

Taking the Low Road

Longpoint 2019

*"Whoever's war aims
Above, they become ashamed below."*

In the zettel, there is a general idea of going below when your opponent is driving up in the engagement. This is particularly valuable to shorter fencers, who cannot always match high windings or parries which might be made by a taller opponent. Techniques covered will include zeckrur, durchwechselln and mutieren.

Experience: Beginners welcome.

Equipment: Mask, fencing sword, forearm protection and any further gear as required for comfort.

Plan

Intro - 15 minutes

- 2min summary of the class
 - While the opponent is moving up, we have an opportunity to move underneath
 - Make sure that we attack during their movement, not after it
- Warmup game 1: S&B high/low tag
 - Right hand is the 'sword', can strike and parry
 - Left hand is the 'buckler', can only parry
 - Target areas are the shoulder/upper arm and the lower thigh
 - Light touches
- Warmup game 2: single sword high/low tag
 - Same as before, but the left hand is removed from play.
 - Encourages more focus on feints and setups, instead of bind work
- Warmup exercise 3: big ribbon cuts with longswords
 - Simple sword exercise

Block 1 - zeckrur under the arms - 15 minutes

and with that hew, in the binding of the swords you shall not omit the fleshwounds to the nearest opening

This is a good thing to have in mind when you are fencing with an opponent who moves to ochs by default, especially at wider range.

Drill with a three step drill:

- First time, just enter with longpoint and land a thrust
- Second time, they bind your point aside and lift the arms, then make a riposte
- Third time, deliver unterhaw to the arm with a step away from their point while they are moving up.

All three stages are one repetition. That way everything is being done with awareness of why it's a sensible action.

Block 2 - schaitler into thrust - 15 minutes

Note, this is when you strike-in and hang the point to the face with the parter: if he then shoves the point firmly upward with his hilt in the displacement of the parter, invert your sword with the hilt high in front of your head (such that the thumb comes below), and set the point under his hands upon his chest

Three step drill:

- Cut high against their alber to hit the head
- They parry and lift high, then cut back down
- While they are lifting up, disengage underneath to thrust.

Emphasis point here - as the coach, give them time in your movement to make their own movement. Don't just shortcut the whole thing. You can make it faster and more challenging as a coach as your fencer gets better at what they're doing.

Block 3 - mutieren - 15 mins

Deploy the mutating thusly: When you bind him with the over-hew (or otherwise on the sword), then wind the short edge upon his

sword and drive well up with the arms, and wind your sword's blade outside above his sword and thrust him to the low openings, and this conducts to both sides.

We'll do this from a slightly odd entry - start in a low guard. When they try to fall on your sword, come around it and bind above. Then you can get into the play as written.

Three step drill:

- Overbind and just thrust directly
- They parry the thrust by moving to left ochs to offset it, and then riposte with a thrust
- While they are moving up, lift with the hands and turn the short edge, then drop your point in for a thrust to the thigh.

Block 4 - body hit from streychen - 15 mins

Item. When you sweep onto his sword, if he then drives high up and winds, so strike him in the right side with outstretched arms, and with that step to the back.

Three step drill:

- They feed a strike to the head - slash up to break it and then riposte
- They wind against the riposte and thrust
- Go out during the winding with a hit to the ribs and a step away

Block 5 - synthesis game - 20 minutes

Pick the attacker/defender:

- Attacker starts high. Options are:
 - Attack, zeckrur
 - Attack, thrust low
- Defender start low. Options are:
 - Bind, mutier and thrust low
 - Streychen, body hit
- Play at friendly intensity to start with, build it up a bit if it's proving easy
- Swap roles after 10 reps or so.

Summary

Low openings are often under-utilised in fencing. People tend to assume that any attacks to low openings can be simply dealt with by overreaching from above.

However, by inducing the opponent to move upwards, a short window becomes available to safely make a low line attack.

This class has reviewed several specific ways to apply this idea in fencing to make safe attacks underneath the opponent's blade.

A key part of effectively training this material (or nearly any other technique that depends on acting inside the opponent's movement) is to work at a controlled pace, emphasising when the action is being made relative to the opponent's action.

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