

The Shortstaff of Paulus Hector Mair

Paulus Hector Mair was an avid collector of Fechtbucher/Fencing Manuals. He eventually undertook the task of producing a large Fechtbuch of his own that brought together material from various sources in his collection. Several variations of this work were made. This was an expensive undertaking, since each one was hand-made and heavily illustrated by talented artists of the day. Mair was employed as a government official by the city of Augsburg and was driven to embezzle municipal funds in order to bankroll his projects and his lavish lifestyle. He was hung for this in 1579.

The material you see here are my translations from the edition of Mair's Fechtbuch that is in the collection of the Sächsische Landesbibliothek in Dresden Germany. It is dated to 1540 and is in two volumes, labeled as C93 and C94. It is one of the most artistically illustrated Fechtbucher known. The SLUB has put a scan of C93 on-line here:

<http://digital.slub-dresden.de/sammlungen/titeldaten/275428508/>

Mair's shortstaff material is rather unique. He shows a shorter staff than is typically seen in "quarterstaff" sources. His staff is only approximately 5 feet long. Most other staff sources will show the forward hand in a forward grip position with the thumb aimed at the forward point. But Mair's primary grip on the staff has the forward hand positioned with the thumb aimed inward towards the rear hand. Most other staff sources will show an emphasis on heavy strikes or at least an equal use of thrusts and strikes. But Mair's material favors the thrust over the strike by approximately 4 to 1. Most other staff sources use the forward point almost exclusively. But the shorter length of Mair's staff allows it to "wind" easily so that both ends of the staff are used almost equally. This means that there are far more passing steps in Mair's methods than in other staff methods.

It has been proposed in the past that Mair's shortstaff was meant as a training substitute for the short infantry spear. While the technique may have started from spear technique, it is obvious from the text that the method has been adapted for a staff weapon. It is never referred to as a "speiss" or "spear" in the descriptive text, and the "butt end" of the weapon is used far more frequently than one would expect if it were a spear. Additionally, Mair shows techniques that involve releasing one hand from the weapon so that it can swing around for a powerful one-handed blow. This obviously wouldn't be practical for a spear.

Mair's short staff material is also related to his half-swording method with the Longsword, as well as his Halberd material. By combining the concepts and techniques from these three sections one can develop a very comprehensive and workable staff method.

The page numbers reflect the numbering of the plates in the PDF scan of the short staff section of the Dresden version of Mair's Fechtbuch. It should be noted that whoever scanned this particular section for the library did not pay attention to page order very well, so they are not scanned sequentially.

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It happens that you are closing with the staff. Step towards him with your right foot on the inside and wind from above from your right shoulder with the right hand outside of his staff. In the winding feel for whether he is soft or hard in the bind. If he is hard against you and holds against your strong, follow with your left leg after and at the same time change through from his left upon his right side and stab him to his face.

If he stabs like this to your face and you also stand against him in the bind with your right foot forward, your right hand forward midway on your staff, then set this aside with our foremost point on your right side. Step with your left leg inside and wind your rearmost point to his face. If he sets this aside, then follow after with your right leg and strike him wickedly with your upper point out of the bind to his head.

If he strikes similarly from above to your head, set your left leg back and displace this with your foremost point. At the same time, thrust him to his chest. If he displaces this, pull back your thrust against him and stab him in his right arm. Then wind backwards away from him.



It happens that you have closed and stand with your left foot forward holding your staff at your left shoulder with your left hand forward. You stand this way against him and he the same in the lower bind. Step inside with your right leg and stab him from the inside to the outside over his left arm to the chest. If he displaces this, then follow after again with your left leg and wind your rearmost point to his face.

If he stabs to your face like this and you stand with your left foot forward, set aside his stab and step inside with your right foot and at the same time thrust your foremost point to his face. If he sets this aside, then change through immediately and thrust to his left side. If he sets this aside, then follow after with your left foot and at the same time wind nimbly double with your foremost point and rearmost point to his face.

If he winds double like this to your face, set this aside with your own winding from both sides. Then immediately follow after with your right leg and stab him to his face. If he displaces this, yank your right leg back and strike him with your staff with an inverted hand to his head and then immediately grab with your left hand once again your staff and cover your face with a good stance.



It happens that you close to the upper bind from your left side. He stands against you likewise in the bind from his left side. Step in with your left leg and at the same time feel whether he is hard or soft in the bind. If he is soft, step outward with your right leg and thrust to his face. If he does a take off, then immediately wind through from your right upon his right side.

If he winds like this to your right side and you likewise stand against him in the bind with your left foot placed forward, displace this and at the same time step outward with your right leg and thrust to his face inside over his right arm. If he displaces this, wind through with your point at his right side and thrust with your point to his right side. If he sets this aside, follow outward with your left leg and wind through with your rearmost point between his arms to his face.

If he winds like this to your face, set your right leg back and set this aside with your foremost point. Then immediately wind your rearmost point likewise to his face. Follow outward again with your right leg and strike him with the half-staff with both hands to his head. With that withdraw into a good guard.



It happens that you close to the lower bind with your right foot set forward and your right hand extended in front near the point. Immediately wind your right hand to the hip and stab him to his face.

If he stabs you like this to your face and you also stand against him in the bind with your right foot placed forward, set it aside with your foremost point and make as if you will stab to his right leg. Then immediately step with your left foot outward and wind your rearmost point to his face or chest.

If he winds like this to your face, step back with your right foot and set this aside with your rearmost point. Then immediately step in once more with your right foot and stab with your foremost point to his face. If he displaces this, change through with your point and follow outward with your left leg and with that stab at his right side.

If he stabs towards you like this, set it aside and at the same time follow outward with your right leg and wind both points double to his face. If he sets this aside, yank your right foot back and strike to his head. Then wind back into a good stance.



It happens that when closing in the Absetzen you step in with your left leg, your staff pointed at the ground and your right hand stretched above your head. Immediately wind your right hand to your hip and thrust to his face.

If he thrusts to your face like this and you stand against him in the doubled Mittelhau with your right foot forward, then set aside his thrust with your foremost point and at the same time step after with your left leg and thrust with your lower point to his face. If he displaces this, change through from below and strike his right arm. If he displaces this, step in with your right leg and thrust with your long point to his face. If he perceives the thrust and displaces it, yank your right leg back and thrust to his left leg.

If he thrusts like this to your left leg do not displace him, rather thrust quickly to his face. Then immediately wind back from him into a good stance.



It happens that you stand in this position from the right side with your right foot forward and hold your staff at your right side in the strong. He then stands against you from his left side also in the strong with his left foot placed forward and you both have each other in the bind. Make as if you will stab to his face, then immediately change through from his right to his left side, follow outward with your left leg and stab him to the chest. If he displaces this, follow outward with your right leg and wind your rearmost point inside between his arms to his face.

If he winds like this to your face, step in with your right foot and set this aside with your rearmost point. Then immediately change through with your point and stab to his face. If he sets this aside, go over and strike to his head.

If he strikes like this to your head, set your staff at the ground on your left side and oppose him with your staff to block him between your hands. Then immediately thrust to his face and yank yourself back into a good stance.



It happens that in the closing to the Face Thrust you hold your staff at your right side with your left hand at the half-staff, your right hand behind near your right leg and your foremost point opposite his face. He then stands against you in the Abnemen with his left foot placed forward, his staff at the ground and the right hand extended behind near the point. Follow outward with your right leg and thrust to his face.

If he thrusts like this to your face, step in with your right leg and go with the staff in front of his face to set his thrust aside. Then immediately wind your rearmost point inside between his arms to his throat.

If he winds like this to your throat, set your right leg back, set this aside with your foremost point and strike him at the bind to his head. Then with that yank yourself back into a good stance and take heed that you are not followed after to the face.



It happens at the closing that you stand in these Absetzen with your right foot forward, your staff directed at the ground with extended arms, your left hand at the middle of the staff and the right above in front of your face. He also stands like this against you from his left side. Then step inward with your left leg and wind your upper point between his arms to his face. If he displaces this, follow outward with your right foot and strike him out of the Absetzen with your rearmost point to his right arm.

If he strikes like this to your right arm and you stand with your left foot forward, take this aside with your rearmost point in the right hand. Then immediately follow outward with your right leg and thrust your rearmost point to his chest. If he displaces this, step inward with your left leg and wind him double with your points to his face.

If he winds you double like this, yank your right leg to the rear and set this aside with your foremost point. Then immediately thrust with your rearmost point to his face or chest and with that yank yourself back into a good stance.



It happens that you stand at the closing with the Face Thrust with your left foot forward, your staff in your right hand at your right hip and the point directed towards his face. He then stands opposed to you in the Absetzen, his right foot set forward, his staff in the middle with both of his hands extended in front of his face. Then step inward with your right foot and wind your rearmost point into his face on his right side. If he sets this aside, wind your other point to his chest. Then immediately set your right leg to the rear and strike him with your staff to his right side.

If he strikes you like this to your right side, step inward with your left leg and set this aside between your hands at your left side. Then immediately thrust your foremost point into his face. If he displaces this, follow outward with your right foot and thrust with your rearmost point to his groin.

If he thrusts low towards you like this, step backwards with your left foot and set this aside with your rearmost point. Then immediately step in with your left foot and thrust with a double thrust to his face. With that step back into a good stance.



When you come to the opponent at the closing, step inward with your left leg and thrust with your staff to his face from your right side. If he displaces this, set your right leg to the rear and let your staff shoot through your hand and strike inward with the long point to his head.

If he strikes like this to your head, displace this with the portion of your staff between your hands. Then immediately step inward with your right leg and thrust your foremost point into his face. If he sets this aside, change through at his staff, follow outward with your left foot and thrust your rearmost point to his right side.

If he thrusts you like this to your right side, displace it and step inward with your right leg towards him and immediately thrust your rearmost point to his face.

If he thrusts to your face like this, displace it, step inward with your right leg towards him and drop into the Absetzen with your foremost point at his neck and your right foot behind his left (as shown in the illustration), then press over away from you into his cheek and yank from below towards you so that he falls to the rear.



When you come to the closing with the opponent step inward with your left leg and hold your arms extended with the staff, your right hand above your head and the point directed towards his chest. He then stands likewise against you in the high thrust position to your upper opening with his left foot set forward. Then follow outward with your right leg, wind with your right arm to your right side and in the winding thrust your long point into his face. Should he perceive the thrust and displace it, change through from his left to his right side and thrust to his chest.

If he thrusts towards you like this, set it aside and follow outward with your right leg and at the same time wind your rearmost point to his face into the Einwinden (in-winding). Then step with your right foot to the rear and thrust to his chest with your long point. If he displaces this, step inward with your right foot once again and strike with the long point from above to his head.

If he strikes towards you from above like this, set it aside with a winding at your staff and immediately thrust double to his face. With that step back into a good stance.



When you go to close with the opponent, strike in freely from the Sturzhaus (plunging strike) double towards him so that you come before the opponent standing with your left foot forward, your right hand at your hip and your staff's point opposite his face. Then immediately follow outward with your right leg and thrust your long point to his throat.

If he thrusts to your throat like this and you stand with your left foot forward in the bind against him, take it away with your foremost point and immediately follow outward with your right foot and strike to his head, and in doing so, wind your staff around in front of his neck. Then step with your left foot in front of his right, press over and away from you and strike him from above so you can take advantage of his weak position.

If he intends to weaken you like this, follow outward with your left foot, take away his point with your staff and immediately wind your foremost point to his face. If he displaces this, change through and thrust him once again to the face from the previously described stance.

If he thrusts you double to the face like this, set it aside with your foremost point and wind the rearmost point to his chest. With that yank yourself back into a good stance.



It happens that at the closing you strike towards him with a doubled Prusthau (chest strike) as you come to him. Then step in with your right foot towards him and at the same time release the staff to quickly pass over and strike his head with an inverted hand. Then once again grip the staff with your left and wind your foremost point into his face.

If you then stand like this against him with your left foot forward and with your staff extended and the point directed at the ground, take aside his strike with the portion of the staff between your hands (as shown in the illustration), step in with your right leg and wind your short point in your right hand to his face. If he displaces this, step to the rear again with your right foot and thrust your long point to his face.

If he thrusts to your face double like this, take it away with your foremost point and immediately step in with your left foot and thrust your rearmost point double to his face. Should he perceive this double thrust and displace it, strike him quickly with your long point to his right side. If he displaces this as well, wind double to his chest. With that step back into a good stance.



When you come to close with the opponent, step in with your left leg and hold your staff with your right hand above your head and your left hand well forward on your staff and stab to his left elbow so that you capture his gewicht (sleeve?).

If he thrusts like this to the sleeve of your left arm and you likewise have your staff in your right hand above your head and your left foot set forward, set this aside upwards from upon your staff and immediately thrust to his groin. Thus you hit him with your thrust below his, which is in vain. Then immediately follow inward with your right leg and wind your rearmost point to his face.

If he winds like this to your face, set it aside with your foremost point. Then hold your staff directly in front of your face and immediately step in with your right foot towards him and strike his staff out of his foremost hand with your rearmost point and thrust with your foremost point to his face. If he sets this aside, yank your right leg back and shoot your long point to his chest. With that step back in to a good stance.



It happens at the closing that you stand in this position with the feet equally together, your staff pointed at the ground, the left hand mid-way on the staff, the right hand at your right side and present yourself with your body in the Wag (balanced stance or position). Then immediately step in with your left leg and thrust your long point to his chest.

If he thrusts like this to your chest and you stand with your left foot forward, your staff at your left leg pointed at the ground and your right hand over your head near your point, then step in with your right leg and set this aside with your foremost point from your right hand. Then immediately step again with your right foot to the rear and thrust with the Gewalt Stoss (power thrust) with your strong and with your long point to his face.

If he thrusts with the strong like this to your face, step in with your left foot in the triangle so that you avoid his thrust. Then immediately step in with your right leg towards him and release your staff to pass over and strike his head. Then grip your staff once again with your left hand and wind double away from him back into a good stance.



When you come to the closing with the opponent step in with your right foot and hold your staff forward pointed at the ground with your right hand mid-way and the left near your point back at your left hip. He then stands opposed to you in the Crossed Wechsel (changer) with his right foot set forward. Go forward with your long point and at the same time follow outward with your left leg and thrust to his face. If he sets this aside, follow outward with your right foot and wind your rearmost point to his face or chest.

If he thrusts double like this to your face, go forward with your staff and set this aside with your foremost point. Then follow outward with your left leg and thrust your rearmost point to his face out of the Crossed Wechsel. If he displaces this, quickly wind him again double to his left side.

If he travels after (nachraisen) you like this, set this aside with your half staff. Then follow outward with your left leg and stab with your rearmost point to his left side. Then immediately yank your left leg back and strike him with your foremost point to his head. With that step back into a good stance.



It happens at the closing that you step in with your left foot towards him and thrust with your staff from your left side inward between his arms to his left chest. He then stands opposed to you also in the Upper Thrust from his left side with his left foot set forward and thrusts to your chest as well. Then release your left hand from your staff and grip with it to his staff near his point and at the same time wind your point beneath his left shoulder with your right hand. Then step in towards him with your right foot and with that wind both staves at your right side with crosswise arms. Thus you will have him such that he cannot work against you.

If he has you locked up like this such that you cannot work with your staff, then quickly allow the staff to drop, set your left foot behind his right from the outside, grab with your right hand to the back of his right knee and with your left below his right shoulder well around and across your body. Thus you will with this prevent him from harming you.



Hold yourself as follows at this closing. Strike inward with the Sturzau (plunging strike) towards him, then set your left foot forward and thrust your foremost point to his face.

If he thrusts like this to your face when you are opposite him at the closing, then set it aside with a forward wind at your staff, step in with your right foot towards him and thrust your long point to his chest.

If he thrusts like this to your chest, then step well in towards him and set the thrust aside with the mid-point of your staff between your hands. Then immediately throw your staff outward over your head, put your body in the Wag and grab with both hands to his waist. Then squeeze him to you and lift him well upwards so that you have him in the weak position. Then immediately throw him down so that you have used him to break your own fall. Knee him to his groin with your right foot between his feet and your left beneath his right. Seize both his hands for by the throat and press hard everywhere to the ground so that you control him (as illustrated).

If you have thus been violently thrown down and controlled, quickly take heed that your hand is not locked up, but rather stop him with either hand in his face, the thumb under the chin and the other fingers beneath the eye sockets. Grab hence strongly with either hand. Thrust him strongly to the groin. Extend a foot that is unencumbered and at the same time yank him against you so that you give him a good one to the groin. With these three grips you can bring him to the mark.