

Schwert und Buckler

By Hugh T. Knight, Jr.

Introduction:

Sword and buckler was one of the most common forms of civilian self defense in the middle ages; even Chaucer's miller is said to be carrying it on the famous pilgrimage to Canterbury. A regular shield was too clumsy to carry around, and even a longsword (also widely used in unarmored combat) was a bit clumsy to carry day to day. The arming sword, however, was a good compromise between the dagger and the longsword, and the buckler added a great deal of protection for relatively little additional bulk.

The sword and buckler were also seen in war, however, their use was limited to unarmored or lightly-armored troops. The simple fact is that the one-

handed sword was of very little use against a man in full armor, and if you were wearing full armor yourself you had little need for a buckler's protection, so a fully-armored man-at-arms was much more likely to use a two-handed weapon of some sort. This is supported by the iconography which shows almost no instances of fully-armored troops using sword and buckler in combat.



Figure 1: I. 33 page 2r; note the buckler defending the sword hand

In looking at the paintings that have come down to us showing buckler combat a strange (strange to our modern preconceptions, at least) fact about the buckler becomes apparent: The buckler was used as much or more to protect the hand of the wielder than it was to block blows on its own.



Figure 2: From the Manessa Codex

The buckler seems to have been used less as a shield than as a kind of gauntlet for both hands; the buckler would be held away from the body to cover a larger zone of space, and then the user would strike a blow in such a way that his sword hand ended up being covered by the buckler at the terminus of the strike (see figure 1). Master Lignitzer (see below) tells us to set the pommel of our sword at our left thumb, so that we're mimicking the grip we'd use on a longsword. The buckler could also be used to pin our opponent's shield and/or weapon in place (as in figure 2)

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so as to allow an unhindered blow to an exposed target. It could also be used to strike on its own (as in Lignitzer's 6th play below).

There seem to have been several different "schools" of buckler use in the middle ages. The earliest extant *fechtbuch*, dating from the late thirteenth century, is called "I.33" or the "Tower Fechtbuch" (see figure 1) and deals entirely with sword and buckler combat. Others are working very hard to interpret this important source, but I believe it is almost too vague for a reasonable interpretation.

Another source that has come down to us is the buckler plays of Master Lignitzer which are bound into the larger von Danzig Fechtbuch (MS 1449); the same plays are also included in the Ringeck Fechtbuch. Lignitzer's method of teaching the form is interesting in that he doesn't teach a single technique at a time as do the others. Instead, he teaches a "play" of the buckler in which we see a series of attacks and counters as they might happen in a hypothetical bout. Lignitzer isn't suggesting that a real fight would actually follow these steps, rather he's showing them to give us a sense of what sorts of things we can do in any given situation. If we strike to the head and we're blocked then we thrust; if the thrust is blocked then wind; if the thrust from the wind is blocked then pin the enemy's shield and sword with your buckler and cut low to his leg, and so on.

The tactical concepts and even the techniques of Lignitzer's instruction for the buckler are almost precisely analogous to the longsword instructions of the Liechtenauer tradition. In fact, the first play of the buckler is almost exactly, stroke for stroke, like the first set of techniques from the *Zornhau* (the strike of wrath). I don't believe this to be a coincidence: Johannes Liechtenauer, the source for most extant *Fechtbücher*, lived *circa* the mid-to-late 14th century. His teachings are focused on the longsword and contain nothing at all about the sword and buckler (that we know of), and yet he states that his art has been around for many years in spite of the fact that the longsword (as opposed to the Sword of War) is a fairly late weapon. I believe Liechtenauer developed his art of the longsword from earlier sword and buckler techniques and that Lignitzer's techniques were based upon Liechtenauer's teachings taken back to the sword and buckler (as were Leküchner's later *messer* techniques).

The tactical concepts displayed in Lignitzer's plays of the buckler are those central to all German martial arts: Before and after; strong and weak; hard and soft; *Indes* (instantly or simultaneously); they're all here. Attack first and keep attacking to opposite sides of your opponent's body until you force him to make a mistake. If you don't attack first then don't just block, parry in such a way as to regain the initiative of the fight. Oppose strength with weakness and weakness with strength. If the weak of your sword is bound against the strong of your opponent's sword then wind up until the situation is reversed and you can thrust with opposition (meaning you stay in contact with

your opponent's blade as you attack so as to keep it under your control). Any one who's worked with Liechtenauer's longsword material will see these concepts clearly repeated here. One difference from the longsword material is that it was fairly common to attack the legs since the buckler could be used to negate the reach advantage that renders such a blow dangerous with the longsword.

Hans Talhoffer also includes sword and buckler techniques in at least two of his manuals, however his techniques seem quite different from Lignitzer's in that they tend to involve a lot of grappling actions or single-time attacks to the attacking limb rather than the binding and simultaneous attacks of the Liechtenauer tradition.

Talhoffer's sword and buckler techniques are presented more conventionally in that we're shown one technique at a time. He emphasizes controlling the enemy's weapon and striking him where he's exposed. It is interesting to note that in every case the attacker in Talhoffer's drawings is shown to be attacking with his sword held apart from his buckler rather than striking into the cover of his buckler as I described above. It is unclear whether this should be taken to mean that the idea of striking into cover was not universal (and, indeed, there are iconographical references that show the hands held apart in the literature), or if he's showing this as a technique used by "bad fencers" (since, after all, this fencer always loses).

What's particularly interesting is that Talhoffer shows five complete techniques in his manuals (plus assorted snippets that are difficult to interpret): Grapple the attacking arm and cut to the head; grapple the attacking arm and thrust to the body; block with the sword and push with the hand/buckler to the attacking elbow; a rising blow against an incoming *Oberhau*; and an *Oberhau* against the wrist of a thrust. With the exception of the last, you can find most of these techniques in both the 1467 *Fechtbuch* and *Alte Armatur und Ringkunst*, and even the last is suggested in one plate. But, more importantly, each of these techniques is *also* shown in Talhoffer's arming sword or *messer* material. Apparently, he's telling us that you the use the same techniques whether you have a buckler or not, you just have to learn to adapt to circumstance.

Please note that this document is not intended as a stand-alone source for sword and buckler play. I assume that the reader has a firm grasp of the basics of Liechtenauer's *Kunst des Fechten* (Art of Fencing) already; this paper is meant only as a guide to my interpretation of Lignitzer and Talhoffer's sword and buckler plays. A full introduction to the principles of *der Kunst des Fechten* would take much more space; if this is your first contact with German martial arts I recommend Christian Tobler's book listed in the bibliography.

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Guards

1.) Die Erste Hut (First Guard or Underarm Guard)



Figure 3: First Guard from *Alte Armatur und Ringkunst*

Imagine that you are standing quietly, minding your own business, with your buckler hanging from your belt and your sword scabbarded on your left hip when suddenly you see a dangerous situation. In response you grab your buckler in your left hand and move it forward to defend yourself and begin to draw your sword from its scabbard. This, in essence, is the first guard: Stand with your left foot forward and your buckler to the front. Hold your sword arm under your left arm with your sword pointed to the rear. This can also be done with the right leg forward.



Figure 4: Two views of *die Erste Hut*

2.) Vom Tag (From the Roof)



Figure 5: *vom Tag* from Talhoffer

This guard is quite simple. Stand with your left foot forward and your buckler to the front at about chest level. Hold your sword back behind your head with the hilt high and the point facing the ground. The name for this guard comes from the fact that it is used to launch powerful overhead blows that seem to come “from the roof”. By holding your buckler well out to your front you guard a large zone from attack in spite of the small size of the buckler.



Figure 6: Two views of *vom Tag*

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3.) Pflug (The Plow)



Figure 7: Pflug from Talhoffer's *Alte Armatur und Ringkunst*

Pflug is a thrusting stance named for the position assumed when pushing a plow. From *vom Tag*, simply lower your sword to your right hip with the point toward your opponent's face. Note that Talhoffer (fig. 7) shows this guard with the sword pointed more to the ground, but it's still the same concept. In keeping with the Liechtenauer tradition I teach this guard with the point aimed up at my opponent.



Figure 8: Two views of *Pflug*

4.) Vidipolge (Fiddlebow)



Figure 9: *Vidipolge* from *Alte Armatur und Ringkunst*

Vidipolge is so-named because of the way your sword crosses over your arm like the bow of a fiddle. There are a number of ways of using this guard, but, in general, you stand as before with your left foot forward. Hold your sword up near your head with the point toward your opponent's face. It is a very defensive guard in that your sword and buckler create a zone of protection against the most common sort of blow (an *Oberhau* to your left side), but it is also strongly offensive because you can launch a powerful cut from this guard.



Figure 10: Two views of *Vidipolge*

Part I: Lignitzer's Techniques

1.) Oberhau (overhand blow)

Start in *vom Tag*. Strike an *Oberhau* toward your opponent's head, cutting in such a way that you move your sword hand into a protected position behind your buckler with your pommel aligned with your left thumb. Follow your blow with a passing step with your right foot. Your opponent blocks with an *Oberhau* but is weak in the bind, so as soon as your blades crash together immediately thrust upward into his face. If he deflects your thrust, wind your sword up and to your left as if you were moving into left *Ochs* (from the longsword tradition), sliding your blade along your opponent's (*am Schwert* or "on the sword") to the weak of his sword; this will give you the leverage you need to move his blade aside enough to allow you to thrust down into his face. If he deflects your *Winden* to his left then snap your sword up and over his blade to strike him to the head with your long edge. You may wish to step forward diagonally with your left foot as you strike the blow to his head, but this will depend upon your position relative to your opponent. (Note the close resemblance to the first series of techniques from the *Zornhau* in Ringeck's longsword techniques.) Remember that your buckler stays in position to protect your sword hand at all times.



Figure 11: Greg (left) and Hugh (right) both stand in *vom Tag*



Figure 12: Hugh attacks with an *Oberhau* which Greg blocks



Figure 14: Greg deflects Hugh's thrust but keeps his point on line to threaten Hugh, so Hugh winds (*Winden*) the strong of his sword on the weak on Greg's sword to attack his face



Figure 13: Feeling (*Fühlen*) that Greg is soft in the bind, Hugh immediately (*Indes*) attacks with a thrust at Greg's face while remaining on his sword (*am Schwert*)



Figure 15: Greg deflects Hugh's *Winden*, moving his point offline as he does so

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Figure 16: Hugh snaps his blade over Greg's rather than resisting his block and attacks Greg's head while passing forward with his left foot

2.) Unterhau (Underhand Blow)

While all of the techniques in this series can be done from *vom Tag*, this technique could also be done from *Pflug*. You strike the *Unterhau*, following the blow with your right foot in a passing step, and your opponent counters with an *Oberhau* against your cut. As soon as the blades clash together you will wind your sword up to a left *Ochs* position with your hilt by the left side of your head and your buckler protecting your hand just as in the first play above. From there, thrust immediately to your opponent's face. If he parries your blow to his left, stay *am Schwert* (i.e., maintain contact with his blade) and wind your sword over to right *Ochs* and thrust again toward his face. If he sets aside your thrust with his buckler or sword, then swing your sword around and down to strike him in the left thigh. As you do so, leave your buckler high to both hide the motion of your sword and to pin your opponent's weapon.



Figure 17: Both start in *vom Tag*



Figure 18: Hugh passes forward with an *Unterhau* which Greg blocks



Figure 19: Feeling that Greg is strong in the bind, Hugh immediately winds up to his left to thrust at Greg's face



Figure 20: Greg pushes Hugh's thrust off to his left, stepping back as he does so, so Hugh winds to his right and thrusts at Greg's face again while remaining *am Schwert*; note that Hugh passes forward with his left foot as he does so



Figure 21: Greg pushes the second thrust aside, so Hugh completes the play by cutting into Greg's left leg while pinning Greg's sword with his buckler

3.) Wechselhau (Changing Blow)

In this technique you start with some blow—I presume an *Oberhau*, but the text doesn't give us enough information to be sure—and when it's blocked you push through the block and cut down into the low position we see in figure 24 which serves as a guard of provocation. You then slap upward with your false edge to defeat your opponent's new attack and continue from there to press him with attacks that move from one side to the other until he errs and your strike lands.



Figure 22: They begin in *vom Tag*



Figure 23: Hugh passes forward to cut an *Oberhau* at Greg, who blocks the attack, stepping back out of range as he does so*



Figure 26: Hugh parry's Greg's attack by lifting his sword to catch Greg's with his false edge as he passes forward to close



Figure 24: Hugh continues his cut through Greg's block



Figure 27: Hugh then snaps his true edge around to attack Greg's right side; Greg parries this blow to his right.



Figure 25: Seeing Hugh open, Greg cocks his sword for a backhanded *Oberhau*

*I indicate that Greg stepped back in fig. 23 because I don't know why, otherwise, Hugh would continue his cut down to *Wechselhau* rather than following the techniques in the first play above. My thought was that Hugh did this so as to draw Greg back in—hence the use of a guard of provocation.

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Figure 28: To defeat Greg's parry Hugh winds up to his right and thrusts at Greg's face



Figure 29: When Greg blocks Hugh's *Winden* Hugh snaps over Greg's sword to cut at his right leg, keeping his buckler on Greg's sword as he does so.

4.) Mittelhau (Middle Blow)

This technique is a perfect demonstration of Liechtenauer's tactical concept of moving from target to target with a continuous flurry of blows to force your opponent to make a mistake and to prevent him from regaining the *Vor* ("the Before", meaning to control the initiative of the fight by forcing your opponent to react to what you do).

Start by striking a *Mittelhau* to your opponent's midsection on his left side. When your opponent parries you will leave his sword and swing up and over to strike a flat horizontal blow or *Zwerchau* to the right side of his head with your long edge. If he parries this, whip your sword around to the other side of his head (taking advantage of the added impetus to the motion of your swing that is imparted from your opponent's parry), striking another *Zwerchau* to the left side of his head, again with the long or true edge. If he parries that, snap your sword up and over to strike a *Scheitelhau* to his forehead. The *Scheitelhau* is a blow done with a fully-extended arm to the top of your opponent's head; it is called the "parting strike" because the intent is to part your enemy's hair! If your opponent parries your *Scheitelhau* pull your sword back and down to your right hip, and immediately thrust into your opponent's groin, leaving your buckler high to pin your opponent's sword in place.



Figure 30: They both start in *vom Tag*



Figure 31: Hugh attacks with a *Mittelhau*, which Greg blocks

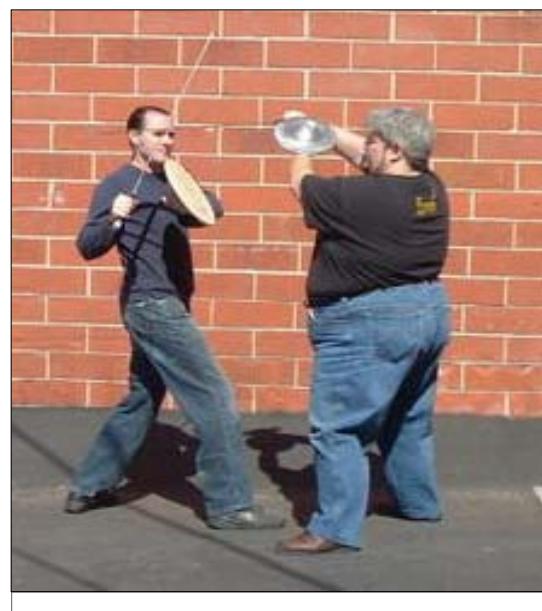


Figure 32: Hugh immediately continues with a *Zwerchau* to the right side of Greg's head using the long edge and Greg blocks that as well

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Figure 33: Hugh maintains the pressure with another *Zwerchau* to the left side of Greg's head, again with the long edge. Greg blocks this as well, totally on the defensive.



Figure 34: Hugh now executes a *Scheitelhau*.



Figure 35: Hugh finishes the play by pinning Greg's sword with his buckler and pulling back to thrust to Greg's groin.

5.) Sturzhau (Plunging Blow)

The *Sturzhau* is a blow that whips over the top of its target to strike downward with the false edge. Follow the blow with a passing step with your right foot. This attack is almost precisely the same as the *Shielhau* or “squinter” strike of the longsword tradition except for being done with one hand. If your opponent parries your *Sturzhau* you should keep your sword in place and attempt to thrust down between his sword and buckler and his body. If your opponent parries your thrust you will wind to left *Ochs* (just as in the first two techniques above) and thrust to his face. If he parries your *Winden*, pass back with your right foot and cut at the outside of your opponent’s right leg with your long edge.



Figure 36: They start in *vom Tag*

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Figure 37: Hugh passes forward and executes a *Sturzhau* to the top of Greg's head. Greg lifts his buckler and cuts into Hugh's sword to stop the attack with the *Kron*.



Figure 39: Greg lowers his hands and moves them to his left to stop the thrust, so Hugh winds up onto the weak of Greg's sword and thrusts at Greg's face which Greg also blocks.



Figure 38: Remaining in the bind, Hugh pushes his point down over Greg's defense to thrust at his body.



Figure 40: Hugh snaps his blade over Greg's to cut to his left leg to finish the play.

6.) Halbschwert (Half Sword)

Master Lignitzer doesn't specify the starting position for this technique (and it may well be he means us to start in the halfsword position), but you can assume the halfsword grip from almost any other guard by simply grabbing the middle of your sword blade with your left hand (while maintaining the grip on your buckler), and I like the idea of grabbing the blade as you move to block so as not to telegraph your intention. This grip is precisely analogous to the grip used in halfswording with the longsword with your thumbs both facing each other.

When the thrust or strike comes in, rotate your hands up and to your left so that the hilt of your sword is higher than the point, deflecting the attack. As soon as the motion of the attack has stopped, release your right hand from the hilt of your sword and grab your opponent's buckler at what would be 8:00 if his buckler were the face of a clock; your thumb should be facing the ground and your palm facing your opponent. Now sharply rotate your right hand in a clockwise motion as you yank his buckler to your right to tear it from his grasp.

Lignitzer doesn't tell us how to finish this technique, but clearly another step is called for. We have taken our opponent's buckler, it's true, but he's still left holding a dangerous weapon. I suggest two possible endings for this technique: In the first, you maintain your firm grip on your opponent's buckler with your right hand, and as soon as your opponent has lost his grip you swing the edge of his own buckler back into his head, stunning him enough for you to finish him off at your leisure. Alternatively, you can raise your left hand (still holding your sword) and stab downward with the point into your opponent's chest.

Lignitzer also fails to mention any footwork for this technique. I have practiced it both without a step and using a passing step forward with my right foot and have found that the technique works both ways. Perhaps Lignitzer is silent on this subject because the footwork is dependant upon the situation, i.e., your position relative to your opponent. Try it and decide what works best for you.

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Figure 41: They begin in *vom Tag*



Figure 42: Greg steps forward with an *Oberhau*. Hugh grabs the middle of his blade in his left hand as he passes forward to block the attack.



Figure 43: Hugh releases the hilt of his sword and grabs the edge of Greg's buckler with his right hand at approximately 8 o'clock



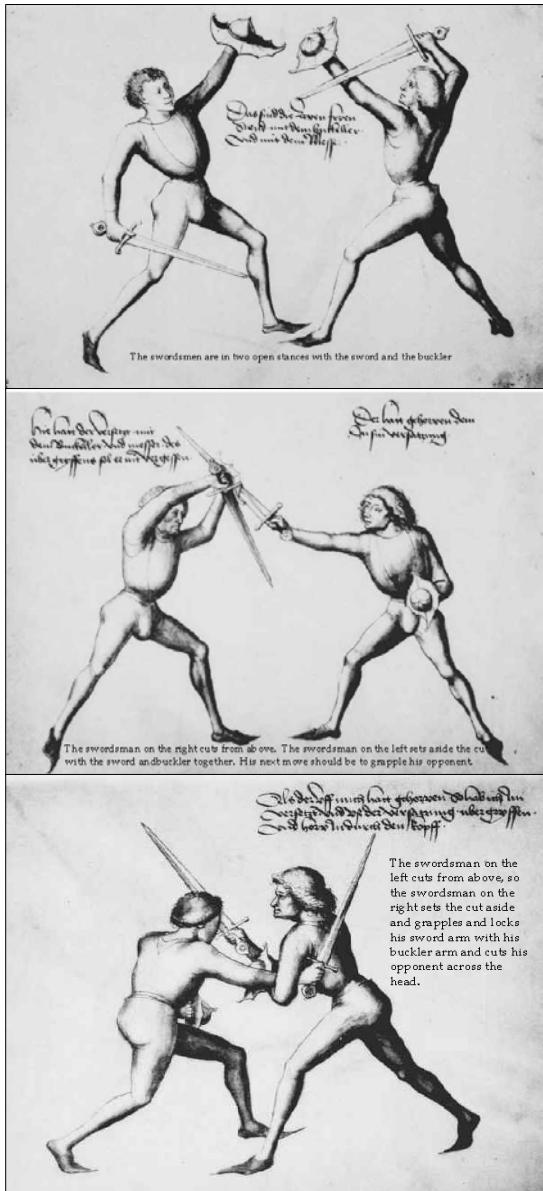
Figure 44: Hugh rotates Greg's buckler clockwise to tear it out of his hand. Note how Hugh keeps his sword on Greg's sword, using his cross to prevent Greg from sliding over Hugh's sword.



Figure 45: One possible conclusion to this technique is for Hugh to slam Greg's buckler into his head. Note that Hugh's cross is still pinning Greg's sword.

Part II: Talhoffer's Sword & Buckler

1.) Übergreffen (over gripping)



In the first picture (from Talhoffer 1467) we see the combatants standing ready to fight. The left figure is in *Pflug* while the right figure is in right *Vidipolge*. The next picture shows the attack: The figure on the right has passed forward with his right foot to swing an *Oberhau* (note that his buckler lags behind). The figure on the left brings his sword up and over his arm to block the attack. In the third picture (note that the figures have switched places to make it easier to see the action) the defender (now on the right) has encircled his opponent's sword arm with his buckler arm to take it out of action, and at the same time he strikes his opponent in the head.

It's interesting to note that the attacker (on the left in this picture) is shown in a stance opposite to the one in his previous picture. I believe that this is meant to show that he is attempting to step back out of the hold that has been placed on him.

The important point to this technique is that you block entirely with the blade of your sword: the buckler is a passive defense, and your left arm should be aiming for the arm grab from the moment of the block, not trying to block with the buckler. When I do this technique my left arm is up and starting to wrap my opponent's sword arm from the moment of the block.



Figure 46: Greg begins in *Vidipolge*, Hugh in *Pflug*



Figure 47: Greg attacks with an *Oberhau*.
Hugh defends by putting his own sword over
his left arm, point down, to block Greg's at-
tack



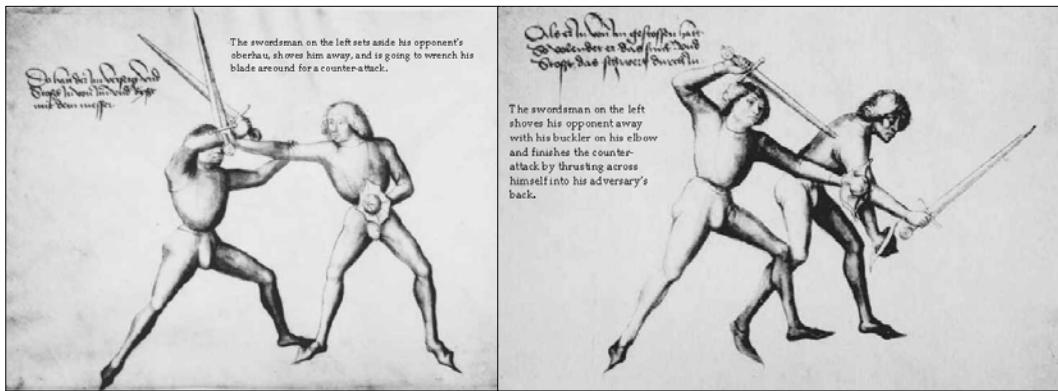
Figure 48: Hugh wraps Greg's sword arm
with his left arm while pulling his sword
back for a cut; note that Hugh has made a
gathering step to close with Greg as he
grabbed his arm

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Figure 49: Hugh finishes the play with an *Oberhau*

2.) Shilthau (Shield Strike)



Unfortunately we aren't shown the starting position for this technique, but I believe the initial attack is an *Oberhau* so I assume *vom Tag* would be an ideal guard for both.

In the first picture we can see that the attack has been struck. The defender catches the blow on the flat of his sword with the pommel held in front of his face. He then places his buckler (for some reason the artist left the buckler out of the drawing, but as it's in the next plate we can safely assume it was meant to be there) on the back of his opponent's arm. (NB: Talhoffer leaves out the first step, but the block makes more sense when you compare with the

Griffhaken below on p. 33 which is, after all the same technique.)

In the second picture we see that the buckler has been used to push the attacker's sword arm, and hence his entire body, to the defender's right. This motion effectively renders him defenseless. At the same time, the attacker flips his sword around and stabs down into his opponent's body.

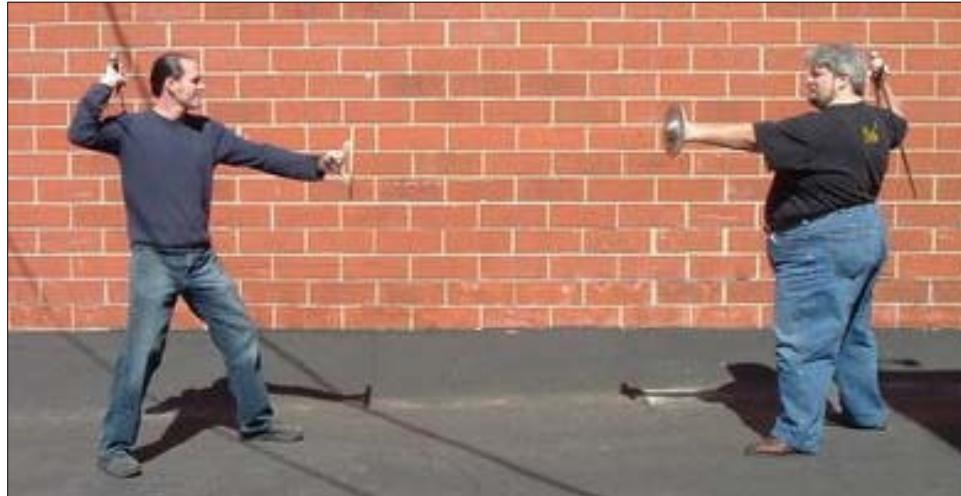


Figure 50: The both begin in *vom Tag*



Figure 51: Greg passes forward to strike an *Oberhau* at Hugh's head. Hugh passes forward and blocks the attack with the outside flat of his sword (in other words, the long edge of Hugh's sword is facing up and to the right in the picture).



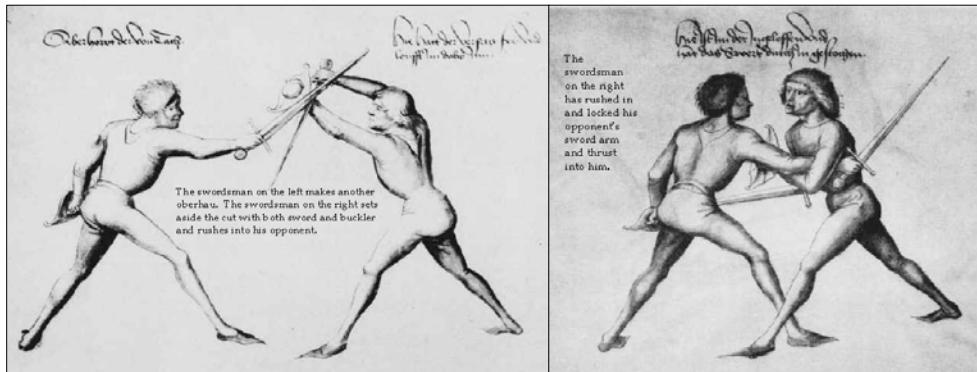
Figure 52: Hugh passes forward with his left foot and presses Greg's sword arm with his buckler while simultaneously snapping the point of his sword around to make a thrust.

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Figure 53: Here we see the conclusion of the technique: The push has turned Greg away, and Hugh's point thrusts home into Greg's back.

3.) Uberschneiden (Cut From Above)



This technique is almost identical to the *Übergreiffen* shown above. The starting positions aren't shown here, but they could be precisely the same as for that technique, and there are no substantive differences between the attack and block in the first picture shown for this technique and the second one shown for the *Übergreiffen*.

Even the second plate above is almost identical to the *Übergreiffen*: The defender wraps his buckler arm about his opponent's arm just as before (although in this picture there's no backward step by the attacker). The difference here lies in the finishing technique used by the defender: Instead of a blow to the head, in this case he pulls his sword back and thrusts the attacker in the midsection or groin.

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Frankly, I am at a loss to decide why this technique is here. What significant difference is there from the *Übergreiffen*? What made Talhoffer include this as a separate technique? To my mind, this is very difficult to understand, and yet Talhoffer included it both his *Alte Armatur und Ringkunst* and in his 1467 *Fechtbuch*, so there must be a reason for having two such similar techniques.



Figure 54: Greg begins in *vom Tag*, Hugh in *Pflug*



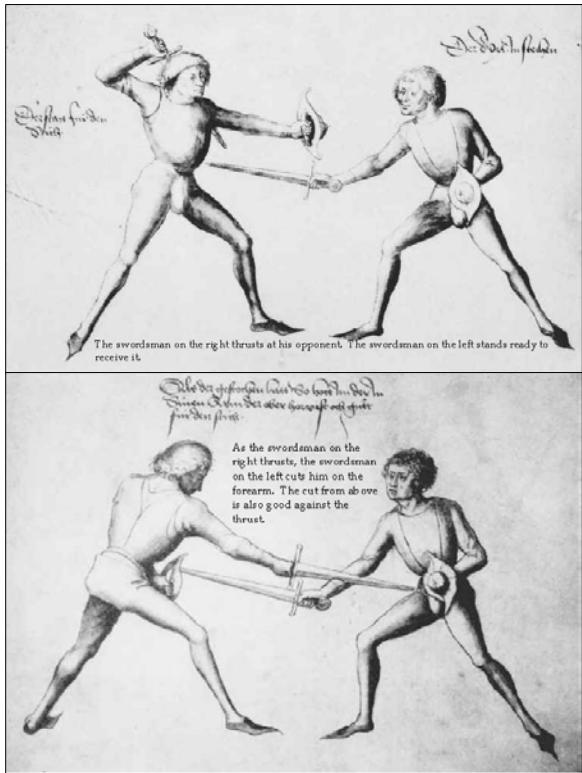
Figure 55: Greg attacks with an *Oberhau* which Hugh blocks by sliding his sword over his left arm.



Figure 56: As before, Hugh over wraps Greg's sword arm and then pulls his sword back for a thrust.

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4.) Uberschnappen (Snapping Over)



This very simple, elegant technique is a perfect example of why you should strike into a covered position behind the buckler. In the first picture we see the defender on the left in *vom Tag*. The attacker's starting position isn't shown, but it was probably right *Pflug*. The attacker thrusts forward to his opponent's midsection and follows the thrust with a passing step with his right foot. Note that the picture shows the combatants much too close together; in reality they would be further apart.

In the second picture we see that the defender has passed backward with his left foot, parrying the thrust by catching on his buckler. At the same time he cuts to his opponent's forearm, rendering him *hors de combat*. From there he could follow with an immediate thrust to the attacker's body, or anything else that seems open; the cut to the arm should be sufficiently debilitating to prevent the attacker from responding well.



Figure 57: Greg begins in *Pflug*, Hugh in *vom Tag*



Figure 58: Greg lunges forward with a long thrust; Hugh passes backward and slightly to his right and simultaneously cuts down into Greg's sword arm, keeping his buckler in front of his body just in case

4.) Handgelenkschnitt (The Wrist Cut)



In this technique you start in the First Guard and your opponent starts in *vom Tag*. He steps forward to cut at your head and you execute an underhand cut (*Unterhau*) upward at the wrist of his sword hand as shown in the first picture (note that the defender doesn't move his buckler with the attack). To finish the technique you step forward with your right foot and cut back down into your opponent's head, killing him. Note the similarity to the wrist cut technique shown in the arming sword techniques in Talhoffer 1467 (*tafel 228-229*). This technique is not shown in the buckler section of the 1467 *Fechtbuch*.

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Figure 59: Greg begins in *vom Tag*, Hugh in Underarm Guard



Figure 60: Greg attacks with an *Oberhau* which Hugh defeats with an *Unterhau* to Greg's arm



Figure 61: Hugh continues the motion of his sword up and then back down to finish the technique with an *Oberhau*.

Part III: Talhoffer's Arming Sword

As popular as the sword and buckler were, there were times when the buckler couldn't be carried or wasn't available so a gentleman had to be skilled in the use of the arming sword alone. Lignitzer doesn't include any arming sword-only techniques in his book, however Talhoffer shows us a series of simple techniques for use with the one-handed sword. The sword shown in these pictures is the German *messer*, which is basically a long knife used for civilian self defense in medieval Germany, but the techniques apply equally well to any arming sword, and, indeed, an arming sword rather than a *messer* is shown in identical plays in Talhoffer's *Alte Armatur und Ringkunst*.

1.) Übergreiffen (Arm Wrap and Cut)



In plate 223 we see a basic starting position. The attacker, on the left, is in the *vom Tag* guard while the defender is in the Underarm Guard awaiting the attack.

Plate 224 shows the attack and the parry. The attacker has executed a passing step forward to cut at the defender's head, while the defender has stepped forward, also with a passing step, and laid his sword over his arm to reinforce it and using the shield thus formed to deflect the attacker's *Oberhau*.

In the last plate in the series, 225, we see the completion of the technique as the defender continues the motion of his defense by wrapping his left arm around his attacker's sword arm to pin it while swinging his sword up and over to cut at the attacker's head. The attacker has raised his left arm to protect his head, but we can assume this will be of little help against his opponent's razor-sharp sword. Note that this technique is done as once continuous, smooth motion: You don't stop at the parry and then do the arm wrap, it's all done as a single action.

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Figure 62: Greg begins in *vom Tag*, Hugh in Underarm
Note that the guards of the arming sword are done with the left arm held behind the back.



Figure 63: Greg attacks with an *Oberhau*.
Hugh passes forward and catches Greg's attack on his blade while beginning to reach for the grab.

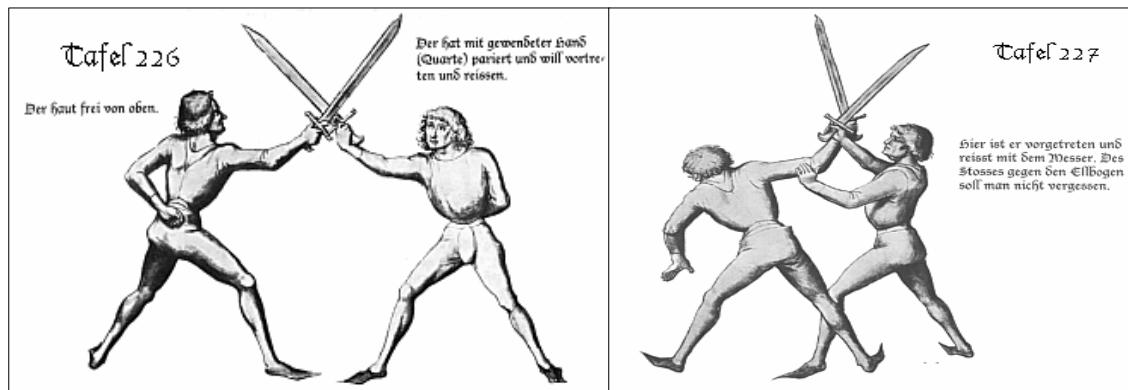


Figure 64: Hugh completes the wrap of
Greg's sword arm and prepares to attack
with an *Oberhau*.



Figure 65: The completion of the technique.

2.) Griffhaken (Hilt Hook)



Talhoffer doesn't show us a starting position for this technique, but based on the actions shown I assume both combatants start in *vom Tag*. In plate 226 we see that the attacker (on the left) has stepped forward with an *Oberhau* as in the previous technique. The defender steps forward as well, and blocks the attack with the strong of his sword (the portion of the blade closest to the hilt). Interestingly, as he does so he rotates his sword so as to catch the blow on the flat of his blade. Some have argued that this was to spare the edges of the sword, but there are far too many edge-on-edge blocks in the literature to jus-

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tify this explanation. Perhaps this rotation simply places the defender's sword into a better position for the hook in the next plate. I have tried this both ways and it does seem to be easier to execute the hook when you've "wound up" your weapon this way to start.

In plate 227 we see the defender continuing the motion of his sword around his opponent's weapon as he steps forward with his left foot, hooking his pom-mel over the attacker's sword hand as he does so to control it. At the same time he places his left hand on his opponent's sword elbow to push him into a defenseless position.

We aren't shown a conclusion for this technique, but at least two present themselves: The defender could continue the motion of his sword to yank the attacker's sword arm down as he cuts his opponent's head (a similar technique for the arming sword is shown in plate 57 of the Wallerstein Codex, except that the elbow push with the left hand is not used). Alternatively, the defender could flip his weapon around, removing it from the attacker's arm, to execute a thrust to the back as in Talhoffer plate 235 of the sword and buckler techniques.



Figure 66: Both begin in *vom Tag*

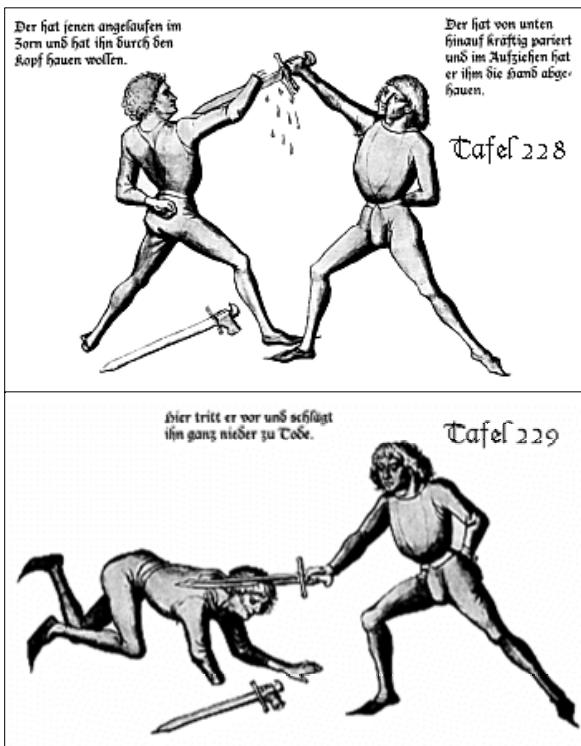


Figure 67: Greg attacks with an *Oberhau*. Hugh passes forward and twists his sword around, cocking it and parrying Greg's attack on the flat of his blade.



Figure 68: Passing forward again, Hugh pushes Greg's elbow with his left hand while snapping his point around to thrust.

3.) Handgelenkschnitt (Wrist Cut)



Again, we're not shown a starting position, but the exact same beginning guards as shown in plate 223 above would work very well for this technique. As the attacker steps forward with his *Oberhau* in plate 228 the defender steps forward as well. This time, however, instead of blocking the attacker's sword the defender executes a rising cut (an *Unterhau*) against the attacker's right wrist, cutting it off—a harsh form of disarm! In order to make the defense more effective you should step off to your right as you cut.

In order to completely finish the attacker off, plate 229 shows the defender continuing his attack by swinging his sword at the attacker's head as he drops to the ground in agony.

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Figure 69: Greg begins in *vom Tag*, Hugh in Underarm.

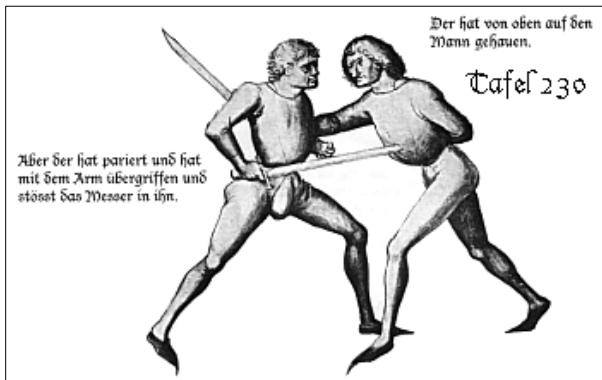


Figure 70: Greg attacks with an *Oberhau* which Hugh defeats by stepping offline and cutting into Greg's arm with an *Unterhau*.



Figure 71: Hugh finishes the technique with an *Oberhau* to Greg's head.

4.) Uberschneiden (Arm Wrap and Thrust)



This play is apparently identical to the *Überschneiden* above in the buckler section and it could be started just as in the *Übergreiffen* (i.e., with the defender starting in Underarm Guard) however in an effort to show the variety of applications these fundamental concepts can be applied to I have elected to show this technique below with both combatants starting in *vom Tag*.



Figure 72: Both start in *vom Tag*

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Figure 73: Greg attacks with an *Oberhau* which Hugh counters by sliding his blade over his left arm to catch Greg's cut while extending his left arm forward to begin the wrap.



Figure 74: Here we see the wrap completed, locking Greg's arm, while Hugh pulls his sword back to thrust into Greg's body.

5.) Uberschnappen (Snapping Over)

This technique is precisely the same as the *Uberschnappen* shown above in Talhoffer's sword and buckler material. While the Master doesn't show this technique specifically, it takes no great imagination to see that a one-handed thrust can be countered by passing backwards and cutting down into your opponent's wrist; obviously, in this version of the technique the step offline as you step backward becomes even more important since you can no longer use your buckler to defend yourself.



Figure 75: Just imagine this technique being done without the bucklers.

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