

# Kingdom of Meridies

## Rapier Combat

### Rules and Regulations

A.S. XXXIV

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## INTRODUCTION

### 1. PURPOSE

These rules are a compendium of the rules under which rapier combat and marshaling activities are performed in the Society for Creative Anachronism (SCA) in general and the Kingdom of Meridies in particular. The following rules are a sub-set of the rules established by the Society Rapier Marshal. The rules in this document are applicable to all rapier fighting activities (tourneys, wars, melees, demos, prize fights, fighter practices, etc.) that are run under the auspices of the SCA in the Kingdom of Meridies. All fighters and marshals are responsible for knowing these rules.

This handbook is an addendum to the marshallate rules for the Kingdom of Meridies. The rules contained herein cover rapier combat (period fencing). General information on the working of the marshallate may be found in the Meridies Marshal's Handbook. Consult local knight's marshal for more information.

Fighters visiting from outside the Kingdom of Meridies shall be accorded fighting

privileges on presentation of a valid SCA Fighter Authorization Card for Schlager combat. All fighters relocating into the Kingdom of Meridies shall be re-authorized under the rules of Meridies delineated herein.

The Standards, Conventions and Rules listed herein will become effective and enforceable upon the publication of this handbook. The Standards, Conventions and Rules listed herein supersede all previous published marshallate related Rules, Conventions and Standards and are Law in the Kingdom of Meridies concerning all rapier activities.

Any observations, questions or comments about the Standards, Conventions and Rules contained in this handbook should be directed, in writing, to the Kingdom Rapier Marshal for consideration or comment. Please note that many of the items defined within this handbook may prove exceptionally difficult to change as many of these rulings are from the Rapier Marshal of the SCA and from the BOD of the SCA and so can only be changed by the previously mentioned persons.

Copies of this handbook may be freely made by members of the Society for Creative Anachronism, Inc. for circulation to other members, so long as no changes are made to the contents of this handbook.

Richard - Rex Meridies	Katrina - Regina Meridies
Robert Greenheart - Earl Marshal	Tormod - Kingdom Rapier Marshal

## 2. OVERVIEW:

Rapier fighting began roughly in the mid fifteenth century. Decades before Columbus sailed for the New World, a new type of sword was being worn by gentles of the court. It had approximately the same heft as the broadsword, but was tapered sharply at the tip. While a lord wore armor on the field, he most certainly wore a rapier at court. It did not need to be able to hack through plate, but rather thrust through the dress of the day. As the style progressed, various schools of Defense for the use of the Rapier and Dagger emerged all across Europe. The period fencing scholar and his more mercenary counterpart, the prize fighter drew many students to their particular style.

Here in Meridies we recreate all forms of Rapier combat. Not only the stylized duel, but the melee, the Tavern Brawl, and the Prize fight are also practiced. These are all facets of the rapier's history, and should not be overlooked.

## 3. CHARGE FROM THE MARSHALLATE:

The Arte of Defense with Rapier is a privilege **and not a right**. Therefore, a marshal has

the power and responsibility to recommend temporary or permanent cancellation of this privilege if the offending fighter behaves in an unsafe manner. Both scholar and master must abide by the rules of honor and the rules set forth in this handbook. Only one form of combat will be addressed: Rapier.

These rules are designed to promote safe rapier combat. 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 answer that promotes the greatest degree of safety for all participants.

## CONVENTIONS

### 1. GENERAL INFORMATION

- A. Rapier Combat shall be conducted in accordance with the Rules of the Lists of the SCA, Inc., The Corporate Rapier Rules, and these rules.
- B. All combatants, prior to every combat or practice, shall insure their equipment is safe, in good working order and has been inspected by a member of the Rapier Marshallate.
- C. At interkingdom events, for any given Kingdom's tourney, guest combatants shall meet SCA standards for protective gear, but shall comply with whatever weapons standards are being used by the host kingdom for that tourney.
- D. Unless otherwise directed by Kingdom Law, the Crown's representative upon the field and in all matters dealing with Rapier Combat is the Earl Marshal, then the Kingdom Rapier Marshal, then, by delegation, members of the Rapier Marshallate.

### 2. BEHAVIOR ON THE FIELD

- A. All fighters shall obey the commands of the marshals overseeing the field, or be removed from the field and subject to subsequent disciplinary action.
- B. Disagreements with the marshals overseeing the field shall be resolved through the established mechanisms outlined in the Marshallate Procedures of the SCA, Inc.
- C. Each fighter shall maintain control over his or her temper and behavior at all times.
- D. Striking an opponent with excessive force, or with deliberate intent to injure, is forbidden.
- E. Upon hearing the call of "HOLD" all fighting shall immediately stop. The fighters shall freeze, check for hazards in their immediate vicinity, and then assume a non-threatening position with their weapons pointed away from their opponents.
- F. Conduct obstructive of normal rapier combat, such as consistent ignoring of blows, deliberate misuse of the rules (such as calling HOLD whenever pressed), or the like, is forbidden.

### 3. USE OF WEAPONS AND PARRYING DEVICES

- A. Blows will be struck by: thrusting with the point of the blade (thrust); or sliding the

edge of the blade by drawing (draw cut - min. 6 inches).

- B. Chopping or hacking blows are never permitted. Fast circular movements (such as moulinets) may, however, be used to place a blade for draw cuts.
- C. Parrying devices may be used to move, deflect, or immobilize an opponent's weapon or parrying device in any manner, so long as such use does not endanger the safety of the combatants.
- D. Striking an opponent with any part of a weapon or parrying device not approved for that purpose is prohibited.
- E. Any combatant being disarmed, or dropping a weapon, must be able to draw another weapon from his/her person or yield. NO HOLD SHALL BE CALLED. His/her opponent may exploit an earned advantage with no loss of honor. [NOTE: It is chivalrous to allow one's opponent the opportunity to retrieve a dropped weapon or secondary, but just as in armored combat, acts of chivalry are praiseworthy - NOT mandatory.]

#### 4. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF BLOWS

- A. In judging blows, all fighters are presumed to be wearing common civil attire of the period, not armor.
- B. Tournaments may be held which define areas of the body as armored, and to what degree, so long as all the participants are made aware of these special conditions prior to the start of combat.
- C. In rapier combat, blows will be counted as though they were struck with a real rapier, extremely sharp on point and edge. Any blow that would have penetrated the skin shall be counted a good blow. Any blow that strikes a mask, helm or gorget shall be counted as though it struck flesh.
- D. A good thrust or draw cut to the
  - head,
  - neck,
  - torso
  - inner groin (to the fighter's hand width down the inner limb), or
  - armpit (to the fighter's inner hand width down the limb)

shall be judged incapacitating, rendering the fighter incapable of further combat.

- E. A good blow to the arm will disable the arm. A good blow to the hand shall render the hand useless; the rest of the arm may still be used to parry with a loose fist. Any additional hit to that hand will disable the arm.
- F. A good blow to the foot or leg will disable the leg. The fighter must then fight seated or standing on one leg.
- G. Parries may be performed with weapons, parrying devices, the gloved hand, or any other part of the body. Though the gloved hand may be used to parry an opponent's blade and hilt, it shall not be used to push, grasp or strike an opponent.
- H. Fighters may choose to grasp, rather than parry the blades. If the blade that is

grasped moves or twists in the grasping hand, that hand is deemed disabled. Grasping techniques shall be used only to immobilize a blade momentarily, NOT to bend it or wrest it from the opponent's grip. Grasping techniques are restricted to the blade and may not be used on the hilt.

- I. If an effective blow is thrown (already in motion) before, or on, the same moment as an event that would stop a fight (a "HOLD" being called, the fighter being "killed" himself, etc.), the blow shall count. If the blow is thrown after the hold, killing blow, or other event, it shall not count.

## WEAPONS AND PARRYING DEVICES

1. Sharp points, edges or corners are not allowed anywhere on any equipment.
2. All equipment must be able to safely withstand combat stresses.
3. Equipment that is likely to break a blade or damage other equipment is prohibited.
4. BLADES:
  - A. The following types of blades are used: (See [Appendix #5](#) for complete list of Approved Blades)
    - i. Rapier blades:
      - Oval bladed schlagers
      - Diamond bladed schlagers
      - Heavy Practice Rapiers
    - ii. Dagger blades: [18-20 inches tip to hilt]
      - flexidaggers (including "schlager daggers" *i.e.* Black Tulip)
  - B. All are subject to the following:
    - i. Steel blades must be manufactured by commercial suppliers. Artisans desiring an exception must apply to the Deputy Society Marshal for Rapier Combat and will be considered on a case-by-case basis.
    - ii. Steel blades will not be altered by grinding, cutting, heating, hammering, or other actions that could significantly alter their temper, flexibility or durability. Normal combat stresses and blade care do not violate this rule. Exceptions are:
      - a. The tang of the weapon may be altered.
      - b. Rapier blades may be shortened so long as it does not make them too stiff.
    - iii. All steel blades must be reasonably flexible. Rigid steel "parrying-only" daggers such as those made from cut down blades will not be allowed. (See [Appendix #1](#), for field tests of flexibility.)
    - iv. The edge must be nominally 1/16 inch. Less than this is considered too sharp. Diamond bladed schlagers must be checked carefully for the minimum edge.
    - v. All blade ends must be capped with rubber, plastic, or leather.
      - a. Tips will have a flat striking surface of at least 3/8 inch (9mm)

diameter.

- b. Tips must be firmly taped or glued in place. The tip must be of a color contrasting with the blade so that the tip's absence is readily apparent. If tape is used, it must contrast with both blade and tip.
- vi. Any blade with kinks, sharp bends, or cracks shall not be used. Steel blades that develop these defects cannot be repaired and must be retired. Flexidaggers with "S" curves shall not be used unless they can be properly re-curved.
- vii. Weapons may use a hand guard such as a cup hilt, swept hilt or quillions and knucklebow. Quillions cannot extend more than 6 inches from each side of the blade. The ends of quillions must be blunt with a 1/4 inch minimum diameter.
- viii. Orthopedic (or "Pistol") grips will not be used unless the fighter has written approval, from the Kingdom Rapier Marshal, for medical reasons, supported by documentation from their health care provider.
- ix. Rapiers with a blade length that is greater than 40 inches, or less than 34 inches, may be used only with opponent's consent.

#### 5. PARRYING DEVICES:

- A. Solid parrying devices will be made of sturdy, lightweight materials and will be resistant to breakage and splintering. Bucklers may be of any size; however, bucklers of greater than 16" diameter (200 square inches) may be used only with opponent's consent.
- B. Soft, non-rigid devices such as cloaks may be made of cloth, foam, leather and similar materials. They may be weighted with soft material such as rope or rolled cloth; they shall not be weighted with any rigid material, nor with materials which are heavy enough to turn the device into a flail or impact weapon.
- C. Devices that would predictably cause entangling of an opponent, or their equipment, either by design or by repeated mishap, are not allowed.
- D. Offensive bucklers are not permitted.
- E. An opponent may decline to face non-standard devices without forfeiting a bout.

#### 6. PROJECTILE WEAPONS: Throwing weapons and mock-gunnery gear (rubber-band guns) may be used in rapier melee combat, as long as safety standards for those arts are met.

- A. Throwing weapons shall be made of soft flexible materials such as cloth, tape, foam and golf tubes.
- B. Depending on the particular melee scenario, certain throwing weapons may have permanent or temporary effects on the target.
- C. Mock Gunnery Gear (rubber-band guns) shall be constructed of any material appropriate to the firearm being simulated. The ammunition shall be made of surgical type tubing.
- D. Mock Gunnery Gear may also be used as a Rigid Parry device before and/or after it has been fired. If the Gun is accidentally discharged while being utilized as a parry device, the shot might still hit somebody and count. Otherwise it should be

considered a misfire.

- E. Damage from a projectile weapon should be resolved the same as thrust.  
([Conventions: 4](#))
- F. The use of any projectile weapon is forbidden within formal rapier Tournament lists (single combat), or in any situation where spectators cannot be separated from the potential line of fire by more than the effective range of the projectile weapons to be used.

## PROTECTIVE GEAR

1. In order of increasing resistance:

- A. Abrasion-resistant material: material that will withstand normal combat stresses (such as being snagged by an unbroken blade) without tearing. Examples include, but are not limited to:
  - i. broadcloth
  - ii. a single layer of heavy poplin cloth (35% cotton, 65% polyester; "trigger" cloth)
  - iii. sweat pants
  - iv. opaque cotton, poly-cotton or lycra/spandex mix tights.

Nylon pantyhose and cotton gauze shirts are examples of unacceptable materials.

- B. Puncture-resistant material: any fabric or combination of fabrics that will predictably withstand puncture. Examples include, but are not limited to:
  - i. Four-ounce (2 mm) leather;
  - ii. four layers of heavy poplin cloth;
  - iii. ballistic nylon rated to at least 550 Newtons;
  - iv. commercial fencing clothing rated to at least 550 Newtons.

Kevlar is not an acceptable material, as it degrades rapidly.

These materials need only be tested at the marshal's discretion; all other materials must be tested the first time new gear is used, or if no marshal on the field knows a given piece of gear to have been tested.

Acceptable field tests shall deliver a consistent force. Tests known to be acceptable are noted in [Appendix1](#), below.

- C. Rigid Material: puncture-resistant material that will not significantly flex, spread apart, or deform under pressure of 12 Kg applied repeatedly to any single point. Examples of rigid material are:

- i. 22 gauge stainless steel (0.8 mm)
  - ii. 20 gauge mild steel (1.0 mm)
  - iii. 16 gauge aluminum, copper, or brass (1.6 mm)
  - iv. one layer of heavy leather (8 ounce, 4 mm)
2. The following are the Kingdom norms for protective gear. Individuals preferring more stringent protection are free to do so, but must weigh the benefits of more rigorous penetration coverage against the risks of heat illness, exhaustion, and stroke due to heavier or more confining gear.

A. HEAD AND NECK:

- i. The front and top of the head must be covered by rigid material to below the jaw line and behind the ears. Standard 12 kg fencing masks are known to meet this standard. If built to this standard, rapier combat helms are also acceptable.
- ii. The face must be covered by either 12 kilogram mesh (e.g, a standard fencing mask) or perforated metal. Such metal must not have holes larger than 1/8" (3 mm) in diameter, with a minimum offset of 3/16" (5 mm) and shall also meet the definition of rigid material.
- iii. Masks and helms must be secured to the fighter, so that they cannot be easily removed or dislodged during combat. The combination of snug fit and the spring-tongue in a conventional fencing mask is NOT sufficient, by itself, to secure the mask to the fighter.
- iv. Both modern fencing masks and rapier helms, when inspected, shall comply with the rigid material standard, provisions on facial coverage, and shall show no evidence of impending failure (e.g, rust which weakens the metal involved, dents or other defects which spread open mesh, broken weld points, etc). If there is concern about the face mesh of a modern fencing mask, it should be tested using a standard commercial 12kg mask punch. Marshals doing the testing shall be trained in the use of the punch.
- v. The rest of the head and neck must be covered by at least puncture resistant material.
- vi. Additional throat protection is also required. It shall consist of rigid material, as noted above, covering the entire throat, and shall be backed by either puncture resistant material (as a hood), one quarter inch (1/4") (6 mm) of open-cell foam, or their equivalents. The cervical vertebrae shall also be protected by rigid material, provided by some combination of gorget, helm, and/or hood insert. An extension from the gorget that covers the collar bones is recommended, but not required.

B. TORSO AND OTHER KILLING ZONES

- i. The entire torso (the chest, back, abdomen, groin, and sides up to and including the armpits and shoulders) must be covered with puncture-resistant material.
- ii. Male fighters shall wear rigid groin protection. Any ventilation holes large enough to admit a broken dagger blade must be covered from the outside

- with at least puncture-resistant material.
- iii. Female fighters shall wear puncture resistant groin protection. Rigid groin and breast protection is strongly recommended, but not required.
- C. ARMS AND LEGS (Updated Jan 25, 2004)
- i. Acceptable minimum armpit and shoulder coverage is provided by a triangle extending from the armpit seam, covering the lower half of the sleeve at the seam, and extending down the inner/under arm, one-third the distance to the fighter's elbow.
  - ii. Hands shall be protected by gloves, made of abrasion resistant material, that overlap any sleeve openings as below. A strong cuff of at least 3 oz leather is strongly recommended (especially if using open or swept hilts), but not required.
  - iii. Feet shall be protected by boots, shoes, or sandals, comprised of at least abrasion-resistant material. Blatantly modern footwear is not permitted.
  - iv. Abrasion-resistant material is required on the rest of the arms, legs, and any area not otherwise mentioned in these rules.
  - v. No skin shall be bared. There shall be a minimum two inches (2") of overlap between separate pieces of protective clothing, regardless of the fighter's stance or movements.

## AUTHORIZATIONS

1. TO AUTHORIZE, one must:
  - A. Be at least 18 years old and currently residing in Meridies.
  - B. Read and be familiar with these rules.
  - C. Have some nominal training in schlager combat (preferably from a Meridien Marshal)
  - D. Own equipment necessary to participate in Meridien Rapier. (Excluding Weapon and Helm/Mask.)
  - E. Sign a combat waiver (or present a Blue Membership Card)
  - F. Complete and Pass an Authorization Procedure officiated by a warranted Authorization Marshal and one other Marshal. This procedure will have two parts.
    1. A Brief Verbal Quiz to ensure that the candidate is familiar with the rules.
    2. Directed Combat with an authorized fighter to demonstrate safe use of the equipment and practical application of the rules.

See [Appendix #3](#) for an example of a typical authorization procedure.

### 2. PAPERWORK

- A. After the authorization procedure is completed and the candidate satisfies the requirements, the forms are completed and sent to the Authorization Card Deputy. The fighter will then be issued a card listing his/her authorizations. All

cards must be signed by the Authorization Card Deputy, a R/PRM, or the KRM ONLY!

- B. If the candidate is not a member of the SCA, then in addition to having a waiver on file with his/her Group Rapier Marshal and the Authorization Card Deputy, a \$10.00 fee will be assessed for the fighter card, (the same as with heavy fighting authorization cards). This is a one time fee.
  - C. A copy of the completed authorization form, signed by the Authorizing Marshals, will serve as proof of authorization until the fighter receives his/her card.
  - D. All additional authorizations can be noted on the Authorization Card.
3. AUTHORIZATIONS AVAILABLE:

- A. Weapons:
  - i. RAPIER (to include offhand)
  - ii. DAGGER (to include single Dagger and combined with Rapier)
  - iii. RIGID PARRY (Buckler, Cane, Tankard, etc)
  - iv. SOFT PARRY (Cloak, Hat, Puppet, etc.)

A combatant may use any combination of weapons he or she has authorizations for. (e.g. If you are authorized in both SOFT PARRY and DAGGER, then you may fight with Cloak & Dagger.)

- B. CASE (two weapons of similar length) is a separate authorization. (Note: in order to fight with Case of Daggers, one must be authorized in both CASE and DAGGER.)

The RAPIER authorization must be completed first before any others are attempted. The other four may be done in any order the candidate chooses. The five authorizations may be attempted months apart or on the same day, providing there is ample time and the candidate has the energy.

## **MARSHALLING CONCERNS IN RAPIER COMBAT**

1. AUTHORIZATIONS: Competence in other SCA combat styles does not automatically mean competence in rapier. Separate warrants and authorizations in rapier combat are required.
2. BROKEN BLADES: Marshals and fighters shall pay special attention for missing tips or broken blades.
3. CLOAKS: When cloaks are used, "HOLD" should be called if the cloak becomes tangled about either fighter, or about one of the weapons such that the weapon cannot be withdrawn. "HOLD" need not be called if the cloak is merely near the face, deflecting a weapon, loosely draped over, or weighting down the blade.
4. BLADE GRASPING: If a rapier has been grasped by an opponent, "HOLD" shall be called if wrestling about the blade occurs.

5. **EXCESSIVE IMPACT:** Combat in the Society poses risks to the participant. This recognition, however, does not excuse fighters from exercising control of their techniques. If a fighter throws blows which force their 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.
6. **MELEE:** Melee combats present special challenges to all involved. Society norms are as below:
  - A. In melees, fighters are engaged with all opponents immediately upon the call to lay on.
  - B. 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.
  - C. Killing from behind is allowed if it has been announced beforehand. The Society norm for "death from behind" in melees shall be: If a melee scenario allows killing from behind, a fighter does so by laying the rapier blade over the opponent's shoulder, to at least a third of the blade, while calling "Dead, my lord" (or 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 his shoulder and shall not attempt to spin, duck or dodge away. Note: 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 misuse of the rules and obstructive behavior.
  - D. In special scenario melees (e.g., bridge or town battles), additional restrictions may be imposed by the marshals as needed.
7. **MINORS:** The minimum age for training and authorization in Meridien Rapier combat is 18.
8. **PERIODIC TESTING OF PROTECTIVE GEAR:** All protective equipment shall be formally tested (including fabric and mask tests, as appropriate) at least once every two years. Compliance is the responsibility of the individual fighter. Any protective gear may be formally tested if there is concern that the gear may have lost protective ability due to age, wear and tear, or other factors.
9. **UNFORESEEN SITUATIONS:** Should a situation arise not explicitly covered by Corporate or Kingdom rapier combat rules, the marshals should NOT assume that the situation is forbidden or inappropriate. Again, however, no matter how clear or accurate, rules cannot replace common sense, good judgment, and concern for the participants.

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