

# Nashville School of Historical Fencing

## Rapier Tournament Ruleset

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Inspired in part by the Slovak Federation of HEMA rapier ruleset

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### 1.Our Goals/Overview

Our aim is to have a rapier ruleset that is both straightforward and encourages assertive and technical fencing. This will be a single rapier tournament, thus no daggers or offhand weapons/defenses will be allowed. As the nature of rapier combat is extremely fast and thrust oriented, there is no ‘Vor/right of way’ rule, like in our longsword ruleset. Doubles are scored as normal strikes and there is no afterblow in this ruleset, thus the aim is for fencers to have awareness of initiative and gaining the first strike. Certain techniques, ex. wrestling, are restricted so that technical skill, athleticism and strategy are to be highlighted and most essential.

### 2. Scoring

**All valid hits regardless of target area are awarded 1 point.**

1. **Valid target** areas include the head, torso, arms, hands and legs.
2. **Invalid target** areas include the back, back of the head and feet
3. **A Double** is when both fencers land a *valid hit* in the same tempo. Each fencer will be awarded 1 point. This is to keep the match moving and to acknowledge the realism of double hits. A strike in the following tempo/afterblow is not valid and will receive no points.

**Valid hits** are the follow type actions:

4. Cutting - a cut must have sufficient force with clear intent to be considered a hit. A light touch of the blade will not be considered a valid hit. Cuts must have at least a 30 degree arch.
5. Thrusting – a thrust must make sufficient contact to the target. A flex of the blade is to be looked for but not necessary if made with sufficient force.
6. Slicing – a slice must have a clear push or pull action against a valid target area with intent. A missed thrust that grazes a target will not be considered a valid hit.
7. Strike with the pommel – A strike to the mask with the pommel and no other target will be a valid hit. Fencers are expected to show control.
8. Disarm – If a fencer’s weapon is taken away it will be considered a valid hit. *Dropping a weapon will not be considered a valid hit.* Halt will be called and the fencer’s reset.

All actions must have sufficient movement with clear intent to be considered a valid hit. This is not to say that hits should be hard, merely that they need to be clear and with intent to a valid target area that would realistically cause damage. Excessively hard hits will be penalized and not tolerated.

**Invalid hits** are not scored and include the following type actions:

1. Strike to the back or back of the head of an opponent
2. Strike to the foot/below the ankle
3. Striking an unarmed opponent
4. Wrestling/Grappling
5. Punching and Kicking

Any fencer attempting an invalid hit may be given a yellow or immediate red card by the referee, depending on the intent and seriousness.

### **Additional rules**

1. Blade grabbing will be allowed against a blade that is not in motion but does not score a point. If a fencer pulls their blade from an opponent’s hand, they will be awarded a point, as this will be considered a valid slice to the hand.
2. Incoming thrusts may be parried with the off hand. Cuts parried with the off hand will be considered a valid hit to the hand by the opponent.
3. Ringouts will not be awarded points. If a fencer intentional goes out of the ring or leaves the ring, a warning will be given the first and second time. A yellow card will be given on the third time.

### **3. Equipment**

Rapiers will be inspected prior to the match to ensure they have proper flexibility, are in functional condition with no dangerous spurs or cracks, and meet the requirements. Rapiers must be made by an approved supplier of HEMA equipment. Any weapon with a sport fencing/epee/foil blade will not be allowed.

Blade length should not exceed 45" from cross to point.

All blades should be taped and tipped with a rubber or leather end for safety. Spatulated tips should be taped. All tips shall be covered with a bright colored tape, such as yellow, green, red or orange, to allow for ease of judging.

***The following equipment must be worn and inspected:***

- Fencing mask - should be rated at least 350N and be free from any dents, cracks or impressions in the mesh.
- Jackets, should be rated 350N
- Adequate hand protection
- Gorget
- Elbow protection
- Knee and Shin protection
- Athletic shoes that completely cover the feet

#### **4. Conducting the Match**

*Each match in the pool rounds will be 3 minutes in length and to 5 points.* The match will end when either one fencer reaches 5 points or 3 minutes ends with the higher score winning. In the case of both fencers reaching 5 points simultaneously, the match will end in a draw.

*In the elimination rounds, each match will be 3 minutes in length to 7 points.* There will be no draws, therefore a tied match will be sudden death until one fencer breaks the tie.

Each match should run for a continuous 3 minutes, the clock should only be stopped if the judges must discuss the scoring on a particular exchange.

Matches will begin with each fencer starting at their "mark" and they will return to this mark after each exchange awaiting the Director's scoring. If the Director or Assistant yells "Hit!" or "Halt!" the fencers should immediately stop and return to their mark. They will continue when the Director says "Fence!" or "Fight!"

Fencers are expected to be respectful to both one another and to each judge. Fencers should salute one another before the match and shake hands at the conclusion. Good sportsmanlike behavior is expected. Absolutely no arguing about calls will be tolerated from fencers.

#### **5. Judging**

Each match will be conducted by two judges - a Director and an Assistant. The Director will make all decisions and determine the scoring for each exchange. The Assistant's primary role is to view the match from the opposite direction and aid in any difficult to call exchanges.

## **6. Conduct and Penalties**

All participants are expected to conduct themselves in a respectful and sportsmanlike manner during the event. No foul language, rude gestures, or other attempts to intimidate or insult other participants will be tolerated. No unsafe behavior deemed outside the bounds of competitive fencing will be tolerated.

Penalties for various actions will be given at the Director's discretion.

**Yellow Card** will be given with a warning for the first offense. The second offense is automatically a red card.

Certain egregious actions may bypass yellow and go straight to red or black.

**Red Card** Penalties will assign a point to the opponent. A red card may be followed only by a red card or a black card. Three red cards will be given a black card.

A **Black card** is an instant disqualification and ejection from the entire event.

### **Yellow or Red Penalties can be given for the following:**

-Either entering the ring before "fight" is called or continuing to fight for a noticeable time after "halt" is called.

-Arguing with the judges, or unsportsmanlike, or obscene behavior.

-Excessively hard hits.

-Intentionally targeting the back of the head, the back of the torso, or feet.

-Intentionally turning to expose the back of the head/torso to an attack.

-Performing an illegal action such as a striking with the cross, throw or joint lock.

### **Black card offenses include:**

Blatant refusal to obey rules or instructions given by judges and staff.

Open hostility toward the judges, staff, competitors, or attendees.

Any physical abuse (outside the realm of a safe and competitive fencing match), verbal abuse, or sexual abuse.

These can also be given for actions witnessed outside the match. For example, shoulder checking a rival on the way to your match area.