

Pressure

Pressure – an attack on the opponent's blade by a sudden exertion of pressure when engaged foible to foible.

The force of the pressure and other parts of the preparation (e.g., advancing) can get a variety of responses, which can be capitalised on. Pressure is more subtle than a beat.

Pressure elicits how firm or weak the opponent's grip is and, if applied suddenly, shows their instinctive reaction. For those with a weak grip it can be used to push the blade aside, exposing target. Pressure is generally best applied in preparation for a disengage, as mostly pressure is met with resistance.

Pressure might work better with opposite hand fencers as blades more closely engaged.

Engagement, change of engagement, froissement and coulé could all be termed pressures. Accordingly, there is a grey area between pressure and takings of the blade, depending on how they are executed.

Froissement

Froissement: a sharp, powerful, grazing action on the opponent's blade diagonally forwards and downwards from foible to forte. The action upsets the opponent's grip.

Technique

- Start first from an engagement (sixte or quarte).
- If sixte, slightly supinate hand as blade severely grazes down the opponent's blade.
- If quarte, slightly pronate the hand as it grazes down the blade.
- Emphasise sharpness and power in the action.

Variants – from different engagements or near-engagements.

- ❖ Practice 1: From engagement in sixte or quarte on extension.
- ❖ Practice 2: From near-engagement in sixte or quarte on lunge.
- ❖ Practice 3: Start with slow step (so opponents will step back slowly), light engagement as back foot completes the step then into an immediate fast lunge with froissement.

Now try each practice with movement, reducing time window for student to exercise the stroke by being at correct distance/blade presented only briefly. Applying increased pressure until fight mode. Correct faults as they occur.

Coulé

Coulé: a graze down the opponent's blade while strengthening the arm.

Technique (same handed fencers)

- Opponent presents with a low hand and point slightly higher than hand.
 - Take a counter-sixte action while extending the arm.
 - Engage the opponent's foible with the mid-section of blade, when arm is extended two-thirds.
 - Maintaining contact, the opponent's point is deflected away from target as the attacking arm is extended.
 - Hit with angulation, while hand moves directly forward with point low relative to hand.
 - Key is forward movement of point to target.
- ❖ Practice 1: With a step forward, engage the opponent's presented blade.

As before, now practice with movement.

Grazing Pressure with Disengage

Suppose earlier in bout you observed that the opponent's reaction to pressure is to push against it, especially when the middle and forte is engaged. So as one grazes down the blade and meets the counter-pressure then change the engagement and complete the hit in opposition.

- ❖ Practice 1: From engagement in sixte (or quarte) on extension in opposition when resistance is felt, change engagement and hit in opposition.
- ❖ Practice 2: From near-engagement in sixte (or quarte) on lunge in opposition when resistance is felt, change engagement and hit in opposition.
- ❖ Practice 3: Start with slow step (so opponents will step back slowly), light engagement as back foot completes the step then into an immediate fast lunge with opposition and change of engagement on resistance to hit in opposition.

As before, try each practice with movement, reducing time window for student to exercise the stroke by being at correct distance/blade presented only briefly. Applying increased pressure until fight mode. Correct faults as they occur.