Handout on Overall Objectives and Definition of Preparations

Objectives to cover in the sessions:

What do we need to learn to give a level IV Prévôt and level V Master Option Lesson?

- To have a deeper understanding of epee techniques, their execution, utilization and pedagogy
- How to present a FRAMEWORK for option - problem solving – lessons, with observed cues, minimal verbal cues, and consistent preparations for the student (S) to use
- How to use the fencing elements of timing, distance, initiative, speed and tempo with simple actions to build a progressively challenging offensive, defensive and counter-offensive lesson
- How to present realistic and varied timing, hand and blade orientation cues
- How to execute hand and foot coordination, correctly and purposefully incorrectly: reaction and no reaction
- Efficient Coaching (C) posture and use of the non-dominant hand
- C's footwork cues and timing to simulate what a fencer needs to recognize and take advantage of when bouting
- Footwork that challenges the fencer, yet energy efficient for C
- How to use correct changes of distance to cue S
- How to use cues with continual movement and coordinate with blade work
- How to use the option lesson so the fencer is better able to adjust to changing circumstances of the bout
- How to successfully demonstrate any of the lessons required for the various USFCA Exams

Preparations

If we have a good understanding of them we can make logical and realistic cues for our S's.
The goal of preparatory actions is not to score a hit, rather anything done to facilitate landing the actual action intended to hit. *The preparations include: footwork, engagement, change of engagement, absence of blade, invitations, feints of blade and/or body, attacks on the blade, takes of the blade, and the false attack.*

The preparation's goals are to gain **reconnaissance, create deception and provocation**. Once the attention of the opponent is gained a reaction in a predictable manner is achievable. The fencer has to be aware of their point placement while making the preparatory movement or it may get too large and become inefficient. Preparation always involves risk. The fencer has to make sure it is not unjustified risk where too much preparation, or too close an action, allows the opponent to take over the initiative. When making a preparation, the footwork selected has to match what the preparation is trying to accomplish.

The preparation makes it more efficient and easier to make the actual hit by:

1. Gaining and assessing information about the opponent's reactions, state of mind: relaxed or tense, strength of grip, strong and weak actions, and style of fencing (attacking, defending, counter-attacking or the mixture of the three).
2. Misleading the opponent with false cues and keep him guessing about the fencer's real intentions. Concealing intentions creates an element of surprise in the real action and means greater success as the opponent may recognize it and respond too late.
3. Helping the fencer to maneuver and gain a feel for the opponent's tempo and speed of reaction.
4. Hindering the opponent's ability to assess the distance and disturbing their concentration. The preparation can also change the opponent's concentration, slow the speed down, and lull into a dull state, with movements just out of distance, such as parries or counter-attacks that seem aimless, reflexive, mediocre or slow. Or the fencer can make the opposite actions of pressuring footwork, fast false attacks, and changes in rhythm, with beats or feints, to disorient and create a nervous state.
5. Distracting or delaying the opponent's defense.
6. Preparing the fencer's actions and helping to gain the initiative.
7. Using footwork to find the correct distance, time and speed to surprise the opponent and make the actual attack.
8. Provoking the opponent to attack at an inopportune time.
9. Provoking the opponent to counter-attack at the wrong time and either finishing with a simple attack or using a counter-time action to make a hit.