Bolognese Sword and Buckler Workbook

Level 1

The purpose of this workbook is to introduce basic terminology and skills needed for the Bolognese Sword and Buckler. The focus will be on those guards necessary to begin work with Manciolo’s book.

Lesson 1 – Terminology

Parts of the Spada/Sword
- Filo Dritto – Straight Edge or True Edge
- Filo Falso – False Edge
- Forte – Strong
- Debole – Weak
- Punta – Point
- Quillion

Types of Swords
- Spada a Uno Mano – One-handed Sword
- Spada a Due Mani – Two-handed Sword
- Spada da Filo – Edged Sword
- Spada da Gioco – Game Sword

Secondaries
- Brochiero – Buckler: May be piccolo/small or larga/large
- Targa – Target: Square, wavy
- Rottela – Wheel: Captain America Shield, strapped to arm

Lesson 2 – The Primary Cuts

In addition to the Italian names for the cuts, we will be using the lettering system devised by Meyer.

Manciolo’s Classification

Mandritto or Dritto
The first cut is the straight cut or true cut. This is any cut originating from the right side, but the default is a diagonal cut starting at your opponent’s left ear towards his right knee. (Lines B thru D)

Riverso
The second cut is the reverse cut. This is the mirror of the Mandritto and describes any cut from the right. (Lines F thru H)

Fendente
The third cut is the vertical cut, Fendente. Its name means “to the teeth” or “tooth breaker”, a reference to how hard one can throw this blow. (Line A)

Some masters distinguish between a Dritto Fendente and a Riverso Fendente, especially when aiming for the shoulders/arms instead of the head.
**Falso**
The Falso is any cut performed with the false edge of the sword. Usually this refers to a rising cut. (Any line, but usually D thru F)

**Montante**
Beyond these five there are two which are not principal because they only occur in the play of sword and buckler. […] the other is called “montante”, because it is thrown from below upwards in the fashion of a falso which ascends to finish in guardia alta.

The Montante is an interesting cut. It begins with the false edge on the buckler and the point angled downward. This means the cut starts as a true edge cut. But as it rises, the hand will turn over and it will become a false edge cut. The distance between the starting point and the target will determine which edge will actually strike. (Lines E or F)

Without a buckler, the word Montante refers to any rising cut along the line of E.

**Modifiers**
To be more precise, one can use these modifiers.

**Squalimbro or Squalembrato**
A descending, diagonal cut. A Dritto Squalembrato is along the line of B, while a Riverso Squalembrato follows the line of H.

**Tondo**
A horizontal cut. A Dritto Tondo is along the line of C, while a Riverso Tondo follows the line of D.

**Ridoppio**
A rising, diagonal cut. A Dritto Ridoppio is along the line of D, while a Riverso Ridoppio follows the line of F.

**Sign Man**
It is traditional for fencing schools to have a sign man posted on the wall. This is used to act as a visual reminder of the cuts and what lines they occur on. Using the space below, label the cuts.
Thrusts

Stoccata

And if you will push the point into the enemy, it is known by all to be called “stoccata”, either with the right foot or with the left forward, either over or under hand.

Like the Mandritto and Riverso, Manciolino does not have separate names for the various ways to thrust. Rather, he simply says to throw a Stoccata at a specific target.

Other authors refer to the Stoccata specifically as a straight or rising thrust. Your palm may down or to the left.

Imbrocatta – Indirect Thrust

An Imbrocatta is a downward thrust where the hand starts upside down with the palm to the right.

Some authors say that you should rotate the hand downwards after the point lands, so that you end in the same position as if you used a Stoccata.

Punta Riversa – Reverse Point

A Punta Riversa is a thrust that comes from your left side. It is more or less horizontal and your palm will be up.

Circular Cuts

Molinello

Not otherwise than was described above in the two previously discussed assaults, finding yourself with every genteel manner at one end of the fencing hall, and wanting to assault your enemy, you will pass diagonally with your right foot toward your right side, executing a molinetto, that is, a circling turn of the sword outside the arm, and then similarly passing with the left foot you will do a riverso from low to high that goes over your arm.

Generally speaking, Manciolino’s Molinello is going to be a descending cut that wheels to the right side. The Molinello can terminate as a Mandritto, Fendente, or Riverso depending on where the circle is ended.

Tramazzone

Beyond these five there are two which are not principal because they only occur in the play of sword and buckler. The first is called “tramazzone”, which is done with the wrist of the hand that has the sword, with that winding from below upwards toward your left side in the manner of a fendente;

This is a type of Molinello that is specific to the sword and buckler. Based on the description above, it appears to be a falling molinello, thrown from the wrist, which wheels to the left with crossed wrists.
Lesson 3 – Guardia Alta – High Guard

The first guard will be called “alta”, because meeting in combat we must gracefully hold the sword over the body, and gripped with the arm elevated as much as it can be, in such a fashion that the sword comes to rest to the rear, and the arm with the buckler must extend well forward toward the enemy as much as it can, and the right foot must stretch out about four fingers ahead of the left, with the heel a little raised, and both knees being straight and not bent.

One can also do this guard in two other ways, namely either with the right foot making a large pace forward, or with the left, also with the same large pace, holding the sword and the buckler in the way as above, and always the sword is found gripped with the arm extended into the air, the feet being in the way that comfort requires; always it is called “guardia alta” because of the designation, not of the feet, but of the settlement that is taken by the sword.

The primary version is with a narrow stance (roughly 4 finger-widths apart), the alternate is with a wide stance. For the sake of argument, we’ll say there is an additional foot-length.

Below you can see a narrow and a wide Guardia Alta. These illustrations are from different editions of Marozzo’s Book.

Defending with the Buckler

Acquire suitable protective gear and another fencer. While you stand in Guardia Alta with just a buckler, the other fencer attempts to throw a cut in each of the eight lines. Parry these with the buckler. Try it with both the edge and flat and record which works better.

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Extra Credit

To defeat someone in Guardia Alta, step close while cutting a Mandritto against their hand or forearm. If they parry, immediately cut a Riverso against the same. If that is parried as well, turn the sword over so that the false edge touches (or nearly touches) the buckler and then immediately cut upwards with a Montante.
Cutting and Thrusting Experiments
Acquire a wooden post, or another fencer in suitable protective gear. While you stand in Guardia Alta, attempt to throw a cut in each of the eight lines. Record how each cut feels, whether it is easy or hard, fast or slow, and powerful or weak. Note that some cuts may not be possible.

For the center box, record how well you can turn the sword over and thrust downwards.

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Parrying Experiments
Acquire another fencer in suitable protective gear. While you stand in Guardia Alta, the other fencer attempts to throw a cut in each of the eight lines. Record the ones that are easy or hard to defend. If you can safely hit your opponent as you parry his attack, record that as well.

The other fencer may start in any position he chooses. If you cannot parry a cut, dodge it by stepping backwards or sideways.

For the center box, record how well you can parry thrusts from the left and the right.

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Lesson 4 – Guardia di Testa, The Head Guard

The second is called “guardia di testa” which is made with equal and even extension of both arms toward the enemy in this fashion: that when you will have extended your fists, they will be found between and at the height of the shoulders, differing only in this, that the sword hand must lie somewhat lower than that of the buckler. But coming to the feet, I say that they can be found in two ways, either with the right or with the left forward in large pace, and nonetheless it will be the same guard, for the aforesaid reason.

Note that the hands are shoulder high and the arms well extended. Whether the shield faces forward or to the left isn’t specified, nor is how close the hands are together.

The first illustration is Guardia di Testa without a buckler. The second illustration is Half-shield from the German manual known as MS I.33. Notice how the buckler and false edge of the sword are in contact in order to support one another. Experiment with Guardia di Testa the same way.

Extra Credit

The Guardia di Testa shares a weakness with half-shield. An attacker can aim for the flat of the sword such that his blade slides down and between the other fencer’s sword and buckler, creating an opening as it goes. Practice this attack without the other person moving, and allow him to attempt to counter it.
Cutting and Thrusting Experiments
Acquire a wooden post, or another fencer in suitable protective gear. While you stand in Guardia di Testa, attempt to throw a cut in each of the eight lines. Record how each cut feels, whether it is easy or hard, fast or slow, and powerful or weak. Note that some cuts may not be possible, while others may have separate over-the-buckler and under-the-buckler versions.

For the center box, record how well you can turn the sword over and thrust downwards.

Parrying Experiments
Acquire another fencer in suitable protective gear. While you stand in Guardia di Testa, the other fencer attempts to throw a cut in each of the eight lines. Record the ones that are easy or hard to defend. If you can safely hit your opponent as you parry his attack, record that as well.

The other fencer may start in any position he chooses. If you cannot parry a cut, dodge it by stepping backwards or sideways.

For the center box, record how well you can parry thrusts from the left and the right.
Lesson 5 – Guardia di Faccia, The Face Guard

The third is called “guardia di faccia” which agrees with the previous one in two things, and differs in only one; namely, that is that it agrees not only in that the disposition of the feet can be with the right foot as well as with the left facing, but also in the height of the arms. But in this alone is the difference, that the aforesaid [Guardia di Testa] was having the sword on the diagonal, and this one holds it straight with the point toward the enemy’s face, and the hand armed with the buckler above the hand appointed to the sword.

Again, we don’t have a clear image of what this guard is supposed to look like with a buckler. Here is Marozzo’s version without a buckler and a possible interpretation from MS I.33.

Note that the bucker may need to move back to the left side if you are attacked on the left.

Tramazzone Exercise
Keeping the wrists crossed and the buckler on the right, practice downward circular cuts on the left side.

Extra Credit
Having the sword extended so far forward makes it susceptible to constraints. Try using your sword or shield to gently move aside your opponent’s blade as you attack. Your goal is to keep it off line just enough to miss you, but not so much that they are encouraged to spin it around for a cut.
**Cutting and Thrusting Experiments**
For some cuts you may find it necessary to move the buckler back to the left. Either way, try to keep the buckler close to the hand so that it can protect it.

![Diagram of cutting and thrusting experiments]

**Parrying Experiments**
With your arm extended in this guard, your partner will most likely attempt to attack your hand and forearm. Correctly moving the buckler is essential.

![Diagram of parrying experiments]
Lesson 6 – Guardia di Sopra il Bracco, The Over-arm Guard

The fourth is called “guardia di sopra il braccio” because the hand that grips the sword comes to lie in the manner of a cross in the middle of the left arm, holding the point to the rear, and in consequence the buckler arm is very extended toward the enemy.

Regarding the feet, I say that in this first manner the right must be only so far forward of the left as not to touch it. One could furthermore do this same guard when the right foot makes the pace large, bending itself inward somewhat with the height of grace. And thus arranged in this guard, although the sword hand does not move from the place where it was above, that is, from the middle of the arm (because otherwise it would change the name for the reason said in the first guard) nonetheless the arms would come to elongate themselves somewhat, which previously were tucked in, so that the right shoulder comes to face opposite the enemy in the manner of delivering a blow to him wherever it seems best to you.

Variants: Narrow or wide stance, right foot forward either way.

In addition to our MS I.33 illustration, we see one from the German author Paulus Hector Mair. Note that the image on the left is actually “left shoulder”. Mair has his weapon over his arm, but his buckler should be extended further.

Exercise

Practice moving the buckler out of the way while throwing cuts from this guard.

Extra Credit

To break this guard, try stepping forward and placing your buckler on their arm and buckler so that their sword cannot move.
**Cutting and Thrusting Experiments**
For your Mandritto cuts, try ending your cuts on both above and below your buckler. As before, some cuts will not be possible from this guard.

Don’t forget to flip the sword over for the thrust.

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**Parrying Experiments**

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Lesson 7 – Guardia di Sotto il Braccio, The Under-arm Guard

The fifth is called “guardia di sotto il braccio”, because the sword hand must lie under the buckler arm, that is, holding the sword under the armpit, so that the point faces toward the rear, but the buckler arm will be well extended toward the enemy; but of the feet, I say that the right must adopt the manner described above here, that is, forward of the left, either a little or in large pace. But if you will hold it in large pace, it behooves you to arrange your right shoulder toward the enemy in the appointed fashion described in the fourth guard.

Variants: Narrow or wide stance, right foot forward either way.

We do not have an illustration from the Italians so instead we look at German examples. Note that the Manciolino again recommends that the buckler be well extended.

![Illustration 1]

![Illustration 2]

**Exercise**
Practice moving the buckler out of the way while throwing cuts from this guard.

**Exercise**
Practice the circular and false edge cuts from this guard.
**Cutting and Thrusting Experiments**

As before, some cuts will not be possible from this guard.

Don’t forget to flip the sword over for the thrust.

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Lesson 8 – Porta di Ferro Stretta, The Narrow Iron Gate

The sixth guard is called “porta di ferro stretta”. In which the body must be arranged diagonally in such fashion that the right shoulder (as is said above) faces the enemy, but both the arms must be stretched out to encounter the enemy, so that the sword arm is extended straight down in the defense of the right knee, and so that the sword fist be near and centered on the aforesaid knee. But that of the buckler must be extended and straight toward the enemy, neither higher nor lower than in guardia di testa. Regarding the feet, the right must be settled in large pace with the knee similarly opposite from the enemy, thereby defended by the guard, and somewhat bent, and the left on the diagonal, also with its knee somewhat bent. And this is therefore called “narrow iron door” through being the most secure among all the others, and exceedingly strong like iron, and that unlike the wide (of which will be treated immediately below), the sword draws nigh to the enemy, restraining itself equally in defense of the knee.

Marozzo’s illustration shows the buckler arm retracted, while Manciolion’s text has it extended.

Exercise

Try the Molinello and the Tramazzone from this guard, moving the buckler as necessary to protect the arm.
Cutting and Thrusting Experiments
As you cut or thrust, use the buckler to protect the arm.

Parrying Experiments
Lesson 9 – Porta di Ferro Larga, The Wide Iron Gate

The seventh guard is called “porta di ferro larga”, and this originates from the previously described, because neither the feet nor the body are moved from the appearance of the above. Only that the sword hand is moved from the knee and hangs with the point toward the ground going to the inside of the right knee, making the body more uncovered than does the preceding guard.

Here we see Mair with his buckler dropped to his hand instead of being extended as Manciolino recommends.
**Cutting and Thrusting Experiments**

As before, some cuts will not be possible from this guard.

Don’t forget to flip the sword over for the thrust.

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Lesson 10 – Cinghiara Porta di Ferro, Wild Boar Iron Gate

The eighth guard is called “cingiara porta di ferro”, in which the left foot is settled diagonally, bending the knee a little, but the right leg must remain straight. And as for the hands, that of the sword must rest with the fist in front of the left knee as you did in that of porta di ferro, whence also it derived a large part of its name, but the left will be extended in defense of the head, with the buckler forward as was said a little while ago; and therefore it is called “wild boar” after the animal that has such a name, which while it approaches attacking, arranges itself with its head and tusks diagonally in the aforesaid manner of striking.

Here we see Marozzo using a dagger instead of a buckler.
## Cutting and Thrusting Experiments

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Coda Longa e Alta – Long and High Tail Guard
The ninth guard is called “coda lunga alta”, with the left foot forward, the knee bent a little, and the foot must be straight toward the enemy in large pace, the right arm well extended toward the enemy with the sword well gripped diagonally, so that the point is aimed well at the enemy, the buckler arm well extended also toward the enemy’s face; and not only this guard but also the following have their origins from a guard called “coda lunga alta” in which the feet are arranged in the aforesaid fashion, but the arm is held with the sword extended straight back, which gave it its name through metaphor, as is said in the common proverb, that one must not meddle with great masters because they have the long tail, that is, they can harm you through their numerous followers; thus, such guard gives the same name to this ninth, and to the tenth. Because of being very apt for reaching and harming your companion, it therefore holds the name of “coda lunga alta”.

Right hand is outside of the knee.

Exercise
Try the Molinello and the Tramazzone from this guard, moving the buckler as necessary to protect the arm. Are they easier or harder than from Porta di Ferro.

Extra Credit
Normally the sword hand is forward, but as you can see the Mair also likes to pull it back so that the weak of the sword is resting on the buckler. An extra page is included so you can log your experiments with this as well.
**Cutting and Thrusting Experiments**

As before, some cuts will not be possible from this guard.  

Don’t forget to flip the sword over for the thrust.

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**Cutting and Thrusting Experiments**

As before, some cuts will not be possible from this guard.

Don’t forget to flip the sword over for the thrust.

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**Parrying Experiments**
Coda Longa e Stretta – Long and Narrow Tail Guard

The tenth guard is called “coda lunga stretta”, with the right foot forward in large pace, in a way nonetheless that the knee is a little bent somewhat diagonally, and both arms must lie as was said above, except that the sword arm reposes somewhat lower. And the aforesaid ten guards will be sufficient for our work.

Right hand is outside of the knee.
Cutting and Thrusting Experiments
As before, some cuts will not be possible from this guard.

Don't forget to flip the sword over for the thrust.

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Next Steps
Once people get close to the end of this book, we will take a poll on which workbook to assemble next. Current options are:

**Bolognese Sword Workbook**: This level 1 workbook will look at the basic guards and cuts for the sword alone. It will be based mostly on dall’Agocchie with the intent on moving on to his workbook.

**Manciolino Level 2 Workbook**: This workbook uses Manciolino’s text to find ways to safely attack someone in each of the guards.

**German Sword and Buckler Workbook**: This level 1 workbook will look at the basic guards and cuts with a German focus. The source material will be MS I.33 and Paulus Hector Mair.