



# Swashbuckling in Sidebars

## Additional Details for *GURPS Swashbucklers*

by Bryan Maloney

A book must be finished in finite time. This means that all kinds of Neat Stuff can come to an author far too late to make it in. Likewise, a book can only have so much space devoted to the extra detail that goes into sidebars. Fortunately, we have magazines. This article is a collection of "extra sidebars" for *GURPS Swashbucklers*, 3rd edition and six new (and notes revising a few other) combat styles. Page references below are all to *GURPS Swashbucklers*.

### Only Copy the Best

Three Maneuvers available in the [errata for GURPS Japan](#) are suitable for inclusion in a European campaign. "Direct Mount" and "Fighting While Mounted" can be added to the Old School and the Italian School (Spaniards considered military swordsmanship too different from Destreza), but add Ride (Horse) to the style if a master teaches these maneuvers. "Tip Slash" can be added to La Verdadera Destreza, The Italian School, The Transitional French School, and Smallsword (French School). In Europe, this technique was called a "stromazone." Only a Cheap European sword would break easily if used in such a fashion against flesh, cloth, or soft leather armor.

### Lobster on the Half-Sword

Once heavy plate armor became popular, European swordmasters taught to not bother trying to cut through it with a sword. Instead, they advocated thrusting at the weak points in the suit. These rules would only be important in a very early period Swashbucklers campaign. By 1600, only generals and kings went onto the battlefield in full plate armor.

The target areas for such thrusts are the armpits (vitals, torso, or arm), the groin (torso or groin), and other armor joints (elbow or knee -- knee requires getting behind the opponent). DR of a vulnerable area is 1/3 the armor's DR (round to nearest whole number). These areas are targeted with a thrust with a -4 penalty to hit in addition to any normal penalty associated with the target. If this is attempted using the "Counterattack" Maneuver against a swing attack (but not a thrust), the penalty is reduced to -2. The "Hit Locations" Maneuver can be used to reduce the penalty.

Likewise, some weapons were designed to actually penetrate hard armor. These weapons should be treated as *GURPS* normally treats armor-piercing damage, using a modifier of (2). Armor-piercing swords and knives do not have edges. They will do crushing damage if swung. They fell out of favor as heavy armor became less popular.

### Left-Handedness

Left-handers have legendary status in Western swordsmanship. Dueling codes universally specified that a left-hander could be required to fight right-handed if his opponent were right-handed. Even old combat manuals pay oblique homage to the sinistral's reputation when they take pains to dispel students' fear of facing them. This reputed deadliness of left-handers has two components: one

objective, the other subjective.

Left-handed swordsmen make attacks from unfamiliar directions. In **GURPS**, left-handedness is equivalent to a style. Characters who have Style Familiarity: Left-Handed would not suffer the unfamiliarity penalty. Left-handers are not automatically familiar with this style. A left-hander who has only faced right-handed opponents knows nothing more about facing southpaws than does anyone else.

The subjective component is a common Delusion: "Left-Handers are Innately Better at Combat." A -1 penalty to active defenses would be a Quirk (given that left-handers aren't all too common). A -2 penalty would be worth -5 points. A -3 to active defenses against a left-hander would be worth -10 points. It is possible for a left-hander to have this delusion at any level (perhaps combined with Delusion "I am an Invincible Left-Hander"). According to a 1983 study (Annett, M. and Kilshaw, D. 1983. "Right- and left-hand skill II: estimating the parameters of the distribution of L-R differences in males and females." *British Journal of Psychology* 74: 269-283), only about 15% of the population at large is left-handed in the modern day. GMs who have sinistral swordsmen behind every bush should increase the value of this Disadvantage.

Left-handedness is also a Social Stigma in the Swashbuckling era. Among the upper classes (Status 1+) and common townsfolk, it gives a -1 reaction that transforms to a +1 reaction in potential combat situations given their "fearsome" reputation in a fight. What of the "superstitious" peasantry? Oddly enough, anatomical analysis of medieval peasant remains (Steele, J. and Mays, S. 1995 "Handedness and directional asymmetry in the long bones of the human upper limb." *International Journal of Osteoarchaeology* 5:39-49) reveals that among the lower classes left-handedness was as common as it is in the modern day.

In balance, this would make Left-Handedness a 5-point Unusual Background. This presumes that the GM gives Style Familiarity: Left-Handers to no more than about 10% of his combat-skilled NPCs (even the great London Salle of Angelo often couldn't find a skilled southpaw for students to practice against). If the GM hands out the Style Familiarity willy-nilly, then Left-Handedness should be a Quirk.

## Feeling Feint?

As redefined in Swashbucklers, the "Feint" is would be more accurately called "Preparation" ("Feint" sounds more posh). Preparations, (feints, beats, engagements, glissades, and so on) are under-emphasized in **GURPS** combat. This is because the Feint is a full combat action in **GURPS** and takes the place of a normal attack. In reality, Preparations (including many feints) are very often part of an attack that falls far short of what a **GURPS** All-Out Attack can do.

To reflect this, "Feints" no longer take up an entire action and can be immediately followed by a normal Attack in the same Turn. However, if the defender chooses to Counterattack or Riposte and the Feint attempt fails, he gets a bonus to his Active Defense and to his Counterattack or Riposte equal to the amount by which a Feint contest fails (double Counterattack/Riposte bonus if the Feinter's roll also exceeds his modified Feint score) -- a failed feint can end a fight! If the attacker instead opts to attack on the next turn or make it an All-Out Attack, the penalty is not assessed, although the attacker suffers normal consequences of an All-Out Attack. The specific Feint option must be declared before the Feint is attempted.

*Example:* Lord Percy has found himself in a duel against Sir Harry Hotspur. He knows that a straight attack couldn't penetrate Sir Harry's defense, so he decides to Feint and immediately follow with an attack. Lord Percy has a Feint of 14 and is using a Slashing Rapier (WM 0), so his roll is a 14. Sir Harry has a Fencing (Rapier) skill of 14 and is using a Transitional Rapier (WM 1), so his effective skill to resist the Feint is 15. Lord Percy's player rolls a 15 and Sir Harry's rolls a 13, so Lord Percy fails by two. However, Lord Percy still has to go through with his attack. Sir Harry

Parries, Ripostes, and gains a +2 to his Parry and +4 to his Riposte. Had Lord Percy instead Feinted and Attacked the next turn, Sir Harry would not have gotten the Riposte bonus even though the Feint failed. Had Lord Percy rolled a 14, Sir Harry's Riposte bonus would have been only +1.

## Two-Handed Sword Antics

The two-handed sword was an amazingly adaptable weapon, and weapon-masters realized that practitioners would often have to deal with people who decided to get in very close. Furthermore, heavy armor meant that thrusts with the became very important. The following maneuvers (both of which can be added to in The Old School) handle this.

### *Schwertringeln (Hard)*

***Defaults to Polearm, Short Staff, Two-Handed Sword, Spear, or Staff-4, cannot exceed lower of Default skill or Prerequisite unarmed combat skill.***

***Prerequisite: Wrestling or Judo at 12 or better***

This Maneuver requires the use of a weapon that can be firmly gripped with at least a shoulder's width between the wielder's hands. It is a Close Combat Maneuver and suffers no specific penalties from Close Combat. A character in Close Combat may use Schwertringeln as if it were Wrestling or Judo for an attempt to Grapple the neck or body and to Choke if the neck has been Grappled. Likewise, a character may Throw an opponent who has been Grappled with Schwertringeln. A Two-Handed Sword used in this fashion can be used to cut after a Grapple has been imposed, doing thr-1 cutting damage. Switching to a Schwertringeln from a normal grip takes effectively no time, but switching back to a normal grip takes 1 turn.

### *Halbschwerd (Average)*

***Defaults to Two-Handed Sword-2, cannot exceed skill***

This Maneuver consists of grabbing the sword by the handle and about the middle of the blade. It allows finer control of thrusts with a two-handed sword and permits a wielder to thrust at both Range 1 and 2 with no penalty. It takes effectively no time to switch to a Halbschwerd from a normal grip or vice-versa.

## The Fencing Parry Expanded Even More

A little tedious mathematical modeling has revealed that the Improved Parry Maneuver (sidebar p. 20) is not unbalancing on a "total point cost vs. combat efficiency" basis until it gets above Default+8. This gives us more room for spotlighting the different emphases on defense that various schools had.

Set the maximum level of the Improved Parry maneuver (sidebar p 20) to Default+4 for the Italian School (including Italian Fencing from Martial Arts for any campaign set before ca. 1640), Default+6 for La Verdadera Destreza, and Default+8 for the Transitional School and French Smallsword (Including French Fencing and Italian Fencing from Martial Arts after ca. 1640). Permit any other style and weapon to have Parry as a Hard maneuver with a maximum Default+2 level.

You can also remove the limit that the Parry Maneuver only works if the character is Lightly encumbered. Instead, apply twice the character's Encumbrance level as a penalty to the Maneuver (or apply the Encumbrance level as a penalty to Parry). If using this rule, consider permitting "lower-limit Parry" styles to take the Maneuver up to Default+8 but only permit the "extra" levels to offset Encumbrance penalties. This has not caused imbalance in my games.

## Esquive on Horse

European and American cavalymen were taught to maneuver their bodies and their mounts in a way that was essentially a Mounted Esquive. This is a Hard Maneuver, defaulting to Riding-6 and unable to be improved beyond the lower of Riding and Broadsword or Lance. If the roll succeeds, it grants a defensive bonuses similar to the Esquive except that an outright Retreat is not aided. Failing the Maneuver roll requires that the defender roll vs. Riding or fall off the horse. The worse of mount's or rider's Encumbrance subtracts from the roll.

## Short and Tall

A combatant's height can determine whether a weapon is effectively "longer" or "shorter." Every foot of difference in height roughly translates to a 6-inch difference in effective weapon "length" (see sidebar p. 22) due to greater arm length. Furthermore, a character suffers a bonus or penalty to his Step, Lunge, and Pass distance of 3/4 of difference between the character's height and "average" human height. This would be likely to make a difference in a fantasy campaign that pits Halfling corsairs (who would have a 1/2 yard lunge) against Ogre palace guards (who could lunge a yard and a half!).

## Stealing a March

It is possible to execute the Lunge and the Pass in such a way as the single maneuver covers the equivalent of two steps in the same amount of time as for a normal Lunge or Pass. In French a Lunge done in this manner is "en marchant" or "on the march." A Pass done in this manner is "doublet" (doubled). Both are hazardous, as they require a quick change of tempo and delicate footwork. The character rolls a quick contest of Lunge-2 or Pass-2 vs. the target's Body Language or weapon skill and covers distance equal to that of a Lunge or Pass plus that of a Step. The character must then roll vs. Lunge or Pass as normal to execute the attack. A character who successfully Steals a March is considered to have begun his attack in proper distance. Failure means that the character suffers the effect of having failed to "Close the Gap" (sidebar p. 23).

Stealing a March can also negate the effects of having a shorter weapon (or simply being shorter -- see "Short and Tall" above). The character must succeed in a quick contest between his Lunge or Pass skill and his enemy's Body Language or appropriate weapon skill.

## Distance is Life

In a real fight, standing within striking distance is tantamount to suicide. The Lunge and Pass maneuvers were developed so combatants could safely close distance in order to attack. That the force of the move added impetus to the damage is merely a welcome bonus. Characters who begin their turn within their enemy's weapon Reach suffer a -1 to active defense against an Attack and a -2 to active defense against a Counterattack or a Riposte.

Characters who begin their turn outside of their enemy's weapon Reach but within Lunge/Pass distance suffer no penalties and gain no bonuses.

Characters who begin their turn outside of their enemy's Lunge/Pass distance gain a +1 to all active defenses against that enemy's attack in melee that turn. This bonus is negated if the enemy attacks on a Lunge or Pass (instead of using a Step and Attack). Those who are two or more times this distance from their enemy gain a +2. This bonus is negated if their enemy attacks on a Lunge en marchant or Pass doublet (instead of using a Step and Lunge or Step and Pass).

## Using all the Options

Gamemasters who want to use all the optional rules might want to use the following Style alterations:

*The Old School:* Add Direct Mount, Fighting While Mounted, Mounted Esquive, Schwertwringeln, and Halbschwerd. Make Riding (Horse) a Primary skill. Permit Parry maneuver to Default+2 maximum for all weapons in style.

*The Italian School:* Add Direct Mount, Fighting While Mounted, and Mounted Esquive. Make Riding (Horse) an Optional skill. Replace Fencing (Rapier) with Broadsword (Rapier). Permit the character to replace the Broadsword skill with one point in the Broadsword Maneuver (defaulting from Rapier). Before 1630 require one point in the Parry Maneuver. Between 1630-1720 require two points in the Parry Maneuver and reduce the Esquive requirement to one point. After 1720 require two points in the Parry maneuver, reduce the Esquive requirement to one point, require two points in Riposte, and set the Parry maneuver maximum to Default +4.

*La Verdadera Destreza:* Replace Fencing (Rapier) with Broadsword (Rapier). Require two points in the Parry Maneuver and set maximum to Default +6.

*Transitional School:* Replace Fencing (Rapier) with the Broadsword (Rapier) skill. Permit the character to replace the Broadsword skill with one point in the Broadsword Maneuver (defaulting from Rapier). Take two points in the Parry maneuver for Broadsword (Rapier), one point for Broadsword. Set maximum for Parry Maneuver to Default +8.

*French Smallsword:* Require three points in the Parry maneuver and set maximum to Default +7.

*French Fencing:* Require three points in the Parry maneuver and set maximum to Default +7.

*Italian Fencing:* Replace references to Fencing (Rapier) and Fencing with Broadsword (Rapier), adjust Parry and Riposte as for The Italian School.

## New Styles

### *Pugilism*

While Professional Boxing in Martial Arts suffices for an ordinary "country pugilist," in the Swashbuckling era, "boxing" could refer to a far broader science than we know today.

*Primary Skills:* Boxing, Brawling, Judo (Wrestling after 1650)

*Secondary Skills:* Broadsword or Shortsword, Buckler

*Optional Skills:* Carousing, Streetwise, Savoir-Faire (lowlife)

*Maneuvers:* Aggressive Parry, Choke Hold, Counterattack (Boxing), Feint (Boxing), Head in Chancery, Head Lock, Jab, Pass (Boxing), Riposte (Boxing), Roundhouse Punch, Slip (Boxing), Sweeping Kick.

*Cinematic Skills:* Power Blow

*Cinematic Maneuvers:* Enhanced Dodge

*Notes:* Sweeping Kick defaults to Brawling-3 and does not have a Karate prerequisite. Cinematic Pugilists could have the Iron Hand Advantage.

Modern boxing gloves do not quite work as described in Martial Arts. The design of the boxing glove is mostly to protect the hands of the attacker, not the health of the target. Corbett didn't wear gloves because he was afraid of hurting Sullivan. He wore gloves because he was afraid of hurting his own hands *on* Sullivan.

This risk can be modeled by ruling that any punch that lands on something hard (like a human head or rib cage) and inflicts more than the attacker's HT/3 (plus Toughness) damage requires that the

attacker roll vs. HT minus (damage inflicted) plus (Boxing/10 or Karate/10) or break his hand. Wearing modern gloves eliminates this penalty but reduces inflicted damage by 1 point. If the attacker has the Iron Hand Advantage, he can ignore this rule.

### ***Head in Chancery (Hard)***

***Defaults to Judo-5, Wrestling-5 or Head Lock-1***

***Prerequisite: Judo or Wrestling***

***Cannot exceed prerequisite skill level***

This type of headlock was popular among English and American pugilists. A boxer would grapple his opponent's head so that the body was behind him and then proceed to pummel him senseless. This attack is resolved as is a Head Lock. However, the hold does not permit the attacker to choke or throw his opponent. Instead, once grappled, the victim is at -1 on any attempt to Break Free. The victim cannot kick his opponent and any punches made by the victim are Wild Swings. The grappler has a +2 to punch the head, any part of the face, and the neck (which multiplies damage by 1.5) in addition to other bonuses granted by a successful grapple. (Note that "head in chancery" actually could refer to both this maneuver and a more conventional Head Lock or Choke Hold.)

## **Classical French Fencing**

This form of fencing developed from the French school of smallsword in the early-middle 19th century and came to dominate northern Europe. By this time, gentlemen no longer wore swords on a daily basis. Likewise, while Maitres d'Armes were hired by European military academies, the swordsmanship of the battlefield had fled far from the techniques of the salle (a fact pointed out by military men like Sir Richard Burton and Col. Alfred Hutton). This was the era when suicidal moves like the Fleche (from "fleche humaine" -- human arrow) first became popular. Dueling was the primary use of the sword, and self-defense fell by the wayside. Some exhibitions were still staged with older weapons, but this was rare.

The "epee" of this style is essentially indistinguishable from the "rapier" in the ***GURPS Basic Set***; the "sabre" of this style is equivalent to that book's "sabre." The "foil" is similar to the weapon in ***GURPS Basic***, but it was always constructed blunt and very flexible. Thus it does crushing damage, reduced by 2 points from the ***Basic*** listing.

"Foil" is not mentioned by name in the skills or maneuvers because during this era the foil was still seen as a training version of the Epee. Thus, Fencing Sport (Epee) and Fencing Art (Epee) both are practiced using the foil. The Sabre was considered a highly specialized weapon, and men could spend their lives fencing without touching one. Thus, one can have a version of this style with all sabre-related skills and Maneuvers deleted. Anyone who wished to be deemed a Maitre d'Armes would, of course, study the sabre. Proficiency in Fencing Sport (Epee) or Art (Epee) was usually a prerequisite to study the sabre.

***Primary Skills:*** Fencing Sport (Epee) or Fencing Art (Epee), Fencing Sport (Sabre) or Fencing Art (Sabre)

***Secondary Skills:*** Body Language, Fencing (Epee), Fencing (Sabre)

***Optional Skills:*** Bucker Art, Broadsword Art, Broadsword (taught in the military academies), Tournament Law (varies for each salle and country), Lore of the Salle (M/E, see Modern Fencing)

***Maneuvers:*** Corps-a-Corps (Epee), Corps-a-Corps (Sabre), Counterattack (Epee) or Stop Hit (Epee), Counterattack (Sabre) [2 points] or Stop Hit (Sabre) [2 points], Feint (Epee) [2 points], Feint (Sabre), Fleche, Floor Lunge (Epee), Floor Lunge (Sabre), Hit Location (Epee), Lunge [thrust] (Epee), Lunge [thrust] (Sabre), Lunge [cut] (Sabre), Riposte (Epee) [2 points], Riposte (Sabre)

***Cinematic Skills:*** Jumping, Acrobatics

***Cinematic Maneuvers:*** Enhanced Parry (Epee), Enhanced Parry (Sabre), Sentiment du Fer

***Note:*** If using the Enhanced Parry Maneuver, maximum is Default+4 (Default+8 if using the rules

in this article).

## Patton's Sabre Combat

*"The surest parry is a disabled opponent."*

-- 2d Lieutenant George S. Patton, 1914

Patton was a skilled fencer and was an officer in the 10th Cavalry. At the beginning of the 20th century it was decided that the US Army needed to update its cavalry swordsmanship, and this task was assigned to the gifted young subaltern. When he began his manual, the First World War had yet to commence, and the limitations of cavalry on the new battlefield had yet to be demonstrated.

Patton's style was an attempt to preserve the usefulness of cavalry in an environment that already had seen rapid-firing guns like the Gatling, accurate artillery, and repeating small-arms. His premise was that cavalry's place on the battlefield was a pure shock weapon. "In a charge, the trooper is merely a projectile, the saber its point." In his theory, cavalry was to thunder across the field, taking targets by speed and force of impact.

Because of this, he concluded that only pure offense would be of any benefit. Individual casualties would simply have to be accepted so long as unit cohesion and tactical breakthrough could be achieved. Thus, he developed a style that was as pure a form of offense applied to the sword as has ever been imagined. The only defense taught was an attack with opposition, to be used at full gallop. No footwork was taught beyond the adoption of a riding stance and a the use of a lunge.

Patton's style was never implemented, and any cavalry attempting to use it on the Western Front would likely have done nothing more than repeat the Charge of the Light Brigade. It is an epitaph for the Western sword.

*Primary Skills:* Lance (Patton Sabre), Riding (Horse)

*Secondary Skills:* Savoir-Faire (Military)

*Optional Skills:* none

*Maneuvers:* Counterattack (Patton Sabre) [2 points], Direct Mount, Lunge [thrust] (Patton Sabre), Mounted Esquive, Mounted Combat.

*Note:* This style cannot use the Enhanced Parry maneuver.

***Lance (Patton Sabre), P/A***

***Defaults to DX 5 or Broadsword 6***

The Patton sabre is a slender, extremely stiff sword, to be used as if it were a lance. It is essentially a light broadsword (see p. 21). Since the weapon cannot be couched, it does not use the full ST of the mount to do damage. Instead, the rider's ST is used and every die of damage that the mount's ST would have done is a +1 bonus, but the wielder must make a Lance (Patton Sabre) roll to avoid losing the weapon on a successful hit. Lance (Patton Sabre) has a parry of 2/3 skill but only if the character is Counterattacking (the penalty to parry while Counterattacking still applies). At any other time, this skill gives no parry.

## Modern Fencing

In 1914, representatives met in France to form an International Federation of Fencing (FIE). This body was invented to regularize the sport of fencing among different countries. In 1914, the First World War broke out. After the war had ended, dueling (which had already been disappearing) simply fell out of the minds of those gentlemen who survived. Killing someone over slights didn't seem to matter that much anymore, and the defense of personal "honor" with deadly force mostly became the property of teenage boys, organized crime, and street gangs, where it has remained to the present day.

Divorced from lethal combat, fencing evolved into a pure sport, with no need to consider the conditions of a real fight. Therefore, the penalty for using Fencing Sport in real combat would be -5 instead of the normal -3. Unfortunately, some practitioners have failed to realize the difference between a pure sport and a combat style and can suffer from the following delusions: "Modern fencing is as good as or better than historical sword skills in real combat." and/or "Modern fencing alone is sufficient basis for understanding all (Western) swordsmanship." In most modern campaigns, these would just be quirks. In a campaign that requires a character to actually defend himself with swords on a regular basis, these would be worth -10 or -15 points. Some modern fencers have Intolerance of all other styles of fencing and swordplay, and/or the Odious Personal Habit of insisting that only modern fencing is "true" fencing or even that only modern fencing can be called "fencing" at all (despite the fact that "fencing" has been used in English for the scientific use of swords for at least 450 years). Due to the rarity of other forms of fencing worldwide, these would be quirks in a modern-day campaign unless the character spends a good deal of time around people who practice other forms of fencing. It should be noted that some modern practitioners of "historical" fencing styles have corresponding mental disadvantages.

The weapons of modern fencing are extremely light and flexible. Modern fencing weapons are not available sharp and must be custom-sharpened. No reputable fencing weapon dealer or armorer would sharpen a modern fencing weapon. Start with the *GURPS Basic* fencing weapons and treat them as if they are "ultra-light" (sidebar, p. 21), with a minimum weight of 1 pound. Reduce thrust damage by 1 point due to blade flexibility. Reduce thrust damage by another point if not sharpened (and damage is crushing). If these weapons are made in the modern day, charge the standard price instead of increasing price for lightness. Primary skills: Any one of Fencing (Epee) Sport, Fencing (Foil) Sport, Fencing (Sabre) Sport -- yes, they are that different from each other in the modern venue.

*Secondary Skills:* Body Language, Jumping

*Optional Skills:* Fast Talk, the other two Primary Skills, Tournament Law (FIE Rules), Lore of the Salle (M/E)

*Maneuvers:* Close Combat (For weapons known), Corps a Corps, Feint (For weapons known), Fleche, Floor Lunge, Flunge (Sabre), Lunge, Riposte (For weapons known), Stop Hit (For weapons known).

*Cinematic Skills:* None

*Cinematic Maneuvers:* Enhanced Dodge, Enhanced Parry (For weapons known)

*Notes:* If using the Enhanced Parry Maneuver, maximum is Default+4 (Default+8 if using the rules in this article).

Cinematic Maneuvers are based on claims made by some more enthusiastic modern fencers.

A character who studies this style cannot take Fleche until he has put at least 1 point in Epee. The Flunge was invented after the Fleche was prohibited in Sabre. Treat it like a Fleche with the penalties of a Floor Lunge.

Lore of the Salle is a body of "history" transmitted among some sectors of the fencing community. It is essentially Victorian misunderstanding of the history of European combat. Many modern fencers know Lore of the Salle and know that it is not true.

## ***Revised Styles (originally in Pyramid #18)***

### **School of Saviolo**

In 1595, Vincenzo Saviolo, an Italian teaching in England, published "Of the Use of the Rapier and Dagger." He soon followed with "Of Honor and Honorable Quarrels." The first was a style manual, the second a rulebook for dueling. Saviolo concentrated on the rapier and did not teach broadsword, polearm, or unarmed combat. His students were gentlemen who could afford his price (a vicar's annual wages per month!). Saviolo disliked parrying and gave defensive footwork great importance. He emphasized the thrust very heavily.



*Primary Skills:* Body Language, Fencing (Rapier)

*Secondary Skills:* Main-Gauche, Cloak, Fencing Art (Rapier)

*Optional Skills:* Buckler, Tournament Law (Fencing), Savoir-Faire

*Maneuvers:* Attack and Fly Out, Counterattack (Rapier) [2 points], Disarming (Rapier), Esquive (Rapier) [2 points], Feint (Rapier), Hit Location (Rapier), Off-Hand Weapon Training (Main-Gauche), Off-Hand Weapon Training (Rapier), Lunge [thrust] (Rapier), Riposte (Rapier), Stromazone (Rapier), Bind (Rapier), Retain Weapon (Rapier)

*Cinematic Skills:* Pressure Points, Jumping

*Cinematic Maneuvers:* Dual-Weapon Attack (Rapier), Dual-Weapon Attack (Main-Gauche), Enhanced Dodge, Flying Lunge

*Notes:* Cuts with the rapier are at -2 skill in this style. If using Enhanced Parry maneuver, maximum is Default+2 (Default+4 if using the rules in this article).

## **School of DiGrassi**

DiGrassi (contrary to what I had previously reported in *Pyramid* #18) taught a style that the London Maistres of Defense likely would have approved of. The original Italian version of his manual makes it plain that his school is closer to the Old School than I had previously thought. Since he was in the mainstream of Italy, the Italian School adequately represents his teaching, but add Shield as a Primary skill and Polearm as a Secondary.

## **London School**

The London School essentially is the Old School up until the middle 17th century, when it was supplanted by Transitional Rapier and Broadsword taught side by side.

## **Revived Historical Combat**

Beginning in the late 20th century, interest in archaic European swordsmanship revived. Modern-day practice runs the gamut from antics that would get someone killed in a real fight to hard labor at attempting to reconstruct actual historical combat methods. Likewise, attitudes go from "This isn't real." to "We're more real than they were back then." As is to be expected, attitudes and practices don't necessarily match up. The finest practical scholar can focus on every tiny detail his re-creations fall short of the reality, and a duffer with foam toys can believe that he's perfectly recreated the skills of Sir William Marshall. Most practice and attitude fall somewhere in the middle.

Adding this to a modern-day campaign can be done by taking any historical style(s) and replacing Combat skills with appropriate Combat Art and/or Combat Sport skills. You will have to decide how "real" various groups are, and assign appropriate penalties from -3 to -8. As a rule of thumb, -3 would go to a group that uses full-weight steel swords, historically accurate protective equipment, full-strength blows, at least some of the unarmed techniques associated with the style, and spends a great deal of time checking and re-checking their work against available manuscripts and period books. At least a few of them would be proficient in appropriate archaic languages. The -8 would go to a group that uses only padded weapons and very modern protective equipment, restricts target area greatly, prohibits unarmed techniques, and relies entirely upon making it up as one goes along (or making it up based on some modern sport).

A character can learn non-Sport/Art versions of these combat skills. He can use Character Point awards after real combat experience. Tournaments and ring time (agonistic encounters) don't count. Only potentially lethal and fully hostile (antagonistic) combat counts. He can study under somebody who also knows the non-Sport/Art version. There are a few people currently around who could know Classical French Fencing as presented above (real duels were fought as late as the 1930s), but they're not exactly spring chickens. This does not pass through generations of trainers. Some modern practitioners have incorporated living martial arts into their training, especially for

wrestling/grappling and unarmed striking. Finally, remember that non-Sport/Art versions of combat skills can default from the Sport/Art versions for learning purposes.

## Selected Reading

- Alvarez, R. 1999. *The Patton Manual*. An analysis of the 1914 manual for sabre exercise. <http://www.classicalfencing.com/articles/Patton.shtml>, part of In Ferro Veritas (<http://www.classicalfencing.com/>)
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