

# THE RULES FOR FENCING IN COMPETITION AT FOIL, SABRE AND EPEE AS ADOPTED BY THE DUNEDIN CLASSIC FENCING CLUB SALLE ANGELO

## I. GENERAL

### A. Organisation and Discipline

1. Duties and obligations of the contestant:

a. The fencers are required to honour *l'esprit de fleuret*, and conduct themselves at all times with courtesy, self-control and elegance.

b. Each fencer shall:

i. Obey scrupulously the orders of the President.

ii. Fence with their weapon, held in one hand only. The weapon may not be changed to the other hand during the course of the bout.

iii. Respect the decisions of the Jury and the President.

c. The fencer must:

i. not start fencing before the command "*Allez*".

ii. not continue to fence after the command "*Halt*" or after having noticed that their opponent is unable to defend them self as a consequence of anything which seriously modifies the normal and safe conditions of the combat, such as disarmament, an involuntary fall, a broken blade, a raised bib, displaced mask and the like.

iii. not acknowledge a touch received after a contrary decision by a judge or the President.

iv. A fencer may not make any gesture or communication that might influence the decision of the Jury except that he may announce aloud any touches received provided this is done immediately on being touched.

2. Notes for the Jury:

a. Only a touch which the judge has actually seen arrive and which has caused the blade to bend sufficiently to indicate that it would have penetrated at least 4 centimetres counts as a touch.

b. No touch made by the fencer against their opponent after the command "*Halt*" or after a happening which modifies the normal and regular conditions of the combat (see 1.c.ii above) shall be valid.

c. The President of the Jury shall exclude from further competition any fencer who, after a first notice, manifestly tries to favour the play of their opponent. The President shall act likewise towards the latter if, in their opinion, the fencers are in collusion.

d. If all the Judges agree that there has been in any bout a case of unsportsmanlike conduct, they may order the bout forfeited to the opponent of the fencer so offending.

e. Decision as to the fact shall in all instances rest with the Jury involved. Their finding shall be final and without appeal.

f. The defending fencer must deflect the opponent's blade sufficiently to prevent a touch before having a right of riposte. If the parry is insufficient to completely deflect the opponent's blade and the defending fencer is touched, that touch has priority.

### B. Armament, Equipment and Dress

1. The following rules and regulations will be enforced by the President or any other official or officials in authority.

Every fencer engaging in competition does so at their own risk and peril, and neither the organisers of the competition, nor any officer, official, agent, or any other person, shall be liable in any manner for any damage or injury suffered by any fencer in competition or otherwise.

The equipment and dress must comply with the following conditions:

a. A standard foil or sabre jacket must be worn, as well as knee length breeches or long trousers. The jacket may be either a full torso or a half-jacket, and the bottom of the latter must be at the hip line and overlap the breeches.

b. The materials of which jackets and breeches are made shall not have a smooth surface across which the button or point of the adversary may slip. Fabric must be in good condition: protective clothing that is frayed,

holed or excessively worn will be rejected.

c. All parts of the dress where the touches are valid, including the back, the sword arm, and the bib of the mask must be white or very light grey in colour. Badges or club insignia are permitted on the jacket sleeve of the unarmed hand. Maker's labels and regulation insignia will also be permitted.

d. The mask shall be in good condition with a padded bib and firm mesh that is free from rust.

e. A glove must be worn and this may be lightly padded. The cuff of the glove must extend a minimum of 10 centimetres beyond the end of the jacket sleeve.

3. The President controls the standard of equipment, and shall have the right to request its modification or replacement. The President may exclude any fencer who refuses to comply with these requests.

### **C. Method of Judging the Bout**

The Jury shall be composed of a President, Timekeeper, and four Judges if available; otherwise, a President and two judges will suffice.

The President, standing within 4m of the strip and at an equal distance from the two contestants, shall watch the bout and study the ensemble of plays and the phrases of the bout.

The two Judges (or one) on the right of the President shall watch and verify the materiality of the touches that may be received by the fencer on the left of the President. The two Judges (or one) on the left of the President shall observe the fencer on the right.

The judges when questioned as to the materiality of the touches, shall reply, "Yes" (*"Oui/Valable"*), "Off target" (*"Non Valable"*), "No" (*"Non"*), or "Abstain" (*"Abstention"*). An abstention shall not count as a vote. Each Judge shall have one vote, the vote of the President counting for one and one-half. The President shall vote last. The President and Judges shall vote from the places they are standing and in audible voices. The decisions will be made in the following order:

a. First the President will ask the Judges whether or not the fencer they are watching has been touched. If the two judges who are watching the same fencer agree, the President must accept their decision.

b. If, as to the materiality of a touch, one of the Judges has a definite opinion and the other abstains, the decision of the former shall be accepted unless the President has a positive opinion to the contrary.

c. If the two Judges have definite opinions but disagree or if they both abstain, the President shall decide on the materiality from their own observations. This applies to foil and sabre, but not to epee as there is doubt.

d. In an exceptional case of doubt, the President may ask the two judges on the same side as the contestant whether or not that contestant has been touched.

The President shall decide, according to the rules and conventions for each weapon, as to the actual validity of a touch. If the President has no firm opinion, they shall put the fencers again on guard.

Touches are scored against the fencer receiving them.

Also refer to Sections II FOIL, *E. Judging of Thrusts*, III SABRE, *E. Judging of Touches*, and IV EPEE..

### **D. General Rules of Fencing**

The ground shall have a good surface where possible and give neither advantage nor disadvantage to either contestant, especially with regard to slope and light.

The ground gained:

a. The ground gained shall remain won until a valid touch is scored. When going on guard at a point where the play has been stopped, each fencer shall lose the same distance.

b. There are exceptions:

i. When the encounter has been stopped as a result of a corps-a-corps, the fencers shall be put on guard in such a manner that the fencer who was attacked remains where they were.

ii. When going on guard, a fencer shall not be put behind the warning line if they were in front of it at the suspension of the bout.

iii. When going on guard, a fencer shall not lose ground if they were behind the warning line at the suspension of the bout.

At the order "*En Garde*", given by the President, the fencers shall go on guard midway between the sides of the

strip, and if it is the beginning of the bout perform the salute. During the course of the bout the fencers will come on guard within reasonable fencing distance. When both fencers are ready (“Prêt?”), the President shall give the order to begin, “Allez”.

Combat:

- a. The moment the command is given, the contestants may commence fencing. They may fence as they please, provided that they observe the fundamental rules of fencing and sportsmanship.
- b. Each bout comprises several periods of combat. The beginning of each period shall be designated by the command “Allez”, and at the end by the command “Halte”, except in the exceptional cases mentioned in Section I, A, 1 and 2 (modifications of the regular and normal condition of the combat).
- c. A new action shall not be started after the command “Halte”, but one already begun may be carried to completion. If a simple action, resulting in a touch on the target, is started before the command “Halte” or before the fencer has time to realise the incapacity of their opponent, the touch shall be valid.
- d. If a Judge sees or believes he sees a touch, he shall call it to the attention of the President. In the case of an accident, the command “Halte” may be given by one of the Judges.
- e. If one of the fencers stops before the command “Halte” and is touched, the touch shall be valid. However, if they stop in good faith and a sufficient interval without action elapses, the President shall decide whether or not the touch shall be scored.
- f. The command “Halte” shall be applicable not only when the action is normally ended, but also if the play is dangerous or contrary to the rules, or if one of the fencers goes off the strip or if, in retreating, comes too close to the spectators or the Jury.
- g. After every valid touch the fencers shall be put on guard in the middle of the strip.
- h. The President shall have the contestants change sides after one of the fencers has been touched three times. If one of the fencers is left-handed, the President shall have the judges change ends while the fencers remain where they are.
- i. Close combat, or infighting, shall be allowed to continue only as long as it preserves the character of a regular combat with the weapon and the President is able to follow the phrasing.
- j. Corps-a-corps:
  - i. The corps-a-corps exists when the two fencers, after infighting or through a phrase of infighting, meet and have their guards, arms, legs or bodies in contact.
  - ii. The corps-a-corps shall not be prolonged. As soon as it is clearly evident that a corps-a-corps exists, the President shall stop the bout.
  - iii. When a fencer intentionally provokes a corps-a-corps, in order to avoid the riposte, they shall be warned and, if they repeat the offence in the same bout, they shall immediately be penalised one touch. This rule shall also apply to an unsuccessful fleche that ends in a corps-a-corps, whether or not the corps-a-corps may be considered intentional.
- k. When a fencer provokes a corps-a-corps with willful brutality, or when they throw them self violently upon their opponent or if, during infighting, they intentionally strike their opponent with their guard or pommel, they shall immediately be penalised one touch, and in case of repetition of the offence in the course of the tournament, may be disqualified from further participation.
- l. It is fundamental to classic foil that the fencers engage in fencing phrases. Accordingly a fencer who consistently counter-attacks into the opponent's attack without first finding the opponent's blade, or who by the adoption of unorthodox body positions frustrates the opponent's attempt to fence in the classic style, will have a touch against awarded on each offence after a warning which will remain valid only for the bout. The president may take prior warnings into account when deciding whether or not to issue a warning in subsequent bouts. Any touch made while contravening this rule will be deemed to be a touch off-target.

#### **E. Periods of Combat and Rest**

The length of the periods of combat in foil, sabre and epee shall be timed with a stopwatch. The period of combat is means the actual time spent in fencing, that is, the sum of the intervals the fencers are fencing or could fence.

The period of combat shall be a maximum of five minutes for each five-touch foil, sabre or epee bout, and for a one-touch epee bout. Time out shall be taken during the discussions of the Jury.

The Timekeeper shall warn the fencers one minute before the expiration of the allotted time for the period of combat.

a. If, at the end of the fixed time, neither of the fencers has received five touches, both fencers shall have their scores increased by the touches necessary for one of the fencers to reach five, that fencer then being deemed defeated. If both have received the same number of touches the scores shall be advanced to four each and the bout continued with no time limit until one fencer scores the fifth and winning point.

## **II. FOIL**

### **A. Bouts in Foil**

1. The fencer who first touches their opponent five times shall be declared the winner. Touches shall be counted **against** the fencer receiving them.

### **B. The Foil**

The weapon shall be so constructed that it cannot wound the fencer or their opponent. The President and Jury shall reject any weapon which does not conform to the rules or which endangers the fencers.

The total weight of the foil, ready for use and everything included, shall be less than 500gms.

The components of the foil must conform to the following:

- a. The foil blade shall be a visual blade with a rectangular or square cross section. It may be very flexible without, however, being too whippy. Electric blades, or electric blades mounted with dummy electric points are forbidden. The point must be covered with a plastic or rubber button. Blades must be clean and free of rust.
- b. Eccentric mountings are prohibited.
- c. The grip shall be of French or Italian type only. No orthopaedic or pistol grips are permitted.
- d. The guard shall have a maximum diameter of less than 120mm, which is to say that it shall be able to pass through a circular gauge 120 mm in diameter. The guard may circular, rectangular, oval, or a figure eight in form. For Italian foils, the guard must be round and the crossbar must not project significantly beyond the guard.
- e. Thongs and wristbands are permitted. A martingale is recommended. The fencer may lash the wrist or hand to the weapon when using the Italian foil.

### **C. Ground Dimensions, Retreating and Reversing**

The width of the strip should be between 1.5m and 2m. The length of the strip shall be 14m. It is recommended that five parallel lines be drawn across the strip: the dividing line in the middle, the two "on guard" lines 2m on either side of the middle line, and the two warning lines 1m from the end of the strip.

When, in retreating, a contestant crosses the warning line with one foot for the first time, the bout is stopped. The President shall warn the retreating fencer and the play be resumed with the rear foot of the retreating contestant on the warning line. If the retreating fencer then crosses the end of the strip with both feet, one touch is scored against them.

A contestant who crosses the rear limit of the strip for the last time, without having been warned at the warning line is not penalised but is put on guard at the warning line.

A contestant will not be warned of their distance from the end of the strip at any time during the bout, except as specified above.

All preceding warnings for retreating are automatically void when a touch is scored against either contestant for any reason whatsoever, or the fencer regains the centre line with their leading foot.

The contestant who steps off the side of the strip with both feet shall not be considered touched but shall be again placed on guard, losing 1m of ground as a penalty. The contestant whom the application of this penalty places beyond the end of the strip with both feet for the first time shall be considered touched. The contestant who crosses one of the boundaries (end or side) of the strip in turning, in pursuit of their adversary or in case of an accident, such as a fall or push, shall not be counted as touched and shall not be penalised.

### **D. Target and Conventions**

1. The target extends from the top of the collar to a horizontal line passing across the tops of the hipbones, exclusive of the arms up to the shoulders (the seams of the jacket being made to correspond to the attachment lines of the arms to the shoulders). However, touches on the head, the arms, the hands or the legs shall be considered valid whenever the head, an arm, a hand or a leg is placed either intentionally or unintentionally between the target and the point of the opponent, that is:

- a. When the fencer covers, permanently or temporarily, the target, thus protecting it, with their head or one of their arms or legs.
- b. When, by a displacement of the target, the fencer receives on one of these parts, normally invalid, a touch which without such displacement would have reached the target, even though the movement is perfectly regular in itself, for they have substituted for the target an invalid part.
- c. Similarly, should the bib of the fencer's mask project below their collarbones, touches to the part of the bib that so projects shall be counted as valid. All touches that arrive underneath the bib, up to the collar of the jacket, are equally valid.

All touches made on those parts of the body where touches do not count stop the phrase and annul all touches that arrive thereafter.

The attack correctly executed must either be parried or completely evaded and the conventional order of the phrase must be followed. A correctly executed attack is made with the arm straightening or straight, the point in line and threatening the opponent's target.

- a. Body movements, such as crouching and rotating are permissible, and the hand not carrying the weapon may come in contact with the ground, but the fencer who, upon crouching, receives on the mask a touch, which otherwise would have reached the target, shall be considered touched fairly, because following their movement, they have received upon a generally invalid surface a touch which without said movement would have reached the target; that is, they have substituted an invalid for a valid part.
- b. However, the fencer who, upon rotating or side-stepping, is touch on the mask shall not be considered touched fairly, because the touch would not have reached a valid surface even if they had not executed the movement; that is, they have not substituted an invalid for a valid part but has merely displaced the invalid part.

### **E. Judging of Thrusts**

Only a touch which a judge or president has actually seen arrive and which has caused the blade to bend sufficiently to indicate that it would have penetrated at least 4 centimeters, counts as a touch.

A flat touch, a slap, a pass, or a graze with the point shall not be counted as a touch, shall not stop a phrase, and shall not nullify subsequent touches.

When one of the contestants, seeking to increase the effective length of their weapon, holds the pommel in the palm of their hand, the benefit of a doubt in the case of a touch during or after a disarm shall always be interpreted unfavourably to that contestant.

The defending fencer must deflect the opponent's blade sufficiently to prevent a touch before having a right of riposte. If the parry is insufficient to completely deflect the opponent's blade and the defending fencer is touched, that touch has priority.

## **III. SABRE**

### **A. Bouts in Sabre**

1. The fencer who first touches their opponent five times shall be declared the winner. Touches shall be counted **against** the fencer receiving them.

### **B. The Sabre**

The weapon shall be so constructed that it cannot wound either the fencer or their opponent. The president and Jury shall reject any weapon which does not conform to the rules or which endangers the fencers.

The total weight of the sabre, ready for use and everything included, shall be less than 500gms. The total length of the sabre shall be less than 1050mm.

Visual and electric sabre blades are allowed. The blade shall have a maximum length of 880mm. The point of the blade shall have a width of about 5mm and shall be rounded. Blades shall be flexible, but not be too stiff, too whipping, or too tapering. The curvature of the blade shall be apparent, continuous and of not more than 40mm deflection. Blades must be clean and free of rust.

The guard shall be smooth, solid, and of one piece. It shall present a continuous round form without projecting edges or holes sufficiently large for the point of the opponent to get caught. The width of the guard in the plane of the cutting edge shall not exceed 150mm, and its width perpendicular to this plane shall not exceed 140mm: in other terms, the entire guard shall be able to pass through a rectangular gauge 150mm by 140mm, the flat of the blade being parallel to the 150mm sides.

### **C. Ground Dimensions, Retreating and Reversing**

The regulations as to ground dimensions are the same for sabre as for Foil above (Sec. II, C, 1).

The regulations for retreating are the similar to Foil (Sec. II, C, 2-5), except that in sabre the retreating fencer is not warned on crossing the warning line, but the bout is instead halted when one foot crosses the end line of the piste. The fencers are then brought back to the centre of the strip and placed on guard at their respective on guard lines. If the same fencer now retreats to the warning line, they are warned by the President and the play resumed with the rear foot of the retreating contestant on the warning line. Should this contestant then cross the end of the strip with both feet, one touch is scored against them.

The contestant who steps off the side of the strip with both feet shall not be considered touched but shall be again placed on guard, losing 1m of ground as a penalty. The contestant whom the application of this penalty places beyond the end of the strip with both feet for the second time shall be considered touched. The contestant who crosses one of the boundaries (end or side) of the strip in turning, in pursuit of their opponent or in the case of an accident, such as a fall or push, shall not be counted touched and shall not be penalised.

### **D. Rules and Fundamental Conventions**

The rules and conventions for sabre fencing are the same as those given above for the foil (Sec. II, D) with a few additions and modifications.

The sabre is a thrusting, cutting and counter-cutting weapon, and, consequently, touches with the point, and both cutting edges shall be equally valid whatever portion of the target is reached.

a. Point touches to score shall be made in such a manner that the point of the blade comes squarely in contact with the target. The touch made by any part of the cutting edge shall be called a "cut" and that made with the forward third of the back of the blade shall be called a "counter-cut". Any touch made with the remainder of the back or with the flat of the blade shall not be counted.

b. The point thrust slipping on the surface of the target and grazing the body of the fencer with cut or counter-cut shall not count even as a cut touch.

c. Cuts across the blade, that is, those that simultaneously touch the target and the sabre of the opponent, shall be valid whenever they clearly arrive on the surface of the target.

The target for sabre is the same as the foil target (Sec. II, D, 2), except that it also includes the hands, the arms, and the head.

The fencer shall take care not to hit such parts of the body of their opponent as are outside the limit of the target. If one of the contestants deliberately hits such parts, or hits brutally or in any way whatsoever places their opponent in danger, they shall be excluded from the competition after one warning.

### **E. Judging of Touches**

The judging of touches in sabre fencing is similar to the judging of thrusts in fencing with the foil (Sec. II, E) with some modifications.

A slap with the flat of the blade, a pass or graze with the point, a whip over the parrying blade or guard or a cut forced in or fallen in after a clear parry shall not stop a phrase and shall have no nullifying power for whatever follows.

When a fencer intentionally provokes a corps-a-corps, in order to avoid the return, they shall be warned and, if they repeat the offence in the same bout, they shall immediately be penalised one touch. This rule shall also apply to an unsuccessful fleche which ends in a corps-a-corps, whether or not the corps-a-corps may be considered intentional.

The fencer who, from the start of an action and without interruption or stop, presses their attack in a continuous and rational manner shall be considered the attacker. If the action of the fencer does not in its ensemble constitute an attack (an invitation, a hesitation, a feint or an advance without a beat when one is necessary), the attack shall not be considered to exist.

## **IV. EPEE**

1. Epee rules are the current electric rules, except:

a. Touches shall be counted **against** the fencer receiving them.

b. Visual and electric blades are allowed, but the travel of the electric epee point must be stopped with a washer or wound thread so that an audible 'click' is not heard if a hit is made. The epee blade shall be a flexible blade with a V-shaped cross-section. The point must be covered with a metal button.

- c. The grip shall be of French or Italian type only. No orthopaedic or pistol grips are permitted.
  - d. Any rules which in the President's view are not relevant to visual weapons are excluded.
  - e. A touch must arrive clearly with sufficient force to have penetrated at least 6 centimetres.
  - f. At epee at least two members of the jury must agree that a material touch has been made before a point is awarded.
  - g. The judges (and President when necessary) must decide whether or not a touch has penetrated sufficiently and call "yes" or "no", and may only abstain if the possible touch was obscured by one of the fencers or another judge. If a judge is in doubt that a touch arrived or penetrated sufficiently, or if the possible touch was not obscured but the judge did not see a touch arrive, then that judge must call "no".
- The President must not express an opinion as to the materiality of the hit unless that is necessary to allow a decision to be made.
- h. When during a fencing phrase both fencers are hit simultaneously or with an interval of time between the two hits which is within 1/25th of a second, there is a double hit and a hit is scored against each competitor.
  - i. The President alone decides whether there is or is not a difference of time between two hits which justifies either a priority or a double hit. If the President is unable to form an opinion on that matter then a double hit must be awarded.
  - j. Where epee bouts are for a single touch, a double hit will count as a defeat for each competitor.
  - k. At epee for more than one touch, when the President is of an opinion that there is a double hit, but has to annul this double hit because the hit made on the fencer who is leading in the bout is doubtful, while that made on his opponent is established, the fencer who is leading in the bout will have the right to insist on the double hit being scored or to accept its annulment.
  - l. Fencers may wear half-jackets or full torso jackets for epee, but a full torso jacket is recommended.

## **V. ACADEMIC SWORDPLAY**

1. Academic swordplay, also known as Drawing room fencing, is fought with foils on a short 4 metre piste. The intention is to emulate the elegant Eighteenth century displays that Domenico Angelo and others gave at his fencing academy and in the drawing rooms of London for the entertainment of English society. If the President decides the quality of fencing falls below this standard during a bout, he may halt the phrase and warn either or both fencers. He may also annul a hit that would otherwise be valid due to the lack of quality in its delivery.
2. The fencing area length is defined from the three central fencing lines of the standard 14m piste, the centre line itself and the two on-guard lines on either side. These lines are 2m apart, or 4m overall. The fencing area width is the standard piste width of 1.5m to 2.0m.
3. Fencers will come on guard with foibles crossed over the centre line, preferably with each in a closed line. After any halt of a fencing phrase, for any reason, the fencers will return to this on guard position over the centre line. Ground cannot be won or lost.
4. Fencers cannot cross their rear line (the standard 'on guard' line) with any part of their rear foot. No warning will be given, and a point is awarded against them if they do so.
5. Fencers can cross the centre line with their front foot. But they cannot cross it with any part of their rear foot, and a point is awarded against them if they do so.
6. Fencers cannot cross the sides of the piste with any part of either foot. If one does so, the fencing phrase is halted and the fencers return to the on guard position over the centre line. A 1m penalty cannot be given, but otherwise the standard fencing rules apply.

Comments: The centre line can act as a visual reference for fencers as to how close their rear foot is to their rear line. The foot rules against crossing lines on the piste, or the sides of the piste, are that no part of a foot may cross either. This is the opposite of the standard rules. It is purposefully more constricting and prevents *flèche* attacks. The corner judges must look for foot crossing in the same manner as for hits and raise their hand when it occurs to signal the president.

*These Academic swordplay rules may be modified before the Masters Games as it is a continuing experiment.*

## **VI. MASTER OF ARMS**

1. In Master of Arms bouts all three weapons described above in the Rules are fought sequentially and both fencers change their weapon after each hit. The weapon sequence is sabre, epee, foil and this cycle follows through the bout until it ends. This weapon order is from the least used weapon to the most used weapon.
2. The corner judge on the inside of the fencer holds the weapons and hands the required one hilt first to the fencer for every weapon change. If judges or fencers change ends at 3 points, the two weapon holders must exchange their fencers' weapons accordingly.
3. The full rules for each particular weapon apply to that weapon when the fencer holds it in his hand and wields it against his opponent. The two fencers must both fence with the same weapon at the same time.

Amended 10 September 2007