

# CORPORATE RULES FOR RAPIER COMBAT IN THE SOCIETY FOR CREATIVE ANACHRONISM, INCORPORATED

## INTRODUCTION

These rules set fundamental standards for rapier combat in the SCA. They are designed to allow use by the Kingdoms of the Society as basic rules, to which Kingdom-specific preferences (such as the weapons used) can be added. In keeping with Corpora, Kingdoms retain the right to add rules which establish more restrictive standards. All fighters and marshals are responsible for knowing these rules, as well as the additional rules of their Kingdom.

Rules are designed to promote safe rapier combat in the Society. However, no matter how clear or accurate, rules cannot replace common sense, good judgment, and concern for the participants. If a question arises when applying these standards, choose the answer that promotes the greatest degree of safety for all participants.

## CONVENTIONS

### 1. GENERAL INFORMATION

- A. Rapier Combat shall be conducted in accordance with the Rules of the Lists of the SCA, Inc., these rules, and such further rules as are established by the Kingdoms.
- B. All combatants, prior to every combat or practice, shall ensure their equipment is safe, in good working order and has been inspected by a member of the Kingdom Marshallate authorized to inspect rapier gear.
- C. At interkingdom events, for any given Kingdom's tourney, guest combatants shall meet SCA standards for protective gear, but shall comply with whatever weapons standards are being used by the host kingdom for that tourney.
- D. Unless otherwise directed by Kingdom Law, the Crown's representative upon the field and in all matters dealing with Rapier Combat is the Earl Marshal, then the Kingdom Rapier Marshal, then, by delegation, members of the Kingdom Rapier Marshallate.
- E. There are three categories of rapier combat, each requiring separate authorization. Each Kingdom can decide which categories of rapier combat they will permit in their rules. These categories are:
  - light rapier
  - heavy rapier
  - cut and thrust rapier

Except where noted, all rules apply to all three forms of rapier combat. One of the major differences in the three forms is the allowable blades, which are specified in Appendix 5.

### 2. BEHAVIOR ON THE FIELD

- A. All fighters shall obey the commands of the marshals overseeing the field, or be removed from the field and subject to further disciplinary action.
- B. Disagreements with the marshals overseeing the field shall be resolved through the established mechanisms outlined in the Marshallate Procedures of the SCA, Inc.
- C. Each fighter shall maintain control over his or her temper and behavior at all times.

- D. Striking an opponent with excessive force, or with deliberate intent to injure, is forbidden.
- E. Upon hearing the call of "HOLD" all fighting shall immediately stop. The fighters shall freeze, check for hazards in their immediate vicinity, and then assume a non-threatening position with their weapons pointed away from their opponents.
- F. Conduct obstructive of normal rapier combat, such as consistent ignoring of blows, deliberate misuse of the rules (such as calling HOLD whenever pressed), or the like, is forbidden.

### 3. USE OF WEAPONS AND PARRYING DEVICES

- A. Valid blows are struck by: thrusting with the point of the blade (thrust) or sliding the edge of the blade by drawing (draw cut).
  - i. Kingdoms have the option of including sliding the edge of the blade by pushing (push cut) and/or placing the tip of the blade upon and then drawing it across an opponent (tip cut) as valid blows.
  - ii. Cut and thrust rapier also includes the use of percussive cuts as a valid blow. Percussive cuts must always be delivered with sufficient control so as not to injure the opponent while still delivering the necessary impact for a valid cut.
- B. Chopping or hacking blows are not permitted in light or heavy rapier combat. For cut and thrust rapier, they still must be delivered with sufficient control. Fast circular movements (such as moulinets) may be used to place a blade for allowable cuts in all three categories of rapier combat.
- C. Parrying devices may be used to move, deflect, or immobilize an opponent's weapon or parrying device, so long as such use does not endanger the safety of the combatants.
- D. Striking an opponent with any part of a weapon or parrying device not approved for that purpose is prohibited.

### 4. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF BLOWS

- A. In judging blows, all fighters are presumed to be wearing common civil attire of the period, not armor.
- B. Tournaments may be held which define areas of the body as if armored, and to what degree, so long as all the participants are made aware of these special conditions prior to the start of combat.
- C. In rapier combat, blows will be counted as though they were struck with a real blade, extremely sharp on point and edge. Any blow that would have penetrated the skin shall be counted a good blow. Any blow that strikes a mask, helm or gorget shall be counted as though it struck flesh. Kingdoms shall not alter this standard.
- D. A valid blow to the:
  - head,
  - neck,
  - torso,
  - inner groin (to the fighter's hand width down the inner limb), or
  - armpit (to the fighter's inner hand width down the limb)

shall be judged incapacitating, rendering the fighter incapable of further combat.

- E. A valid blow to the arm will disable the arm. A valid blow to the hand shall render the hand useless; Kingdoms may decide whether the arm above the incapacitated hand may be used to parry.
- F. A valid blow to the foot or leg will disable the leg.
  - i. For light rapier and heavy rapier, the fighter must then fight kneeling, sitting, or standing on one leg.
  - ii. For cut and thrust rapier, valid blows to the leg or foot are considered incapacitating, rendering the fighter incapable of further combat.
- G. Parries may be performed with weapons, parrying devices, the gloved hand or any other part of the body. Though the gloved hand may be used to parry, it shall not be used to grasp or strike an opponent. Fleeting contact between opponents is allowed, as long as no grappling, deliberate striking or other unsafe behavior occurs.
- H. In heavy rapier and cut and thrust rapier, fighters may choose to grasp blades, rather than parry them. If the blade that is grasped moves or twists in the grasping hand, that hand is deemed disabled. Grasping techniques shall be used only to immobilize a blade, not to bend it or wrest it from the opponent's grip. Prolonged wrestling over a grasped blade is sufficient grounds for calling a 'hold' and forcing a release of the blade.
- I. If an effective blow is thrown before, or on, the same moment as an event that would stop a fight (a "HOLD" being called, the fighter being "killed" himself, etc.), the blow shall count. If the blow is thrown after the hold, killing blow, or other event, it shall not count.

## **WEAPONS AND PARRYING DEVICES**

1. Sharp points, edges or corners are not allowed anywhere on any equipment.
2. All equipment must be able to safely withstand combat stresses.
3. Equipment that is likely to break a blade or damage other equipment is prohibited.
  - A. Light rapier does not permit any equipment that has small rigid openings large enough to admit a properly tipped light rapier blade (i.e. small holes in bell guards, small openings in a cage or swept hilt, any design which has acute angles where a blade could easily be wedged and bent). Knuckle bows are deemed safe for use with light rapier blades.
4. **BLADES:**
  - A. Blades will be specified as to which type of rapier combat they are allowed for. This list is kept in Appendix 5. Some blades may be allowed in more than one type of rapier combat so care must be taken by the fighters as to agree on which set of rules (i.e. which category of rapier combat) apply to each bout.
  - B. All are subject to the following:
    - i. Any rapier or dagger blade in a given rapier class may be used against any other blade in that same class, but NOT against blades of the other class. Remember that some blades are allowed in more than one category and so can face a wider range of other blades. Blades must follow all restrictions for a category to be used in it.

- ii. Only blades listed in Appendix 5 – Blade Types and Conventions are permitted for use. Fighters or marshals desiring an exception must apply to the Deputy Society Marshal for Rapier Combat and will be considered on a case-by-case basis.
- iii. Steel blades will not be altered by grinding, cutting, heating, hammering, or other actions that could significantly alter their temper, flexibility or durability. Normal combat stresses and blade care do not violate this rule. Exceptions are:
  - a. The tang of the weapon may be altered.
  - b. Heavy rapier and cut and thrust rapier blades may be shortened so long as they maintain acceptable flexibility.
  - c. A nut or other blunt metal object designed to spread impact may be welded to the tip of heavy rapier and cut and thrust rapier blades so long as care is taken to prevent damage to the temper of the blade. The blunt object will still need some form of coverage, per 4.B.v. below.
- iv. All steel blades must be reasonably flexible. Rigid steel "parrying-only" daggers such as those made from cut down blades will not be allowed.
- v. All blade ends must be capped with rubber, plastic, or leather.
  - a. Tips will have a blunt striking surface, presenting a cross-section of at least 3/8 inch (9 mm) diameter.
  - b. Tips must be firmly taped or glued in place. The tip must be of a color contrasting with the blade so that the tip's absence is readily apparent. If tape is used, it must contrast with both blade and tip.
- vi. Any blade with kinks, sharp bends, or cracks shall not be used. Steel blades that develop these defects cannot be repaired and must be retired. Light rapier blades or flexidaggers with "S" curves shall not be used unless they can be properly re-curved.
- vii. Weapons may use a hand guard such as a cup hilt, swept hilt or quillons and knucklebow. The ends of quillons must be blunt.
- viii. Orthopedic (or "Pistol") grips will not be used unless the fighter has approval for medical reasons, supported by documentation from their health care provider.

#### 5. PARRYING DEVICES:

- A. Solid parrying devices will be made of sturdy, lightweight materials, resistant to breakage and splintering.
- B. Soft, non-rigid devices such as cloaks may be made of cloth, foam, leather and similar materials. They may be weighted with soft material such as rope or rolled cloth; they shall not be weighted with any rigid material, nor with materials which are heavy enough to turn the device into a flail or impact weapon.
- C. Devices that predictably cause entangling of an opponent or their equipment, either by design or by repeated mishap, are not allowed.
- D. Offensive bucklers will be considered non-standard devices. These devices must be approved on a case by case basis, in accordance with rules established by each kingdom's

Rapier Marshallate. An opponent may decline to face non-standard devices without forfeiting a bout. Offensive bucklers shall be made of soft flexible materials such as cloth, tape, foam and golf tubes.

6. PROJECTILE WEAPONS: Kingdoms may permit combat archery, throwing weapons, and/or mock-gunnery gear (such as rubber-band guns) to be used in rapier melee combat, as long as safety standards for those arts are met.
  - A. The use of any projectile weapon is forbidden within formal rapier Tournament lists (single combat), or in any situation where spectators cannot be separated from the potential line of fire by more than the effective range of the projectile weapons to be used.

## PROTECTIVE GEAR

1. In order of increasing resistance:
  - A. Abrasion-resistant material: material that will withstand normal combat stresses (such as being snagged by an unbroken blade) without tearing. Examples include, but are not limited to:
    - broadcloth
    - a single layer of heavy poplin cloth (35% cotton, 65% polyester; "trigger" cloth)
    - sweat pants
    - opaque cotton, poly-cotton or lycra/spandex mix tights

Nylon pantyhose and cotton gauze shirts are examples of unacceptable materials.
  - B. Puncture-resistant material: any fabric or combination of fabrics that will predictably withstand puncture. Examples include, but are not limited to:
    - Four-ounce (2 mm) leather;
    - four layers of heavy poplin cloth;
    - ballistic nylon rated to at least 550 Newtons;
    - commercial fencing clothing rated to at least 550 Newtons.

Kevlar is not an acceptable material, as it degrades rapidly. These materials need only be tested at the marshal's discretion; all other materials must be tested the first time new gear is used, or if no marshal on the field knows a given piece of gear to have been tested. (Refer to Appendix 1 on Testing Standards.)
  - C. Rigid Material: puncture-resistant material that will not significantly flex, spread apart, or deform under pressure of 12 Kg applied by a standard mask tester, repeatedly to any single point. Examples of rigid material are:
    - 22 gauge stainless steel (0.8 mm)
    - 20 gauge mild steel (1.0 mm)
    - 16 gauge aluminum, copper, or brass (1.6 mm)
    - one layer of hardened heavy leather (8 ounce, 4 mm)
2. The following are the Society norms for protective gear. Kingdoms enacting more stringent standards shall weigh the benefits of more rigorous penetration coverage against the risks of heat illness, exhaustion, and stroke due to heavier or more confining gear.
  - A. HEAD AND NECK:

- i. The front and top of the head must be covered by rigid material to below the jaw line and behind the ears. Standard 12 kg fencing masks are known to meet this standard. If built to this standard, fencing helmets are also acceptable.
- ii. The face must be covered by either 12 kilogram mesh (e.g, a standard fencing mask) or perforated metal. Such metal must not have holes larger than 1/8" (3 mm) in diameter, with a minimum offset of 3/16" (5 mm) and shall also meet the definition of rigid material.
- iii. Masks and helmets must be secured to the fighter, so that they cannot be easily removed or dislodged during combat. The combination of snug fit and the spring-tongue in a conventional fencing mask is NOT sufficient, by itself, to secure the mask to the fighter.
- iv. Both modern fencing masks and rapier helmets, when inspected, shall comply with the rigid material standard, provisions on facial coverage, and shall show no evidence of impending failure (e.g., rust which weakens the metal involved, dents or other defects which spread open mesh, broken weld points, etc). If there is concern about the face mesh of a modern fencing mask, it should be tested using a standard commercial 12kg mask punch. Marshals doing the testing shall be trained in the use of the punch. The Kingdom Rapier Marshals may elect to designate certain deputies to administer such testing.
- v. The rest of the head and neck must be covered by at least puncture resistant material.
- vi. For heavy rapier and cut and thrust rapier, additional throat protection is required; it shall consist of rigid material, as noted above, covering the entire throat, and shall be backed by either puncture resistant material (as a hood), one quarter inch (1/4") (6 mm) of open-cell foam, or their equivalents. The cervical vertebrae shall also be protected by rigid material, provided by some combination of gorget, helm, and/or hood insert.
- vii. For cut and thrust rapier, the back of the head must also be covered by rigid material, as noted above sufficient to protect against percussive cuts.

## B. TORSO AND OTHER KILLING ZONES

- i. The entire torso (the chest, back, abdomen, groin, and sides up to and including the armpits) must be covered with puncture-resistant material.
- ii. Acceptable minimum armpit coverage is provided by a triangle extending from the armpit seam, covering the lower half of the sleeve at the seam, and extending down the inner/under arm, one-third the distance to the fighter's elbow.
- iii. Male fighters shall wear rigid groin protection. Any ventilation holes large enough to admit a broken blade must be covered from the outside with at least puncture-resistant material. Female fighters shall wear puncture resistant groin protection.

## C. ARMS AND LEGS

- i. Hands shall be protected by gloves, made of abrasion resistant material, that overlap any sleeve openings as below. Feet shall be protected by boots, shoes, or sandals, comprised of at least abrasion-resistant material.
- ii. Abrasion-resistant material is required on arms (save as noted above for armpits), legs, and any area not otherwise mentioned in these rules.

- iii. No skin shall be bared. There shall be sufficient overlap between separate pieces of protective clothing, regardless of the fighter's stance or movements, that the minimum protection for that body area be preserved.
- iv. For cut and thrust rapier, elbows must be further protected by a minimum of an athletic pad or equivalent materials.

## **MARSHALLING CONCERNS IN RAPIER COMBAT**

1. **AUTHORIZATIONS:** Competence in other SCA combat styles does not automatically mean competence in rapier. Separate warrants and authorizations in rapier combat are required. Each Kingdom can decide how they wish to control authorizations for each category of rapier combat.
2. **BROKEN BLADES:** Marshals and fighters shall pay special attention for missing tips or broken blades.
3. **CLOAKS:** When cloaks are used, "HOLD" should be called if the cloak becomes tangled about either fighter, or about one of the weapons such that the weapon cannot be withdrawn. "HOLD" need not be called if the cloak is merely near the face, deflecting a weapon (assuming that the Kingdom rules allow use of the cloak for blocking or deflection), loosely draped over, or weighting down the blade.
4. **BLADE GRASPING:** Blade grasping is allowed in heavy rapier and cut and thrust rapier. When a blade has been grasped by an opponent, "HOLD" shall be called if wrestling about the blade occurs.
5. **EXCESSIVE IMPACT:** Combat in the Society poses risks to the participant. This recognition, however, does not excuse fighters from exercising control of their techniques. If a fighter throws blows which force their opponent to retire from the field, from a real injury (even one which only causes brief incapacitation), the marshal responsible for the field shall take such steps as are appropriate to stop the problem from recurring.
6. **MELEE:** Melee combats present special challenges to all involved. Society norms are as below:
  - A. In melees, fighters are engaged with all opponents immediately upon the call to lay on.
  - B. Fighters may strike any opponent with any legal blow if they are within the 180 degree arc of the opponent's front. A fighter who approaches an opponent from behind shall not deliver a blow until he is within that frontal arc. A fighter may never deliberately strike an opponent from behind.
  - C. Killing from behind is allowed if it has been announced beforehand. The Society norm for "death from behind" in melees shall be: If a melee scenario allows killing from behind, a fighter does so by laying the rapier blade over the opponent's shoulder, to at least a third of the blade, while calling "Dead, my lord" (or other short, courteous phrases) in a loud, clear voice. Reaching around the neck is forbidden. The opponent will be deemed "killed" from the instant the blade touches his shoulder and shall not attempt to spin, duck or dodge away.
    - i. If death from behind is not allowed in a given melee, a fighter who deliberately ignores an attacker behind them, or repeatedly maneuvers to keep their back to an attacker (thereby preventing any attack on them) may be considered for misuse of the rules and obstructive behavior.

- ii. Daggers may also be used but care must be taken not to punch or strike the fighter with the guard or quillions of the dagger when so used.
  - D. In special scenario melees (e.g., bridge or town battles), additional restrictions may be imposed by the marshals as needed.
  - E. Cut and thrust rapiers may not be used in melees.
7. MINORS: The minimum age for training and authorization in rapier combat is 14. When fighters under the age of 18 undertake training and authorization, the Kingdom Rapier Marshal (or his designated representatives) shall ensure that the minor's parent or legal guardian has observed rapier combat, is aware of the risk of injury inherent in this martial art, and has signed a statement explicitly acknowledging the above.
- A. A youth rapier fighter may participate in melees with other rapier fighters (youth and/or adult) subject to whatever age requirements and other qualifications that are mandated by their kingdom rules.
8. PERIODIC TESTING OF PROTECTIVE GEAR: Kingdoms shall require all gear to have been formally tested (including fabric and mask tests, as appropriate) at least once every two years. Compliance is the responsibility of the individual fighter. Any protective gear may be formally tested if there is concern that the gear may have lost protective ability due to age, wear and tear, or other factors. Refer to Appendix 1 on Testing Standards.
9. UNFORESEEN SITUATIONS: Should a situation arise not explicitly covered by Corporate or Kingdom rapier combat rules, the marshals should NOT assume that the situation is forbidden or inappropriate. Again: However, no matter how clear or accurate, rules cannot replace common sense, good judgment, and concern for the participants.

Appendices can be found in one or more separate documents. They are:

Appendix 1 - Testing Standards For SCA Rapier Combat

Appendix 2 - Procedures For Experimentation In Rapier Combat

Appendix 3 - Procedures For Creation Of A Drop Tester

Appendix 4 - Procedures For Use Of A Drop Tester

Appendix 5 - Blade Types And Conventions

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