

Applying the Verkehrrer Or Gross Motor Mechanics

Festival of the Sword 2019

When interpreting techniques, it's helpful to rely as much as possible on gross motor mechanics. This makes it easier to learn and much easier to apply under pressure in heavy fencing gear. This workshop will explore the application of these principles to the verkehrrer (inverter) - one of the least studied techniques in Ringeck's gloss. By using simple powerful mechanics, we can improve the success of this and several other related plays in our fencing.

Equipment: Longsword simulator (flexible steel or synthetic), mask with back of head protector, heavy gloves. Fencing jackets encouraged.

Experience: Beginner/intermediate - basic descending cuts; thrusts; and the zwerhaw.

Translations kindly provided by Christian Trosclair

Introduction - 10

This class is looking at the verkehrrer (inverter), a very niche play that's often just thrown in as a curiosity by most clubs. The different glosses have quite different versions of this technique, but Ringeck's is particularly interesting for defining the 'inverting' part as being overturning the sword, not shoving the opponent's elbow (there's a key supporting line here in Ringeck's extra plays which we won't go into in this class, but trust me that it's there).

We see versions of this movement used repeatedly throughout Ringeck's gloss. Most of the time it's in techniques like the verkehrrer or the untertwer, which people often treat as 'fun manual tricks' but assume are too complex for sparring in full gear. We'll be looking at an alternative way to approach complex movements like this, focusing on simple powerful movements that can overcome the resistance provided by gear and are easier to execute under stress.

Core movement practice

- Turn the sword against resistance, Sean Franklin style
 - Start with a bind with some pressure.
 - Close the grip and push with the thumb to turn the sword over against that pressure, without the point deviating in either direction.
- Push the arms up, partner provides some pressure from above to drive through.
 - Start in a low-ish position, partner gives some pressure to the hilt of the sword.
 - Go directly up with the arms to over the head, pushing against this
 - ◆ If height is an issue, this works from kneeling or sitting down just fine - it's about the upper body movement.

Core play - 20

Yet another play from the cross cut and this is called the inverter

The inverter compels

The slipper through wrestles even at the same moment

Take the elbow surely

Spring into their movement

Gloss. *Note you shall conduct this play like so: When you bind against the opponent's sword with a rising or descending cut, invert your sword such that your thumb comes under and thrust at their face from above. Thus, you overwhelm them such that they must block and in the blocking, seize their right elbow with your left hand and spring in front of their right foot with your left and shove them over it. Or slip through using the inverter and wrestle as you will find hereafter in the slipping through.*

So, let's talk mechanics. Specifically, let's talk the mechanics we just looked at: turn the sword; push up with the arms. We can use these to drive the point in towards the face - like so:

- Demo the movement
- Tactically speaking, this demands a response
- One of the most common successful responses is to shove it across sideways

- The hands high make driving up tricky at best
- So while they parry, you now get an opening to enter, help the elbow along and do what you will.
- Drill
 - Part 1: mechanics. Start in a bind
 - ◆ Verkehr the sword and stick them in the face
 - ◆ Coach sometimes goes to parry, enter to take the elbow when they do
 - Part 2: full play - three step drill. Start wide
 - ◆ Step 1: come in and hit them
 - ◆ Step 2: They bind and riposte
 - ◆ Step 3: As they bind, verkehr.
 - ◆ Step 3b: Optionally, continue to the parry and elbow push
 - ◆ All three steps is one rep. Do five reps then swap roles.

Main feedback point: drive forward aggressively at the face.

Untertwer - 15

Here note the break against the upper cross cut

Note. *When you bind the opponent from your right side with a descending cut or otherwise against their sword, if they subsequently strike around to the other side using the cross cut, then come forth under their sword against their neck also with the cross cut, as is pictured hereafter next to this, such that they strike themselves the same way with your sword.*

Now let's look at a much more common application of the same movement - breaking the twerhaw. If they leave a bind to cut around, we can use *exactly the same mechanics*, with a slight adjustment in footwork, to deliver the twer unter twer against their attack.

- Close distance a bit - land a cut
- Move slightly out to your right
- Shove the hands up and invert the sword
- Voila, you have the untertwer
- Three step drill:
 - Step 1: Enter with threat and hit.
 - Step 2: They bind and twer around.
 - Step 3: Invert the sword to do the untertwer

- Be careful not to over complicate this. Simple strong mechanics are the only way you will reliably land this at high intensity.

Main feedback point: hands need to be uncrossed for this - lots of people want to cross them.

Unterschnitt - 10

How the slice breaks the crown.

*Slice through the crown
So you break the hard beautifully
Press the thrust
Withdraw it with slicing.*

Gloss. *Note when they block the parter or otherwise another cut with the crown and with that rushes in, take the slice under their hands into their arm and press firmly upwards, so the crown is again broken and turn your sword from the lower slice into the upper slice and withdraw yourself during that.*

A third great application of this movement is in slicing the arms. Here's a play from the schaitel which we can use it in.

- They drive up and move in
- So we meet that by flipping the sword and punching up with it, driving into the forearms from underneath.
- This blocks out the movement of the arms and allows a while much of fun continuations.
- Movement generally is now sinking down on the legs for structural reasons.
- Three step drill
 - Step 1: Attack directly
 - Step 2: They parry high while closing and establish body contact.
 - Step 3: Invert your sword to come underneath and push up through their hands to lock them out.
- Technical note - this works ok both sides, but we're going to entirely do it from a right side bind because it keeps the movement most similar.

Main feedback point: arms have get straight or the structure will collapse

Zeckrur - 10

Item. You shall note that everything that you wish to fence, conduct that with the entire strength of the body and with that, cut in from close at the head and at the body, so they can not change through in front of your point and with that cut, in the binding of the swords, you shall not omit the biters to the nearest opening. That will be delineated hereafter in the five cuts and in other plays.

This one is more of a stretch. But you can use basically the same movement, with a step *past* their sword. You lose some reach, which does increase the risk, but the speed helps mitigate that. I find this variant is great against people who lift their arms high in the bind.

- Step through with the left foot
- Verkehr sword
 - You can keep it a bit shallower, more "out" than "up", in this case
 - But same basic explosive mechanics
- Then run the hell out of dodge
- Three step drill:
 - Step 1: Enter with threat
 - Step 2: Parry across and high, then riposte
 - Step 3: Tag the underarm or chest and run away

Main feedback point: note the footwork variation from the previous plays, stepping away with the left instead of stepping in.

Synthesis - 20 minutes

So, how does this all come together? Well, all four of these plays are making use of exactly the same basic body movement - punching the arms up while turning the sword in your hand. That's a very simple and powerful movement which is easy to execute even in full gear under pressure. What outcome it leads to depends more on the position and actions of the opponent than anything else.

Exercise:

- Fencer attacks with a direct action - either cut to hit or throw in the point to land as a thrust.
- Coach binds against it (or gets hit, if they forget) and sets up one of the following situations:
 - Maintain the bind
 - ◆ Fencer inverts the sword to demand more commitment from the coach, and enters for the elbow push
 - Strike around with the twer
 - ◆ Fencer inverts the sword and adjusts their position, for the untertwer.
 - Drive up high and move in
 - ◆ Fencer inverts the sword and sinks to make the unterschnitt on the arms.
 - Stay wide and let the hands drift up and high
 - ◆ Fencer inverts the sword and steps past, making a tag-hit to the forearms or the body
- Fencer - your job is to use the same basic 'invert the sword' mechanic, plus make whatever little adjustments you need for the precise situation. That might mean closing in a bit or pulling away a bit, threatening with the point or driving in the edge, etc.
- Start out at a friendly intensity, build it a bit if things are going well for both of you. This can go all the way up to jackets and full sparring speed if you want to.

Summary - 5

So, let's review:

- Using gross motor mechanics allows apparently complicated actions to be executed more easily and robustly under stress
 - This also helps to overcome some of the limitations of fencing gear, like a jacket or heavy gloves.
 - My belief is that lots of plays are considered 'too hard' not because they are actually difficult but because the common interpretations rely too much on small detailed movements instead of large powerful ones.
 - We've looked at one specific gross movement in this class - inverting the sword
 - ◆ This is actually made of two extremely simple elements, both of which can be applied separately to all sorts of other situations

- Inverting the sword in this way can be used to set up a number of plays - demonstrate again
 - The verkehrer with an elbow push
 - The untertwer against a cut around
 - The unterschnitt against an attempted wrestle
 - The zeckrur against an overcommitted parry
- One of the key advantages of simple movement-based interpretations like this is that they can be translated easily to multiple plays
 - This increases the probability of achieving a successful fencing action under pressure
 - ◆ Since you don't have to recognise as much about the situation when making decisions.

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