

Know Your Enemy

IGX 2019 Class 2

Abstract

After self-awareness, the next most important skill is to know your opponent. This class will explore ways to analyse an opponent, testing their response to various situations and discovering their strengths as a fencer. Students will then practice incorporating this into a tactical plan to maximise their own strengths and exploit their opponent's weaknesses.

This class is the second part in a three class series. It builds on the self-analysis techniques established in part one. In part three we will explore how to apply these skills when coaching. Attendees are recommended to take all three classes in the series for best results.

Equipment: Longsword, mask, sparring gloves. Jacket recommended, full kit is a bonus.

Experience: Attendees should know basic cuts, thrusts and parries and have some experience actually fencing.

Plan

90 minutes overall. 2 min break between each fencing section, for explanation/water/breather

*Conscious fencing starts with using preparation of actions.
Preparation is the basis of conscious fencing.*

Key training objectives:

- Ways to establish strong and weak of an opponent
- Matching your strengths (class 1) to their weaknesses
- Preparation/setup of actions

Warmup (10)

- 'speed date' light sparring
- 2 minutes per opponent, then switch to someone new

- Speed can stay reasonably quick but keep impact levels low
- Pick one finishing action and try to play with setting that up

Attacks (10)

- One of the simplest ways to probe an opponent
- Try simple attacks - oberhaw, thrust, etc
 - More complex (e.g. schiel or twer) available as options as well
 - You need to be able to execute the action without conscious thought.
- Look for their areas of comfort/confidence, their areas of weakness and their panic actions.
- This also establishes the ground work you can call on for feints and the like.
- Exercise: 1 minute of attacks each, note down habits mentally, then swap roles. Change partners after 2 mins
 - In the long run, writing this stuff down by the specific opponent is super useful.

Presseur (10)

- Another solid basic way to learn their habits
- Prepare your strong parries, then push into their distance
 - Be confident in your defence and ready to react/retreat.
- Read their reactions:
 - Retreat? How? How far? What movement?
 - Snap attack? Which action? What footwork? Distance?
 - Coordination of the body? Weight distribution? (advanced)
- Use these to prepare your plans - e.g. enter and krump and hit
- Try various guards/positions to see what behaviours you can get
- Same exercise as before.

Probing (10)

- Use fine distance tweaks and deceptive/changing bladework.
 - Offer and refuse binds
 - Threaten and disengage
 - Adjust distance rapidly and unpredictably
 - Change lines and angles of attack
- Look for their confusion or error
 - e.g. chasing your sword when you offer then refuse a bind
 - Or pulling their sword back to stop you harassing it
- Then you can force that error and exploit it.

- Same exercise as before.

Patience (10)

- Just wait - easy, and yet not.
- Think about your stance and be very watchful of distance.
- Use this to learn their attacking habits, in order to plan parries or counterattacks.
- Only try it if you're very confident in your reactions.
- Same exercise as always
 - Coach: be sure to give some attacks since the fencer will be passive.
- *This exercise was skipped in the workshop as run*

Warmup game repeated (10)

- We're going back to the same speed date sparring game we played in the intro.
- However, now you can bear in mind these scouting and preparatory methods we've looked at.
- Still try to set up one finishing action
- And still play fast but not hard.

Strengths v. weaknesses (10)

- One of the most reliable ways to win exchanges is to ensure you are using your strongest actions and you are forcing your opponent to use their weakest ones.
- Reconnaissance and prep is vital to this process
- Drill is exactly the same as before. But think about:
 - What is working well for them?
 - What is working badly for them?
 - How can I get to my strong points and avoid their strong ones?
 - Try to use this to guide your approach
- That's it!

Summary

- Conscious fencing <-> Preparation
- Your strengths vs their weaknesses
- Some diagnostic/scouting tools:
 - Attack (for responses)
 - Pressure (for reactions)
 - Harass (for mistakes)

- Wait (for frustration)
- Lots more can exist, of course
- Use in concert with awareness of your own strengths
 - This was discussed more in workshop 1
- Once you have scouting and self-awareness, you can develop strategy
 - Come to part 3 and we'll work on that more.

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