



XIITH INTERNATIONAL GATHERING OF
HISTORICAL EUROPEAN MARTIAL ARTS

The Rotella swordplay - Part 2

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General Overview and disclaimer

This booklet is meant to be used as a compendium to the workshop. Many of the concepts expressed herewithin will be meaningful only after having attended the class. We will be giving advanced tips on the use of the Rotella, as described by the Masters of the Italian school in the XVI century.

Please note that these concepts are the result of years of hard study, and they usually require some years of practise in order to be mastered.

Advanced Concepts

While in the first part of the workshop we mainly focused on giving a basic overview on the use of the Rotella, in this second part we'll try to highlight it's practical use in combat, and we'll also introduce some of the most peculiar and advanced techniques shown by the Masters.

Rather than focusing on the techniques, though, we'll try to extract some tips and tricks which can be actually used in free sparring right from the beginning. Techniques from the Masters will obviously be shown in the Workshop, so to give the right background to the concepts expressed in the following sections.

Have fun!

First tip: how to create an opening

As we can see analyzing the sources, it's really difficult to hit our prefixed target without using feints. Generally speaking, the best way to hit the target is to have our opponent do what we want him to do.

While on many other weapon combinations this can be done just starting with a feint, and then taking the decisive blow, the Rotella offers so much protection that a single feint is most of the times insufficient to take a successful action. However, analyzing the techniques from the Bolognese School it's obvious that the protection the Rotella gives can also be used to our advantage; that is, we can do more feints in the same action, provided that we use the Rotella to cover our openings while performing the feints.

This is obvious in many techniques from Anonymous Bolognese, Marozzo and Manciolino, and can be expressed as follows:

*Feint to one target so to bring the opponent's weapons there,
and hit to the opposite target.*

These particular actions can all be summarized as follows:

Creating an opening in the opponent's defenses

		Examples (simplified techniques from the sources)		
		<i>Anonymous Bolognese</i>	<i>Anonymous Bolognese</i>	<i>Antonio Manciolino</i>
1st Feint	Always made slightly out of measure.	Falso impuntato	Thrust to the chest (from op. right side)	Falso to the face
2nd Feint/ blow	Most of the times in measure. Can become a real blow if the opponent remains still or doesn't parry.	Mandritto to the advanced leg	Falso imputato	Roverso to the face
Actual blow	This is usually the blow that gets the target, if all goes according to our plans...	Right thrust to the abdomen	Left thrust under opponent's Rotella	Thrust from under the Rotella



Second tip: managing Measure

Measure management in the Rotella swordplay is a key factor in taking a good hit to the target. The distance from the opponent will be slightly lower than the distance used with other sword combined weapons because most of the blows have to be thrown without exposing the hand too much.

This basic principle has some really interesting consequences that the Masters smartly use in their techniques.

We can summarize them in a few points:

Actively Managing Measure	
	Examples (simplified techniques from various sources)
<i>Bring a blow slightly off measure, so to force the opponent to answer with a predictable response.</i>	Mandritto to the advanced leg, so to force the opponent to parry, and answer to your leg with a step. Promptly step back and hit him on an opening.
Bring a fast blow to the opponent so to force him to answer, or stay still.	Thrust directly towards the opponent with a small step, promptly step back, and wait for his reaction.
Continuously attack the opponent slightly off measure, so to avoid feints and force him to a direct blow.	Move around the opponent with upwards Falso followed by Mandritto or Roverso to the leg. As soon as he breaks the measure with a blow, step back and hit the hand, or bring a direct thrust.



Third tip: feints and Tempo Insieme

As we could see, feints are really common in the Rotella swordplay. This doesn't mean, however, that your opponent (or you...) will always be able to perform them in the right way. The Rotella must always be used actively to protect yourself while performing feints, and using a opponents small oversight to our advantage can suddenly end the fight.

When receiving attacks, always focus also on the opponent's Rotella. If it's creating an opening, being it also a small gap, then there's good chance we can execute a Tempo Insieme while the opponent is performing the feint (or even taking a real blow).

The basic concept of the Tempo Insieme is to hit the opponent while he is taking his blow, simultaneously parrying his attack with our Rotella.

In order to perform such an action, we need to focus on timing, and start our action as soon as we see the opponent overdoing a feint, moving away the Rotella from his body, or even overcharging a blow.

The best way to execute the action is to suddenly move forward your advanced foot, lower your hip really fast, use the Rotella to actively protect your head, and hit the opponent with a fast thrust under your rotella, or with a Mandritto to the advanced leg.

Active use of the Rotella

Although the Rotella is a mostly defensive weapon, we can see in the sources some techniques where the shield is used actively to hit the opponent.

This kind of action is more an exception than the rule, but can be used to our advantage when we have the chance.

The only way we will have to use the shield to actively hit the target is when breaking measure, and only when attacking from our left sides:

Active use of the Rotella

Get in control of the opponent's sword, break measure, put the Rotella under the opponent's armpit, profit...

When parrying a Roverso to the head, step forward, break measure, and hit the opponent's head with the Rotella from your left side

Bring a thrust so that your sword slightly overlaps the opponent's Rotella, step forward, hit the opponent's Rotella with yours, continue with the thrust

When being attacked in this way, suddenly step forward, hit the attacker's Rotella before he does, bring a thrust to the chest.

