

Train the Trainer
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SKBC 2004

<Exercise: Get everyone's name and home park, and a brief explanation of their expectations from the class.>

Class Introduction

This class will look at training in three stages:

- First Contact Newbies (Under 6 weeks)
- Still new but getting better
- Average to good

First Contact.

<First contact exercise. Have the students approach each other as never played newbies and start the process about 5 minutes.>

First priority is often to get them on the field. This is sound.

Basics must be shown first

- Obvious stuff like rules and hit locations
- Practice on the side is good in small doses
 - o There is nothing like playing with everyone to build enthusiasm
 - o Those who only learn basics on the side are much less likely to stay
- Often newbies want to ditch with the group
- Don't keep them from it too long
- Taking time with them will always make them more likely to stay.
- How you spend that time is important though

If multiple Newbies come in together, let them fight each other some but step in and fight them some too.

First day players fighting other first day players develop the following problems

- Poor shot calling skills
- Hard hitting skills
- Tendency to fight long after death

Better bet is to put them together in ditches.

Train for the trainee not for your own ego.

- Take notice of if the student is getting anything from it

When sparring the Newbie yourself, there is a choice as to whether to do your best, or fight down to his/her level...). Some will thank you for going easy and some will be insulted by it

- Some want you to explain each shot or sequence
- Others want lots of fights/per time spent discussing

Sluffing, honor and the unwritten rules:

- This can be an uncomfortable subject
- Care must be taken to bring it up in a positive way
- Approach Sluffing as something that happens in the game rather than as something the newbie specifically might do
- Newbies need to know those things that piss off Amtgarders
 - o Backstabbing
 - o Lurking

<Have the class list some others>

- Some parks don't like backstabbing.
 - o Make it clear that backstabbing is legal but that some people consider it uncool.
 - o Warn them that they might get yelled at even if they don't deserve it for backstabbing.
 - o If your park doesn't backstab you still need them to know it is legal, otherwise visitors will upset them
- Leave the SiM/AC debate until the Newbie has a little practice, unless your park sees a lot of visitors from the other system.

Weapon Style Choice:

- Giving the Newbie what he or she wants(in terms of equipment, class or style)
 - o This is to build interest and enthusiasm in Amtgard
 - o People are always happier doing what they want to do.
- Starting off Newbies often want to go single. Explain the choices.
- Newbies single against experienced with S&S or Flor will die a lot.
- If they choose Shield let them otherwise push them toward Florentine.
- First and second week fighters get more from Flor:
 - o they start on long term skill
 - o they have more success
- Poles, spears and other long weapons should only given if strongly requested
 - o Not like any other style
 - o It's easy enough that guys feel like they are better than is true.
 - o Will often piss off others and set the Newbie as a beat-down target
 - o Same for Flails
- Don't give Newbies weapons that are extra heavy or short.
- Of course, anything newbies make newbies should be taught to use.
 - o Except really strange stuff
 - o In which case let them learn the negative for a little
 - o Then explain why Staves, Bat'lehs and Nunchaku are poor in Amtgard.
 - Generally real characteristics that do not translate to safe Amtgard.
 - The speed of Nunchaku or staff for example.

Still a Newbie but in search of more training:

By confident but polite.

- Be sure of yourself

- If you have a disagreement explain yourself rationally
- If the student refuses your way of thinking, let them try in their way... they'll learn (but don't turn it into an "I told you so" situation).
- Don't let your students make you uncomfortable
- Especially don't yell at them or berate them
- Use Positive reinforcement when it's earned
 - o Compliments and general encouragement are very valuable.
- .Work to prevent discouragement
 - o Newbies often get down on themselves when they can't get good in a couple of weeks.
 - o Tell them how long you have been at it.
 - o Tell them how well they are doing relative to others you have seen (or yourself)

Analysis of how a newbie will best fight is important to teaching them right:
Some things to consider: Foot Speed, Reach, Aggressiveness, Favored styles, Handedness, Gender (maybe), Age.

- About half these items can be modified somewhat by training
- How the items above might affect training:
 - o Low foot speed newbies should not be started on techniques that require lots of side to side movement.
 - o Long reach fighters can learn wrap shots earlier than others. Short reach fighters should concentrate on aggression or blocking
 - o Relatively passive fighters shouldn't start with rush tactics
 - o Those who favor S&S can start more defensively than those who prefer Florentine.
 - o The differences in training lefties are many and care should be taken to consult with those who understand the format differences.
 - o Some fighters of each gender are not comfortable learning from the other gender for various reasons.
 - Find the right Gender.
 - Consult the web for good resources (House Lionesse, SCA sites)
 - o Age is more a factor of who can talk to who than differences in ability. Some older mid 20s fighters do not want to learn from 18 year olds.

<Analysis exercise: Each student brings up one physical trait that contributes to their style and how>

<Analysis exercise 2: After watching other students for a little bit do the same for them and check>

A primary concern should always be whether the trainee is comfortable with the techniques being taught. No matter how sound the theory might be if it doesn't fit the fighter it won't work.

Examples:

- knee bending
- leaning over

Equally important is to help find the right people to teach the right techniques

Also newbies at this stage have started to develop a regular weapon style

- either because the equipment available
- or genuine preference
- Pressure from others in the group can be a factor
- At this stage this should be encouraged
 - o Better learning curve
 - o Quicker success

If at about 6 weeks the player is still serious make sure their weapons are decent

- Be positive if it was made by the newbie
- Be constructive in rebuilding it with (not for) him or her
- Even those who never get good at building weapons need to know how
- Also understanding that in a touch game there is very little advantage to heavy

Some specific bad habits should be broken at this time and good habits installed

- Hand or punch Blocking is good
 - o Easy to make the block
 - o Easy to pivot into a shot
- Extreme Chicken wing is bad
- Just sticking swords out and waving is bad
 - o Separate specific shots
 - o Return to Neutral Drill

This is also the stage to start various drills.

- I recommend the drills that Spyn teaches like Block/Strike
- Practicing offhanded
- Hand matching to teach blocking skills.

This is also a great time to start the newbie on fighter practices outside the game day

- this social interaction makes them more likely to stick in Amtgard
- it also has the obvious benefits for the fighting.

Average to good looking to get serious

Trainees at this point are by definition getting close to your skill

- Treat them with respect as such.
- Do many of the training exercises cooperatively.
 - o Let them offer feedback on themselves and you
 - o Make sure they are talking and thinking combat with a wide group.
- Let your enthusiasm and theirs build on each other

Nothing is more important at this stage than the frequency of practice

- Obsessed Warlord example
- The role of Fighting Companies

Encourage practice in various ways

- Competitive ways
 - o Rogue ducks
 - o Work off the Warriors
 - o Prep sessions for specific tournies/Events
- Less competitive ways
 - o Travel
 - In Kingdom or Out
 - Specific Benefits of Travel
 - o Scheduled fighter practice
 - o Unusual games and Rules are the Spice of Life

<Exercise: ask for practice encouragers from the class>

Cooperative fighting practice often balances fighting with discussing weaknesses

- Doing it after the practice, maybe over dinner is good for some
- Others prefer more immediate feedback
- I like the three bouts method:
 - o Choose a specific style, technique or opponent that needs improvement
 - o Fight three bouts concentrating on that specific area
 - o Then stop and talk about it.
 - o This offers more meat to talk about than one bout
 - o Specifics are still easily recalled
- Use whatever method works best for you and the trainee(s)

How to help a student who is better than you to improve

- The same analysis works
- Use that info to teach areas where you are still relatively strong.
- Use that info to pick other good trainers
- Asking the right questions to make the student understand himself
 - o Look for the whys of his/her fighting
 - o Draw out answers he/she already know
 - o Draw out instincts into words

<Exercise: Ask some of this type of question.>

Questions for the instructor and practice teaching each other with time left.

Course evaluation