

Epee: Second Intentions

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Much has been made of Second Intentions in Foil and Sabre but, where Epee is concerned, we seem to forget not only that they are the basis for much of the Epee game but also that they even exist - in Epee, that is.

As we all know, the typical Second intention in Foil and in Sabre goes as follows: Fencer A (who's executing that ploy) attacks Fencer B usually with a Simple (or Direct) action, allowing the latter to Parry and Riposte; he of course knows what Riposte to expect (most of the time), parries Fencer B's Riposte and scores with a Counter-Riposte emanating from his Parry.

To clear things up -

Foilist A attacks with a beat straight in Quarte, Foilist B parries Quarte and ripostes straight; Foilist A then recovers forward while parrying that Riposte with a Counter-of-Sixte and lunges low.

...or -

Sabreur A attacks with a Cut to the Head, Sabreur B parries Quinte and cuts over to the Banderole; Sabreur A then recovers forward while parrying that Riposte with a Quarte and lunges again, this time to the Face.

Cute, no? And not that hard to execute. All we have to do is watch our victim-to-be operate in one of his bouts so as to determine his favorite parry, i.e., the one he performs when surprised, and the target his following riposte goes for; given the limited target area foil offers, that shouldn't be too hard. A little harder in sabre, though, what with those long sleeves on the lame', and the mask, but because of the size of the parries (the parry of quinte, also known as the "head" parry, ain't exactly subtle and its riposte, like the hammer of Thor, ain't exactly gentle) and the distance the ripostes usually have to travel before they land make it fairly easy to spot.

But Epee at least as far as Second Intentions Attacks are concerned is another story entirely.

For one thing, our opponent doesn't have to parry our attack at least not with a tack parry (that's the sort Foilists and Sabreurs alike prefer because it allows them to bounce off the other guy's blade and get on with that immediate riposte we hear so much about); no, instead he'll pick one that allows him to touch us almost as soon as he finds our blade; like a sixte or quarte or octave opposition, all of which are - if properly executed - nothing more than counter-attacks into the blade and really spell trouble for the "second intentionist". Another choice our wily adversary has is the counter-attack and most epee's second intentions are based on the attackee counter-attacking his attacker. Then the attacker can counter-stop-hit that counter-attack, or take it with one of his fulminating prises and score.

We can also attack and when parried, even with one of those oppositions listed above, slip the parry with a reprise or a barre' aimed at the Manchette, no further, lest the opposition get us first. Our reprise can be into the blade as well: since we have to go to the other side of our opponent's blade, we might as well take it on our way there, no?

Once again, to clear things up -

Epeeist A attacks to the Manchette, epeeist B counter-attacks atop the arm, epeeist A counter-stop-hits beneath the Manchette and, just to make sure, follows up with a sixte opposition atop that Manchette.

Epeeist A attacks to the Manchette, epeeist B parries counter-of-sixte opposition, epeeist A slips the parry and reprises with a Quarte opposition, or a disengage inside, both to the Manchette and follows up with a quarte croise'.

Is that fun or what? What I like most about second intentions in any weapon but particularly in Epee is that our opponent actually helps us score on him. Unwittingly. And that is FUN!