

Fencing (rapier) Marshal 101

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Atlantia Kingdom Rapier Marshal
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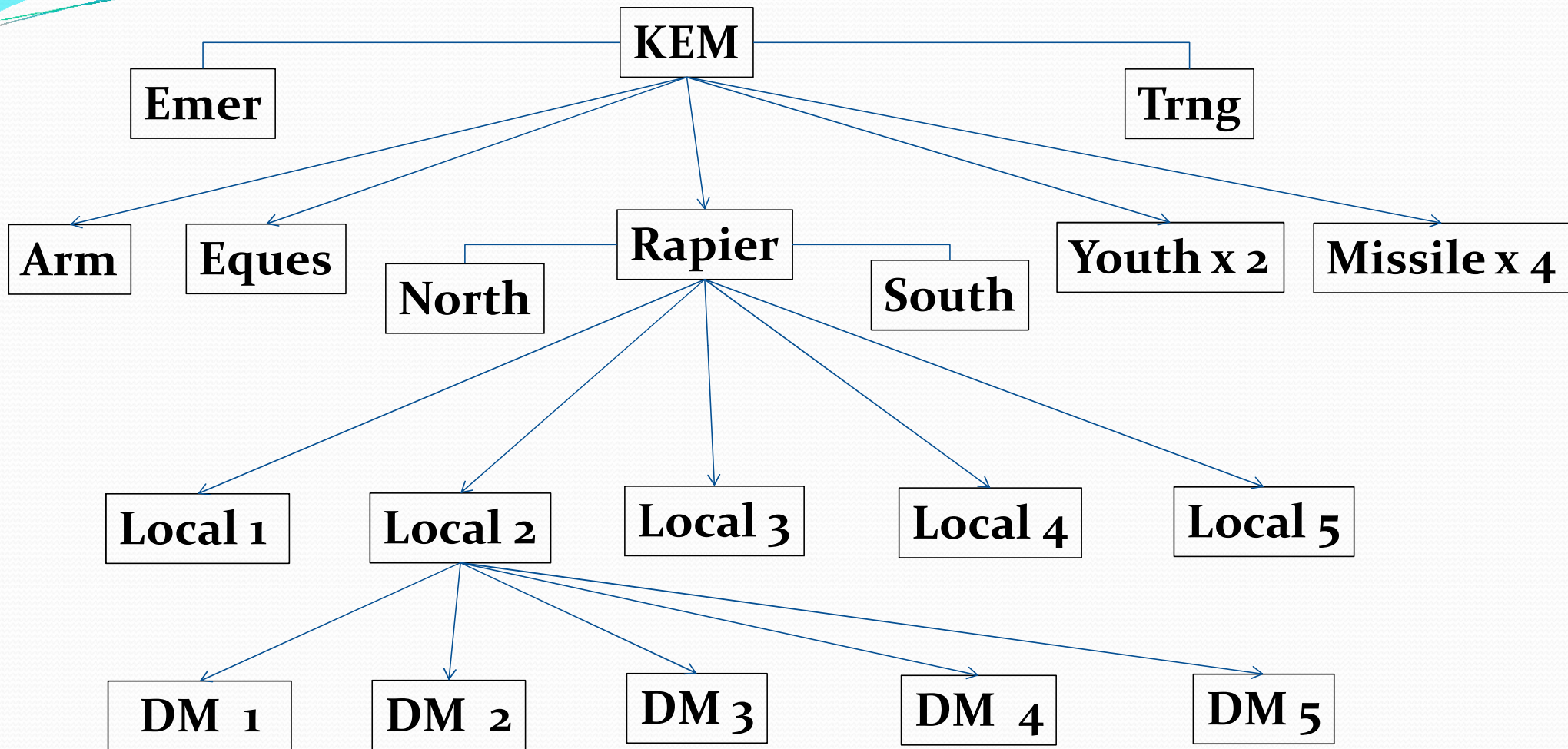


Goal

- The Atlantian Fencing Marshal 101 class aims to provide individuals with the basic background required to begin or renew a successful journey toward a marshal's warrant and be a local Rapier Marshal. It is not an instruction in all rules of fencing combat. This outline assumes that the instructor and students are familiar with the most recent edition of the SCA Fencing Marshal's Handbook and Kingdom Policy related to fencing combat.

Specifically this class will enable you to;

- Summarize duties as a Marshal
- Describe armor standards and how to inspect them.
- Describe weapon standards and how to inspect them.
- Summarize the procedures for authorization.
- Identify what to do in the case of an injury or issue on the field.
- Summarize the procedures for marshaling a fight.
- Summarize the MiT Program.
- Summarize the FIP Program





Philosophy

- **Fencing in the SCA is a privilege earned by demonstrating you can fight safely and will comply with our policies.**
- **This is a sport and people will likely get injured, so there is risk.**
- **Ideally the injuries will be minor, such as bruises, and the frequency low.**
- **Accidents will happen, so we want to do what we can to ensure compliance with SCA policy which is intended to reduce the chance someone will be seriously injured.**
- **Anyone intentionally not complying with our rules is selfish and putting others at risk.**

- **We are a team and should communicate up and down the chain**
- **Want to fix problems not exclude people**

Duties of a Local Rapier Marshal

- Ensure compliance with rules and policy* at all practices and events to promote our fencers safety and Rapier as an activity.
 - Inspect equipment; yearly safety stand down.
 - Oversee conduct of fighters
 - Handle and report adverse incidents
- Run local Practice
- Marshal during tournaments and Melees (Covered in detail in the 201 class)
- Conduct Authorizations
- Participate in the MIT program

*Keep a copy of the rules and polices on you.

Running a Local Practice - 1

- Each Group (Barony, Shire, Canton) can have a local Rapier Marshal. They could be the Groups Knights Marshal, but are usually subordinate to the groups' Knights marshal.
- Typically the groups will have one or more official practices per week. As these are official they are required to have a Warranted Marshal present to ensure compliance with rules. Note that there is no such thing as an unofficial practice.
- At practices the Marshal is responsible for;
- Organize the sessions
 - Set the tone
 - Ensure a Warranted Marshal is present
- Conduct inspections
- Marshal Fights
- Acquire and maintain spare equipment
- Make sure nonmembers sign waivers
- File Quarterly Waiver reports

Running a local Practice - 2

- **Organize training of new fighters**
 - **Make sure they understand and comply with SCA Rapier Policy and rules**
 - **Help them with acquiring equipment.**
 - **Use senior fencers**
 - **Teach blow calling skills**
 - **Taking blows**
 - **Giving blows**
 - **Equipment**
 - **Training**
- **Assess Fighter attitude**
- **Groups will often have more than one Warranted Marshal, these other Marshals are deputies to the group's Marshal. They are subordinate to the group Marshal and should be used as a resource.**

Armor Inspections and Standards

Overview

A. How to Inspect

1. Inspections must occur at each event, practice, and every day for multi-day events.
2. Remember, inspections are pass/fail first. Ensure that the fencer knows they have passed or failed, and provide the reason for failure. A fencer should be allowed to remedy the failure and return to the marshal who failed the item for re-inspection.
3. If you wish to provide an opinion on an item, such as one that may be legal, but close to failure, be clear in your language so that the fencer understands that the information you are offering is your opinion, not a requirement.
4. Inspect the same order every time—this will help you avoid making errors.
 - a. Are they wearing required personal protection?
 - b. Has their armor been punch tested in the last two years?
 - c. Have they inspected their gear for its condition?

Armor Inspections and Standards

Head and Neck

A. Head

- Check masks and helms for fit, wear, and padding. Mask and helms should be inspected both on AND off the combatant. If there is concern about the face mesh of a modern fencing mask, it should be tested using a standard commercial 12kg mask punch tester by a marshal trained in the use of a tester.
- Ensure that the hood covers so that there are no gaps.
- For Cut and Thrust back of the head protection is required.

B. Neck

- For everything but light rapier, verify the fencer is wearing a rigid gorget. This is one of the most commonly forgotten pieces of armor when fighting after a break.

Armor Inspections and Standards

TORSO

- Torso armor must be made of penetration resistant material. In the case of cloth or leather Ask if the armor passed a punch test in the last two years and/or they have checked it for defects.
 - We are taking the fighter on their word
- Armor **MUST** be tested every two years per the Society Fencing Marshal's Handbook and must be tested the first time that new gear is used or if no marshal on the field knows a given piece of gear to have been tested. They may also be tested at the marshal's discretion.
- Verify the armpits and groin have puncture-resistant coverage, this is the most often forgotten area.
- Under Armor, Spandex, and other similar stretchy materials are not suitable as puncture-resistant materials. In addition, Kevlar is not an acceptable material as it degrades rapidly.
- Marshals should acquire and bring appropriate testing equipment to practices and events they run.

Armor Inspections and Standards

TORSO CHAINMAIL

- Chain mail shirts are legal. Verify there are no missing rings in vital areas. If you can't see it because the fighter is wearing a shirt, politely ask them if they have inspected the shirt that day and if it is in good order. We are issuing a policy clarification to state:
 - Appendix 2 of the Society Rapier Handbook states that: *'When inspecting a combatant's armor, you may not be able to see every part of armor. In these cases, ask the combatant about their armor and to determine if they know the rules and are, per their assertion, armored accordingly.'* This may be the case, for example, when someone is wearing chainmail underneath other clothing; it is sufficient to ask them if they appropriately inspected their chainmail before donning it."
- Based on feedback from fencers the most likely failure point is the underarms due to pulls from movement. Add a gusset?
- Lord Fujina is a great resource for how to repair the shirts.
- Blow calling can be different
- Be sure to check the gorget/shirt coverage.



Armor Inspections and Standards

LIMBS

Hand and Arms

- For Heavy Rapier there is no longer a requirement to wear gloves or abrasion resistant material on the arms or legs. However...
- For Light Rapier and C&T there is still a requirement for coverage by abrasion resistant material on the arms.
- For cut and thrust, verify at least soft elbows and appropriate hand protection for the weapons forms are being worn.

Legs

- There is no requirement to cover the leg in Heavy rapier, but they must be covered by abrasion resistant material in C&T and light rapier.
- There is no requirement to wear shoes in heavy rapier but combatants should be encouraged to do so.

Armor Inspections and Standards

Overall appearance (10' rule)

- The fencer's kit shall look SCA period at a distance of 10' or greater.
- The intention is to improve the appearance of the field, not prevent people from playing.
- In general, this means no obvious sports logos, fluorescent colors, etc. Sports armor should be completely covered.
- Be especially polite and helpful in the enforcement of this rule, but firm. This also applies to authorizing fencers. This is something that should be first addressed at the local practice level.
- If an authorizing fencer does not meet this standard find out who is running their practice and talk to that marshal.
- If an experienced fencer does not meet this standard they may be removed from the field.
- To the extent possible reduce the clutter of obviously modern equipment around the list area.

Weapons Inspections and Standards

Blades

A. Blades

1. Check blades for; kinks, S curves, sharp bends, cracks, rust, or burrs.
2. Verify tips:
 - Will not be dislodged easily.
 - Contrasting color tape is used.
 - NO tape covers the end of the tip.
 - Has adequate protection against punch-through (e.g., metal in the tip) except for spatulated tips.
 - No electric tape
3. If the flex of a blade is questioned, be prepared to test it to Society standards.
4. Hilts and defensive gear such as Bucklers should not have any sharp points or edges nor be designed to capture blades.

Weapons Inspections and Standards

SPEARS

- Rubber-headed spears must be mounted on rattan between 1 1/8th and 1 3/8th inch diameter. Gauges
- The Head must flex to 90 degrees with hand pressure and return to normal within 3 seconds.
- It must have a Combined length of between 4 and 9 feet.
- The minimum diameter inserted into the head end is no less than 1/2 inch.
- Heads must be friction fit with tape including bright contrasting colored tape or ribbon at the base of the spearhead for visual contrast.
- Spear tips degrade with use and need to be assessed routinely.
- While Spears (and Longswords) comprise a minority of weapons used they account for a disproportionately high number of hard hits. Stress practicing prior to events.
- We are considering an experiment with Heavy Legal Spear tips

Weapons Inspections and Standards

PROJECTILE WEAPONS

- **There are several types of projectile weapons allowed to be used with Rapier**
 - **Combat Archery & Thrown weapons**
 - **Must have a Combat Archer Marshal participating**
 - **Not commonly done at this time**
 - **Weapons and projectiles must comply with Combat Archery rules**
- **You can Marshal a fight with Projectile weapons but you must have appropriate ANSI-rated eye protection,**
- **Spectators must be kept further away than the effective range of the weapons.**
- **Certain types of projectiles may be disallowed from specific scenarios at the marshals' discretion. For example, ball type projectiles, such as small rubber balls may be unsafe on rigid flooring as they may pose a slip hazard to combatants, but may be safe for use on grass and soft dirt.**
- **No material may be used on any striking surface that may flake off when hitting an opponent.**
- **The use of projectile weapons is forbidden in any situation where spectators and non-involved combatants cannot be separated from the potential line of fire by more than the effective range of the projectile weapons to be used**
- **Projectile weapons must be unloaded or safely discharged into the ground before any participants remove their masks or marshals remove their safety goggles.**

Weapons Inspections and Standards

RUBBER BAND GUNS

- **The Marshalling of Rubber Band Guns is now under the purview of Rapier Marshals**
- **You will conduct inspections and Marshal their use. You will need a way to measure the draw force required for the ammunition.**
- **Using RBGs does not require authorization, but the weapons and ammunition must be inspected.**
- **RBGs must look like a period muzzle-loading weapon dated before 1600 CE.**
- **RBGs must be made from sturdy, yet lightweight materials that can withstand regular combat. All edges and corners must be smoothed off, and no splinters or cracks must exist.**
- **RBGs or similar apparatus that fire flexible projectiles using the elasticity of the projectiles as the sole propulsion force may not have a draw strength of greater than 30 lbs (13.6 kg) per projectile.**

Weapons Inspections and Standards

RBG AMMUNITION

- **RBG Ammunition (referred to as RBG ammo) regulations**
- **RBG ammo must be made from commercially available rubber tubing and must not contain any metal parts.**
- **RBG ammo must not use rigid materials beyond the minimum required to join the ends together.**
- **Any rigid materials joining the ends must be covered and smoothed with vinyl duct tape or plastic shrink wrapping.**
- **RBG ammo must not be filled with any material.**
- **RBG ammo and gun must be individually marked to identify the owner.**
- **RBG ammo must be inspected and used with a specified weapon.**
- **RBG ammo may not be shared between weapons without reinspection.**

Weapons Inspections and Standards

RBG USE

- A shot from an RBG that strikes a weapon “destroys” that weapon, which may not be used until the weapon bearer has resurrected.
- A shot from an RBG that strikes a non-rigid defensive object, such as a cloak, is considered to have gone through the defensive object and hit the person behind the defensive object.
- There is no minimum range for an RBG.
- Participants may not aim RBG at the back of anyone's head.
- RBGs must be unloaded unless the marshals have declared that RBGs can be loaded.
- RBGs must be unloaded upon the marshal's declaration that RBGs should be unloaded.



Authorizations

Overview

- Authorization is the process of testing a new fighter to ensure they can conduct themselves safely on the field. Authorizations are not about showing great skill, just that they will not injure another fighter or themselves.
- An authorization will be conducted by two Marshals and an Usher (opponent) as well as the fighter to be tested.
- Authorizations consist of two phases; An oral test of the candidates knowledge of the rules and a practical test with the candidate sparring.
- Separate authorizations will be conducted for each Rapier discipline: Light Rapier, Heavy Rapier, HVY Rapier with a two-handed sword, HVY Rapier Spear, Cut & Thrust, Cut & Thrust with a two-handed sword, and Projectile Weapons within rapier combat which are governed by Combat Archery marshals.
- Paperwork; It is the responsibility of the authorizing fencer to obtain all appropriate signatures on paperwork before the end of the event day.

Authorizations

Marshals

- Two Marshals will be selected by the RMIC to conduct the authorization.
- They will administer the oral test and sparring sessions.
- Selecting Marshals
 - They must be willing to let the authorizing fencer stand on their own merits and be willing to fail an individual.
 - At least one marshal must be from a group outside of the authorizing fencer's group.
 - The marshals must not regularly practice with the candidate.
- The Marshals are allowed to consult with the candidates Home group Marshal in order to obtain any relevant background on the fighter.



Authorizations

USHER

- **Usher; The Usher is an authorized fencer selected to actually spar with the candidate. Their task is to draw out the skills and reactions of the candidate for evaluation.**
- **Selecting an Usher**
 - **Try to select a fencer with at least three years of experience.**
 - **They should be unflappable in personality and controlled in their fencing.**
 - **They should understand and comply with the intent of testing the new fighter. That is the Usher must be willing to be struck by the authorizing fencer deliberately leaving openings and not try to win every pass.**
 - **The Usher should push the candidate to a level commiserate with the candidates apparent skill.**
 - **They must not regularly practice with the candidate.**

Authorizations

Oral Test

- The Marshals will quiz the candidate on their understanding of the rules and conventions of Rapier in Atlantia.
- The authorizing fencer must have read the rules of the list and must demonstrate a command of them.
 - They must know the intent & spirit, not necessarily the letter of the laws.
- Marshals will not answer questions for fencers, nor provide hints.
- The authorizing fencer should be encouraged to demonstrate a point (say, how to obtain engagement) if they cannot express the requirements verbally.
- The authorizing fencer will not proceed to the combat phases unless they have demonstrated a thorough knowledge of the rules of the list, particularly engagement and target zones.



Authorizations

CRITERIA FOR SUCCESS

The authorizing fencer must behave and fight in such a fashion as to not be a danger to themselves or others.

- **Understands the rules for both equipment and conduct on the field.**
- **Does not conduct unacceptable behavior such as: Failing to stop on the call of Hold, Cringing or dropping of defense when not in hold.**
- **Safely Executing proper attacks and correctly interpreting strikes to themselves.**
- **Safely just moving about the field**

See the Society Fencing Marshal's Handbook, Appendix 5 for more examples.



Authorizations

CUT & THRUST AND SPEAR SPECIFIC CRITERIA

In Cut & Thrust and Spear authorizations the authorizing fencer will meet the criteria for Light Rapier and Rapier in addition to the following:

- **A higher standard applies as the addition of percussive cuts requires a greater degree of skill to ensure safety for the fencer and opponents.**
 - **Possible to deliver more energy percussively.**
- **Demonstrate the ability to conduct attacks in series, incorporating multiple blows and/or feints.**
- **Demonstrate a defense capable of protecting against complex attacks such as described above.**
- **Show control over the weapon and the power generated when throwing blows.**
- **For spear, must show control when abruptly charged by their opponent.**

MARSHALING A FIGHT

Marshaling a fight

- As the fencers enter the list, inspect them to confirm that there is no obviously missing or defective armor. Confirm they are armored as inspected.
 - People often take off their gorget during breaks
- Ask them if they are ready to begin and insist on an audible response from each fighter to any question or comment you make. Insist they respond in a clear audible voice.
- Stand in a location relative to the fight that provides the maximum visibility. This means as the fight moves you may need to move as well.
- A marshal should be able to specify a hit location and whether a blow was delivered edge-on or flat. A marshal may NOT call whether a blow is good or not.
- A Marshal is expected to stop a fight if they assess that fighters may be moving toward a dangerous situation such as losing their temper or being cognitively impaired from heat.
- Marshals must keep spectators and unarmored fencers outside of the safety zones around the outside of the list.

MARSHALING A FIGHT

Showmanship and Field presence

- It is expected that marshals will adhere to the same period appearance rules as are required of fencers (preferably exceeding them).
- Marshals should conduct themselves in a calm and chivalrous manner at all times. Set the tone.
- Marshals cannot both marshal and fight in the same activity. If an event has multiple fencing activities occurring at a given event, they may marshal one activity and fight in a separate activity unless they are the RMIC.
- At the end of each fight, the Marshals will ask each fencer if they are satisfied with the conduct of the fight. If the fighters are agitated you may give them a cool down period and then address any issues. Try to resolve problems that day.
- The marshal should be identifiable to spectators and fencers as a marshal from a distance by wearing the badge of the office and having a marshal's staff.
- This applies to practices as well as "events".



MARSHALING A FIGHT

MELEES

- In melees, fencers are engaged with all opponents immediately upon the call to lay on.
- Combatants may strike any single opponent they can safely reach with any legal blow if they are within a 180-degree arc of the opponent's front as defined by the opponent's shoulders, and at an angle they can be reasonably seen by the opponent.
- Combatants may strike any opponent who is part of a line if the attack is delivered within a 180-degree arc relative to the local line the opponent is a part of.
- Killing from behind (aka Death From Behind/DFB) is allowed if it has been announced beforehand. Make sure Combatants know if it is allowed or not. Demonstrate proper technique.
 - Poorly done DFB is a major cause of injury and frustration. Make you fencers practice good technique.
- Ask combatants to check their tips and other gear during holds.
- Melees are by nature chaotic and therefore have a higher potential for injury and misunderstanding. Additionally Combatants are more likely to become fatigued, so be particularly vigilant, assertive, and diplomatic.



Marshal in Training Program

The Purpose of the MIT program is to;

- Attempt to ensure a uniformity of training and experience among the marshallate such that rules are being enforced in the same way across the kingdom.
- Provide new marshals with the mental toolkit necessary to manage fights and uphold armor and weapons standards in potentially stressful situations.

The MiT program consists of both Fencing Marshal 101 and Field Marshal 201 and conducting supervised Marshaling at three events one of which must be outside the MIT's local group.

REMEMBER: MiTs are NOT marshals and cannot, on their own, monitor fights, inspect weapons, or sign off on paperwork.

The MIT is sponsored by a mentor who will

- Provide guidance and practical instruction to the MiT.
- Certify the competence of the MiT.



Adverse Actions

- Adverse actions are ones that violate SCA Rapier policy and rules to a level that they negatively impact safety
- They are required to be documented and reported
- There are three categories of issues
 - Injuries
 - Broken Equipment
 - Behavioral
- There are three levels of severity
 - Verbal warning
 - Taken off field; for fight, for day
 - Sanctioned; Authorization revoked for extended period.

INJURIES / ISSUES ON THE FIELD

General

- Marshals (generally speaking) are not physicians but do have a responsibility for the safety of fencers under their management. Fencers should be allowed to monitor their level of injury and gauge their ability to engage in combat activities. Some special cases, however, are mentioned below.
 - Fencers with freely flowing wounds must be removed from the field until the wounds can be dressed in such a way as to prevent blood (or vomit) from coming into contact with other participants.
- Marshals should seek to determine the root cause of any injury to confirm that the armor and weapons of the participants continue to meet Society standards or identify unsafe circumstances.
- Exercise patience and empathy if you happen upon a fencer who may be experiencing an event such as a PTSD/trauma trigger. If this happens, the fencer may need assistance getting off the field or further assistance from a trusted source. A marshal is a safety officer, not a therapist. It is not our job to resolve the episode outside of what may be necessary to maintain safety, both that of the fencer and those around them.

INJURIES / ISSUES ON THE FIELD

CONCUSSIONS

- Fencers who are rendered unconscious may not return to the field that day and should be encouraged to seek professional medical care.
- A fencer showing signs of a concussion should be removed from the field.

We recommend that all Marshals take the free online concussion recognition training available <https://www.cdc.gov/heads-up/training/sports-officials.html>

Some signs of Concussion

- Delayed or slowed spoken or physical responses.
- Slurred/unclear speech.
- Changes to balance, coordination, and/or reaction time.
- Disorientation (confused about time, date, location, game).
- Blank stare, dazed look.
- Loss of consciousness/blackout (occurs in less than 10% of cases).
- Memory loss of event before, during, or after injury occurred.
- Vomiting.

INJURIES / ISSUES ON THE FIELD

Excessive Force

- **Shots delivered with excessive force are the most common cause of injuries in our sport.**
- **They can be caused by;**
 - **Fleeting actions such as closing.**
 - **Fighters choosing to execute dangerous moves beyond their skill.**
 - **New equipment such as a stiffer or longer blade which they have not adequately practiced with.**
 - **Fatigue, particularly in warm weather**
- **It is unacceptable to intentionally throw hard shots no matter the perceived motivation. Calibrate.**
- **If a fencer throws blows that force their opponent to retire from the field from a real injury for any reason, the marshal responsible for the field shall determine why the excessive force hit occurred and take such steps as are appropriate to stop the problem from recurring. These actions may be as severe as suspending the offending fencer from the field for the day.**
- **A fighter who is consistently throwing shots that may not cause their opponent to retire but are still painful should be addressed.**

Broken Equipment

- **Equipment is broken when it suffers a degradation that puts it in violation of inspection standards. Examples include:**
 - **Bent or broken blades, dented masks, broken straps, tips that have been perforated by the bare blade (a blow thru)**
- **Broken equipment is grounds for an immediate Hold and should be removed from the field.**
- **When broken equipment is discovered, to include during inspections, data should be gathered and reported on the circumstances of the failure, how and why, and the personnel involved.**
- **If an Injury occurs it is critical to establish why the failure occurred and what the result was.**
- **Stress the collection of this data as it supports preventing future instances.**

Behavioral

- Behavioral issues are either lack of emotional control or a disregard for SCA policy and rules.
 - Emotional Control could be; Anger or Adrenalin related. In this case the Fencers is not in control of their actions at some level. This may blind them to actions and their consequences.
 - Disregard could be; Dishonorable, Arrogance, Disregard for compliance. Here the Fencer is aware of their actions but for whatever reason has chosen to not comply with policy and rules.
 - A form of this is treating others differently based on gender, rank, or other factors.
- In either case this can result in poor technique with blow calling or hitting hard or creating a negative environment for others.
- Note that behavioral issues may only be evident in more competitive settings such as tournaments.
- If people will not comply and continue to misbehave you have the authority to temporarily suspend the fencers authorization.
- Bullying is technically a Seneschal issue but it can have a serious effect on participation
 - “Fear is the Mind Killer”



Fighter Improvement Program

- Our Goal is to ensure Fencers fight safely and do not generate a negative environment that adversely effects others. The vast majority of fighters share this goal but some need additional guidance to achieve it.
- Once a Fighter has been indentified as needing more attention the issue should be discussed with them and documented in a report. Ideally this will be a one time occurance.
- If the issue persists than the KRM in consultation with the KEM and in conjunction with a local Marshal may put the fighter on an Improvement Program.
- This program notifies the fencers of specific issues, such as blow calling or behavior, that the fencer needs to correct or they may face formal action such as being sanctioned or having their authorization revoked.
- Personnel, such as the local Marshal or a local senior fencer, should be identified to help the Fencer correct their issue.
- The primary goal is to fix the issue and improve the fencer not loose them.
- This program does not restrict the Fencers activities within Atlantian fencing, though the reason for the Fencers involvement in the program may be a factor in restricting their activities.

Event Reporting

- Required after event, but can be written at any time by anyone about official Fencing activities
- Generally describes the activities of the event; authorizations, tournaments, participation.
- Must Indicate any adverse issues:
 - Injuries, Broken equipment, Behavioral
 - Details are critical, people involved, circumstances, indicate statements vs analysis.
 - Pictures are excellent
- Can be used to share or document suggestions
- Reports can be searched.
 - Adverse incidents should be tagged
 - Supports Fighter Improvement Program and Sanctions
 - Data project, looking at trends
- ** Video taping fights
- Best Practices Project

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Atlantia Rapier Page, <https://marshal.atlantia.sca.org/rapier/>

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