

Five Cuts on the March

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In order to use any action in fencing, you must first find or create a situation where this action is useful and effective. This workshop provides a tactical framework designed to create opportunities to use Liechtenauer's five hidden cuts. This framework also gives an answer to the common problem of "how do I pick between all these responses to the same action from my opponent?".

Preliminary notes for all exercises

- Work in groups of 4
- Rotate one partner every 2-3 repetitions.
- When you're not 'on', watch carefully. There is a lot to be learned from observation here.
- As the coaching role in these exercises, pick your cue *before* the fencer starts. Give it as clearly and precisely as you can at exactly the correct moment.
 - They are using the timing and distance of your cue to make their decisions, help them do that right.
 - If the fencer is struggling, try to give them a clearer cue - you often won't need to make the action itself easier.
- As the fencer, if the coach forgets to do their thing, just hit them!

Advance in Preparation

The first key concept for this class is the *point of no escape* - the distance from which if you attack, you will hit despite any parry. Knowing when you have reached the point of no escape for your intended attack (and therefore when you should launch) is the critical finishing condition for the rest of the actions we'll be building up.

- Distance guide for the fencer: attack at your extension distance + 15cm.
 - You should be aiming to hit as the feet cross on your passing step - not as the foot lands.
- Drill - advance in preparation:
 - Start at extension distance + 15cm. Coach takes one step

- back, then waits.
- Fencer makes a small advancing step to their attacking distance
- Coach can either:
 - ◆ Wait - fencer should *immediately* launch their attack as soon as they have done their advance
 - ◆ Step back - fencer should stop after their advance, with no 'bobbling' or second step showing they were overcommitted.
- Coach emphasis: cue with your retreat before their front foot lands.
- Second drill:
 - As before, but now if the coach steps back, the fencer makes a second small step to reach their attacking distance again.
 - As soon as the coach does not step back on the fencer's advance, the fencer should launch their attack immediately.

Countertime

Unfortunately, the opponent will rarely cooperate with your nice advance in preparation, and often will try to take the opportunity of your advance to hit you instead. This can be addressed with the concept of *countertime* - drawing out a counterattack and parrying it to set up your own hit. We'll use two simple exercises based on the advance in preparation drill

- Countertime drill - as the advance in prep drill from before
 - When the coach stops, they present their blade with the point in presence
 - Fencer clears the blade while launching their attack
- Second counter time drill:
 - When the coach stops, they launch a simple cut that will likely hit the fencer as they finish their advance.
 - Fencer parries this cut and then launches their own riposte to hit
- For groups where these exercises are going well, you can do them "on the march", using repeated advancing steps while the coach repeatedly retreats.

The Zornhaw

With the basic framework in place, we can start to see how the five cuts fit into this framework. First up is the zornhaw, used at the widest distance.

- When the fencer starts to advance in preparation, the coach can cut to place their point in presence.
- To handle this, the fencer can do their own cut second, coming down on top of the coach's blade and displacing it.
- As the fencer finishes their cut, they continue with their attacking step and land the point to hit.

- Exercise: counter time drill
 - Coach cuts to put the point in presence when they wait
 - Fencer cuts as well, clearing the blade and lining up their own point to land as they finish their step
- Extension: if this is proving easy, do the drill "on the march".

The Krumphaw

With each further step forward from the fencer, the distance between the two participants changes, and the ideal actions also change.

- Starting from 'zornhaw distance', the fencer can take another small step forward.
- The coach delivers pretty much any cut, aimed to hit the fencer directly.
- To handle this, the fencer pushes the pommel under their arm and drops the long edge on the coach's sword, then hits using a riposte by cut or thrust.

- Exercise: counter time drill
 - First option: coach can cut the point in presence, setting up the zornhaw
 - Second option: coach can wait, fencer takes another small advance forward, coach makes a cut that's intended to hit directly.
 - Fencer now drops a krump on the cut and hits a riposte

- Extension: at krump distance, coach can feed *any* cut they choose (from the correct side) - krump should handle basically all of them just fine.
- Second extension: on the march.

The Twerhaw

As a 'shortened' cut, hitting using a twerhaw either as a direct attack or a counterattack requires very short distance between the fencers. This paradigm provides a way to safely reach that short distance

- Starting from 'krump distance', the fencer takes another small step forward.
- The coach hesitates, allowing the fencer to immediately slam in the twerhaw to the head
 - If the coach is waiting in HVT, this cut will tend to hit the arms instead. That's fine
 - If the coach doesn't hesitate and cuts down instead, launching the twerhaw anyway will tend to close out their cut and hit them safely.
- Exercise: counter time drill, now up to three options:
 - Coach presents the point at zorn distance -> zornhaw
 - Coach cuts to hit at krump distance -> krump and riposte to hit
 - Coach allows the fencer to step forward and to reach twer distance -> launch a twerhaw to hit directly
- Extension: coach can sometimes launch a cut as the fencer closes in to twer
 - Fencer should just do the twerhaw anyway and will likely be able to block the coach's attack.
- Second extension: "on the march", the coach varying between waiting to give the feed or taking retreats.
 - This gets very complex, with the potential to spend multiple steps of the exercise at each range band.
 - As the coach, stay attentive and make sure your fencer is reacting to what's going on instead of getting confused.

The Schielhaw

So far all the choices have been purely based on distance. The schielhaw fits into this paradigm at the same distance as the zornhaw, but is prompted by a different action from the coach.

- As the fencer advances to 'zorn distance', the coach leaps in to try and hit with a *cut*
- Fencer responds by slamming in the schielhaw instead to lock them out
 - This works because the big long step tends to mean the sword lags a bit, giving an opening.
 - If the sword is coming in with the point instead, zorn.
 - You probably make this decision based on habits/ observations, not in the moment.
- Exercise: countertime drill at zorn distance, two choices:
 - Coach puts the point in presence - fencer uses zornhaw
 - Coach leaps forward to hit directly - fencer uses schielhaw
- Extension: on the march

The Schaitelhaw

The schaitelhaw fits into this model when the coach has tried to hit directly with a cut but is too far away, giving the fencer an opportunity for *nachreissen*.

- As the fencer advances to 'zorn distance', the coach swings and misses
- To exploit this, the fencer pulls the trigger on a committed explosive cut to head.
- Exercise: counter time drill at zorn distance, two choices:
 - Coach puts the point in presence - fencer uses zornhaw
 - Coach swings and whiffs - fencer uses schaitelhaw
- Extension: add schielhaw cue.

Sabre March

This fencing game sets up most of the same ideas from the class, but in a more open-ended package where each participant can try to make their own side of the exercise work.

- Pick a back line and designate attacker/defender.
- Attacker wins if they hit (including in any double) or if they push defender off the back line
- Defender wins if they
 - hit clean + get away
 - successfully parry
 - make the attacker swing and miss
 - make the attacker step backwards or stop for more than a moment.
- Swap partners a lot
- This is a hard exercise and requires careful tactical thinking to succeed (in both roles)
- 1h hits and leg cuts forbidden (only mention if needed)

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