

Commentaries and Procedures for the Judging and Directing of Classical Foil Formal Assaults

Introduction

The purpose of these rules and regulations is to put in place safe and sane criteria for the practice of classical and historical fencing. It is not the intent of these rules to recreate "actual combat," but rather to outline basic parameters for conducting assaults within a tournament structure. In the opinion of the Association, 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 classical and historical forms of fencing can do so in an honorable fashion that stresses safety.

General Provisions

- I. Fencers fence at their own risk and peril.
- II. It is the responsibility of the participants to have knowledge of and adhere to the rules. No exceptions and no waivers.
- III. Spectators must not interfere in any way. Coaching by voice or gesture, commenting in a loud voice, swearing, using foul language, or abusing officials is prohibited. Spectators behaving in an unruly manner, creating a nuisance, and/or preventing orderly proceeding of the contest will be warned, and if they persist in their actions, ejected.
- IV. All rules listed herein are to be enforced without modification in official AHF events, unless permission is granted by the AHF Rules Committee to modify the rules for a given competition.

1.0 General Conditions of the Assault

- A. There shall be two categories of participation. The first category is for young participants 12 to 17 years of age. The second category is for participants 18 years and older. The rules shall be the same for either category. There may be open tournaments that include all age brackets, at the discretion of the Tournament Director.
- B. All assaults shall be fenced on a *piste* 20 feet long by 3 feet wide. Stepping out of bounds will be penalized as detailed in section 8.0.
- C. Each fencer must adhere to Classical foil technique and form.

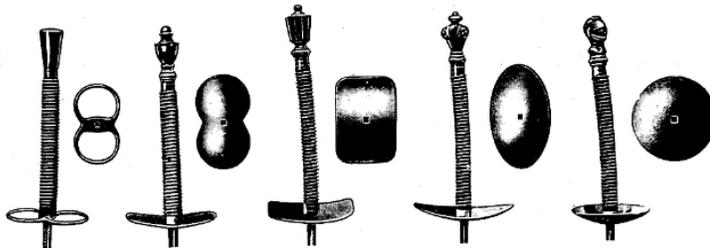
2.0 Weapons, Equipment Specifications and Requirements

All weapons and equipment must be inspected by officials prior to the beginning of the tournament. Each participant is required to bring 2 weapons to be inspected.

A. Weapons

- I. Only French, Italian, traditional Spanish, or Scuola mista hilts are permitted.
All foils must have their points covered with a rubber, plastic, leather or waxed thread button affixed with white surgical adhesive tape. Blades must be clean and free of rust. No part of the blade can be covered by tape with the exception of the point. The tape over the button covering the nail head cannot extend more than one inch below the nail head. Bird blunts cannot serve as a button on a foil.
 - On the French foil, guards (*coquilles*) may be figure-eight, rectangular, oval or round.
 - On the Italian foil, the guard (*coccia*) must be round, and the cross bar may project no more than two centimeters beyond the circumference of the guard.
 - On the Spanish foil, the guard (*taza*) must be round.
 - On the *Scuola mista* foil, the guard (*coccia*) must be round and the grip may be constructed with a single ring or single prong.

French foils



Italian foil



Spanish foil



Scuola mista foil



- II. Only standard non-electric foils will be permitted. Orthopedic grips of any type are forbidden. Blades mounted with dummy electric tips are forbidden.
- III. The use of a *martingale* or a *wrist strap* is optional.
- IV. Fencers must have two weapons in good condition when arriving on the *piste*.

B. Clothing and Protective Equipment

- I. Three weapon fencing masks (12 Kg punch test) with thick, sewn-in bibs are required for tournaments. No customized masks or attachments to the masks will be permitted, with the exception of additions like leather coverings that are sewn onto the mask or padding that is attached which is designed in a manner that does not cause a blade to get caught in between the mask and the padding. The mesh (black, white, or silver) must remain unmodified as it comes from the manufacturer. No images of any kind are allowed on the mesh. No electric saber masks or masks with polycarbonate visors are permitted. All masks must fit properly to ensure maximum protection.
- II. Three-weapon jackets are required for tournaments. These must be made of strong material, preferably of heavily padded cotton duck or canvas. The jacket must completely overlap the waist of the pants/knickers by a minimum of 2 inches. In order to facilitate judging of touches jackets must be white or of a natural canvas color.
- III. Long pants or fencing knickers must be worn and must be made of at least 12-ounce duck or the equivalent, and can be of any light (muted) or dark solid color. Specifically forbidden are, sweat pants, blue jeans, Gi /Kung Fu pants, warm-up pants and pants with pockets on the outside of garment.
- IV. Socks must be of any light (muted) or dark solid color. Shoes must be predominantly white, black or gray.
- V. An underarm plastron is required under the jacket. Breast protectors are required for women, and rigid groin cups are required for men.

VI. A glove for the armed hand is required. The cuff of the glove must overlap the sleeve by at least 3 inches and must be made of sturdy leather or equivalent material.

VII. Spandex or nylon clothing as well as excessively baggy clothing is forbidden.

NOTE: No bare flesh may be exposed with exception of the unarmed hand and back of the head.

3.0 Technique and Safety

A. Target Area

The valid target area shall be within the limits bounded by the top of the neck under the chin (the bib or *bavette* where it covers the same area of the neck is also valid target), and a line connecting the tops of the hipbones. The back, which is considered to end at the top of the hips, is also a valid target. The groin, arms, and legs do not count as valid target.

B. Thrusts

Thrusts must land clearly and distinctly on target, and the blade must bend sufficiently on impact to demonstrate penetrating power. Jabbing or punching actions are forbidden, and do not qualify as thrusts. However, actions such as an *appuntata* or remise are permitted, as they are valid technique.

C. Use of the Unarmed Hand

The use of the unarmed hand is NOT permitted, with the exception of the *passata sotto*, in which the unarmed hand makes contact with the ground.

4.0 Infighting

A. Infighting is permitted. However, discretion and self-control must be exercised. If the director feels that the action has become irregular or unsafe, he will immediately stop the action. Similarly, if the action becomes obscured so that the director and judges cannot interpret the phrase, the action must be stopped. The action will also be halted upon any clashing of the guards. The contestant who systematically and deliberately causes infighting by force of the action will be dealt with as described in Section 8.0.

B. The “fleche”, or any type of running attack, is prohibited. However, attacks by means of a passing step are permitted, since they are not executed as running attacks.

C. *Corps-a-corps* encounters must be stopped by the Director. *Corps-a-corps* is defined as either bodily contact or clashing of the guards and is not permitted in foil. The contestant who systematically and deliberately causes a corps-a-corps by force of the action will be dealt with as described in Section 8.0.

D. A touch outside the prescribed target area may be counted provided if, in the opinion of the director, it would have been good if the adversary had not taken an irregular position or made an illegal movement.

5.0 General Conduct

A. Every touch should be immediately acknowledged, whether good or bad, by the fencer receiving the touch by making a foot call (an appel) and declaring “touch” in a loud voice.

B. Speaking while under arms (except for acknowledging a touch against oneself) is not permitted except with the permission of the director, gained by making a foot call (an appel) and being recognized by the director.



Shaded area indicates valid target

- C. When the director halts the action, both fencers must immediately assume first position.
- D. It is forbidden to hold the weapon with both hands or to change from one hand to the other during an assault.
- E. A fencer should not gesture in any form to the audience or judges that he has made a valid thrust or that he disapproves of a decision.
- F. Neither fencer is allowed to keep the point of his weapon fixed upon the adversary once the halt is called.
- G. The fencer is not allowed to turn his back toward the adversary after delivering a thrust.
- H. Emotional outbursts or displays of temper before, during or after an assault are forbidden. Participants must exhibit self-control and good manners.
- I. The covering of valid target with any part of the body considered as non-valid (e.g. hand, arm, or leg) is forbidden.
- J. All violations of the general conduct rules will be dealt with as a violation of the rules, as described in section 8.0.



First position

6.0 Officiating

- A. Formal Assault
 - I. Every formal assault will be presided over by a Director of Combat. The director'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 exchange that, in his opinion, is unruly, patently unfair and/or unsafe. Additionally, the director shall have the power to:
 - Commence, halt, or end an assault, and declare a winner.
 - Penalize violations of the rules and conventions of fencing, including those written and unwritten rules relating to good conduct.
 - 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 that may be in the area of the *piste*. This control extends to whatever means may be necessary to maintain order, including ejecting a fencer or spectator, dismissing a judge, etc.
 - The Director of Combat is the sole interpreter of the rules.
 - II. The Director will be assisted in his duties by 4 judges, the responsibility of whom it shall be to watch for touches occurring during the assault, which they shall signal against the fencer who was touched by raising a hand and declaring "touch" in a loud voice.
 - III. Judges shall have 1 vote each and the director shall have 1½ votes. A minimum of 1½ votes are required to award or deny a touch.
- B. Scoring for Excellence of Technique and Form
 - I. Scoring for technique and form shall be determined by a separate panel of 3 judges. Each judge in the panel will award to each contestant in each assault a point value from 0 through 5 (0 being least, 5 being most). When a separate panel cannot be assembled, then the award shall be determined by a consensus of the officiating director(s) and/or judges.

- II. The technical points are used to distinguish between those who are adhering to sound martial principles and those who are merely interested in scoring points. Points are awarded according to how effective the fencer is in both offense and defense in conjunction with precise orthodox execution of technique.

7.0 Procedure

- A. All assaults shall be for 3 points, or for a limit of 5 minutes, whichever comes first. Points are scored against the fencer receiving the touch. If the score is tied at the end of this time period, one additional touch will be fenced without time limit to determine a winner. The fencer with fewest touches called against them shall be declared the winner.
- B. To begin the assault, the director shall bring both contestants to the center of the piste. Once the director has assured that everything is in order (such as that the fencer is using inspected weapons, wearing the approved clothing, etc.), he shall have them salute and bring them on guard, with the command "on guard." He shall then give the command "fence." The fencers shall cease fencing upon the command "halt."
- C. Upon seeing a touch or the signal for a touch from a judge, the director shall stop the assault and poll the judges as to the validity of the touch. The judges must respond with one of the following: "yes," "no," "abstain," "off target," "insufficient penetration," "passé" (passed), "plaque" (flat), "mal parée" (insufficient parry) or "over steel."
- D. For a parry to be considered sufficient, the attacking blade must be clearly removed from its threatening position with the result that the defender is not touched. Mere contact against the attacking blade is not considered a sufficient parry. If an attack arrives due to an insufficient parry (mal parée), the attack is counted as valid. If the attack lands due to the attacking blade whipping around a properly executed parry (over steel), the touch is not valid.
- E. A hit off-target suffices to stop the phrase of arms and annuls any succeeding riposte or counter-riposte.
- F. If a fencer disarms his adversary by beating or transporting the weapon, a touch is good only if made instantaneously as a consequence of that action. The touch must be made before the adversary's weapon reaches the ground.
- G. Priority
 - I. Priority is determined by the attack. The attack in foil is the initial offensive action executed by FULLY EXTENDING THE SWORD ARM, which must precede any forward movement of the body and continuously threaten the adversary's valid target.
 - II. Fundamental Principles for the Determination of Priority in the Double Touch—Adopted from: *Foil and Sabre: A Grammar of Fencing by Louis Rondelle, 1892*
 - 1. *A Double Hit by simultaneous attacks of equal merit is annulled.*
 - 2. *A Double Hit by a Stop-Thrust upon an attack badly executed, wherein the feint was too large or the arm drawn back, counts for the one who made the Stop-Thrust; Since he may have mistaken the faulty movement of the assailant for a preparation of attack, and erred only in judgment, while the other is doubly culpable in having sacrificed primary principles to ambition or excitement.*
 - 3. *A Double Hit by a Time-Thrust badly judged counts for the assailant. For the attack was well executed and the adversary had a choice of a parry, a retreat, or a Time-Thrust. He chose the most hazardous and executed it faultily.*

4. *A Double Hit by a Tension upon an attack well made counts for the Assailant. The party attacked sought to make a Double Hit because he felt himself incapable of parrying.*

8.0 Violations of the Rules

Violations of these rules will be dealt with in the following manner, unless otherwise noted elsewhere in the rules:

- 1st Offense: Warning
 - 2nd Offense: Point against
 - 3rd Offense: Loss of the assault
 - 4th Offense: Disqualification
- A. If a fencer steps off any boundary of the piste with one foot (meaning any part of the foot outside of the designated boundary lines) he will receive a warning. A second occurrence will result in a point being called against that fencer. Once any point has been awarded, all previous out-of-bounds warnings are annulled for both fencers.
- B. Dishonorable conduct, such as attempting to circumvent the rules, will result in a warning for the first offense and ejection for any subsequent offense.
- C. Vindictive acts of any kind will result in disqualification and ejection from the event. The AHF Board of Governors may also ban the offender from all events for a period of any length, up to and including a lifetime ban from Association events.

“This method of judging is based upon the idea that the contest is intended as an exhibition of skill as well as the securing of touches.”

—*Amateur Fencer’s League of America Fencing Rules*, 1891

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These rules have been adapted primarily from *Foil and Sabre A Grammar of Fencing*
by Louis Rondelle, 1892

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