

1.0 Grappling (abrazare) Techniques

Introduction

The student is introduced to grappling or wrestling techniques (*abrazare*) as is called in Fiore dei Liberi's manuscript. The training begins with these wrestling techniques because it forms the basis on which other skills are layered upon, such as dagger and longsword techniques. The student is introduced to the techniques described in Liberi's "Flos Duellatorum" written in 1409/1410. It is critical that the student comprehend that the techniques learned in this part and the later dagger part, are extremely dangerous techniques! The student must remain cognizant that his/her partner is exactly that, a training partner, and not someone to compete with during the training exercises. In Liberi's manuscript, there are very few instances (four instances we believe) in which he refers to the partner as an "opponent". The student will view his/her training partner in the light of "scholler" (*scholare* – Italian, someone that has more experience than he/she) or "players" (*zugadore* – Italian, a partner in training) or "companion" (*compagno* – Italian, another reference to a partner in a non-aggressive orientation).

Complete medieval combat training does not only involve developing skill with the sword. Other skills are necessary in order to develop high degree of swordsmanship skills. In battle conditions, one must be comfortable and able to continue combat, hand-to-hand/grappling should one loose the sword, or if the opponent closes in on the student. Following this section, the student is provided with basic skills in the area of close-quarter combat with dagger techniques that leverage what was learned in this section.

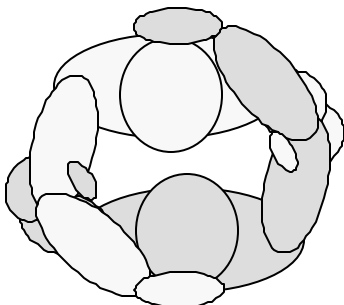
The student at the end of this training part will have developed a good understanding and some skill in the area of guards (positions in preparation to deploy defensive or offensive maneuvers) and begin the development of timing, distance, judgment and position. Advanced grappling and throw techniques as documented by the other masters will be explored in later levels of training. The skills developed in this level of development comprise the minimum technical requirements for the acquisition of the rank of scholler.

1.1 General Grappling Fundamentals

We begin this training with the four (4) fundamental grappling holds. These form the basis on which more sophisticated knife and longsword disarming techniques will be introduced in later skill levels training. These are forms to familiarize students with fundamentals of fighting and are taught foremost as combat techniques. A short description of each hold follows. The illustrations depict the holds from above in order to provide a visual clarification of the holds described.

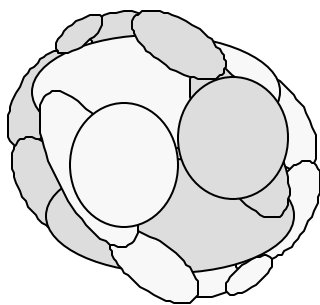
Another concept is the notion of the opponent's "inside" and "outside". His/her "inside" is the area of the body to the left of the weapon wielding arm (assuming right handedness) and his/her "outside" is the area of the body to the right of the weapon arm.

1.1.1 Neck & Elbow Hold (L & R)



- position the feet approximately shoulder width apart, and face your opponent at a distance apart that will allow you to place your hand on the back of your opponent's neck without stretching
- place your right hand on the back of your opponent's neck (right hold)
- place your left hand on the right elbow of your opponent
- your opponent implements the same hold on you
- switch hand positions, so that the hold is now reversed (left hold)

1.1.2 Diagonal Hold (L & R)



- position the feet approximately shoulder width apart, and face your opponent at a about 1/2 arm's length distance apart
- take your right arm over your opponent's left shoulder and down the back diagonally towards the right waist
- take your left arm, around the upper part of the right waist and up and lock a grip with your right hand
- at the same time, move into your opponent, placing your head solidly against the base and left side of the opponent's neck applying some downward pressure with your forehead (this will prevent a "head butt" from your opponent during live situations)
- switch hand and head positions so that the hold is reversed (right hold)

1.1.3 Back Hold

- position the feet approximately shoulder width apart, and face your opponent
- lowering yourself with your legs, wrap your arms around your opponent's back, locking your hands in a grip
- your head will rest against the chest either with the left side of your face or the right (this position will allow you to invoke a hip-thrust throw or a gravity throw which will be described later)
- the figure is an extract from Talhoffer's manuscript, plate 195 or "tafel 195". It illustrates a hold similar to the back hold currently described. The caption associated with this illustration from the manuscript reads "*Wieder ein gleiches gegenseitiges fassen. - Nach dem gegenseitigen fassen sieht er den Unterarm, ergreift ihn am kopfe und schwingt ihn von sich.*" which translates to: "Again, the same mutual hold. -"



From the mutual hold, thus he draws beneath his arm and grasps him by the head and swings him away from himself."

1.1.4 Belt Hold



- position the feet approximately shoulder width apart, and face your opponent
- lowering yourself with your legs, reach forward and grasp the "belt-line" or the top of the pants/trousers with each of your hands (right and left sides)
- the figure on the left is an extract from Talhoffer's manuscript illustrating the belt hold attempt, however, the individual had gotten himself into a head lock position. The caption associated with this illustration from the manuscript reads: "*Im Durchgehen ist dieses der Bruch, dann wurgt er ihn am halse.*" which translates to: "In this pass-through, thus this one breaks and chokes him about the throat."
- with this type of hold, you would be in a good position to deliver a hip-thrust throw

The following section describes 3 increasingly advanced levels of drills to designed to develop the necessary grappling skills. The drills are not competition, and therefore, the student and partner must be managed by an instructor or coach to ensure that the pair don't get away from themselves.

1.1.5 Grappling Drills

Level #1

These training drills are to be conducted in pairs. This drill is designed to increase the student's comfort with grappling his/her opponent. In order for this to occur, the opponent must assume a non-resistant "living mannequin" role. In other words, the student delivering the holds, will have free range and unrestricted ability to deliver the above holds, in whatever sequence the student desires.

The student must transition between each of the holds described above, alternating between left and right holds if relevant.

This should be done for about five (5) minutes for each student.