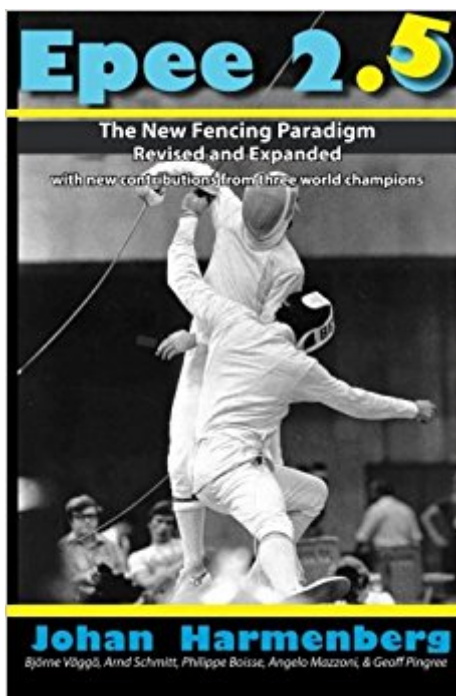


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# Epee 2.5: The New Paradigm Revised And Augmented



## Synopsis

Johan Harmenberg revolutionized epee fencing when he pioneered the New Fencing Paradigm that lets a fencer neutralize his opponent's superior technique. In this new, expanded edition of Epee 2.0, he hears comments from top competitors and gives his responses. The result is a book that covers the development of epee fencing from the 1970s to the present. Johan had given up on serious fencing because he thought he lacked the talent to fence classically. He left his native Sweden to pursue his education at MIT. Here he met Eric Sollee, an innovative coach. Together, they mapped out the "New Fencing Paradigm, scribbling Eric's Three Conjectures on a bar napkin. Johan put the New Paradigm into effect " with a vengeance. Despite being snubbed by the Swedish authorities for his new style, he won the World Championship in Men's Individual Epee in 1977 and the Olympic Gold Medal in 1980. In this ground-breaking book, Johan tells his inspiring story and reveals the theory behind his style. Also, Bjørne Væggø, NCAA epee champion and Olympic Silver Medalist, explains his own take on the New Paradigm, Geoff Pingree, IFA epee champion, tells how the paradigm developed at MIT, In this new edition, new voices join the conversation: world and Olympic individual champions Arndt Schmitt (Germany) and Philippe Boisse (France) plus Swiss national coach and world team champion Angelo Mazzoni. They share their winning methods, their insights, and their comments on Johan's theories, and he replies to their comments. He has also added new chapters, including a scientific paper on a study that put his ideas to the test.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Born in Stockholm in 1954, Johan Harmenberg took up fencing at the age of 11. As a freshman at

MIT, he led his foil team to the Little Iron Man trophy and a 3rd place finish in the NCAA tournament, as well as an individual 3rd place finish. He won the World Championship in individual men's epee in 1977 (his Swedish team also took first place). In 1980, he won Olympic gold in individual men's epee and finished first overall in combined World Cup results. After this, he retired from the elite international scene. In 1982, he received his doctorate in Medical Science from Stockholm's Karolinska Institutet and started a career as a physician specializing in antiviral and cancer research. He has over 100 publications and abstracts and has worked with clinical development at firms such as Roche, AstraZeneca, Pharmacia-Upjohn, and Medivir. In addition, he is on the management team for Swedish fencing, involved in training, team selection, tournament cadre, and as special advisors for talented junior fencers. He lives in Stockholm with his wife, Ulrika. They have two children. His son Karl captained the Harvard fencing team and captured silver medals in the Estonian (2011) and Swedish (2014) championships.

Since there has not been much literature written on epee fencing, any new submission is generally eagerly received. This book, however, is somewhat all over the place. It is historical, biographical, instructional, prescriptive and anecdotal. Although the material is interesting to an epee enthusiast it lacks coherence and structure. This book would function much better as two separate booklets: a biographical narrative (Epee 2.5) and an instructional manual (Epee 3.0).

If you have read "Epee 2.0" you might not need to purchase "Epee 2.5". There is new material in "Epee 2.5", but I didn't feel that it substantially changed impact of the original book, or provided substantially more information than "Epee 2.0" did. It was interesting to read some of the additional commentary, and the use of a few YouTube links in the text was a nice surprise and helpful. I will say that the book is rather poorly set out, with a few small sections of the typography (in my copy, the picture captions specifically) being almost unreadable. Fonts change for no reason, and so forth. It's distracting, but doesn't significantly reduce the information in the book. Don't purchase the book for a huge insight into tactical epee fencing. The idea of removing the opponent's pre-requisites to score and forcing the opponent into yours is now universal among good coaches and has been for some time, though I think Harmenberg does a nice job of explaining how this concept -- radical at the time -- worked for him (and, as an aside, one of the strengths of the book is Harmenberg's insights into his own processes as a high level athlete). What was most interesting to me was that this book discusses the evolution of a new, modern style in epee from a very personal point of view. As fencers, we don't document the changes in our sport very well, or engage in the sort of "style

analysis" so common in professional sports, so this was a welcome re-read for me. I know some people have told me that "Epee 2.0" and "Epee 2.5" are the definitive works on modern epee. I would disagree, and argue that such a book has yet to be written.

I provided a review of Epee 2.5 on Fencing.net here: <http://www.fencing.net/15040/epee-2-5-review/>

If you're an epee fencer, you need to read this book. If you're NOT an epee fencer, you STILL need to read this book. In many ways, it's reminiscent of Musashi's "Book of Five Rings" - not so much a book on tactics and the mechanics of fencing as a work on strategy. Dr. Harmenberg lays out a fundamental principle of strategy, as applicable to grand strategy as to the fencing strip - that victory comes to the side that is best able to force the fight into conditions that favor them. Manipulation of the opponent is as important as excellent execution of technique. A word of warning, though...Harmenberg himself writes that this is not a book geared to the novice fencer. He stresses that a novice needs to lay a good foundation, and be competent in all aspects of fencing, before selecting a few techniques to hone to lightning-quick perfection.

You have already developed some technique in fencing. You have already visited tournaments and have a rough idea where you stand. It's not at the top, as you are unsurprised to find out. How do those at the top approaching fencing? This book gives one answer to this question of strategy in modern fencing. It is written by the erstwhile *World Champion* and Olympic gold medal winner Johan Harmenberg, who was one of the athletes of the 1980ies to revolutionize fencing. Harmenberg recounts how he, as a technically inferior fencer, had the good luck to get into an environment at MIT where his coach Eric Sollee experimented with ways to beat the then still prevalent paradigm of fencing as a 'conversation' where the technically superior fencer would win. In the 1970s Sollee asked and then, with Harmenberg and the other fencers at the MIT, answered the following three questions: 1. Is it possible for the fencer with the lower technical fencing ability to decide the technical level of a bout? Yes it is, by identifying the technically superior fencer's favourite technique and denying him the required prerequisites. 2. Can the fencer with the shorter fencing distance control the distance in a bout? Yes he can, by closing below the longer-ranged fencer's favourite distance. 3. Is it possible to force your opponent into your own area of greatest strength? Yes it is, by denying him all other avenues and refusing to play the opponent's game. Harmenberg goes on to recount how these "conjectures" were worked into a strategic approach, gives examples on how he translated them into tactics and how they led him to the Gold

medal at the Olympic games in Moscow, 1980. Of course, the specific technique he uses (bind in sixth riposte or counter-attack) is a typical Ã©pÃ©e technique. His approach however is general enough that it can easily be translated into foil. Other valuable lessons may be learned on Harmenberg's discussions on distance and of extension. One of the best content is provided as essays by former top Ã©pÃ©e fencers Arnd Schmitt , Philippe Boisse, Angelo Mazzoni and Bjorne Vaggoe. If you have some experience fencing and want to improve your strategic approach and tactics, then you need this book.

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