

Beat Attacks and Timing

Contributed by Beatrice Pickup
Wednesday, 26 November 2003

Beats. Timing of the beat during the attack.

When boutng in the fencing club, or even when executing drills, you will notice that fencers beat the blade in different ways at different times. Examining the different ways to beat the blade can help you come up with additional strategies for defeating your opponent's use of the beat and, more importantly, to set up your own actions more effectively.

Using the beat in the proper tempo.

In order to get the most out of your beat attack, you must know when to make the beat relative to your footwork depending on what type of attack you are making. There are really two times that you will be making the beat: with your back foot and with your front foot.

* Simple Beat Attack

The simple beat attack is like the fast ball in baseball. You make it clear that you are going straight for the target and you bet that you can get there before your opponent's parry.

In making the simple beat attack with advance-lunge, you will have to make the beat when your back foot hits the floor and you begin your lunge. This way there is the least amount of time between you clearing the blade with the beat and your opponent's ability to respond.

Try this exercise:

Pair off with a partner and get in your advance-lunge distance.

1. + Make 5 advance-lunge beat attacks making the beat when your front foot hits the floor on the advance.

+ Your partner attempts to parry as soon as you beat.

+ No disengages are allowed.

2. + Make 5 advance-lunge beat attacks making the beat when your back foot hits the floor at the end of the advance.

+ Your partner attempts to parry as soon as you beat.

+ No disengages are allowed.

You should have been more successful in exercise 2. This is because of the amount of reaction time that your partner has between the beat and the attack.

When you are going for a simple attack, make sure to practice making the beat with your back foot and accelerating into your lunge.

* Composed (compound) Beat Attack

The composed beat attack becomes your change-up. This attack is used either when your opponent always makes a parry immediately after you beat their blade or when you have established your simple beat attack.

For the composed beat attack, you are expecting to make a beat then an immediate disengage around your opponent's parry. Because of this, you need an extra half-step from the time of your beat to complete your attack successfully.

To execute the composed beat attack, start in advance-lunge distance as before, but make the beat with the start of your advance (at the same time your front foot hits the floor). When your opponent immediately parries, you can now execute the disengage and hit in proper distance.

Practice this exercise to get the feel for the composed beat attack.

Pair off with a partner and get in your advance-lunge distance.

1. + Make 5 advance-lunge beat attacks making the beat when your front foot hits the floor on the advance. (Make the beat to 4.)
+ Your partner attempts to parry as soon as you beat. (Parry 4. - lateral parries only.)
+ Immediately disengage after making your beat and lunge.

2. + Make 5 advance-lunge beat attacks making the beat when your back foot hits the floor on the advance. (Make the beat to 4.)
+ Your partner attempts to parry as soon as you beat. (Parry 4. - lateral parries only.)
+ Immediately disengage after making your beat and lunge.

In this set, you probably either hit off-target or missed some of your attacks using drill #2. This is because you did not have the proper distance/timing between making the beat and executing your lunge to make a proper composed attack.

Another use of the composed beat attack is to make a counter-riposte rather than a disengage hit. This is slightly more advanced, so you may need to take the first couple of repetitions slower and then speed up as you get more comfortable with the action.

Pair off with a partner and get in your advance-lunge distance.

1. + Make 5 advance-lunge beat attacks making the beat when your front foot hits the floor on the advance. (Make the beat to 4.)
+ Your partner attempts to return your beat as soon as you beat. (Beat 4. - lateral beats only.)
+ Immediately disengage after making your beat and lunge.

2. + Make 5 advance-lunge beat attacks making the beat when your front foot hits the floor on the advance. (Make the beat to 4.)
+ Your partner attempts to return your beat as soon as you beat. (Beat 4. - lateral beats only.)
+ Allow the parry to meet your blade.
+ When your back foot hits the floor, execute a second beat, then lunge to the target.

For those of you who have taken music classes, the tempo for the beats in exercise 2 should be "Quarter-Note, Eighth-Note, Eighth-Note." (Long-Short-Short).

For bouting:

Establishing your best simple attack is the key to progressing your game throughout the bout and controlling the actions. By establishing the simple beat-attack, you force your opponent to make a quick parry. This allows you to move to either a composed (disengage) attack or a counter-riposte for your next set of touches.