

# RAPIER COMBAT CONVENTIONS

## PENNSIC WAR 47

**RAPIER COMBAT MARSHAL-IN-CHARGE:**

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Below you will find the Rapier Conventions for Pennsic War 47. As in years past, these rules will govern all Rapier War Point events and activities. Rules applicable to specific activities are denoted in the individual event descriptions. Fencers are encouraged to review these conventions carefully, as there have been changes from last year. Here are some important notes for participation in rapier combat at Pennsic.

### **AUTHORIZATIONS AND INSPECTIONS**

In order to participate in any rapier activities, a fencer must have authorized in at least one rapier weapon form prior to arrival at War. Fencers are free to authorize in additional weapon forms at War, per their kingdom's authorization rules, and use those forms in rapier activities, including War Point events. Additionally, those fencers participating in the War Point events must receive an inspection sticker, which will be available at the Rapier Marshals' Tent. A rapier marshal will issue a sticker upon a fencer's armor and equipment after the fencer passes an initial inspection and displays proof of authorization, photo identification, and site token. In camp inspections can be arranged for armor inspection, but only by a marshal from the rapier combatant's home kingdom. Weapon inspections may only be conducted on the field.

### **CUT & THRUST RAPIER**

Fencers interested in practicing Cut-and-Thrust rapier may do so on the rapier field using the Society rules or their own kingdom's C&T rules. Fencers wishing to practice C&T must be supervised by a marshal warranted in C&T in that marshal's kingdom.

### **YOUTH FENCING**

Minors wishing to participate in youth fencing activities must first see the Youth Rapier Marshal-in-Charge, accompanied by a parent or guardian, to complete necessary paperwork. They will be on the field during youth fencing practice.

### **WAR POINT MARSHALS**

A minimum of 15 marshals from the Middle Kingdom and its allies and 15 marshals for the East Kingdom and its allies shall present themselves to Rapier 1, 30 minutes prior to the scheduled start time of each battle. No battle shall take place until the minimum number of marshals from each Kingdom is met.

### **PENNSIC WAR 47 RAPIER CONVENTIONS**

These rules establish standards and conventions for Rapier Combat at Pennsic for all rapier activities. Kingdoms sponsoring other rapier events at Pennsic will employ these rules at minimum, and may add additional rules specific to the kingdom hosting the tournament. These rules are designed to promote safe rapier combat at Pennsic, and all participants in events governed by these rules are responsible for knowing, understanding, and applying them. 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 response that promotes the greatest degree of safety for all participants.

#### **1. General information**

- A. Rapier combat shall be conducted in accordance with the rules of the lists of the SCA, Inc., the corporate rules for rapier combat in the SCA, and these rules.
- B. The Kingdom Rapier Marshal of that year's hosting Kingdom is the Marshal-in-Charge at Pennsic. He or she may assign a "marshal on duty" to oversee the day's events, but serious problems should be handled by the Marshal-in-Charge.
- C. In order to participate in any Rapier War Point events, a fencer must have authorized in at least one rapier weapon form prior to arrival at War. Fencers are free to authorize in additional weapon forms at War, per their kingdom's authorization rules, and use those forms in rapier activities, including War Point events.
- D. A fencer must comply with the standards for protective gear of his or her home kingdom, but shall comply with the weapon standards of the kingdom hosting the rapier event in which the fencer is participating.
- E. Per the corporate rules for rapier combat in the SCA (the "Society rules"), all fencers, prior to every combat or practice, shall ensure their equipment is safe, in good working order, and has been inspected by a marshal authorized to inspect rapier gear. At Pennsic, such inspection must be performed a minimum of once per day by either a marshal from a fencer's home kingdom to that kingdom's

standards or, if a marshal from that kingdom is not available, by any marshal to the specifications described in Society rules.

F. Marshals have the power and the duty to remove from the field any person who is violating the rules of the list and suspend such person's fighting activity at Pennsic. Such violations include, but are not limited to, non-acceptance of blows, ignoring the rules of engagement, and behavior that is dangerous to combatants. Marshals should keep in mind that all fencers are honorable people and treat them with courtesy and patience. Remember that honest mistakes do happen. Fencers should remember that the marshals are attempting to ensure the safety of all fencers present and treat them with courtesy. Marshals shall always be obeyed by combatants on the field.

G. A Marshals' Court will be in place after each War Point melee, and the marshals will be prepared to address any serious problems that are brought before the Court. A Marshals' Court may also be convened at any other time, if needed, but only in the event of a serious or intractable problem arising on the list. Marshals or fighters can bring issues before a Marshals' Court. A Marshals' Court shall be presided over by the Pennsic Rapier MiC, and shall include both the Kingdom Rapier Marshal of the kingdom hosting the rapier event in which the problem at issue occurred, and, if possible, the Kingdom Rapier Marshal of the fencer who is subject to the Court. The MiC for the tournament/melee and any pertinent witnesses may attend if required by the MiC. **The Marshals' Court will review infractions of the rules and combat conventions.**

## 2. **Use of weapons and parrying devices**

- A. Valid blows are performed by:
  - i. Thrusting with the point of the blade (thrust)
  - ii. Sliding the edge of the blade by pulling (draw cut) or pushing (push cut) a minimum of 6" across the target.
  - iii. [Optional] placing the tip of the blade upon, and then drawing it (tip cut) a minimum of 6" across the target.
- B. Though the gloved hand may be used to parry, it shall not be used to push, grasp or strike an opponent. Blade grasping is not permitted in any War Point event. The use of blade grasping in other rapier activities shall be at the discretion of the marshal in charge of a particular melee or tournament.
- C. Parries may be performed with weapons, parrying devices, the gloved hand, or any other part of the body. Striking an opponent with any part of a weapon or parrying device not approved for that purpose is prohibited. 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. Conduct in violation of this rule which creates a significant safety hazard on the field will be grounds for immediate removal from the field and suspension from participation in Pennsic 47 rapier activities.

## 3. **Acknowledgment of blows**

- A. 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, this shall be interpreted as; The calibration standard shall be the lightest touch that can be felt. Excessive calibration will not be tolerated. Any blow that strikes a mask, helm, or gorget shall be counted as though it struck flesh.
- B. A valid blow to one of the following locations shall be judged incapacitating, rendering the fighter incapable of further combat.
  - i. Head,
  - ii. Neck,
  - iii. Torso,
  - iv. Inner groin (to the fighter's hand width down the inner limb), or
  - v. Armpit (to the fighter's hand width down the inner limb).
- C. A valid blow to the arm will disable the arm. A valid blow to the hand shall render the hand useless; the arm above the incapacitated hand may be used to parry.
- D. A valid blow to the foot or leg will disable the leg. The fighter must then fight kneeling, sitting, or standing on one leg. A "legged" fencer may rise from a sitting to a kneeling position. A disabled fencer may "knee walk."

## 4. **Blades**

- A. There are three classes of rapiers in the SCA: light rapiers (epees and foils), heavy rapiers and cut and thrust blades. The use of epees and foils are prohibited in any War Point battle. Any 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. An exception to this are those blades that pass the flexibility standards as legal for "both" heavy rapier and C&T. These blades may be used in both "styles" of combat, i.e. heavy rapier and C&T. Check with the MiC if there is any question as to the legality of a blade for a particular event.
- B. Dagger

- i. Definition
      - a. Blade length is less than or equal to 18" as measured from the tip to the top of the tang.
      - b. The length of the handle plus pommel is less than or equal to 10".
    - ii. They may be used against any class of rapier blade.
  - C. Sword
    - i. Definition
      - a. Blade length greater than 18" and less than or equal to 48" as measured from the tip to the top of the tang.
      - b. The length of the handle plus pommel is less than or equal to 10".
  - D. Two-handed sword
    - i. Definition
      - a. Blade length greater than 18" and less than or equal to 48" as measured from the tip to the top of the tang.
      - b. The length of the handle plus pommel is greater than 10" in length and less than or equal to 1/3 of the length of the blade.
      - c. Additional weapons may be deemed to fall into this category at the discretion the Pennsic RMiC and deputy RMiC.
    - ii. No secondary weapon or parrying device can be used along with a two-handed sword.
    - iii. Two-handed sword users may use a two handed sword with only one hand.
    - iv. As stated before, any discussion on whether a two-handed sword does or does not meet the criteria above is left to the discretion of the Pennsic RMiC and deputy RMiC.
  - E. The kingdom hosting a particular rapier event may specify the types of blades to be used at that event. If a tournament specifies allowed blades only by general type, i.e. light or heavy, then all blades allowed at Society level in this category will be allowed. Information regarding which blades are permitted in the Society and within each kingdom is available in the Marshals' Tent. The use of epees and foils are prohibited in any War Point battle.
- 5. **Parrying devices**
  - A. Parrying devices shall follow SCA Rapier Handbook, with the additional rule that shields/bucklers cannot be more than 40" on any diagonal and may only be wielded in one hand.
- 6. **Spears and Pikes**
  - A. Spears and pikes may not be used in any Pennsic rapier activities and may only be used in practice and open sparring at the discretion of the Pennsic RMiC and Deputy RMiC.
- 7. **Rubber band guns**
  - A. Rubber band guns ("RBGs") shall not be used in any War Point scenario.
  - B. For other Pennsic rapier activities, RBGs are approved for use under the following conditions:
    - i. RBGs are allowed if it has been announced beforehand.
    - ii. Everyone on the field during a melee using RBGs must have eye protection of some kind, including marshals and water bearers.
    - iii. When a hold is called, all loaded RBGs should be aimed to the ground, or if this is not possible, aimed away from all persons. In the case of rubber band cannons, a fully armored crew member must stand in front of the cannon blocking any accidental shot.
    - iv. At the end of melees, the fighters must unload all RBGs before leaving the field.
    - v. RBGs are only approved with surgical tubing shot. Use of tubing containing any liquid, sand, beads, or any other material is not legal.
    - vi. RBGs should mimic the appearance of a period firearm. A dagger blade may be attached to an RBG pistol to mimic a bayonet, but such blade must meet flexibility requirements.
    - vii. RBGs must pass the same safety requirements as a rigid parrying device if it will be used as such.
    - viii. The validity of any given shot from an RBG shall be judged by the recipient of that shot.
- 8. **Marshalling concerns in rapier combat**
  - A. Authorizations must be done by marshals of a fencer's home kingdom. It is against Society law and policy to authorize across kingdom boundaries.
  - B. Excessive impact: combat at Pennsic poses risks to the participant. This recognition, however, does not excuse fighters from exercising control of their techniques. If a fighter throws blows which forces his 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. At a minimum, the thrower of the blow should be removed from the field for the remainder of that tourney/melee.
  - C. Melee combat presents special challenges to all involved. Society norms are repeated here for emphasis:
    - i. In melees, fighters are engaged with all opponents immediately upon the call to lay-on.
    - ii. 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 strike an opponent from behind. In addition, fencers should make a reasonable attempt to get an opponent's attention before throwing a blow.
- iii. Killing from behind is allowed if it has been announced beforehand. The Society norm for "death from behind" in melees shall be as follows: if a melee scenario allows killing from behind, a fighter does so by laying the rapier blade over and on the opponent's shoulder to at least a third of the blade, while calling "dead, my lord" (or any 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 the opponent's shoulder, which opponent shall not attempt to spin, duck or dodge away.
    - a. 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.
    - b. In addition, the thrower of the DFB must come to a complete stop. Hyper-DFBs or machine gunning ("deadmylorddeadmylorddeadmylorddeadmylord") will not be tolerated. The marshals are allowed to have the DFB disregarded and to remove the thrower of the inappropriate DFB from the tourney/melee.
- D. Additional melee rules for Pennsic 47
- i. Blind shots are illegal. Combatants must have visual contact before throwing a shot at an opponent.
  - ii. Daggers may NOT be used for DFBs
  - iii. Running from place to place in melee is permitted. Running TO engagement is permitted. Running FROM engagement is permitted.
    - a. Running attacks; either against a line, an individual, running engagement, and/or running through engagements are prohibited. Combatants must come to a complete stop before beginning an attack, fouling a blade or otherwise engaging opponent(s). Combatants may NOT throw shots at a running opponent. Running is defined as movement in such a manner that for an instant in each step both feet are off the ground.
  - iv. Combatants violating 'a' above will get one warning from the marshalls; a second offense will be grounds for ejection from the battle.
  - v. A combatant who steps off the Edge of the World is considered dead. They will get one loud, verbal warning from the witnessing marshal when they are approaching the edge, but the onus is on the combatants to always know their surroundings. Edge of the World deaths mean the combatant must the field or return to their resurrection point (if applicable). To cause an enemy to retreat out of bounds is considered a valid tactic.
  - vi. All defeated or disabled fencers should remove themselves from the melee field. Fencers withdrawing from the field should do so with weapons held above their head to indicate non-combatant status. Fencers who have lost both hands or arms are considered disabled.
  - vii. Fencers may not pretend to be dead or purposely hide themselves among the dead. If asked by a marshal or another combatant, combatants must answer truthfully if they are alive or dead. To do otherwise means instant ejection from the War Point and they may not return to the battle.
  - viii. Dropped weapons do not need a hold unless it presents an immediate safety issue.
    - a. Combatants may not steal an opponent's dropped weapon.
    - b. Combatants are not required to (but are encouraged) to allow opponents to pick up their dropped weapon.
  - ix. Dead fighters may only say they are dead. They may not give orders or other information. During a "HOLD" fighters will not discuss anything but safety concerns with their teammates. Fighters can tell someone to check their armor, sword tip, etc. Good natured conversation is also fine during holds.
  - x. Fighters in any battle may call themselves dead at any time. In a resurrection battle a fighter can always walk back to resurrection point.
  - xi. Except for haybales used to secure flags and flag systems to the grounds; combat over the haybales is not allowed.
- E. In any tournament or melee, additional restrictions may be imposed by the marshals as needed.
- F. Should a situation arise not explicitly covered by Society or Kingdom rapier combat rules, the marshals should not assume that the situation is forbidden or inappropriate. However, no matter how clear or accurate, rules cannot replace common sense, good judgment, and concern for the participants.

**THIS IS FRIENDLY COMBAT WITH FRIENDS. DON'T DO ANYTHING STUPID TO JEOPARDIZE THAT FRIENDSHIP.**