



Slovak Federation of Historical European Martial Arts (FEBUS)

General rules for the rapier tournament fighting

Version 1.1

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0. Revisions

Version	Date	Changes	Author
1.0	13.1.2016	First version of the rapier rules	Martin Fabian and Martin Janičina
1.0.1	15.1.2016	Changes in the weapon dominance rules (section 9.2), formal corrections	Martin Fabian
1.0.2	30.1.2016	All hits score for one point instead of weighted scoring, changes in allowed weapon proportions	Martin Fabian
1.1	12.9.2016	Slice no longer scores a point, attacking with the dagger is forbidden	Martin Fabian

1. Goals

The primary motivation for tournament organization is a practical test of fencing skills in a controlled, athletic-driven environment. The objective of these rules is to limit a fencing match in such way that fine techniques, functional strategy, tactics and an athletic skills would be required to win a duel. Furthermore, they are an essential safety measure.

One of the principles which stands above all others is the principle of fair play. Every functional ruleset should be efficient in providing equal opportunities for every tournament contestant.

It is also presumed that the rules will be modified from time to time, both to help to elevate the quality of fencing and also prevent their gamification in a way which is unrelated to the original art of fencing.

2. Basic Terms

- **Fight** – a friendly fight between two fencers which is commenced and ended up by a qualified referee. An exchange may end up by awarding a fencer with a point, awarding both contestants or by a tie, awarding no one
- **Exchange** – an exchange or handwork is the basic unit of a fight. An exchange starts with the first offensive action and ends up with a hit or with both contestants assuming a distance from which it is impossible to continue in the previous offensive
- **Match** – a match is a series of fights / exchanges between two contestants where points awarded for the individual exchanges determine the outcome of a match. Only one fencer is declared a winner of a match.
- **Tournament** – is a series of multiple matches with the aim to declare an overall winner from the contestants
- **Guard** – a position of the body and weapon which allows one to attack or to defend
- **Tempo** – is the basic unit in which a simple fencing action can be done or the proper time and distance to attack
- **Measure** - the distance between to fencers; to be 'in measure' means to be in a distance from which we can hit the opponent
- **Contra action** – is an action done simultaneously with the opponent's one
- **Bind** – crossing of the blades

3. Fencing actions

This section of the rules defines basic fencing actions in terms which are easy to understand for every contestant even though they might practice different schools of fencing and thus use various terminologies.

3.1. Offensive actions

- **Attack** – an attack is the initial offensive action which drives every exchange
- **Simple attack** – is an attack which is aimed at one target from its initial movement. It starts with the movement of the weapon and the body towards the opponent with the arms extending from the initial guard or posture. The preparation of the attack nor the swing are not considered as a part of the attack.
 - **Direct attack** – is a simple attack aimed and done against a target, done without any feinting, from an initial guard and in the direction of the swing
 - **Indirect attack** – is a simple attack done without feinting; its trajectory ends in a different line than that of a the preparatory swing

- **Complex attack** – is an attack which consists of one or more feints; its purpose is to lure the opponent into a defensive action and at the same time strike him to a created (or different) opening
- **Riposta** – a riposte is an offensive action of a fencer who parried an attack of their opponent, executed in a single tempo (*Indes*) or in two-tempi
- **Contra-riposta** – is an offensive action of a fencer who parried their opponent's *Riposta*
- **Counter attack** – is an offensive or offensive-defensive action of a fencer done within an attack of their opponent
- **Stop-hit** – an attack against opponents attack
- **Stop-hit with opposition** - an attack into opponent's attack with a concurrent blocking of the potential target
- **Doubling** – a subsequent, continuing action against a parrying opponent who isn't countering with a *Riposta*

3.2 Defensive actions

- **Parry** – a defensive action which blocks opponent's weapon from reaching its target
- **Void of the body** – it is an action of the body when a potential target avoids being hit by prolonging the distance or by other movement
- **Voiding with the hand** (see 10.1)

4. Fencing arena

1. A fencing arena must provide similar conditions to both contestants. This applies mainly to angles of the light and the ground lubricity
2. The dimensions of a fencing arena must be minimally 5x8 meters or maximally 8x12 meters in a square or rectangular shape. The shape of a fencing arena must be marked by a full line attached or drawn on the ground. The closest obstacle must be at least 1 meter away from the marking line.
3. The central point of a fencing arena may be marked optionally.
4. Contestants start a fight out of measure, on marks which are at least 2m away from the central point of the arena
5. Another line (safe zone) must be marked one meter away from the fencing arena. Everyone except the referee or his assistants is prohibited to enter the fencing arena and the safety zone during a fight.

5. Mandatory equipment

1. Every contestant is responsible for their equipment and in order to enter a tournament is required to use all parts of mandatory equipment. If an equipment is declared unsuitable or unfit and a contestant is unable to get a suitable substitute they may be prohibited from entering a tournament.
2. The mandatory equipment is controlled and checked by the referee of each fencing arena. A referee may require a contestant to change or adjust a part of his equipment in a time frame which won't be longer than 5 minutes. If it is not possible for the contestant to comply within the set time frame, the contestant will be awarded a black card and won't be able to continue in the respective tournament. All their fights will be declared a win for the opponent.
3. If an accident will occur and the sole reason of this accident will be unfit equipment, the responsibility lies on the referee who approved the contestant's entry. The referee will be subjected to disciplinary proceedings and their license may be revoked.

4. A referee has the right to forbid a piece or a set of equipment which doesn't comply with the prescribed norm.

5.1 Head

1. An undamaged and fit mask which complies with FIE certification with the bib protection of 1600N is mandatory.
2. Back of the head protection and cervical spine protection is mandatory
3. A neck protector with a thick layer protecting the larynx is mandatory
4. The bib of the mask must not roll up.
5. If a contestant leans their head in every standard angle no unprotected part or skin must be visible.

5.2 Hands, arms and torso protection

1. Special HEMA fencing gloves, sport fencing gloves, thick lacrosse gloves or hockey gloves are allowed. All of them are to be subjected to individual control. It is forbidden to use pieces of metal on any place of the gloves.
2. A fencer using a cup hilt rapier or a rapier with a complex hilt doesn't have to use a massive glove with the main weapon – a standard fencing glove will suffice. They should however have the rest of their forearm covered.
3. If a fencer uses the dagger, he must protect it with a massive, specialized glove (see 5.2.1)
4. Gloves used in a tournament don't need to have a thickened layer on the inside of the palm but the palm has to be covered at least by a simple glove or textile.
5. The torso of the body must be protected with an undamaged fencing jacket or gambeson which is made of special hardened or thick material which prevents blade penetration and eases the blade impact. The jacket is subjected to control by the tournament staff and the arena referee. A fencing jacket must cover the armpits as well.
6. Additional protection of the arms or elbows is required if the jacket doesn't provide sufficient protection itself.
7. Every part of the body must be covered. No open space must be left between the gloves and the jacket.
8. An additional fencing plastron is mandatory in the rapier competition.

5.3 Leg protection

1. A groin protector is mandatory for every male contestant.
2. The knees and shins must be protected from the front and the sides as well.
3. Hips must be protected either with a fencing jacket or with padded pants.
4. Thighs and the upper legs must be protected with (at least) a FIE 350N certified pants or other approved protection (Kevlar, aramid etc.).

6. Weapons

6.1 Rapier

1. Only historical-like rapiers (e.g. simulators/replicas) with historical-like blades designed for competitive fencing are allowed. Modern sport-fencing blades (either for epee or foil) are not allowed.
2. The length of the handle, hilt type (complex hilt, cup-hilt etc.) or the width of the cross are not limited. However the maximum length of the weapon must be 130cm.
3. Cross must be rounded in its ends.
4. The maximum allowed length of the rapier blade is 110cm (including the ricasso). The blade must be adequately flexible mainly from the mid to the point. The flexibility is measured by

fixing a weight of 500g to the point; the point must be then angled at least 30 degrees compared to the horizontal blade.

5. The weight of the rapier must be between 900 to 1300g.
6. The blade must not bear signs of heavy damage, must not be bent, broken or ruptured. The edges must be round and blunt.
7. The point of the blade must be blunt and rounded to prevent potential penetration. If the point is not adequately rounded, a rubber tip or other accessories should be used to make it safer. The main referee will then check and approve the weapon.
8. The point of the rapier must be covered by a colored tape for a better visibility.

6.2 Sidearm – dagger

1. A sidearm is allowed in the rapier tournament – namely a dagger. The dagger can be used for defensive purposes and its use is voluntary.
2. By a sidearm we understand a dagger with one straight blade; daggers with multiple blades, special ricasso used for blade trapping or daggers with curved blades are forbidden.
3. The maximum length of the blade of the dagger is 45cm. The tip of the dagger must blunt and rounded. If the tip is not rounded, it should be covered with an additional rubber tip. Furthermore, the tip of the dagger must be covered by a colored tape.
4. It is allowed to deflect and parry opponent's attacks or to bind their rapier.
5. It is forbidden to use the dagger for offensive purposes. An attack with the dagger will be penalized by a yellow card. In case the attack is exceedingly brutal, the referee may penalize it straight with a red card.
6. It is forbidden to throw the dagger against an opponent. Such action will be immediately penalized by exclusion from the tournament.

7. Fencing match

7.1 Beginning, breaks and the general course of the match

1. The match begins with both fencers choosing their weapons. It is per their agreement if they will use the dagger or just the single rapier. In case of a dispute the main referee will have the final call (e.g. by tossing a coin etc.).
2. Both fencers assume their respective places in the arena, with the first fighter standing right from the referee.
3. After referee signals "On your marks" both of the fencers assume their initial guards, both of them standing at least 2m away from the arena center.
4. The referee then asks both contestants whether they are ready to fight by shouting "Ready?" If both contestants signal readiness or if no negative signal is given, the referee starts the fight with a clear "Fight!"
5. Both of the contestants must wait for the signal to fight. If any of the fencers moves, they will be punished with a yellow card.
6. The referee stops the fight with the signal "Stop!"
7. Both fencers are obliged to stop the fight (not depending on the phase of the fight) immediately after the signal "Stop!" is given and stand still where they've been stopped
8. A clear offensive action which ignores the referees signal to stop the fight will be penalized with a yellow card.
9. The reasons for stopping the fight may be following:
 - a. At least one fencer achieved a valid hit
 - b. An invalid hit occurred. Such a hit may complicate the exchange evaluation.

- c. When a contestant leaves the designated arena by stepping out of the field with both legs. If a fencer leaves the field by himself, they will be punished with a yellow card. If a fencer was pushed out of the arena by their opponent no penalization will occur.
 - d. The designated time frame for the match or fight is over.
 - e. If a piece of equipment is damaged or not attached correctly.
 - f. If there is a risk of injury or an injury has occurred the fight must be stopped immediately without any hesitation.
 - g. The exchange or fight is clearly chaotic and standard scoring is not possible.
 - h. Any of the fencers wishes to interrupt the fight by giving a clear signal with their arm raised.
10. If the exchange was halted and no point was given, fencers start the next exchange on their marks
 11. It is strictly forbidden to intentionally turn the back against the other fencer during the course of the fight. Such an action will be immediately penalized with a red card.

7.2 Match duration

1. The duration of a fight means the actual time spent fighting (or a fighting net time). Thus a timer is started with the signal "Fight!" and are paused with the signal "Stop!"
2. A match may end before one of the contestants reaches the maximum designated score for the respective match.
3. The timer must be visible to both of the contestants. Otherwise the arena manager or any other designated assistant must inform the fencers about the remaining time before each fight.
4. The duration of a match fought in the pools is 3 minutes net time. However victory may be reached after one of the contestants reaches a score of 5 before the net time runs out.
5. A match during the elimination phase of a tournament takes 2 rounds of 3 minutes net time with a break of 1 minute before the next round. Victory may be reached after one of the contestants reaches a score of 7 before the net time runs out.
6. If the result of a match is a tie, e.g. the time ran out and the score is even, match will be prolonged by one extra minute and fought to "sudden death"; that means first valid hit wins the fight.
7. Every contestant has the right to ask for a break by signaling with their arm raised up. This may be done due to an equipment failure or due to an injury (or any other valid reason). If a fencer is not able to continue fighting within 3 minutes after a halt is given, the match is ended by declaring the other contestant winning 0:1 no matter the previous score.

8. Judging

All appointed referees supervising SFHEMA tournament must have a valid judging license. The conditions of obtaining a license are modified depending on the current ruleset.

- a theoretical test of rules knowledge must be done
- it's required to objectively referee at least 90% of fights/exchanges from a video recording
- a practical test on judging and tournament management is required

8.1 Referee

1. A referee supervises pool fights in his dedicated arena
2. A referee manages individual matches
3. Is responsible for equipment check during fights in their dedicated arena

4. Manages their assistants, timer and score input
5. Moves around the arena to be able to perfectly spectate and analyze the fight
6. May penalize the attendees (with a yellow, red or a black card)
7. Assigns points for valid actions / hits according to the ruleset
8. A referee is obliged to explain a point assignment if they are challenged to do so by at least one of the fighters. They are also obliged to explain a penalty or exchange stop (if applicable).

8.2 Assistant referee

1. An assistant referee helps the main referee in scoring and hit validation. Their task is to observe a match from a different angle than the main referee and to memorize the individual exchanges for evaluation.
2. Usually, they may be asked to observe one fencer's actions, both given and received hits
3. If an assistant observes that a fencer they are to follow received a hit, they should raise their arm. The main referee may then stop the fighting (or not).
4. There should be at least 2 assistant referees for a fight if no video recording devices are used.
5. An assistant referee is not responsible for point assignment nor for the overall match score.

9. Scoring

1. A successful attack/hit awards one point.
2. In case of a simultaneous hit, or a doublehit, both fencers are awarded one point. A doublehit is a situation where both fencers hit each other within a timeframe which may be considered to be simultaneous.
3. A referee may award a point for an exchange only if the action was performed between the signals "Fight!" and "Stop!" If a simple offensive action is commenced before the halt is signaled and a hit is achieved during or after the signal, the hit may be called valid and a fencer may be awarded a point if it complies with the conditions of a valid hit.
4. After the fight is halted, the main referee evaluates and analyses the actions within the last exchange. Depending on this they decide whether a point will be awarded to one of the combatants, both or no one. The referee must be able to describe the exchange and explain their decision to award a point. The referee must be able to explain what actions and techniques they saw.
5. A referee must not award a point if they are not able to describe or define what they saw, if there are not sure about the sequence of the actions performed or about the area which was hit. They may ask to evaluate a video recording (if applicable).
6. Punches or attacks with the fist to the mask are not valid.
7. A cut is considered as a valid action only if it is performed with a visually distinctive trajectory towards valid areas. If both of the fencers miss with their attacks and will come to a narrow measure and will put their blades on other's openings, such action will not be seen as a cut.
8. Weak attacks or indistinct attacks can be called as invalid by the referee. For example, if the blade doesn't bend with a thrust, such attacks may be seen as invalid.
9. Both fencers have the right to admit they were hit, mainly if the referee hasn't seen it. If such situation occurs, they should cease fighting and raise their arm.

9.1 Valid hits

1. A valid hit is the contact of the blade with the opponent's body or handle of their weapon.
2. A hit may be considered valid or invalid.
3. A hit that is valid has to contact a valid area of the body which is namely the area of the whole body, the weapon's handle (or the rings, if applicable) except:

- a. The feet, from the ankle below
- b. The back of the head and the cervical spine
- c. Any attack with the dagger
4. If a fencer intentionally turns him/herself or covers a valid area with a non-valid one, they will be immediately penalized with a red card
5. It is possible to achieve a hit with a:
 - a. **Cut**; using the edge or the flat of the blade towards the whole valid area. A cut must be performed with a visually distinctive trajectory (at least approx. 30cm) and must correspond with an action that would probably cause the target area to be wounded
 - b. **Thrust**; using the point of the blade towards the whole valid area. A valid thrust must be performed in such way that it would be visually distinctive, e.g. the blade will be bent at the end of the action.
 - c. **Strike**; using the pommel of the weapon against opponent's mask, not elsewhere. It won't be considered a valid nor an invalid hit against any other target.
6. It is enabled to grab the opponent's blade but it won't be considered a hit.
7. A valid hit must be performed with a substantial force; in other case it is not necessary for the hit to be considered valid and the referee may let the fight continue.
8. The amount of force put into an attack must be adequate and should not unnecessarily exceed a considerable boundary. If a fencer uses unnecessary brute force, they may be penalized with a yellow, a red or subsequently with a black card.
9. A fencer has the right to admit they were hit by their opponent by raising their arm and verbally proclaiming their cause. The referee however is not obliged to award a point after such thing occurs but they have to explain their decision sufficiently.
10. If a fencer thinks they've landed a hit and will stop fencing even though the referee will not give a signal to stop and they will then receive a hit from the other fencer, only the second hit will be considered valid.

9.2 Special actions

A fencer may be awarded a point even though their action does not end with a valid hit, but they were able to assume a dominant position in their exchange / fight.

There are two types of dominance:

1. **Weapon dominance**; If a fencer lays their weapon on a valid target area of their opponent and it is not followed with a cut, a thrust or a slice, the opponent is obliged to immediately remove the weapon out of their body during the next tempo (e.g. it is obvious that a standard counter action can't be achieved). If they are unable to do so, the position of the weapon is considered dominant.
2. **Disarming**; a fencer disarms the opponent. The fight is immediately stopped by the main referee. If a fencer loses their weapon due to their own action/mistake, it won't be considered as a disarm.

9.3 Forbidden actions

All forbidden actions will be sanctioned with a yellow card. It is forbidden to:

1. Attack with a cut or with a thrust on the back of the neck or the cervical spine.
2. Attack the foot.
3. Attack with the cross.
4. Kicking is not allowed.
5. To tear down opponent's mask or any other protective equipment.

6. Wrestling
7. To throw the opponent by lifting them with their both feet above the ground.
8. Attack an unarmed opponent.
9. Attack or do any offensive action with the dagger
10. To disrespect or to disoblige the referee

10. Special rules

10.1 Voiding with the hand

1. Fencers may use their off-hands to deflect certain types of attacks, namely incoming thrusts or static blades
2. By voiding with the hand we understand pushing the opponent's blade with the hand away from the valid target. Such action won't be considered a hit unless the voiding hand was attacked and hit by a thrust or a noticeable cut.
3. Fencer may grab the opponent's blade only if it is static. If during such action the other fencer will manage to pull their blade away, releasing it from the grab, the void will be considered invalid and a point will be awarded to the fencer who freed their blade.

10.2 Wrestling and close combat

1. Any wrestling or grappling move when one could either lift their opponent or create a lever on their joints is forbidden. If such situation will occur, the referee will call a halt. If no hit occurred before the halt, the exchange will be considered finished and no points will be awarded.
2. Punching to the mask is allowed but no points will be awarded for such attack. A fencer may use the attack as means of closing in, releasing themselves from a dangerous situation or to take initiative.
3. If both fencers miss with their attacks and will get into a close measure, from which it is not possible to continue to attack, only by stepping out and if no one takes the initiative to escape from such measure, the referee will call a halt. Touches with the blade after the miss are not considered valid hits (see valid hits).
4. It is forbidden to kick. A kick will be penalized with a yellow card.

10.3 Right of Way

1. Tournaments in rapier do not follow the right of way rule.

11. Video recording

1. Video recording is necessary in the elimination phase of a tournament
2. Each fencer has the right to call one illegitimate and an unlimited number of legitimate validations of their exchange using a video recording
3. An appeal should be signaled immediately after a point is awarded.
4. The referee may or may not change their decision after they review the recording
5. If the referee does not revoke their previous judgment, the fencer who called for the validation will lose the right to call more video validations during the match
6. A referee may validate video recording of the last exchange anytime they see it as appropriate. After a new fight is commenced, it is not possible to validate the previous exchange
7. A video assistant is also entitled to call for a video validation.
8. If possible, the video assistant is also responsible for the timer, score sheet and answers to main referee's instructions

12. Cards and penalties

1. A **yellow** card means a warning
2. A **red** card assigns a point to the opponent
3. A **black** card excludes a person from a tournament
4. If a fencer was already penalized by a **yellow card**, the next one is automatically **red** and assigns a point to the opponent.
5. A **red** card may be followed only by another **red** card. Or a **black**, depending on the situation.
6. Awarded penalties are noted in the tournament protocol.

13. Standard signalization



On guard!



Ready?



Play!



Halt!



Attack! / Counter-attack!



Simultaneous!



Point in line



Hit against!



Not valid!



Hit scored for!