

First Look: Kolobkov Pro Epee Blade

Contributed by James Faine
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The new Kolobkov Pro FIE blades from Leon Paul certainly have the look of a blade a World Champion would use, and well they should. Instead of simply taking an existing product and slapping a famous name from onto it, LP worked in partnership with the Lammet Forge and Pavel Kolobkov to develop a blade with the feel, balance and qualities that Kolobkov demands in his fencing blades.

At first glance, the K-Pro blade looks very much like a standard LP FIE blade with a pretty finish. They both have the deep V-shaped cross section and the rather short buildup to the shoulder at the forte. However, the K-Pro has a more pronounced widening towards the forte and balances much closer to the hand compared to other LP blades. Another aspect unique to the K-Pro blade is that the top surface of the foible and mid section is peened. This extra step in manufacturing is designed to increase the lifespan of the blade.

The feel and flex point of the K-Pro blade is an additional difference between this and other LP epees. The forte and mid section of these blades are very rigid and the flex comes almost entirely from the foible. This gives you a blade that always seems right on target with no point lag after hard actions. I found it to be a very accurate blade, never having to wait for the point to catch up to my actions.

I have been using the K-Pro blade hard for almost a month now. It took a couple of hours in practice for the blade to loosen up and for me to find the flex point. Once I had the blade dialed in, I found it an excellent blade for takes, fast beats and tight disengages. The blade I evaluated is less optimal for a fencer who relies on big flicks to reach target. The K-Pro will flex to put the point on target very well for pecks to the arm and hand, but the blade is much too rigid to ever do foil style flicks to the back or flank.

In deliberately abusing this blade, I have been surprised with its durability so far. I have given lessons with it as well as fenced in practice and several competitions. In practice I have done takes and beats with a bit more force than normal. In tournaments I took the opportunity to hold the blade harder on counters to fleches or lunges in bad distance trying to kink up the blade. I even wrapped the blade in a sweaty jacket after practice and left it in my bag for a couple of days.

Through it all, the blade has required nothing more than some slight hand straightening to keep the foible angle I prefer. The finish is still beautiful and rust/tarnish free and the blade itself has no kinks or serious dings. If you run your fingers up and down the blade, you would be hard pressed to guess I have used it as often and as hard as I have.

Overall, I am very pleased with this blade. The extra manufacturing steps and the meticulous quality control of Leon Paul show through in the example I have used. The blade exhibited none of the issues I have had and heard of with Lammet blades in the past, but did have the finish, lifespan and attention to detail I have come to expect from LP. The blade has a very settled, continental feel not unlike a stiff BF, but with less weight and (from my limited experience) most likely a more consistent lifespan. For those looking for an alternative to the BF/STM/Prieur blades I would strongly suggest giving these a look.

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Kolobkov Pro - Photos from Review

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