

St. Michael's Salle d'Armes

Rapier Tournament

Rules of Combat

These rules are a modified version of the rules used by the **Association for Historical Fencing (AHF)**. The purpose of these rules and regulations is to put in place safe and sane criteria for the practice of the art of the rapier. It is not the intent of these rules to recreate "actual rapier combat," but rather to outline basic parameters for conducting fencing with the rapier. It is impossible to replicate personal combat to the most minute detail and authentic conditions without resorting to actual bloodshed. It is the intent of this regulatory system to insure that those who wish to practice the historical forms of fencing with the rapier can do so in an honorable and reasonably realistic fashion that stresses safety.

Officials: 1 Marshal and 4 Corner Judges:

The Marshal's function is to ensure that the combat proceeds smoothly and fairly. He must see that the fencing is conducted in accordance to the rules and must halt any swordplay that, in his opinion, is unruly, patently unfair, and/or unsafe. If the Marshal feels that the action has become irregular and unsafe, he will immediately stop the action. Similarly, if the action becomes obscured so that the Marshal and judges cannot interpret the phrase, the action will be stopped.

Additionally, the Marshal shall have the power to:

- Commence, hold, end a bout, and declare a winner.
- Penalize violations of the rules and conventions of fencing, including those written and unwritten rules relating to sportsmanship and good conduct:
 - ♣ 1st offense: Warning
 - ♣ 2nd offense: Loss of point
 - ♣ 3rd offense: Loss of bout and/or Disqualification and ejection from the tournament.
- Award touches with the concurrence of the judges and in accordance with the applicable voting procedure.
- Exercise complete control over the fencers, spectators, judges, minor officials, and such other personnel as may be in the area of the ring. This control extends to whatever means may be necessary to maintain order, including ejecting a fencer or spectator, dismissing a judge, etc.

The Corner Judges have the responsibility to assist the Marshal by watching for touches occurring during the bout, which they will signal against the fencer who was touched by raising a flag, or by such other method as may be determined for a given competition.

Weapon and Equipment Specifications:

All weapons & equipment must be inspected prior to the beginning of the tournament and are subject to inspection prior to each bout.

Rapiers:

These must be of the cup, shell, or swept-hilt variety and mounted with blades that are either doublewide épée (also sold as "musketeer" blades), Del Tin Practice Rapier blades, or practice schläger blades (oval or diamond). Blades must be between 35 and 45 inches in length measured from ricasso to the tip. There shall be no prohibition against different types of blades being used against each other.

Daggers:

Shall have hilts of either the ring, cross, or shell variety, and must have quillons. Blades must be of the flexible fencing dagger type (the "flexi-dagger," "safety-flex", or similar type). Daggers made from cut-down épée or foil blades, and any blades specifically designed to catch or break an opponent's blade are all specifically prohibited.

Cloaks:

Cloaks may be of any stout fabric that will not snag on an opponents blade. Cloaks cannot be weighted on the edge, nor may they in any way present a danger to the fencer- such as cloaks that are tattered, have holes, or are in a state of disrepair.

Shields/Bucklers:

Small Shields of no more than 15 inches or a Buckler of no more than 16 inches may be used. All measurements will be a diagonal length from corner to corner. In the case of a round shield the measure through the center shall not exceed 15 inches. All edges must be sufficiently blunted or have rolled edges for safety reasons.

General Weapon Specifications

Rapiers and daggers must be constructed in as historically accurate a manner as possible within the realm of safety. The hilts of weapons must be constructed without any type of eccentricity with regard to the quillions, knuckle bow, or ricasso, and without anachronism, such as offset guards. The blade must NOT be mounted obliquely with respect to the quillions. Moreover, the blade must be in good condition, free of rust and burrs, and may have only a single, gradual curve. Blades may be neither too stiff (rigid) nor overly flexible (whippy), subject to the discretion of the Marshal and officials. * The point of the blade must be covered with a winding of waxed thread covered with adhesive tape and then covered with a leather patch or rubber coating. Rubber or plastic buttons, or their equivalent (such as rubber "archery blunts"), are acceptable, but must be secured to the blade with adhesive tape. If your blunt is secured with black tape, we will place a brightly colored tape on top to facilitate visualization of touches and aid prompt recognition if the blunt is lost in the middle of the fence.

* The quality of the blades as manufactured will be taken into consideration.

Clothing and Protective Equipment:

Three-weapon fencing masks (12 Kg Punch test) with thick, sewn-in bibs are required for competition. Extra protection for the throat, such as a gorget made of steel or leather (no less than 4 oz) is required, and must be sufficiently padded to provide impact protection. Standard three-weapon uniforms or equivalent commercially available protection, which, in order to facilitate judging of touches may be of any solid color but black, or historically period clothing are required for competition. Uniforms must be made of strong material, preferably of heavily padded cotton duck or canvas. Long pants or fencing knickers must be worn and must be of a strong, tight weave, non-stretch material. Heavy plastrons over the jacket are recommended, as are elbow protectors, padded sleeves, padded leg coverings, kneepads, shin guards, etc. Breast protectors are required for women, and rigid groin cups are highly encouraged for men. Padded saber gloves for both hands, or leather gauntlets, or the equivalent, are required. The cuffs of the gloves must go over and cover the sleeves by at least three (3) inches, and construction must be of sturdy leather or equivalent.

Tournament Conduct

There will be 3 rounds and a Final Round

All participants shall compete in the first three rounds. The top six (6) scoring competitors shall advance to the final round.

The First round will be single Rapier

The Second round will be Rapier and Dagger

The Third round will be Rapier and off hand weapon of choice to include small shield, buckler, Cloak, dagger, or second Rapier.

The Final round will be single Rapier or Rapier and off hand weapon of choice.

Judging Rules

1. Each school that has more than 3 participants will be given the opportunity to have a corner judge. It is the responsibility of the club/Guild/school to train their representative in judging.
2. The Marshal will begin the bout by bringing both contestants to the center of the fencing area ("ring"). Each fencer will wear a colored ribbon on his or her non-dominant arm for identification purposes. Once the Marshal has assured that everything is in order he shall bring them on guard with the command "Take your guard" or "engarde." He shall then step back and give the command to "Fence." Each fencer fences in his own way and at his own risk and peril. The fencers shall cease fencing upon the command "Hold."
3. There will be 4 static corner judges and one Marshal. Each judge will have 1 vote when indicating a hit. The Marshal shall have 1 vote when indicating a hit. In order for a hit to be considered valid a combination of 3 judges or 2 judges and the Marshal must agree that a touch was on target and had sufficient bend to indicate significant penetration.

4. Upon seeing a touch or the signal for a touch from a judge, the Marshal shall stop the bout by calling “Hold” and poll the judges as to the direction of the touch (who was touched,) the type of touch, whether point or cut, and where it arrived. Should the judges agree that there was a hit, but disagree as to its point value (e.g. whether it was to the chest or arm), one point shall be awarded. A judge may abstain from Judgment if their vision is obstructed.

Scoring Rules

1. The Marshal shall declare the combatant who reaches 3 points first the winner of the bout. No more than 3 hit points shall be awarded per combatant per bout. However, all points (hit and style points) earned in the first three rounds will be tallied to determine the six fencers with the overall highest scores to proceed to the final round.
2. Thrusts to the chest, head or abdomen (vital areas) are valued at 3 points. Thrusts to any extremity are valued at 1 point. Thrusts must land distinctly on target, and the blade must bend sufficiently but not excessively on impact to demonstrate penetrating power. The exception to this rule is thrusts to the mask (including the head, face, or throat), which must be pulled to avoid injury. If these blows are not pulled, they will be judged excessively violent and shall be punished accordingly by the Marshal.
3. Cuts to any area of the body are valued at 1 point. The Cut must be done with the True Edge or False Edge. Cuts made with the distal third of the blade are valid. Any Cuts done with the flat of the blade or the forte of the blade will be invalid. Cuts that are brutal, that is, delivered with excessive force, or are made by hacking, chopping, whipping, or bludgeoning, are strictly prohibited. Cuts made by laying the blade on target and drawing are not acceptable or permitted, as these are not true draw cuts. Cuts landing over steel shall be declared valid.
4. Double kills and Double Touches: When both fencers hit a 3-point area at the same time, each fencer will receive 1 point and the bout will end. If one of the touches was clearly out of time, then that touch shall be ignored and the 3 points awarded to the fencer whose touch was first. If one of the double hits is to a non-vital area (non-3 point area) the fencer landing the non-vital hit will gain a point towards his/her total score. The fencer landing the vital 3-point hit will be considered the winner of the bout. Should one fencer hit his opponent with both dagger and rapier the points will be awarded for each hit. (E.g., a rapier hit to the leg plus a dagger hit to the arm of his opponent), total score would be 2 points. Should one hit be to a 3 point area such as the head or torso, the highest point will be counted and the secondary hit will be ignored.
5. Use of the unarmed hand to parry is permitted. The unarmed hand may be used to parry at the option of the fencer. Use of the unarmed hand for checking and pushing is permitted. Combatants are allowed to seize the blade without losing a point if the action is on the lower 2/3 of the blade. The combatant will have one tempo to score a hit against his opponent before the Marshal halts the action. Should the combatant seize his opponent’s weapon on the upper 1/3 of the blade they will receive a point against them (a cut) but will have one tempo action to score against his opponent before the Marshal shall call a hold. If a counter-

- seizure is employed, then the Marshall shall call hold to ensure safety and forestall grappling. **This rule does not apply to disarming, see rule #7 below.**
6. Grappling and striking actions will NOT be allowed for safety reasons. This includes, but is not limited to, tripping and knocking down an adversary. The use of striking actions such as punches, chops, and kicks are forbidden. Blows of any variety are forbidden. Grappling techniques including but not limited to joint locks, throws, and tripping are forbidden. If this occurs, hold will be called and no points will be awarded for the first offense. Subsequent violation can result in disqualification and ejection from the tournament.
 7. Disarming techniques by means of seizing the arm, forte of the blade, or hilt of the adversary's weapon with the off-weapon hand are not permitted. If a fencer loses his secondary weapon he must fence without it. However, should a fencer purposely drop his weapon in order to prevent injury to his opponent from an excessive impact on a valid target, that shall not be considered a disarm. In this case, a hold shall be called and the fencer shall be allowed to reclaim his weapon and continue the bout. The decision of whether a weapon was dropped purposefully or not shall be solely at the discretion of the Marshal, and this decision shall not be affected by polling of the judges. While fencing with rapier and dagger should the fencer lose his primary weapon and no hit was made to either party then the fence will continue until a touch is received. Once either party has made a touch the dropped weapon may be recovered and the fencing will continue (see scoring Rules).
 8. Pommel strikes are not permitted for the sake of safety.
 9. **Strikes to the back of the head or neck of any kind are NOT permitted for safety reasons.** Should a fencer expose the back of the head and the adversary is in position to strike, it will be to the discretion of the Marshal to stop the fence and poll the judges to grant the appropriate point.
 10. Declining the Point: A combatant awarded a hit may decline the point if they know that their hit was insufficient to cause injury. Any secondary point scored by the opponent will also be void. No points will be awarded and the contest will continue until 3 points are reached. If the fencer chooses to decline a point-his/her decision will be considered final and no polling of the judges will take place.
 11. Accepting a point. Combatants may call a hit upon themselves if they were struck but not called by the Judges or Marshal. The combatant may call halt and back out of measure to tell the Marshall where they were hit. The Marshall shall then award the appropriate score to the adversary.
 12. Style Points: After the fence, the Marshal will poll each Judge to award Style points for martially correct historical fencing. The fencer must demonstrate control of body and blade with cleanliness of form. Each fencer in the bout will be judged individually. The Marshal shall say "Judges, style points for Blue combatant" at which time each Judge and the Marshal will indicate by raising their hand simultaneously to award .25 style points to the fencer for fencing in an historical accurate manner. The Marshal then will Say " Judges, style points for Gold combatant" at which time each Judge and the Marshal will indicate by raising their hand to award .25 style points to this the fencer for fencing in an

historically accurate manner. A maximum of 1.25 style points can be earned per bout. Fencing and Style points will be tallied by the scorekeeper and announced to all present.

13. **Total Score and Winner**: Winners of bouts will be determined by both Hits scored and Style points earned. Maximum points that may be earned per bout is 4.25. (Three points for the fight and one and one quarter point for style and cleanliness.) After three rounds the six fencers with the highest total points will compete in the final round. In the final round, points will be awarded for touches only. There will be no style points awarded in the final round. However, the judges or Marshall may halt the fence if the combatants are not fencing in a martially correct style. The first halt shall result in a warning. The second halt will result in loss of one point. A third halt will result in loss of bout.

Dishonorable conduct

Dishonorable conduct such as attempting to circumvent the rules will result in a warning for the first offense and ejection for any subsequent offense. Vindictive acts of any kind will result in disqualification and ejection from the event. Emotional outbursts, or displays of temper before, during, or after a bout are forbidden. Participants must exhibit self-control and good manners.