves the field. If your words or attitude express pride, confidence will blossom. If your first reaction is negative, the young fighter will go into the next bout feeling even more pressured to win.

One last note on an important subject: Sooner or later you'll hear a young fighter say, "I just suck at this." (Or some variation on the theme.) If your trainee is verbalizing the thought for you to hear, he or she has probably been thinking it silently for some time. Don't pass it off as a phase -- address the issue and try to build some confidence immediately.

## Energy

If you've never worked with young people before, you're in for a surprise: They'll run you into the ground. Twenty-seven years old and feeling fit? Try skating with a hockey team full of fifteen year olds for a day...

The incredible energy of the average youth rapier fighter can become a hindrance to training if you don't establish focus. Remember the first time you held an epee? Chances are that your first impulse was to stab the nearest tree, wall, or fellow student. Footwork drills and listening were the last things on your mind. Combine that with a thirteen year old's rocket-fuel energy, and you're in for a fun ride. There are a few keys to keeping an energetic practice in focus.

First and foremost, you (the adult) must recognize that young people are somewhat squirrely. They're not going to concentrate on your sage words 100% of the time. If you don't have the patience to overcome this, you shouldn't be training youth fighters.

Second, you need to train yourself to watch for the coming bouts of squirrelness. When the kids simply can't be contained any longer, take a break from drilling and sparring. Use that as a moment to get some water and discuss what you just worked on.

Next, vary the routine. Don't expect your youth fighters to work on a point control target for two hours straight, or do footwork drills all day. Do your drills for half an hour and take a break. When it's time to resume, let them spar a bit with your guidance. After another break, hit the point control bag. Whatever you do, keep the practice from becoming monotonous.

Finally, listen to the kids. When a youth fighter is comfortable with you, he or she will let you know what his/her current interest is. If your fighter wants to work on bucklers, make time for the bucklers. Trust me, once your thirteen year old trainee has decided to communicate with you, you'll know everything that comes to his mind.

## What Kids Won't Do

When training a youth combatant, you **must** remember that as an adult, you have responsibilities which can't be foisted off onto the fighter. The most important of these is safety.

The adult marshal is ultimately responsible for the condition of the youth's weapons and armor. If your trainee forgets her gorget and ends up hurt, you **are responsible**. When a youth fighter takes the field you should inspect his/her armor, check for tips and problems with the weapons, and assure yourself that he or she is safe to him-/herself and others. Young people will forget things on occasion, such as gorgets, mask ties, and socks. You, the adult, cannot forget these things.

Your youth rapier fighters will not always want to quit fighting when their body is out of water or energy. Particularly in the hot Ansteorran summer, you should enforce breaks and refreshment to keep your young trainees healthy. Yes, kids are resilient. They're also notorious for pushing themselves beyond their limits. Don't let your fighters pass out from heat stroke because they were having too much fun to take a break.

Kids will not fall for your crap. I'm quite serious about this; kids can see through B.S. with X-ray vision. If you don't have an answer to a question, tell your fighter that you'll look into it and get back to him/her. Your trainees will give you immense respect once. If you lose it, you may never get it back.

Keep in mind that your young trainees will not instinctively differentiate between the appropriate and the inappropriate. If you stand in front of your trainees and refer to Don So-and-So as a big doofus, you've just killed the kids' respect for that person. Regardless of the intention behind your words or your personal experience with Don So-and-So, the youth fighters will take your words at face value and assume that your lack of respect gives them permission for a similar lack. You **must** set the attitude example for the young people at **all times**, regardless of your opinion of the topic of conversation.

## Focus and Review

You probably have years of rapier experience. You undoubtedly have more than the young people whom you're training. There are a thousand things you have to teach, from basic stances to advanced moves to fighting philosophy to tourney mindset. Keep in mind during training that information overload will frustrate your trainee and make the practice very un-fun.

When starting out, let the young fighter do footwork and target practice in a basic stance. Work on the very basics, such as orientation of the feet, "straightness" of the body, and position of the hands. Give the trainee some time to get comfortable standing and moving before you start the "fine tuning" process. It doesn't help to have the elbow tucked in if your fighter can't move backward without turning around.

When you get to the point where your trainees are practicing with actual sparring, have them concentrate on one or two things at a time. Don't expect your new fighter to monitor his footwork, hand parries, fighting distance, disengage moves, and body lean all at the same time. Zero in on one aspect at a time.

Review is a necessary, ongoing part of any training for youth fighters. Ask any teacher. Kids aren't going to remember everything you tell them after one iteration or round of practice. Assume that in Week 1 you work on moving forward and backward. In Week 2 you decide to teach a basic lunge. Before working on the lunge, do more of your forward and backward drills. By reviewing the previous lessons constantly, you'll ingrain the concepts in the fighter's mind and body.

The same is true for the rules of the field. I assume that before you even started training you explained the rules to your young fighter. Hearing them once, on the first day of practice, is not enough for everything to be remembered. When taking breaks from physical drills, quiz the trainees on rules. Ask what happens if they grab the opponent's blade, or if a cloak ends up draped over their mask. And make sure the kids are a vocal part of this process, rather than you chanting the rules at them constantly. They're much more likely to remember something they've repeated aloud than something they've just heard you say.

## Build Teams

You may be able to get somewhere with your trainees if they're infused with bloodlust and the raging desire to beat the next fighter. I **know** you can take your fighters to great successes by building a sense of camaraderie and teamwork between the fighters themselves and their teachers. Think about the adult rapier community. How often do you hear the terms "cadet-brother", "my teacher", "of my household", or "guy I practice with"? The training process is significantly better when you have someone else with whom to work. And it's vital that that someone else be a person whose company you enjoy, not a knockdown, all-out rival.

Kids, just like adults, will work out the social structure of their practice group instinctively. You can help guide the process by introducing each new person as a teammate. Yes, the kids will always have an idea of who's the more skilled fighter, and they'll always enjoy winning fights. That's a given. Here's where the variables lie:

Team-like atmosphere, camaraderie = I can lose a fight and still have fun

Ultra-competitive environment = if I lose, I'm not as good and the adults will like him better

In the adult rapier community we have quite a few natural "teams". The most obvious is the rapier fighters' dedication to the queen. With that common responsibility, all Ansteorran rapier combatants have at least one bond. We also identify with our local practice groups to a great extent. And, of course, we have the Don-cadet relationships.

It's important that the youth rapier marshals encourage the concept of the team to their charges. The study of the rapier is largely an exercise in individual development. However, the pursuit of an individual goal doesn't necessitate walking the road alone. Your youth fighters are much more likely to stay interested in rapier fighting if they're working with people they perceive as friends.

### Set Goals

For your youth fighters to stay interested in training, achievable goals must be set. Many people will assume that the goal of the training is to win tournaments. However, look at the last tourney you attended. How many people won? Most likely only one. Obviously, other goals are necessary.

Start out with the authorization card -- there are three goals listed already for 12-14 year olds, and six for 15-17. The younger group can authorize in single foil, cloak, and buckler. The older fighters can add Florentine and dagger, as well as becoming junior marshals. Naturally, there are smaller goals within these six. Learning to parry with the offhand. Using a cloak without tangling your own blade. Making successful attacks with the dagger.

Here's a somewhat more advanced goal: Becoming practiced enough at something that the adult trainer asks the youth to demonstrate or teach other fighters. This is an enormous confidence builder for the young fighter -- the idea that the adult in charge thinks so highly of my ability, he's willing to let me teach others.

Some tournament goals: To win a tournament fight. To never be warned for poor conduct. To make the adult marshal or parents proud.

More advanced goals: Become authorized in all the weapons styles. Get to help organize a list, or help list mistress. To stand up in court and publicly recognize another fighter's honor.

Whatever the goals are, make sure that your fighters have something to strive for other than just winning tournaments. The quickest way to kill a youth's interest in rapier is to let him or her think that they're just not getting anywhere.



# Attack Sequences

By Don Brendan McEwan

Most people assume there is some trick to attack sequences. If you do 'this', you'll hit your opponent every time. Maybe the trick changes a little from opponent to opponent, but essentially, there is an attack that is always effective. This is just not true.

The secret to effective attacks is to vary your options enough to make it difficult to identify and predict the sequence of attacks that will occur. Your first attack should rarely be your striking blow. It should be a preface for the attacks to come. Now, that does not mean that your first attack should not be real, just that most likely it will be countered.

Every attack I throw is designed to a) hit you, b) take you offline, or c) determine your response tendencies. Feints are thrown into the mix so that my opponent can never assume that an attack is real or not. The secret to a good feint is that at any moment the feint could be changed to a real attack. Realize that a feint and an attack should be the same shot, it's just that one is extended farther out. In addition, a feint to take someone offline and an attack that happens to take someone offline are not the same thing.

In order for attack sequences to work they must take your opponent offline enough that they are left in a non-offensive position. This can be done with feints, positional movements (ex. after an engagement and your opponent relaxes), or from setup attacks. It is these setup attacks and the subsequent attacks we'll be examining here.

To evaluate a sequence determine how effectively they take your opponent offline, the position they leave you in, how defensive you are at this point, and the following attack(s). Typically, the first attack comes from a center position, that is, in a standard stance; your attack originates from a little above the waist to a full arm extension. The target is the primary difference in the attack. Now, if we vary some of the parameters of an attack, we come up with a sequence of events that can create an effective and deadly attack sequence.

Say we do a lunge to attack the midsection. The attack comes from a standard position at full speed. This attack in general is only marginally effective against your better opponents. Now, let's add to the equation a second attack. Don't just do a side to side attack, but try a midsection attack, partial arm reset for the next attack, then attack to the head. Again, your better fighters will tend to defend this easily, but now, because of defensive tendencies, your opponent will have his blade tilted point up and arm slightly refused. At this point, by adding a third shot, low and away (off side waist) or thigh/knee area, there is a good probability that this shot could land. Because you have maximized the distance of your opponent's blade position and defensive target, it takes longer to get the blade back to defend the target. That is why typically I throw at the leg in this case. It gives me the most opportunity with the least danger to myself.

Attack sequences do not have to be elaborate or particularly fancy. The key areas to vary are (Don Miguel, August 1995):

## 1. Target

This one's pretty easy. Just change your target. The most common way to do this is a side to side attack. It's also the easiest to parry and the easiest to predict. Try going for the obscure. Hand, leg or head, chest or hand. The main thing here is don't throw the same shot over and over.

## 2. Speed of attack

Everyone expects the fast guy to blast in with a high speed shot. Okay, go for it. But every once in a while, throw a real slow one. You would be surprised how often these can land.

## 3. Angle of attack

This is what I refer to as 3-D fighting. Most attacks come from a frontal position. Try off-angle stuff. A simple example is a straight lunge. You lunge, they parry. Now, break your wrist to go around his blade like a hook shot. Now, he has to parry a lot farther. The same thing can be done from extreme angles.

## 4. Rhythm of attack

Most attacks come on a particular beat (think drum). By breaking this rhythm, it makes the attacks difficult to predict the timing. Instead of 1-2-3 attack, 1-2-3 attack, etc, do 1-2-3 attack, 1-2 attack, attack, 1-2-3-4 attack. Automatic parries based on even spaced timing no longer work well.

## 5. Sequence (toe, toe, head or head, toe, chest)

Most shots are thrown left right or high low. By varying the target in a more unpredictable pattern, the defensive moves become more difficult to accomplish.

## 6. Number of attacks

The less experienced a fighter is, the more likely they will only throw one attack at a time. The first attacks are also from the most extreme range you will fight at, take the longest to finish and give the defender the most time to react. It is the second, third or fourth attack that can press a position and provide the best opportunity to strike successfully. Press until good position is lost, or the defender has regained control of the defensive position. The second they have recovered form, position, and control or their game, the advantage is lost and the attack should cease.

#### 7. Type of attack (snipe -vs- closing move)

Throwing several attacks at the hand can put too much of the defenders attention on it. This provides an over-focus that can leave other areas vulnerable.

#### 8. Speed variation

This is in reference to speed during a shot. The shot starts off slow and quickly speeds up, or starts off fast, and seems to pause right before finishing the shot. The result is parries that miss and a loss of control for the fighter who cannot perceive the change. This should be very subtle. If the speed change becomes a stop, wait, continue, it can give the defender a chance to recover.

These are the ones that are most evident. Changes to any of these alone, or in combination with one another can make an otherwise ineffective and uncreative attack much more dangerous to your opponent.

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## Fighter Analysis

By Don Brendan McEwan

Fighter analysis is the most under utilized tool used in rapier combat. When asked, most fighters cannot say how they knew the right attack to throw or when to throw it. It's a level of awareness that escapes most fighters because they do not pay attention to the subtleties that are on going during the dance of rapier combat.

One of the first lessons in learning the art of analyzing an opponent is to learn what is good for survival, and what is bad. This is actually very easy to identify in a broad scope.

1. A wide stance that is held for any length of time. This is bad because movement in any direction becomes very difficult to accomplish. The distance of movement on the initial step is also greatly reduced.
2. Off balance. The second someone is off balance, their movement is limited to the direction they are off balance in.
3. Excess motion that causes extra time to be spent to finish an action. An example would be cocking the sword arm during an attack. Extra time is spent cocking the arm during the attack which lengthens the time it takes to complete the attack.
4. Telegraphs. There an infinite number of ways to telegraph. Cocking the sword arm. Dropping your stance. Clinching. Tensing of any muscles. Motion (like rocking) that suddenly ceases.

These are the most evident ones and are a guideline of the types of things to look for.

I suggest watching fighters from the sidelines to analyze what they are doing wrong, and where bad positioning is resulting from their actions. The advantage to doing this is that there are not any distractions during this phase since you are not fighting. Watch closely and note any tendencies. Did they start in good position? Was their stance unusually wide? Was their sword arm cocked back? All of these positional anomalies have a subsequent effect. That is, there are things that can be done, and things that cannot be done. As the engagement progresses, note any tendencies that have the potential for exploitation. Did they ever lose their balance? Were there any detectable telegraphs that prefaced attacks? Did they have a favorite target? If pressed, did they automatically do anything? Do they stop thrust?

As you become more experienced watching, it becomes easier to see how people fight, and what their approach is to fighting. Next, try to apply the same principles while fighting. Analyze your opponent as well as have your opponent and a bystander analyze you. (This best done as a three-person group. If there are four, you will all end up fighting and not standing by and analyzing.) As you become more experienced, you can begin to see which mistakes are the easiest to see and which ones are the easiest to exploit. Also, the more you practice, the more automatic it will become. Eventually, it will make its way to your sub-conscious thought.

The main thing during this learning process is to have a good understanding of form and how it applies to the fight cycle. This process can be used to take a relatively isolated group of fighters and allow them to still be able to achieve relatively high level fighting. Realize that any fighter using this technique has input to give any other fighter. Don't ignore someone just because they have not been fighting as long as you have. They may see something that you could help you.

## Lady's Fashion in Sixteenth Century

By HL Delphina de Champeaux

From the beginning of antiquity, clothing was worn not only for comfort and protection from the elements, but also to inspire fear, impose authority or denote power. Since power is "often equated with wealth, [clothing] came to be an expression of social caste and material prosperity." (Boucher 10) After the fourteen century, it became more apparent that clothing was a way to determine the social position of the courtier. "Until the end of the fifteenth century, population groups were comparatively isolated from one another" but because of the navigational skills of Christopher Columbus and Vasco de Gama the world became open for trade. (Boucher 219) Nobles could now spend great amounts on exotic materials and gowns were made of "Egyptian cotton, Irqui and Syrian silks, Indian cotton stuffs," (Boucher 221) "velvet, damask and silk of every color." (Challamel 116)

By the late sixteenth century fashion was an expensive business. Collars and cuffs were edged with lace of gold. Gowns and doublets were encrusted with gems and pearls. [Figures 1 & 2] In order to stop some of the excessiveness of the court and to keep a class distinction between the court and the rising bourgeoisie, many kings wrote sumptuary laws. Charles IX on April 22, 1561, drew up an edict at Fontainebleau, forbidding his subjects from using "on their clothes, whether silken or not, any bands of embroidery, stitching or piping of silk." (Challamel 97) Then again in January of 1563, he "forbade vertugadins

(farthingales) of more than a yard and a half in width, gold chains, [and] gold work whether with or without enamel plaques." (Challamel 98) And yet again in 1567 Charles does battle with fashion by "permitting silks only to princesses and duchesses [and] prohibiting velvet from the bourgeoisie," however fashion was victorious and the sumptuary laws were simply ignored by the court. (Challamel 99)



**Figure 2 Infanta Isabella Clara Eugenia by de la Cruz, 1599**

From the end of the fifteenth century the long voluminous dress worn by women was no longer made in one piece. It now consisted of a bodice and skirt made separately. By the middle of the sixteenth century "the bodice [of the gown] fitted closely and smoothly over the stiff basquine, and the neck retained the broad square shape," showing the chemise or partlet, which were also decorated with jewels and embroidery. (Evans 52)

[Figure 3] The front of the dress was often "cut square and low [to give the noble ladies the excuse to wear] elaborate necklaces and chains." (Evans 5) A surviving example of the



**Figure 1 detail of bodice jewels**

square necked bodice is "a satin gown and a velvet bodice or 'bodies' worn by Eleanora of Toledo, wife of Cosimoi di Medici." (Arnold 102) The bodices of this time period were usually cut without curves and worn over a pair-of-bodies. By

looking at several pictorial sources, the placement of the laces could be attributed to the station of the wearer. Therefore, noble ladies, who had people to dress them, would have bodices that laced up the back, while the bourgeoisie, who had little help with dressing, would have the side laces and the lower class would lace their bodices up the front by themselves. In the portraits of the late sixteenth century there are examples of the sleeves of a women's garment, borrowing "the slashings, tiered puffs and tight wrists of men's garments." (Challamel 233) By the middle of the sixteenth century, paned sleeves (or sleeves made of strips of material) are seen in several portraits. (Boucher 223, 230 and 233)





**Figure 3 Elizabeth of Austria by Clouet, 1580**

The chemise was commonly decorated with lines of embroidery or lace trim that would "lie in either vertical or diagonal arrangements on the sleeves, chest and back." (di Cuneo1) From about 1530 on, "the neckline [of the bodice] was filled in either with a high-necked smock or a partlett." (di Cuneo1) It is almost impossible to tell the difference between the partlett and a high-necked chemise in portraits. After the mid-sixteenth century "the neckline of the chemise, [followed that of a man's shirt being] cut high and finished with a broad band, fitted close" around the neck. (Cunnington 37) The front opening was fastened with strings or buttons. And again in "Consonance with men's fashions, the [chemise] was no longer entirely concealed; and the edging was often left visible at the neck and wrists as through the slashed sleeves." (Cunnington 37)

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# **Towards a More Period Fencing Doublet**

By Doña Gwenneth of Glamorgan

## **Introduction**

### *Scope/Limitations*

This article does not claim to present an intensive or comprehensive discussion of sixteenth-century clothing. Rather, its purpose is to offer suggestions and guidelines on how to make a more period-looking doublet, with some consideration given to the practicalities of fencing in said doublet.

It is assumed that the reader is generally familiar with doublets as commonly worn in the SCA, but has not yet researched the actual period styles. Therefore, many of the guidelines are intended to prevent common inaccuracies often seen in the rapier community and in the SCA at large.

Due to the limited scope of this article, generalizations are often made, with an emphasis on late-sixteenth-century English examples. Exceptions to the guidelines presented do exist in some cases, but unless the reader has sufficient knowledge to determine the precise situation in which these exceptions occur, it is safer to avoid them.

### *Organization*

The first section will cover the shape and appearance of the doublet itself. A series of doublet, jerkin, and bodice pictures and details are included after this section. These figures are referenced by number in the text when appropriate. The second section will discuss suitable fabric and decoration choices. Some recommendations for further research are listed at the end.

## **Cut and Construction**

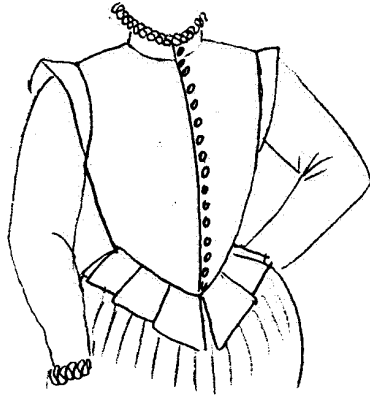
### *Fit*

One of the most common problems seen in SCA doublets is the fit. They frequently tend to be loose-fitting, while period doublets were snug-fitting and often (especially in the late sixteenth century) stiffly padded and boned. Bodices were generally worn over corsets. While padding and corsetry are not recommended for fencing doublets, because of problems with overheating and blow-calling, a snug fit can go a long way to improving the appearance of a doublet. It also helps reduce the tendency of blades to be caught in the extra folds of fabric. Boning or stiffening can also be used to help achieve a smooth shape, as long as it does not interfere with blow-calling.

### *Length/Waistline*

The waistline on sixteenth-century doublets and bodices was at the natural waistline, except for a point in the front, with peplums, skirts, or tabs attached at the waistline and hanging down from there. A notable exception is that German doublets often had straight waistlines (1, 2, 3). (Seventeenth-century doublets had higher waistlines, but they are outside the scope of this article and will not be discussed except to note that if the waistline of the doublet is higher, the waistline of the pants should also be raised.) For women, the location of the waistline is self-explanatory, but men seem to have less of a waistline than a vague waist region. In these cases, the waistline at the back should be at the narrowest part of the torso, follow a horizontal or gently sloping line around the sides of the body, and then curve down to form the point in front. If the doublet waistline is lower, below where the hips have started to flare out again, as is frequently seen in the SCA (see figure below), it is difficult to get a smooth fit.





Typical Period Doublet



Common SCA Doublet

### Comparison between Typical Period Doublet and One Commonly Seen in the SCA

#### *Openings*

With few exceptions, period doublets fastened in the center front. Period bodices were more varied, fastening in the front (4, 6), on the sides toward the back (5), or down the center of the back, with a back fastening indicating that the wearer had servants to lace her in. For the sake of convenience, front fastenings are almost universal for SCA fencing doublets, in which case the opening should be in the exact center, not wrapped over several inches to the side, as is occasionally seen.

#### *Fastenings*

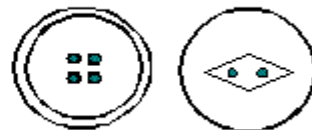
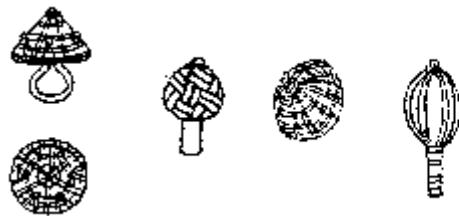
Most men's doublets were fastened with buttons and either buttonholes or buttonloops, although sometimes hooks and eyes were used (2, 7). The major differences between the buttons in period and modern buttons are size and quantity. Period doublets had small buttons very close together (1, 8, 9). Sometimes they appeared almost to touch (10). Buttonholes tended to be horizontal, rather than vertical as in modern shirts. There were two reasons for this. First, with the buttons so close together, there was not enough room for vertical buttonholes. Second, since the doublets had to fit tightly, vertical buttonholes would gap, possibly allowing the button to slip out, placing excessive stress on the narrow strips of fabric between the holes, or at the least, causing unsightly wrinkles around the buttons.

Bodices usually laced up the sides (5), back, or front (6), fastened up the front with hooks and eyes (11, 12), or emulated men's doublets with buttons down the front (13).

The buttons themselves tended to be small (often 1/2" diameter or less), thick, domed or spherical shapes, with shanks on the backs, rather than wide flat disks with holes drilled through them. They could be metal, wood, fabric, or various other materials, sometimes with thread wrapped around them in decorative patterns (see figure below).

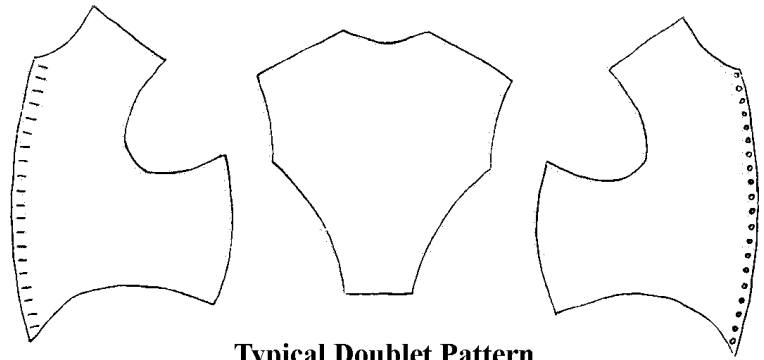
#### Examples of Period Buttons (Arnold)

#### Examples of Modern Buttons



### *Seam Lines*

A very common style of doublet in the SCA has side panels of a different color than the front and back. This was not done in period. Sixteenth-century doublets and bodices rarely even had seams at the front sides. For a typical pattern, the front left and the left side were a single piece, as were the front right and the right side, and the back was a separate piece. Note the curved front edge, which allows for closer fitting when there is no front side seam and can help provide the peascod belly of later doublets.



**Typical Doublet Pattern**

### *Sleeves*

Well-dressed sixteenth-century men usually wore both a doublet and a jerkin, the doublet with full sleeves and the jerkin with no sleeves or partial sleeves (3, 14, 15). While many SCA fencing doublets are made without sleeves, both to be cooler and to allow greater range of movement, having sleeves is a good way to improve the appearance of a doublet. With the new rules about underarm protection coming into effect, the use of sleeves has added advantages. Doublet sleeves could be either sewn in all the way around, sewn in on the top and open under the arm, or tied on. For fencing purposes, the fully sew-in sleeve is by far the most practical.

In any case, men had a distinct lack of variety in sleeve styles, which tended to be full-length and narrow, although there was a great variety of decoration (1, 15, 16, 17, 18). (There was more variety in sleeve styles in the seventeenth century, but again, that is outside of the scope of this article.) Jerkins sometimes had short, puffed sleeves, covering the top part of the doublet sleeve, or else open hanging sleeves (7, 15). Adding a jerkin over the sleeved doublet is good way of achieving a more period look, but it has the disadvantage of adding more layers of clothing, which can be a problem in the summer. It was more common for a jerkin to match the pants, with a doublet of a different fabric, than for the doublet and pants to match (14).

Bodices could either have sleeves or not. Women had an advantage here, with many different styles of sleeves to choose from: long and narrow (19, 20), large and split up the front (21), slashed into ribbons all the way around (5, 22, 23), short puffed cap sleeves (4, 11, 24), full and gathered at the top but tightly-fitting at the wrist (25), etc.

### *Peplums/Skirts*

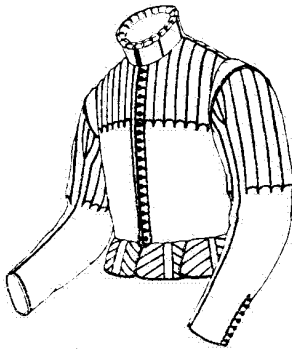
Peplums (the small, usually trapezoidal pieces hanging from the waist) came in a variety of styles (1, 3, 6, 12, 15, 26, 27). The most common in the SCA are three to four inches long and trapezoidal. This is a perfectly acceptable period style (1, 9, 14, 16, 28, 29). Smaller peplums are also period (10, 17), but they do not adequately cover the abdominal area and are therefore rarely used for fencing doublets. However, if the pants or skirt is designed to provide protection, this variety of peplum may be used. Another possibility is skirts, in which a single piece of fabric is gathered or fitted into the waist of the doublet (2, 7, 13, 27). Both peplums and skirts are made separately from the doublet and attached with a seam at the waistline. The practice of simply extending the doublet and slitting it up to the waist at several locations in order to form peplums was more typical of the seventeenth century.

### *Wings/Shoulder Treatment*

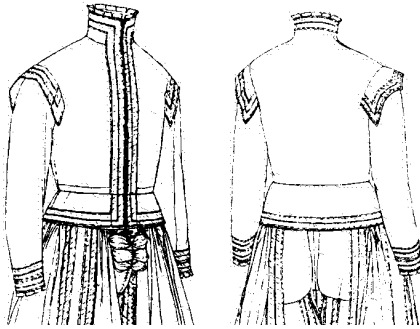
The most common form of shoulder wings seems to have a curving outer edge and comes down approximately two-thirds of the way down the armseye from the top of the shoulder, a little farther in back than in front (1, 9, 16, 18), but there are many options available (6, 8, 10, 12, 14, 26). The wing could still be a single piece, but of a different shape (2, 27). There could be a series of narrow tabs all around the armseye (7, 21, 29). There could be a banana-shaped padded roll (13, 17, 28). The use of a flat piece that wraps all the way around (3) is fairly common in the SCA as it met the old requirements for armpit protection. While the usual SCA practice of setting wings directly into the armseye was used in period (1, 16, 18), another period practice was to sew them separately and tack them on to the doublet itself, set back from the armseye (2). This would decrease the amount of fabric at the armseye and improve the range of arm motion, which can often be restricted due to the extra layers of fabric used for fencing doublets.

### *Collars*

Most period doublets had a high, tight collar, with a ruffle or small ruff poking out from the top (1, 2, 8, 14, 27). This has the added advantage of providing neck protection. Bodices could have high, tight necks, similar to those seen on doublets (13, 19); high, open collars (4, 12); or low, square necks (5, 6, 11, 23, 25). Those with square necks generally had a high-necked partlet covering the upper chest and neck (11, 24), although there was often a triangular or diamond-shaped gap between the bodice and the neck (30). Needless to say, this style is not recommended for fencing. Later bodices often had a large ruff with the inconvenient property of covering the neck (22), so that it is not possible to tell from portraits what the neckline is doing. Round necklines were rarely if ever used.



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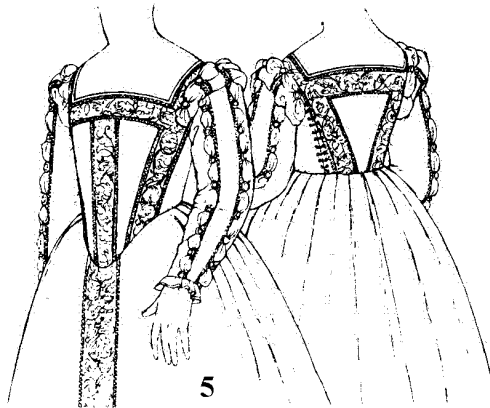
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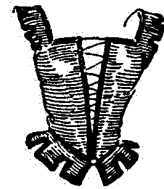
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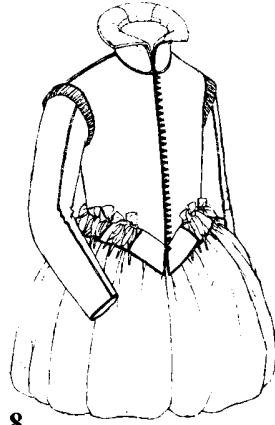
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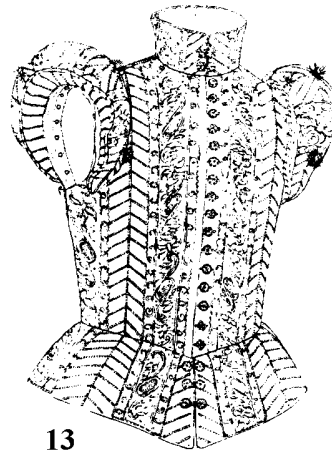
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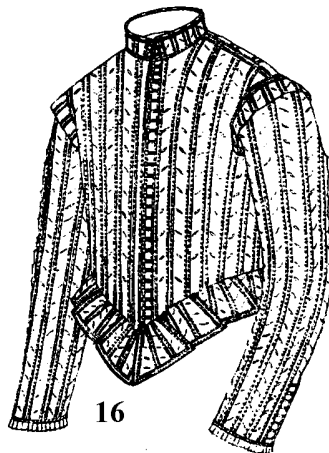
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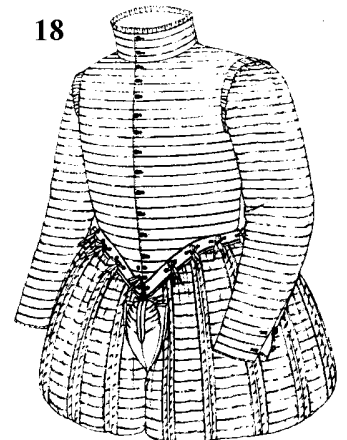
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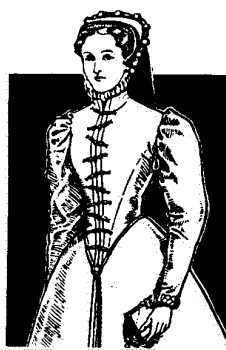
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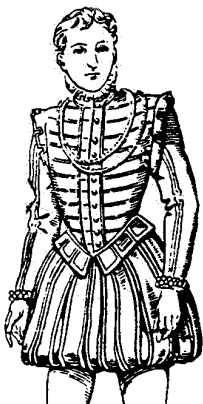
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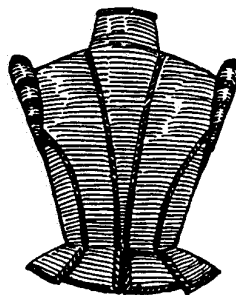
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## Fabric

### *Fiber*

All fabric in the sixteenth century was made of natural fibers. Shirts and chemises were almost invariably white linen. Silk, linen, and wool were used for outer clothing. In addition to being non-period, polyester-cotton blends such as trigger cloth do not breathe well and are very uncomfortable in an Ansteorran summer. Good-quality silk is hard to find and also acts as an insulator. In addition, the wearing of silk was restricted in period by sumptuary laws. Wool can actually be surprisingly cool, but it is hard to find at reasonable prices. (Most “wool” seen in fabric stores is only about 20 percent wool, the rest being synthetics.) Linen is the best fabric for fencing armor. It breathes well and is very strong, even when wet. In recent years, it has also become cheaper and more readily available. Cotton-linen blends are also good. If linen is not available, cotton is the best alternative. It does not breathe as well as linen, nor is it as strong, but it is available nearly everywhere and it is very inexpensive, less than half the price of trigger cloth.

### *Color*

Black was popular among the wealthy, but also very expensive, since it required repeated dyeings to achieve and it faded quickly. In addition, one of the most common mordants used to achieve black tended to deteriorate the fabric it was used on. Blue was fairly readily available in England from woad, but clear, true reds had to be imported from the New World and were very expensive. Purple required over dyeing red and blue, so it was almost as expensive as black, and much less frequently used. Greys, browns, russets, oranges, yellows, and yellowish greens were easily achieved. Pastel colors are not commonly seen in portraits, although there are examples of coral and dark rose. Clear, bright colors were rare and tended not to last. A slightly murky tone to colors results in a more period look. Most colors available in trigger cloth are simply not suitable.

### *Texture*

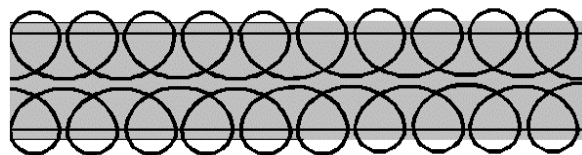
Brocades, satins, and textured weaves were very popular in period. A plain weave, especially in a polyester-cotton blend and in combination with chemical dyes, can often give a dead, flat look which is hard to describe or quantify, but simply looks wrong. Unfortunately, satins and many brocades tend to have long floating fibers which make them easily damaged from fencing. A good compromise is a cotton twill or herringbone weave or other tight weave. They can be woven more tightly than a plain weave and are thus more resistant to penetration.

### *Weight*

A common problem with many SCA clothes is that the fabric used is too lightweight. It is much hotter in Ansteorra than in sixteenth century Europe, especially England, and people try to compensate by using lighter fabric. Clothes therefore do not hang properly. This is difficult to overcome without risking heatstroke. However, using heavier natural fibers is cooler than using lighter synthetics. For areas which are not required to be impervious to penetration, such as pants, skirts, or shirts, using a slightly looser weave can make the fabric appear heavier, while allowing it to breathe better than do lighter-weight fabrics with a tight weave.

### *Surface Decoration*

Rich clothing in period was covered with embroidery, braid, pearls, slashing, pinking, etc. Most of these are not practical for fencing as they snag on tips of blades. Woven trim is the usual compromise. The best-looking trims have some texture and depth to them, rather than being flat woven strips of cloth. Unfortunately, these trims often risk damage from blades. If they are used, they must be sewn on securely. A particular type to avoid is called gimp. The most common variety consists of two rows of looped cord, forming a braid-like pattern. This cord is not strongly held together, and after it has been through a few fights or washes it will start raveling. Another problem is gold or metallic trim. Modern metallics have a bright, gaudy look, which screams, “Synthetic!” They are also brittle and tend to break or fray quickly.



**Gimp**

A common error in the SCA is to use cheap, plain fabric and dress it up with gold trim and pearls in an effort to copy the clothing seen in period portraits. This creates an incongruous effect. If fancy trim is necessary, the fabric should be of comparable richness. If not, an elegant look can be created more subtly with good but non-ostentatious fabric and simple trim or braid. It is not necessary to make fencing armor to resemble court clothing. After all, one would not be fighting duels in the clothing worn when posing for portraits.



## Further Research

The pictures used in this article were chosen to illustrate specific points. Line drawings were preferred over photographs for the sake of clarity, since details can be difficult to distinguish in reduced and reproduced photographs. However, all of the drawings are at best secondary sources and are therefore not necessarily suitable for the purposes of serious research or documentation. For further, more specific research, photographs of period portraits are usually the best sources available. A list of recommended books is attached.

## Figure References

Arnold, Janet. *Patterns of Fashion, 1560–1620*. 1985. (Figures 1-3, 5, 8, 13, 16, 18)  
Norris, Herbert. *Tudor Costume and Fashion*. 1938. (Figures 4, 6, 7, 9-12, 15, 17, 19-22, 24-30)  
Wilcox, Ruth Turner. *The Mode in Costume*. 1958. (Figure 14)  
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## Colorful Personality

Or, Thomas Dekker's "How a Gallant should behave himself in a Playhouse"

By Harry Champernowne

When you have something to say, the introduction is always the hardest. It is your explanation, your reason for existence. The introduction is used to catch the reader's attention and say "I am worth while, and not a waste of time." So, why should you read this? I'll start with a question. Who are we as a community? Are we technical reenactors trying to recreate the mechanics of an art used 500 years ago? Or, are we trying to create personalities of the type of people who could have lived those many years ago? Neither one is an exclusionary activity, but only one will lead to a rather boring existence. So, who are we to recreate, or create; for none of us can be Saviolo, Machievell, or De Grassi. We are historic creators who have taken the task to create personalities who aspire to not only imitate, perfect, and teach the styles of the renaissance masters, but to expand on their work in the practical arena. But, we are not merely academic technicians imitating movements from manuscripts. We are personalities and should act accordingly. And, how should we create this recreated personality? Now, we fall back on our skills as the technician. We know how to behave in court. But, the majority of our time is not spent there. If it were, the SCA's membership would be a lot less than it is. We spend the majority of our time dealing with the general populace, or the common riff raff of the SCA. That is, you and me.

Thomas Dekker's (1570-1641) "How a Gallant should behave himself in a playhouse," is one of many Elizabethan articles that's purpose was to educate the young Gallant in proper behavior. This article instructs the Gallant in how to deal with the common riff raff of his day. The Playhouse, or Live Theater was one of the only forms of formalized, mass entertainment of the day. Anyone who could cough up a penny could go and see the play. So, what separated the Gallant from the Groundling? It was the custom of the time to allow people who paid a larger sum of money, to sit on the stage and watch the performance above the common rabble. Dekker writes, "By sitting on the stage, you have a signed patent to engross the whole commodity of Censure; may lawfully presume to be Girder; and stand at the helm to steer the passages of scenes; yet no man shall once offer to hinder you from obtaining the title of an insolent, overweening Coxcomb."(404) Therefore, it is the purpose of this paper to describe to you the proper behavior of a Gallant, who is sitting on the stage. And,

it is my hope that you may take from this article the seed of a personality that will grow and create the type of person that should have been interested in the technicalities of the fencing masters of the renaissance.

The first thing we need to do is to get our Gallant to the theater. Dekker writes "Present not yourself on the stage until the quaking prologue hath got colour into his cheeks, and is ready to give the trumpets their cue as though you were one of the properties." (405) The term "Fashionably Late" comes to mind. From the very start, a Gallant should make a show of himself. He should take his position on the stage just as the introduction is about to begin. If you arrive early, you have opened yourself to be up staged by other Gallants. You want the crowd to see you last before the play starts. However, Dekker warns not to arrive too late "...from behind the Arras, with your Tripes or three footed stool in one hand, and a teston mounted between a forefinger and a thumb." (405) For, the crowd, or audience will not appreciate you distracting their attention. They did not pay to come and see you take your seat.

"Before the Play begins, fall to cards: you may win or lose (as Fencers do in a prize) and beat one another by confederacy, yet share the money when you meet at supper." (407) When on the stage, you are with your peers. You may trick, gamble, or what have you, but remember that these are the people that you deal with on a regular basis. By sitting on the stage, as the play begins, "... you may at the very next door ask whose play it is." (404) By calling out, you make yourself known to the writer. By showing to him that you have the power to demand to know whose play you are seeing, he may show his respect with a sonnet. If you know the author to have lampooned you, or somehow gotten on your bad side, there are two primary actions to take. First, during the play, "...you rise with a screwed and discontented face from your stool to be gone". (407) This works best in conspiracy with others. Or, if you come with an entourage, then you don't need the cooperation of your peers. For, if you leave the play, followed by others, you make such a display as to disgrace the writer in the public forum. But, if you are unable to leave the theater, you could "...turn plain ape, take up a rush, and tickle the earnest ears of your fellow Gallants, to make other fools fall a-laughing." (408) Thus, telling everyone in the theater that the play is not worth your attention. But, these are extraordinary cases. Most of the time authors will not be known to you, and you will allow the play to proceed. During a play, Dekker writes "It shall crown you with rich commendation to laugh aloud in the middle of the most serious and saddest scene ... and to let the clapper (your tongue) be tossed so high, that all the house may ring of it." (405) Why should you be loud? "...all eyes in the galleries will leave walking after the Players, and only follow you: the simplest dolt in the house snatches up your name, and when he meets you in the street, or that you fall into his hands in the middle of a Watch, his word shall be taken for you. He'll cry, 'He's such a gallant,' and you shall pass." (406) But, Dekker's words of warning ring again that no one will save you from being a fool. Be a Gallant. Don't be annoying. The difference between a Gallant and a Clown is knowing when to stop.

As I wrote in the beginning, this is but one of hundreds of articles of behavior for the young Gallant. I encourage all of you to read and to write about as many as possible. For, we are not merely technicians learning movements, but are enactors learning a way of life.

Haydn, Hiram, The Portable Elizabethan Reader, The Viking Press, New York, NY. 1955. Pages 402-408.



The Ende