

FENCING TIPS FOR TOURNAMENTS AND COMPETITIVE BOUTING

By Coach Mal-sun Marletto

Things to remember while warming up & waiting:

- Remember to finish the retreat first, then parry-riposte moving forward.
- If you start first with the offense, you must finish the attack without stopping or hesitation (it can be slow & gradual, but must be continuous).
- If you let your opponent start first with the offense, you must parry-riposte.
- If you think your opponent is going to do a compound attack (v. a direct attack), then you can try to counterattack and catch them "in preparation." If you're not so sure of your opponent's intentions, safer to retreat and parry-riposte.
- Try to watch your opponents' actions before you fence them. When they're fencing against another opponent, pretend you're fencing against them and think of things you may try against them. Pay attention to their feints, preparations, etc. Do they like to attack? Simple attacks or compound attacks? Do they like to defend? Do they have a "favorite" parry or attack? Do they counterattack? (If they like to counterattack, you must keep your attacks simple and direct--no compound attacks--alternatively you can make feints to get the counterattack so you can parry-riposte).
- It's ok to feel nervous/anxious at competitions. It's natural! Shake off the jitters by warming up, stretching & FENCE a few touches with another competitor or teammate before you start--don't be shy about asking someone to fence a few touches with you. While fencing those warm-up touches you want to focus on proper distance, timing, and start getting your brain in gear to think fencing. Don't worry if your opponent gets more touches than you (you're just warming up!!) Don't keep track of points, just fence a little, preferably until you start breaking a sweat. Don't overly exert yourself--save energy for the real thing.

Things to remember while you're bouting:

- Stay relaxed, but focused
- DON'T RUSH! Fence your game.
- Think ONE touch at a time
- Expectations of any sort (high or low) only cause undue stress.
- Only focus on fencing--be confident!
- Surprise your opponent and don't let your opponent surprise you!
- Don't underestimate or overestimate your opponent by their appearance!
- Remember you only need to lead by one touch to win the bout, so if you're in the lead let your opponent do the hard work and focus on defense--do not get impatient.
- If you get hit, shake it off and focus on your next touch. Pay more attention to distance, defense & DON'T EVER stop fencing until you hear the HALT.
- If you lose a bout 5-0, don't worry about it--DO NOT get angry or frustrated--just focus on your next bout. It happens! 5 touches can be very quick!
- Be happy with every touch you get and focus on your next one.
- Encourage yourself, don't put yourself down.
- Fence well, have fun!

Sample positive talk (not to be confused with over-confidence or cockiness):

- "I know I can do it: I beat so & so at the club and they're a better fencer than my opponent, so I know I can do it."
- Think of a hardship you went through and overcame. Anything that will make you feel more confident compared to your opponent.

