

Is Good Fencing Pretty? Or is it just effective?

Contributed by Administrator
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Do you strive to fence well, or to look good while fencing? What is your aspiration when you are playing a sport where you are trying to outscore your opponent but whose basic philosophical construct is "to hit without being hit"?

Following are some some comments by Enrico Di Ciolo

"Fencing well" does not mean "beautiful to see" but just "hitting" the opponent. To say that the important thing is to "fence well" doesn't mean anything. The concept of fencing well is abstract; the best fencer is the one who wins.

It's very different when you specify the kind of touches that an athlete makes. If a fencer does many types of actions it means that he knows the theory of fencing and applies it well. In the case of a fencer who wins only executing a few kinds of touches it means he is a great athlete, a good dueler. In the ancient times whoever killed his enemies won the war, today whoever touches his opponent wins the game. It's different if the fencer does "only" a few kinds of touches and doesn't achieve good results: we are in the presence of a cultural-motorial regression that has carried the fencer to the end of his sportive evolution.

Some fencers put the beauty of an action above the utility. They want every action, even in the turmoil of a hotly contested tournament bout to be beautiful and wail against those who "win ugly."

I look at athletes like Valentina Vezzali. She has superb defense and offense and she makes a habit of making her opponent miss.

Her fencing, though highly effective, is not what I would call "beautiful fencing". When I watch her, I don't marvel at the beauty of the actions but I very much respect the effectiveness (utility) of what she does.

When I would spend too much time practice my "forms" instead of drills and bouting, one of my former coaches would say to me:

"Do they give a medal to the fencer with the best lunge? "

umm..no

"Will they take away a touch if your hand is too wide?"

umm..no

On the other hand - the most effective fencing does look good, Vezzali aside. If you see the fencing of Montano, Sanzo, Bissdorf, or some others at the top of the world game, you will see great fencing. Once you are understanding the tactics and strategy involved, then the actions are not where the beauty lays, but in the flow of the bout and in the movement from one trap to another.

Those hung up on the "pretty lunge" tend to overlook the 10,000 foot view.

- Craig