

Greetings from your Knight's Marshal, Serzantas Gintaras Taurus!

I am happy to see Heavy Armored Combat thriving in Ravenslake. I can officially say that since last year, the amount heavies in the shire have gone from "handful" status to "armful" status! It is also great to see that you are all taking the time to help each other with armor, weapons, and training. It makes my job easier and gives you all more opportunities to play. Keep up the good work.

Last time I wrote, I described how to make a thrusting tip. This time I was going to include some tips on melees, but since Pennsic is over that usually means the end of war season. Therefore, I thought that a different article would be better. This article will show the benefits of pell work, the basics on how to do pell work, and finally one way on how to make a pell.

Why do Pell Work

Pell work is a very important activity in a fighter's training. It improves several things including strength, stamina, and speed and gives the fighter time to think about proper delivery and combinations. It is the equivalent of a football player running drills, a baseball player throwing the ball back and forth to another player, or a golfer on the driving range. All of these activities are isolated parts of the greater sport. In our case pell work is the isolated part of our martial art. It helps your fighting ability by improving upon small pieces of it at a time so that you improve your performance overall on the field. Remember, a good fighter will show up and fight at every practice. A better fighter will spend a lot of time on the pell and at practice. The best fighters will spend a lot of time on the pell and at practice and in tourneys.

How to do Pell Work

There are many ways to do pell work and I am going to show you the way that I have been taught and have pieced together from various articles. If you want to know more about different methods of pell work, ask other fighters or search the Internet. There are many resources out there. If you disagree with the way I do pell work, then do not contact me. Instead, right an article on it and submit it to the chronicler. I would love to get others input on the subject.

First, I must say that I do all pell work while wearing at least my gauntlets, gloves, and using weapons that are the same as or similar to the ones I fight with. My motto is that you perform the same as you practice. You should reflect anything you do in practice that you would do when you in a tournament; including wearing the same tabard that you would. I know people who pick up a weapon like a pole arm without gauntlets on, go to the pell, and think that they are a GOD. Unfortunately, they do not realize that gauntlets make a world of difference in one's performance when doing actual combat. By the way, if you are using a shield, use it while doing pell work which does two things. One, you get used to having it there. Two, your arm gets used to the weight. Again, practice like you perform.

Next, stand in front of the pell, with correct stance for whichever weapon style you are working on. Stretch your weapon out to where the blade touches the "sweet spot." This is usually located $\frac{3}{4}$ of the way to the tip of weapon from where your hand(s) are located.

Then, very slowly throw a shot at one area of the pell, say, right side of the head. Now, return the weapon back to rest position. Repeat this process and pay close attention to your technique. Do not cheat yourself. It's like in studying for math, if you go over the easy problems over and over again, sure you'll feel better about yourself, but will you really be prepared for the difficult ones? No. Instead, you should take the time to do all level of problems. In fighting, if you do not practice good and proper technique, then you will not perform good and proper technique.

After you have continued with the slow movements to one area 5-7 times (while making sure that your technique is good), add in another shot to the mix. Like right side of the arm. Then do this combo over and over again. When you are ready, add in a shot to the left side of the head and so on. Eventually you want to get to the point where you are going through an entire combination.

Now that you are using proper technique and you have your combination down, you can finally start increasing your speed. Do this very gradually. It will pay off in the long run and will help to prevent injury of the muscles. Once you are up to an ultra-fast speed, slow all of the way down and go through the combination at the speed from where you are started. NOTE: if you ever weight your weapon to try to strengthen your muscles, do not increase your speed. Keep it at a very slow pace. Otherwise you might hurt yourself.

Have Patience with Pell Work

When you first start using the combination you devised on the pell, you will do poorly. However, do not despair because if you continue, you are going to get better. Next, you will use the combo at practice. Where you will do poorly. Then you keep practicing and you will get better. Then you go to a tourney and try the combo. And guess what? You do poorly. But then you keep using it at tourneys and then you become good. Guess what happens now? That's right! You go back to the pell, practice a new combo, and start the whole process over again. If you do this 15-20 times you will come out as a really good fighter. Then guess what happens? You pick up a new weapon style and start going through the cycle with it!

As said before, remember to not ever cheat yourself when doing these exercises. It is very easy to just speed ahead and start wacking rapidly at the pell. But this does not do anything for you but wear you out. Instead, you want to do things slow, then fast, then fast near exhaustion, and then slow again. Why? Because this focuses on your muscle memory and trains your body to act instinctively. The best fighters do not think about every blow they throw. They best fighters have trained their body to throw the correct shot and the right time and this is done through lots of slow, repetitive learning.

How to Make Your Own Pell

This pell is from a website that I found that lists several types of pell designs. Here is the link: <http://www.woodenswords.com/WMA/index.htm>. I plan to make this pell because of the benefits described below. Yes, I said, "plan to make." I just haven't gotten around to do it, but I do want to see if we could do a pell-day at MacGregor's mill in the fall. In addition, with this type of pell, it can be easily transported to practice where we can work on pell work together.

The Free-Standing Post

The absolute immobility of the pell has been answered a few different ways, one of which is to take the wooden post, and mount it to an old wheel drum, which can usually be found at any junk yard for a relatively low price. The wooden post is then placed in the center of the wheel drum, and affixed into place with concrete. You now have a free standing pell that, while heavy, will not fall over, and can be tipped on an angle and rolled to wherever you want it in your yard. The post can again be wrapped in carpet or foam to protect your weapons.

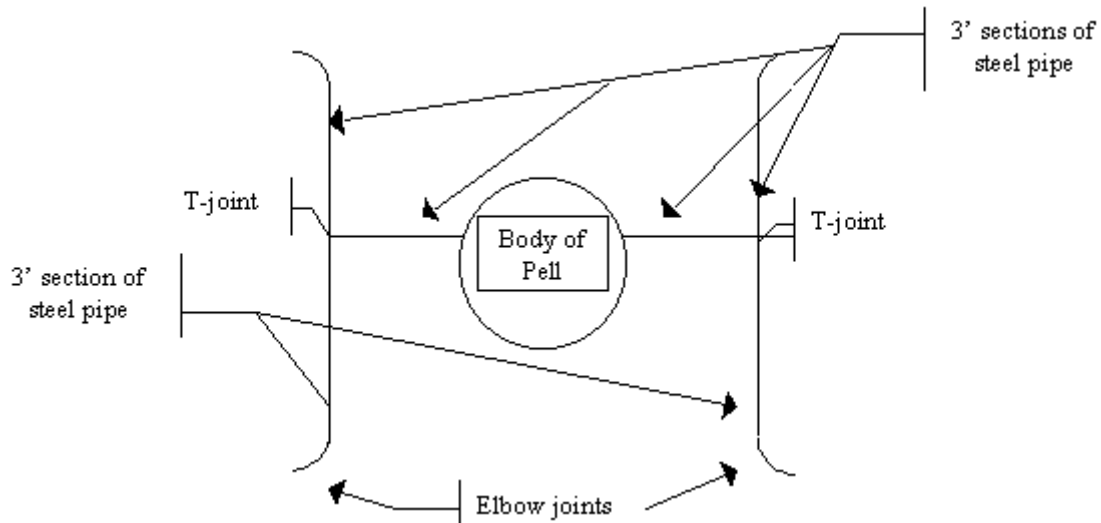
Besides being more portable than a sunken pell, however, there really isn't much additional advantage to this sort of pell. It still doesn't really do anything to facilitate footwork, nor is it really portable. It is, however, easy to make, and will probably last forever. If weight and portability isn't a concern at all, replace the wooden post with steel piping, and you have a training tool you can pass on to your descendants.

A better design for a free-standing pell is an H-base shaped pell. This particular design is made entirely out of 3' sections of steel pipe (about 1 1/4" in diameter), connected by "t-joint" connectors. Basically, the base is made in the shape of the letter "H," as in the diagram below. In the center of the cross bar, a final t-joint is placed, with the third joint facing up. Additional stability is provided to the frame, by attaching elbow joints to the outside of each leg, and turning the elbow so that it lies flat, and faces outwards. (Again, see diagram.)

The body of the pell will be screwed into the open center joint you have remaining. The body is simply made of additional pipe, of whatever length you want your pell to stand at. This is then wrapped in some

sort of cushioning. Carpet or conveyor belt is quite resilient, camping-pad foam less so, but are both easily found. I've recently seen this same pipe core surrounded by a series of foam "noodles" sold in most toy stores as pool toys. As silly as this may sound, this is actually a pretty resilient padding material, which will also minimize damage to your practice sword.

H-Frame Pell Design



The benefits of this design are durability, portability, and versatility. Although certainly not light (altogether, you're probably looking at 25 - 30 lbs.), you can unscrew the body from the base, disassemble the base, put the whole thing into a duffel bag, and store it in a closet, or lug it to a practice. It will assemble or tear down in a matter of a couple of minutes.

In terms of durability, the pell I have of this design, and is now nearly a decade old. I've had to re-wrap it in duct tape occasionally, as the carpet tears, and I confess the time for a new covering draws nigh, but the frame and body are perfectly sound. Even if they were beginning to show signs of breaking, one pell every ten years seems acceptable.

Versatility: Oddly enough, this particular design also can help develop foot work, notably traverses and passes. Because you have the long legs of the base sticking out, as you close and traverse around the pell, you will find that you need to learn how to step so you don't trip. This might seem self-evident, but as you practice your cuts and routines, you will quickly find that you initially bump and stumble around the pipe frame. Learning how to step around/over the base, and continue to make effective cuts and thrusts, will prove to be a useful aid in analyzing your own footwork.

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