

Foundation for Circle-Sword Technique

By: Sir Abu Nur Rustam Ibn Abdallah (Lucian J. Rizzo)

SirRustam@yahoo.com

Lets start by defining CircleSword. This is my name for an aproach to swordplay that interprets all sword movements in terms of circles. By seeing all sword blows as circles the swordsperson gains many advantages, including; all varied blows leading from one directly into another by way of continued circlular movement, efficient conservation of generated force, and reduction in joint-strain while fighting.

It was this last item which originaly lead me to a circle-based aproach to swordplay. Being a slow learner, it took me 10 years to achieve knighthood in the Society for Creative Anachronism. A year or so short of this achievement, I had sufficiently traumatized my sword-elbow that I could hardly hold a sword, let alone wield one. It was at this point that I determined to never again throw a swordblow that did not have a smooth and painless recovery.

As I worked on the slow recovery of my elbow joint, I also worked on reevaluating my standard repetoï of sword blows, now looking for ways to safely complete their motions if they should fail to stop on their intended target. It soon became clear to me that joint strain is the result of fighting against the momentum of the weapon. This occurs when trying to stop its motion before it has spent its momentum and also any time that one tries to force it to leave its natural path of travel once full momentum has been achieved. In short, this meant having circular follow-throughs for every blow.

Knighthood, being just one milemarker on the road of a swordsman, I've continued to search for ways to improve my fighting. Further experimentation with circular sword patterns has lead to many refinements, both in possible technique and in power-generation. Now that I am thinking in terms of circles, I find myself understanding the techniques of many successful fighters in terms of circles.

After years of using these techniques in my regular fighting, I was reading about the I.33 manuscript (a 14th century german fight manual) and found that it's fundamental guards and cuts formed a solid foundation for my current method of fighting. Also, many of my more advanced cirle techniques are fundamentally similar to methods outlined in later period broadsword and backsword manuals.

My use of period "Western Martial Arts" techniques has been arived at by working backwards from my experience as a successful stick-fighter in the SCA. While I am pleased to find that my methods have some historical authenticity, I place higher value in their ability to improve my performance in hard competition.

As an AnTirian knight, I have need to dish out hard, armor-cleaving blows and to be able to effectively deal with the same. My interpretations of period materials is guided by this objective.

My early training in SCA fighting allowed me to develop good speed and power as well as learning those lessons that can only be learned by open competition with swordsmen better than myself. The “learning by competing” model that I grew up with in the SCA did have a peculiar result however. Not only did I not learn good habits as to what to do with a sword blow that missed or cut through its target, but I also really only learned the more advanced (and thereby most commonly effective) techniques.

What I have found useful in the period manuals is a foundation in the simplest cuts. Rather than the highly refined and effective high-guard snap shot, it is the simple diagonal cleaving shot for example. In practice, I have found that these simple foundation techniques are extremely useful, especially at those awkward and opportunity-rich moments that can occur at the ends of long engagements or following a more sophisticated feint. Furthermore, their well-rounded simplicity allows for easily adapting to new equipment like the use of a buckler rather than a standard sized shield. Good foundations offer versatility.

Introductory ideas:

- **Its Been a While :**

Its been quite a while since I've taught this class, and a lot of new material has been added. To ensure that we don't miss anything important, I will be doing a lot of direct reading from my notes, then supplementing it with demonstrations and having you walk-through the techniques until it is apparent that you understand each underlying concept enough to take it home and practice it.

- **'Many different styles' disclaimer:**

Almost every fighter has an intellectual understanding of what they do that is different from that of every other fighter. In spite of this, their actual physical movements are often very similar or identical. What this class presents is my intellectual interpretation of a common and often successful style of sword movement. It is not the only physical way to move, and it is certainly not the only way to think about these movements, but this particular approach has many inherent advantages.

- **What is Circle-Sword Style?**

Circle-Sword Style is an approach to sword work that interprets all movements of the sword in terms of circles. The goals of such a style are:

- Reduction of joint strain by having clear follow-through for every blow.
- Reduction of antagonistic muscle tension resulting in faster blows. (Your body slows you down when it has good reason to fear injury. Having faith in your follow-through options reduces antagonistic muscle tension and allows greater speed.)
- Developing an understanding of how blows travel and generate force that allows many *different* blows to be understood using the *same* foundations of movement.
- Developing an integrated understanding of blow dynamics thereby allowing one blow to smoothly transition into another and for bocks and blows to be fluidly combined.

One result of this method is that the sword can be used for both offense and defense, rendering the shield a valued luxury.

(Although the pictures are mostly with a buckler, I also use this system with a larger center-grip round-shield. It is suitable for all styles, although shields can restrict what movements are natural and comfortable. One should learn how to move the sword fully and freely before 'crimping its style' with a shield.)

- **Does this approach fit in with real medieval sword fighting? (answer is 'yes' & 'maybe')**

I've utilized the 14thC. I.33 manuscript as a foundation for the essential guards and simplest blows. Also, this 14thC. Manual clearly shows the sword being used for both offense and defense. A later period broadsword manual, George Silver's Paradoxes of Defense, speaks repeatedly of "compassing blows" which, in context seems to refer to a circular path for swordblows. These references and the simple fact that this system is effective give some reason to believe that it may have existed, at least in part, in medieval practice.

- **What *isn't* covered in this class?**

In combination, the Foundation class and the Advanced class attempt to present a very complete explanation of swordwork. It is, however, important to keep in mind that these

classes only cover **1/3** of the *physical* knowledge necessary. Other absolutely *essential* areas not included are:

- Footwork!!
- Shield work
- Physical conditioning

- **Putting it all in perspective:**

Finally, before starting on the physical techniques of this style, I want to present a couple of analogies to help keep this information in its proper perspective.

- Learning fighting is like learning to read and write
 - abc's ...smallest elements memorized
 - parts of words (phonetics) how these make-up words
 - slowly building a vocabulary of words
 - reading simple books (at first, still conscious of the previous steps)
 - advanced reading and writing (focus on content and meaning)
 - skillful writing and poetry, start bending and breaking some rules

Similarly to the above process, these physical aspects of how to handle the sword must be practiced and absorbed until they recede from the mind, leaving the fighter free to focus on the content and meaning of the fight...not on what they are physically doing with their own weapon.

- The difference between the Tool-Box and the Craftsman
 - How you move your sword is your tool. It is helpful to have lots of the very best tools, but ultimately it is how and when you use them that matters. Being a craftsman takes more than good tools, but they certainly do help.

I feel it is important to gain this perspective before beginning to train the physical techniques of swordsmanship. The actual goal of intense repetitive practice and study is to make it no longer necessary to even be aware of these underlying principles. In eastern martial arts this is often referred to as transcending technique.

Always keep in mind that the physical part of fighting is just the tool...it is the mental game that creates victory.

The Techniques:

We will begin by learning some essential definitions of stance, areas of attack, ready positions, and angles of attack. Most of these concepts are represented, in one form or another, in historical manuals on swordsmanship. Some of these distinctions persist even in today's modern schools of fencing.

Stances:

A couple of universal principles for stances:

- Knees inside of foot placement (allows faster change of direction)
- TOES ALWAYS POINT THE SAME DIRECTION AS THE KNEES!

It is important to keep the hips tucked under in all stances, as this helps protect the lower back from strain.

3 Essential Stances (and their variants, strengths, and weaknesses) :

Left-Lead

Right-Lead

Square

Square Stance



(at an angle, modified)



*(Keep in mind that the sword and shield position shown is only one of many possibilities)
(Notice how the knees and toes point slightly inward for more rotational power)*

Strengths:

- Balanced rotational power in both directions
- Excellent for lateral movement

Weaknesses:

- Slow forward and back (perpendicular) movement
- Exposes both legs to attack

Variations:

- Knees and toes in for rotational power
- Knees and toes out for stability (good for pikes)
- Can be oriented perpendicular (side horse stance)
- Can be oriented diagonal or to opponent
 - (Beatrix, slightly forward angled feet, shield foot forward)

Right Lead Stance (my primary stance)



(normal)



(normal)



(back toe up, knee in)



(narrow)



(wide)

(long and short not shown)

(Keep in mind that the sword and shield position shown is only one of many possibilities)

Strengths:

- More power for offside shots
- Longer sword reach
- Moves the left (near) leg out of range
- Excellent maneuverability with power
- Easier to block onside shots (with the sword)

Weaknesses:

- Less power for onside shots
- Takes a bit more energy to hold shield up
- Less sword freedom in close
- More awkward to block offside shots (with the sword)

Variations (of both the Right-Lead and Left-Lead stances):

- Narrow for movement
- Wider for rotational force and sidesteps
- Longer for stability, power, and smaller target (feet farther apart front to back)
- Shorter for speed, longer steps, and height (feet closer together front to back)
- Back knee in and down with heel up for speed and maneuverability (loses stability and ease)

Left Lead Stance



Strengths:

- More power for onside shots
- Good maneuverability
- More sword freedom in close
- Shield easy to hold
- Easier to block offside shots

Weaknesses:

- Less power for offside shots
- Less sword reach
- Left (near) leg in range
- More awkward to sword-block onside shots

Variations: Same as with right lead stance

- Allows a useful right spin

The 4 zones (or Lines) of attack (mirrored in many historical traditions):

High-Outside

High-Inside

Low-Outside

Low-Inside

The 4 (5) personal zones (for guards): (These correspond with the same zones but in reference to our own bodies and our guard positions.)

High-Right
High-Left
Low-Right
Low-Left
additionally:
High-Center

The 4 angles of attack (mirrored in many historical traditions):

- **Horizontal** (notably high and low)
- **Vertical**
- **Diagonal** (Right to Left)
- **Diagonal** (Left to Right)

...all in both directions of directions of travel

The angles of attack are an artificial, but useful, distinction. Each angle represents a generalization of all the angles near it and helps define the follow-through or return for all blows in that zone. All the angles can be flattened or made more vertical etc. as is appropriate to the circumstances.

We now know how to stand, where we might try and strike our opponent, at what angles we can move our sword, and have some terms with which to describe our swords placement in relation to our bodies.

We will now refine the last item by learning 5 basic Guard positions.

[skip this section in lecture]

In preparation for learning these, we will first define some terms by which we can describe both these basic guards, and later, any number of other guard positions.

My naming conventions for guards are as follows:

“High” or **“Low”** indicates at what elevation the guard is held. High is above the shoulder-line, and low is below the shoulder-line. Traditionally, blows would usually travel to the opposite side; moving horizontally or to its opposite elevation. (ie. High guards would either cut horizontally to the opposite side or to a Low guard on the opposite side. Conversely Low guards would either cut horizontally or to a High guard) It may sometimes even be necessary to call a guard **“Higher”**, if it is significant that it is further above the line of the shoulders or **“Lower”** if it is below the line of the hip.

Second- **“Right”**, **“Left”** or **“Center”** simply indicates which side of the body the guard is held at. This nomenclature assumes right-handedness.

Sometimes it is necessary to describe a guard as being **“Front”** or **“Rear”**. A Front guard has

sword-hand in front of the line of the shoulders. A Rear guard has the sword-hand at or behind the line of the shoulders.

A few guards are modified by the descriptor “**Turned**”. These are guards, in which the torso is turned so much that the sword is on the opposite side of the body. An example of a “Turned” guard would be: High-Right-Turned, the sword rested on or near the Right Shoulder, but the torso turned to the left so far as to put the sword on the left side of your center-line.

It is also sometimes useful to define a guard position as “**Hanging**”, “**Vertical**” or “**Rested**”. In Hanging guards, the tip of the sword is at the same elevation or lower than the sword-hand. In Vertical guards, the tip of the sword is higher than the sword-hand. Rested guards have the sword's blade laying its weight against the body, on the shoulder for example.

“**Forward**” guards are positions in which the tip of the sword points towards the front. Sometimes this is only a slight forward orientation. No “Rearward” description is used, since most guards have the sword tip pointing towards the rear and so it is assumed unless indicated by the “Forward” designation.

It is also possible to describe a guard as “**Extended**”, which means that the sword-tip, and often the sword-hand, is more forward towards the opponent than is usually seen in the described guard.

The medieval term “**LongPoint**” will be used to describe a sword position such as at the end of a thrust, with the tip extended towards the opponent. I.33 also notes that this is the position through which your sword passes during the striking portion of any cutting blow.

I will use the term “**Couched**” to describe a particular position in which the sword is held with the tip forward, and the hand against the right breast. The palm is up and the elbow is straight back, in-line with the blade. The quillions brace against the chest. It is a position like couching a lance.

By naming the guards using these terms, the guard's name largely describes how to hold the guard. The names are long, but fully descriptive. (when accompanied with personal examples, or pictures, the names will often be shortened to only include the essential descriptors.

Although somewhat different positions can end up being described with the exact same nomenclature, these variants will tend to be essentially interchangeable in regard to their use. If necessary further description in parentheses will follow the guard's name.

[pick up here again in the lecture]

5 Basic Guards From the I.33 Manuscript:

These are 5 of the 7 guards illustrated at the beginning of the I.33 manuscript.

(It is essential to note that the *exact* placement of the guards is not important. As your understanding of circle-theory increases, the guard positions becomes less and less significant.)

High-Right (I.33 is Rested, but can be Vertical or Hanging as well)



High-Left (I.33 is Rested, but can be Vertical or Hanging as well)



Low-Left(I.33 at armpit, can be at hip. Can be slightly Vertical or Hanging)



Low-Right (hand extended to the rear, can be somewhat Vertical)



High-Center (I.33 as slight Vertical. Can be Hanging)



Cutting from these 5 Guards...and Putting it in Perspective

Although a full understanding of circle theory will allow cuts to be made in any direction from any guard (actually from almost any position), it is useful to first understand the simplest and most intuitive cuts from these 5 positions. By training these first, as individual cuts, we gain two things:

- First, the ability to make effective single cuts through a target, ending in a safe position without sticking our own sword in our leg, shoulder, etc.
- Second, we learn how, and where, to naturally stop the movement of the sword so that it can be redirected to a new angle of attack without strain.

Once we have gained the benefits of understanding sword blows in this fashion, we will expand our understanding with full circle theory which, while seeming to break these rules, actually will simply add a great many additional options to them. Once fully understood, circle-theory is a simpler concept than these “basic” cuts. We will drill these basic cuts first, so as to gain the two benefits of ; *Single Cuts*, and *Natural Stopping-Points* before they are lost in the bigger world of circle-theory.

Notice that we are not adding any body dynamics to add force to these sword cuts yet. This is easier to grasp and learn once we begin full circle theory. After studying circle theory, the various elements for adding power to these Basic Cuts should become instinctive.

One last Item before we begin swinging sticks:

Explain why we are using the practice sticks:

- No wrist restraint
- Not too “hand-heavy”
- Clear sense of the flat and edge of the blade
- Lighter so that it doesn’t weigh down at slower speeds.
(all these factors become more important once we start dealing with fully circular sword cuts)

Now for the Basic Cuts

Horizontals:

High-Right *cuts* to High Left
High-Left *cuts* to High-Right

Low-Right *cuts* to Low-Left
Low-Left *cuts* to Low-Right

Diagonals:

High-Right *cuts* to Low-Left
Low-Left *cuts* to High-Right

High-Left *cuts* to Low-Right
Low-Right *cuts* to High-Left (nice as a wrap)

Near Verticals: (downward cuts only...as the upward cuts are awkward in the beginning)

High Center *cuts* to Low-Right
High-Center *cuts* to Low-Left

True Vertical:

High-Center *cuts* to the ground.(bend knees)

Two more Diagonals worthy of note:

High-Right *cuts down from left to right* - tip moves across to the left then cuts down from high-left to low-right all the way around to end in High-Right again. This is a full circle action beginning and ending in the High-Right position.

High-Left *cuts down from right to left* - tip moves across to the Right then cuts down from high-right to low-left all the way around to end in High-left again. This is a full circle action beginning and ending in the High-Left position.

These last two Basic cuts are our first taste of blows that move in a full circle.

Moving on to Full Circle-Theory

At this point we could continue to drill more and more obscure combinations of these positions and cuts.

Instead, we will begin to develop full Circle-Theory. This will allow us to intuitively grasp many of the more obscure cuts, as well as transitioning from one Guard to another. It will also help us add power to all variety of cuts. One of the great strengths of Circle theory is that a great many subtle and varied moves can be understood on a physical level, without having to learn them all as *separate* moves. Circle-Theory ties all the moves together into a pattern and allows one to associate the proper power-generating body movements with the proper parts of the pattern without giving it detailed thought. After we finish with Circle-Theory you will benefit from back-tracking and studying the previous material while:

- Applying Circle-Theory's power-generating principles.
- Exploring how the ward positions can provide a natural stopping point in the flow of a Circle-Theory pattern...which can then be easily lifted to a new position and begun again from that new position.

I will leave this continued study largely to the private study of the student.

CIRCLE-THEORY

The Basic-Cuts have been taught as circular shots that trace part of a circle stemming largely from the shoulder. We will return to those ideas later, in the Advanced class, but must first understand full circle shots and the establishment of a flat plane of movement.

To do this we will return to the Basic Horizontal cuts.

Sword Blows: (horizontal)

Onside shot (with a stick)

- Start in a lifted High-Right Guard
- Passes over the head
- Follow-through return (don't lift elbow)
- Returns to the High-Right Guard

[EVALUATE]

Offside shot (with a stick)

- Start in a slightly lifted High-Left Guard
- Follow-through return
- Returns to the High-Left Guard

[EVALUATE]

How to Hold the Sword:

- a shifting, flexible grip to allow smooth movement of the sword as circles are refined next.

Refining the onside and offside shots and adding power:

- Make it a full circle *//explain//*
- The flat plane
 - Demonstrate using visual aid of a shield
 - The weakness of making “cones”

Weight on a string - “Whirly-Gig” (Key concept!) //explain//demonstrate//practice//

- Swing weight horizontally. Right to left.
[EVALUATE]
- Swing weight horizontally. Left to right.
[EVALUATE]

Refinements to the Whirly-Gig concept.

- Leaning away from the weight
- Pulling against the pull of the weight with the hand
- Small, well-timed motion, makes power difference
- Torso rotation (small!)
- Foot pressure to create body rotation (opposite foot from the direction of travel in front)
- Make it “zoom” at the front

Practice with the Whirly-Gig using the above refinements.

- Swing weight horizontally with refinements. Right to left.
[EVALUATE]
- Swing weight horizontally with refinements. Left to right.
[EVALUATE]

Differences between a sword and a weight on a sting...

- **Disadvantage:** only partially flexible wrist joint
 - Must learn to adjust wrist and arm to “get out of the way” of the swing
- **Advantage:** Can stop and/or redirect the motion when necessary
//discussion//demonstration//

Apply Whirly-Gig principles to swinging a stick //practice//

- Alternate-foot-pressure practice [just as a standing practice...no sword swinging
//explain//demonstrate//practice//

- Body rotation leads and supports the action *//explain//demonstrate//practice*
- Pressing down with opposite foot for rotation *//explain//demonstrate//practice//*
- Triggering with the hand for power *//explain//demonstrate//practice//*

POWER IS DERIVED BY INVOLVING AS MUCH OF THE BODY AS POSSIBLE IN THE SWORD BLOW WITH PRIORITY GIVEN TO THE BIGGEST MUSCLES AND MASSES.

BLOW POWER IS THE RESULT OF SPEED AND MASS. WELL DEVELOPED TECHNIQUE ALLOWS FASTER DEVELOPMENT OF SPEED AND THE WEIGHT-ON-STRING METHOD ALLOWS A SWORD WITH MORE OF ITS MASS OUT ON THE STRIKING END TO BE USED WELL.

EVEN A HEAVY SWORD, WITH ALL THE WEIGHT IN THE HAND, WILL NOT HIT HARD! [GIVE ANALOGY OF A HORSEMAN'S MACE.]

POWER IS REDUCED WHEN THE FLAT PLANE OF THE SWORD IS ALTERED (Do this only as necessary)

- Relax, smooth, get the “whoosh” *//explain//demonstrate//practice//*
- The return creates the onside wrap shot *//explain//demonstrate//practice//*

**[review on-side & off-side shots with all refinements]
[EVALUATE] [full understanding before moving on]**

[15 minute break]

[question/answer period]

Wrapping up Circles for now:

At this point we have covered both the foundations of sword-blows and the fundamental core of circle-theory. We are now going to step back into foundations and work on thrusting. Please keep in mind that, in the advanced class, we will continue to develop circle theory covering the following items:

- Throwing flat-planed circular shots at a variety of angles.
- Using figure 8 patterns to tie full circular blows into fluid combos.
- Adding yet more power to our blows based on upwards or downwards movement.
- Understanding the options and opportunities that arise when we contact our opponent or their shield with our sword.
- Refining our understanding of circles to include circles based on the different joints of the body and the properties of and transitions between these circles.
- Learn the crucial differences between 1st blows (from a still position) and blows that follow from a 1st blow.
- Discuss the fundamental principles of defense.
- Learn to locate and implement blocks within our circular patterns, allowing blows to turn into bocks and blocks to turn into blows.

Thrusting:

As we re-visit sword-work foundations, we need to discuss an approach to thrusting. We know that swords were clearly used for thrusting as early as the 14th Century, as this technique features prominently in the I.33 manual. In truth, the points on swords, and references in older stories, would indicate that thrusting has been a part of swordsmanship since very early on.

Perhaps even more so with thrusting than with cutting blows, it is important to have a stable and rehearsed “guard” position from which to launch the attack. Similar to cutting, these are not positions to be “posed” in, but rather they are known positions through which the swordsman moves his or her sword on the way to launching a thrust. Having these rehearsed positions increases accuracy in thrusting and allows one to practice the transition from a cutting blow to a thrust.

Many of the techniques illustrated in the I.33 manual include a thrust. Several “ready to thrust positions are illustrated, and several are implied.

We will cover these and a few that I've added for completeness. The added ones are drawn from my own experience and are mostly found in other later-period manuals as well.

Before we start thrusting, it should be noted that the sword arm should never lock fully straight at the end of a thrust. Always thrust to a slightly bent position, stopping under your own power... do *not* rely on hitting your target to stop your thrust. This is done to protect the elbow. Unlike cutting, a thrusting action will not have so much momentum and leverage against your joints as to necessitate follow-throughs and circular paths.

Right Couched:

This position is straight out of the I.33 manual and is given the honor of being illustrated among the “guards” at the very beginning of the manual. This is sensible, since it is the only one of the thrusting

positions which could be “posed” in without putting yourself at too much hazard.



“**Right Couched**” position: near the armpit on the right side.

The Right Couched position stabilizes the sword against the body in a manner similar to couching a lance. It also retreats the point far enough that your shield can provide cover for the tip...keeping your opponent from deflecting it to the side.

Notice how you can easily draw into this position from several of the guards, notably:

High-Right

Low-Right

High-Left

Left Couched:

This position is more implied than shown in the I.33 Manual. It is a position on the left side, with the fingers up. I call this “**Left Couched**” due to its similar hand position and relation to the body....notably it isn't stabilized as well against the body as its right-sided cousin.



“**Left Couched**” position: near the left armpit

Notice how this position offers a thrust to the opening between sword and shield on your opponent. This thrusting angle is referred to as the “preferred” thrust” in the I.33 manual.

Typically one would draw down into this thrusting position from a High-Left guard, though it also could be moved to from “iron chicken” or from “half-shield” defense (covered in the buckler class).

Left Hip:

Lowering the hand to the left hip gives a similar but lower position I would call this “**Left Hip**”. Notably, this position is under the cover of your shield.



“**Left Hip**” position: near the left hip

While seemingly awkward, there is one very useful transition to this thrusting position which is directly referenced in I.33. This is from Low-Right to the Left Hip. This swinging motion allows your sword, under cover of your shield, to swing across and thrust from the left side of your shield. It works best with a left-foot lead stance. Amazingly its transition even works with quite large shields.

Roman:

Although the last two thrusting positions are not referenced in I.33 I think they are both fairly commonly found elsewhere and are clearly useful.

The first of these I would call the “**Roman**” position. This position places the hand next to the right hip or thigh with the fingers in toward your body.



“**Roman**” position: near the right hip or thigh

This thrusting position is easily transitioned to from any of the 5 basic guards;

- High-Right
- High-Left
- Low-Left
- Low-Right
- High-Center

[All of these thrusting positions should be stabilized against the body if necessary, although **Right Couched** is most superior in this respect.]

Scorpion:

This is my final thrusting position. It also is not directly referenced in I.33 but is similar to thrusting positions found in many later manuals.

Although this thrust can also be made from a position more to your right, I find that accuracy, with a heavy sword, is better when it comes from directly over your head with the fingers turned upward.



“**Scorpion**” position: directly over the head, fingers facing up

Although this thrusting position can be drawn to from any of the guards, it is most elegant and effective when one swings up to it from the Low-Right guard. Actually this transition works best when one is swinging your sword back *into* the Low-Right guard and it is allowed to simply continue up and over into the thrust. This conceals much of the transition and allows it to arise directly out of a cut that would otherwise have ended in the Low-Right guard.



Moving to the Scorpion from the Right-Rear guard.

[Notice that this Scorpion thrust can be converted into a high-guard fanning cut either during its execution or after its completion.]

The Significance of Low Right Guard for thrusting:

It is worth noting that the Low-Right guard is an ideal guard from which to transition to many of the thrusts;

- Swinging on back through Low Right into the Scorpion

- **Swinging up to Roman**
- **Swinging up to Right Couched**
- **Swinging up to Left Hip from Low Right Guard (specifically mentioned in I.33)**

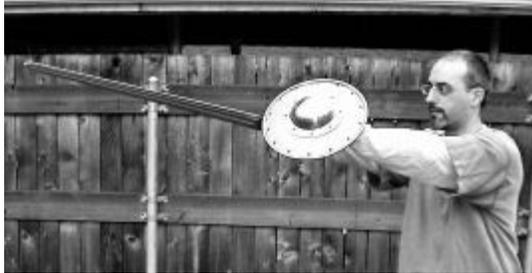
Thoughts on use:

Of all the thrusting ready positions, I'd only recommend the Right Couched position as a "presented threat". Its being stabilized against the body, and not being too far forward, make it more suitable than the others. The other thrusting positions should only be moved through on the way to the thrust or as a feint.

"Long Point"

This is a guard position from I:33 that I have held off on showing until the end. Some of the subtleties of this position will be dealt with in the Sword and Buckler class, but the basics are appropriate to note at this point.

"Long Point" is the position you end up in at the end of a thrust, or at the end of an attack that stops on (or in) your opponent. This significant point is explicitly noted in I.33 and the student is advised to give extra attention to its study due to that simple fact.



"Long Point" Position: Sword tip extended (shield protecting the hand)

For our purposes, it is adequate to note that we can draw our sword back from Long Point into **any** of the **thrusting positions** or into **any** of the **guards**. Additionally we can launch a **full-circle** blow into **any** trajectory from this position (much more on this in the Advanced class).

Things to Explore Using Your Thrusts:

Below is a list of things to explore and practice regarding thrusting:

- Move from any of the basic guard positions into any of the thrusting positions.
- Shift from any thrusting position to any basic guard position.
- Shift from any thrusting position to any other thrusting position.
- Transition through an ending guard position, from any cut into any thrusting position.
- Draw back from a cut or thrust, ending in Long Point, into any thrusting position.
- Draw back from Long Point into any guard position.
- After thrusting, throw a circular blow from Long Point, without withdrawing the sword.

A Last Note on Thrusting Accuracy:

It is often difficult to develop accuracy when thrusting with a sword. Using rehearsed thrusting positions will help with this by allowing the body to become familiar with how a thrust travels from a comfortable and known position. These positions and transitions are also designed to help

control and direct the mass of the sword to make it easier to bring the tip to bear.

Another difficulty in thrusting accurately with a sword arises from a mental misconception. When we think to thrust at something, it is natural to think like we are poking it with our index finger. When grasping a heavy sword, this is *not* an analogous action. Since the sword projects from our hand at an angle, it is more like thrusting with the tip of the thumb! Not so much like the thumb is extended straight out like a “Fonzie salute”, but instead, it is like the hand is in a fist and the pad of the thumb closes the hole at the top of the fist, its pad laying along the side of the curled 1st finger. It is from this position that we are thrusting with the tip of the thumb.

While we have a lifetime of experience poking at things with the tip of our index finger, most of us have little experience poking with the tip of our thumb. This kind of poking requires a very different set of motions regarding your arm and elbow. Get Started now and begin developing a natural feel for how to reach out and touch things with the tip of your thumb. This will improve your intuitive accuracy with thrusting with a sword.

Wrapping It Up:

Thank you for attending the Foundation for Circle-Sword Technique. I hope that you will have gained from this class:

- A good understanding of 3 stances; Square, Right-Lead, and Left-Lead
- A knowledge of 6 Guard positions and how to cut from them and move between them.
- A basic understanding of how a sword-blow can use a circular path and thereby; prevent joint pain and improve blow power.
- An analogous movement to the circular blow (the whirlygig) that can be used for refining power and motion in circular sword blows.
- 5 positions from which to thrust
- How to move from guards to thrusts and how to transition between cuts and thrusts.

Class notes are available and include pictures of the Guards and the Thrusting positions.

I hope to see as many of you as possible in the Advanced class. This Foundation class is a Pre-Requisite for that class, so there is room for each of you in that class if you should choose to attend (don't sweat registration if you missed that). Remember that it is in the Advanced class that we will refine and expand on the circular sword blow, adding both more power and versatility...even tying blocks in with our circular blow patterns. Remember to practice until you can stop thinking about this stuff.

Thanks again.