

Macdonald Academy of Arms Open Backsword Tournament

Proceedings and Rules

The following proceeds as a presentation of Rules as established by the Macdonald Academy of Arms for the conducting of an Open Backsword tournament. Rules established May 2003.

1 – Of Weapons –

That the weapons used shall be of singlestick form, consisting of a wooden blade (preferably ash) of a length (excluding hilt/grip length) between 29” and 33” according to personal preference or availability of useable weapons. Sticks should be round in section of natural form (not turned), and not exceeding 1” in maximum diameter.

Hilts should be appropriately sturdy in construction, of wicker reed or leather, providing adequate protection of the hand against blows and fitting such as to allow freedom of movement to the fingers, hand and wrist.

2 – Of Attire –

That participants must wear strong fencing masks or martial arts face masks for head protection, in good condition to serve adequately in covering at least the front, sides and top of the head, said armour also incorporating sufficient throat protection. Steel mesh or bars must be close enough not to permit a stick point to enter.

A protective fencing jacket or padded plastron or jacket must be worn incorporating chest and arm protection.

A leather glove with gauntlet must be worn on at least the sword hand. Padded protection must be worn to cover the knee of the forward leg and elbow of the sword arm.

3 – Of Valid Target Areas –

That the target areas of the body valid for scoring hits upon shall be the head, shoulders, chest, flanks, arms and upper part of the forward leg from 2” above the knee.

4 – Of Valid Hits –

For the purposes of Open Tournament, the only permitted method of striking shall be by delivering cuts only to the specified target areas with that part of the stick that represents the true edge of the sword. Cuts must be well placed with control and either drawn or pushed upon landing to replicate the action of an effective cut with a steel blade edge.

An intentionally well executed disarm of blade, where one party removes or disables use of the sword from the other and presents an immediate threat from one or both shall count the same as one hit. In the event of one party losing their sword by dropping it, or having it beat from their hand, their opponent shall score one point as a hit if they present the immediate threat and intention of a cutting attack within distance and demonstrate honourable control in stopping that attack short of valid target.

5 – Of Scoring of Hits –

That the first opponent to land three clean hits upon the other shall be declared Victor of that individual bout.

Each valid hit landed must be clearly audibly acknowledged by the recipient at the moment of occurrence. Double hits, where both parties land valid hits together at the same time, shall be declared void, and no points awarded to either party.

6 – Of Actions not Permitted –

That hard hitting, thrusting with the point, striking with the hilt, pommel or any part of the body and grappling with the opponent's person are all **not permitted** for the purposes of Open Tournament.

Upon first infringement of actions not permitted, shall a clear verbal warning be given to the offending party.

Upon a second infringement by the same person throughout the course of any one tournament, shall a hit be awarded against the offending party.

Upon a third infringement of the same, shall the offending party be disqualified outright from the tournament.

7 - Of Judges –

That one Presiding judge, holding the recognised title of Master-at-Arms, shall conduct the general running of the Tournament and give final decision regarding the validity and allocation of hits. Two additional assistant judges may be appointed to confirm actions and their validity.

8 – Of Respectful Engagement –

That upon being called to play and entering the arena, both opponents should face each other outwith engaging distance and before masks are worn, clearly salute each other, the judge/s and gathered spectators, in that order.

Upon masks being worn, both opponents shall be called to engage blades in guarded distance. Upon the signal to begin play, both opponents should first retire out of distance before commencing with combat.

9 – Of Halt of Play –

That upon the Presiding judges clear call of "Halt!" should all play immediately stop. This shall be called upon all acknowledged and perceived valid hits, and may also be called at any time for reasons of safety.

If any other Tournament participant (opponent or judges) sees good reason to stop play at any time, they should signal this intent clearly by raising their left hand high in the air. Any hits landing after halt has been called shall not be counted as valid.