

Commentaries and Procedures for the Judging and Directing of Rapier Formal Assaults

1.0 General Conditions of the Assault

All assaults shall be fenced in a square area that is 25 - 35 feet in length and 25 - 35 feet in width, hereafter referred to as the 'ring'. Stepping out of bounds will be penalized as detailed in section 8.0.

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

Permitted weapons forms are: single rapier, rapier and dagger, rapier and cloak. Combinations not specifically mentioned in the list of permitted weapons forms are NOT permitted.

• Rapiers

These must be of the cup, shell, or swept-hilt variety and must be mounted with practice rapier blades. Blades must be 35 - 45 inches in length.

• Daggers

Daggers must have hilts of either the ring, cross or shell variety, and must have quillions. 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 are specifically PROHIBITED.

• Cloaks

Cloaks may be of any stout material that will not snag on an adversary's blade. Cloaks cannot be weighted on the edge and cannot in any way present a danger to the fencer, such as cloaks that are tattered, have holes, or are in a state of disrepair.

B. General Weapon Specifications

I. There shall be no prohibition against different types of blades being used against each other.

II. Rapiers and daggers must be constructed in as historically accurate a manner as possible within the realm of safety.

III. 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.

IV. The blade must NOT be mounted obliquely with respect to the quillions.

V. The blade must be in good condition, free of rust and burrs, and may have only a single, gradual curve.

VI. Blades may be neither too stiff (rigid) nor overly flexible (whippy), subject to the discretion of the director and officials.

VII. Any weapons with blades designed to catch or break an adversary's blade are all specifically PROHIBITED.

VIII. The point of the blade must be covered. If the point ends in a nail-head it may 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



Cup-hilt rapier



Shell-hilt rapier



Swept-hilt rapier



Dagger

equivalent (such as rubber archery blunts), are acceptable but must be secured to the blade with adhesive tape. Blades without nail-heads must be covered with a rubber button or archery blunt. Inside the button or archery blunt there must be a metal washer to prevent the blade from penetrating through the button.

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

C. 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 of any type will be permitted. 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. All masks must fit properly to ensure maximum protection.
- II. Standard three-weapon jackets or equivalent commercially available protection, which, in order to facilitate judging of touches may be of any solid color EXCEPT BLACK, are required for tournaments. Jackets 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. Long pants or fencing knickers must be worn and must be of a strong, tight weave, non-stretch material.
- III. 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 required for men.
- IV. Padded sabre gloves for both hands, or the equivalent, are required. The cuffs of the gloves must overlap the sleeves by at least 3 inches and must be made of sturdy leather or equivalent material.

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

3.0 Technique and Safety

A. Target Area

The target area shall include all parts of the body except the back of the head and the weapon hand(s).

B. Cuts

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.

C. Thrusts

- I. Thrusts must land distinctly on target, and the blade must bend sufficiently on impact to demonstrate penetrating power. The exception to this rule is a thrust 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 director.
- II. Jabbing or punching actions are forbidden. These do not qualify as thrusts.

D. Use of the Unarmed Hand

- I. The use of the unarmed hand is permitted. The unarmed hand may be used to parry.
- II. Seizing of the blade is permitted. The fencer seizing the blade can do so only momentarily. Twisting or pulling the blade, however, is prohibited. This is not the

same as disarming, in which the blade, hilt, or arm is seized in a manner specific to the technique. The defending fencer, in order to avoid injury to the other fencer, must not twist or pull his weapon away when it is seized. Permissible actions in this case include letting go of the weapon (which is counted as a disarmament) or employing a counter seizure. If a counter seizure is employed, the director will call a halt to ensure safety and forestall grappling.

- III. Disarming techniques by means of seizing the arm, forte of the blade, or hilt of the adversary's weapon, are permitted. This is counted as 3 points scored against the fencer who was disarmed. If a fencer loses his primary weapon other than by a disarm he loses the assault and 3 points are scored against him. If a fencer loses his secondary weapon he must fence without it. However, should a fencer drop his weapon as a result of the impact on a valid target surface, that will not be considered a disarm. In this case, a halt shall be called and the fencer shall be allowed to reclaim his weapon. The decision of whether a weapon was dropped because of the impact will be solely at the discretion of the director, and this decision shall not be affected by the decision of the judges.

4.0 Infighting

- I. Infighting is permitted. However, discretion and self-control must be exercised. If the director feels that the action has become irregular and 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.
- II. The use of the unarmed hand for checking, pushing, or pulling the adversary is permitted. Use of the weapon for checking or pushing is permitted. Actions and techniques that constitute a blow, striking, or impact are prohibited.
- III. Ducking, weaving, and slipping, and all evasive displacements of the body, including those in which part of the body comes in contact with the ground, for the purpose of avoiding being hit are permitted, provided the action remains controlled. However, should the director feel that the action is uncontrolled or constitutes a fall, he shall halt the assault.
- III. Wrestling techniques are forbidden. This includes, but is not limited to, tripping and knocking down and adversary. The use of striking actions such as punches, chops and kicks are forbidden. Blows of any variety are forbidden. Grappling techniques are forbidden, including but not limited to joint locks, throws and tripping. The fencer who causes bodily contact without either brutality or violence, even several times in succession, has not violated this rule and is guilty of no irregularity.

NOTE: Any violation of the wrestling and grappling prohibitions will result in ejection.

5.0 General Conduct

- A. The fencers may acknowledge receiving a touch by 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 and being recognized by the director.
- C. A fencer should not gesture in any form to the audience or judges that he has made a valid touch or that he disapproves of a decision.
- D. Emotional outbursts or displays of temper before, during or after an assault are forbidden. Participants must exhibit self-control and good manners.
- E. All violations of the general conduct rules will be dealt with as a violation of the rules as described in section 8.0.

6.0 Officiating

- A. 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 sportsmanship and 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 ring. This control extends to whatever means may be necessary to maintain order, including ejecting a fencer or spectator, dismissing a judge, etc.
- B. The Director will be assisted in his duties by 4 judges, the responsibility of whom it will be to watch for touches occurring during the assault, which they will signal against the fencer who was touched by raising the hand and declaring "touch" in a loud voice.
- C. Judges shall have 1 vote each and the director shall have 1 votes. A minimum of two votes is required to award a touch.

NOTE: The Director of Combat is sole interpreter of the rules.

7.0 Procedure

- A. All assaults shall be for 3 points, with points scored against the fencer receiving the touch. Thrusts to the body and face shall count for 3 points, whereas thrusts to the rest of the body count for 1 point. All rapier cuts count as 1 point. In all assaults there shall be a time limit of 5 minutes. 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.
- B. To begin the assault the director shall bring both fencers to the center of the ring. Once the director has assured that everything is in order (such as that the fencers are using inspected weapons, wearing the approved uniform, etc.) he shall bring them on guard with the command "Fencers take your guard." He shall then step back and give the command to "Fence." The fencers shall cease fencing upon the command "Halt." If required, the director shall use a staff or cane to separate the fencers.
- 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 direction of the touch (who received the touched,) the type of touch, whether it was a thrust or cut, and where it arrived. The judges must respond with one of the following: "yes," "no," "abstain," "off target," "insufficient penetration," "*passé*" (passed), or "*plaque*" (flat).
- D. In the event of a tie vote, the vote of the director shall be the deciding one. Should the judges agree that there was a touch, but disagree as to its point value (e.g. whether it was to the chest or arm), 1 point shall be awarded.
- E. In the case of a double touch (encounter), a touch will be scored against both fencers unless in the opinion of the director one touch was clearly out of time. In the case of an encounter where one fencer is struck with a 1-point touch and the other with a 3-point touch, the fencer receiving the 3-point touch is defeated, unless the other

fencer had 2 touches against prior to the encounter, in which case both are defeated. In case of a double defeat (simultaneous reaching of 3 points against), the assault shall be re-fenced for "first blood" - that is, the first touch shall determine the winner.

- F. The fencers may acknowledge any touches they have received. However, the director has the final say in awarding the touch.

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 ring with one foot (meaning the whole 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.

The AHF Rules Committee
Jeannette Acosta-Martinez, chair
Ramón Martínez, ex-officio
Jana Umbs, Christopher Umbs, Keith S. Massey
Rules Author: Ramón Martínez
Editors: Keith S. Massey and Andy Baiman

Association for Historical Fencing, Inc. 1999
Revised March 2000
Revised January 2009