

Sofia CrossSword 2023

HEMA Tournament Ruleset

Introduction

Sofia CrossSwords 2023 is a competitive sporting event, created to give fencers the opportunity to test their abilities in a controlled environment.

The goal of this ruleset is neither the reconstruction of a historical competitive system, nor the simulation of historical combat. Instead, its goal is to be a competitive ground for testing key skills needed for developing understanding of historical fencing techniques, in a safe and controlled environment.

Fencing actions

Scoring actions are:

Hits:

- Cuts delivered with the edge of the sword after visible travel of the blade in an arc and with momentum.
- Thrusts delivered with the tip of the sword with visible bending of the sword or push of the opponent.
- Slices delivered with the edge of the sword with a visible movement of the sword up or down and pushing the opponent with the edge.
- **Light** pommel strikes to the mesh of the mask.
- **Light** strikes with the centre of the buckler to the mesh of the mask..
- Blows with the flat of the blade to the head **may** be counted as valid if they haven't hit anything else on the way.

Others:

- Disarming the opponent - unintentional AND intentional dropping of the sword counts as disarm. Exceptions may be made at judges' discretion if a fencer intentionally drops their sword during strong thrusts in order to keep the opponent safe. However the sword must not present a danger to others.
- Establishing control of the opponent through wrestling - either standing up or with controlled descent to the ground and a maximum of 5 seconds will be given after wrestling begins.
- Driving or pushing the opponent outside the playing field.

Non-scoring actions are:

- Grabbing the opponent's body or arm(s), weapon hilt or buckler to deliver a hit.
- Grabbing and holding a sword's blade if it is not moving to deliver a hit. If the blade is not securely held and slides on the hand it will be considered as a slice for the opponent.
- Pushing the opponent with hands or body.
- **Light** palm strikes with hands to the mask.

- **Lightly** placing the centre of the buckler on the opponent's body or arms to establish control.
- Using arms and legs to establish control of the opponent or as a lever point for a controlled descent to the ground.
- A one handed started after the weapon arm is already hit by their opponent (weapon arm - target covered by gloves, forearm and elbow protector).

Forbidden actions

- Intentionally hitting forbidden targets (**back of the head, spine, groin, foot/ankle**).
- Intentionally presenting their back of the head or spine as a target to stop an opponent's action.
- Removing a piece of equipment during an exchange - their own or their opponents'.
- Hitting an unprotected and/or bareskin part of the body, uncovered due to equipment failure.
- Hits with the crossguard.
- Grabbing a sword's blade with both hands.
- Hits with **force** with hands, pommel or buckler.
- Hits with the buckler or pommel outside the mesh of the mask
- Hits with the rim of the buckler.
- Stomping the opponent's feet, hits with legs, elbows or head.
- Locking or striking the opponent's joints against their natural movement.
- Uncontrolled descent to the ground - sweeps, body slams, double leg throws etc.

Fencing bouts procedure

After the fencers' gear is checked and they are at the starting positions, the Main judge calls "**Ready?**" at the fencers and after a confirmation the match begins with a command "**Fence**" from the Main judge and the start of the timer.

End of exchange conditions - a judge calls "**STOP**" or "**HALT**" when any of the following occurs:

- A scoring hit is made to the head of a fencer - target covered by the mask;
- A scoring hit is made and fencers have exited the fencing distance - more than one step is required to reach each other;
- A scoring hit is made and then a hit was parried by either fencer;
- Other scoring action is performed - ring out, disarm, wrestling control;
- A total of two scoring actions are made from one or both fencer;
- A scoring action followed by a non-scoring or forbidden actions performed from one or both fencer;
- A forbidden action is made;
- Equipment failure or injury;
- A call for a break by a fencer - it has to be stated clearly and in a safe manner outside fencing distance with both arms raised;

Exchange results

- A scoring action performed by one fencer rewards them with one point (1-0).
- If both fencers perform a scoring action before an **end of exchange condition** is met - neither receives a point (0-0).
- If a fencer starts and performs a scoring action after an **end of exchange condition** is met, that action will not be scored.
- If a fencer performs two scoring actions they are rewarded with a maximum of one point per exchange (1-0).
- If a fencer performs two scoring actions and their opponent performs a scoring action during the second one - neither receives a point (0-0).
- If a fencer performs a forbidden action or receives a red card they receive 0 points regardless of any scoring actions made.
- In case both fencers have performed a forbidden action, it's up to the judges' discretion to decide which one or both fencers are to be penalised.
- If both fencers are penalised with a red card in the same exchange, neither receives a point for this exchange regardless of any scoring actions.
- If the judges are unable to score an exchange due to uncertainty after consultation with the fencers they will call a no-exchange and write down - "no score".

Judging

After each exchange, the fencers move safely and quickly back to their places. If the call is clear the Main judge announces it. Otherwise the judges gather and discuss the exchange. If the judges are uncertain of the exchange or a fencer protests the call, (by raising their hand) judges and fencers gather at the centre of the playing field. Each fencer explains in brief their point of view (protesting fencer first) and then both move back to their places. Video review can be requested during the elimination phase (see below).

The final decision always stays with the judges and the two of them must agree on it to score an exchange. The Main judge describes the exchange and calls the final result and the scorekeeper writes it down.

After an exchange happens and it is scored the fencers are at their starting positions. The "**Ready?**", "**Fence**" commands are repeated and a new exchange begins.

End of Match

Matches in the pools will be played until a fencer reaches 5 points or 7 minutes pass since the start. Matches in the elimination phase will be played until a fencer reaches 7 points or 15 minutes pass since the start. The timer runs uninterrupted during the bout unless the judges stop it for injury or equipment failure. If the timer expires, "Final exchange" is called which continues uninterrupted.

Matches in the elimination phases that have reached 15 minutes and have equal result will be played until a fencer receives one more point (sudden death). After the required score is reached or the timer expires the Main judge calls "**End of match**" and announces the result.

Match results can be either:

- Win for one fencer and a loss for the other - if a fencer has reached the score required at any moment or has a higher score after the time has elapsed.
- Draw (only in the pools) - if both fencers have the same score after the allotted time has elapsed.

Penalties

There are three levels of offences, and the fencers receive for each the following card:

Yellow card

- If the fencer is late for their fight more than 30 seconds.
- Failing to stop a dangerous action before full application, excessive force.
- Blows to forbidden areas, forbidden degree of grappling and/or striking.
- Not following the judge's commands swiftly.
- Throwing mask, sword or other gear carelessly on the floor.
- Not stopping quick enough after "STOP"/"HALT" command.

Red card: 1 point for the opponent

- If the fencer is late for their bout more than 60 seconds.
- Receiving a second yellow card for the same offence.
- Receiving a third yellow card for different offences.
- Committing any yellow card offence after a red card.
- Insulting attitude and/or speech towards the judges and/or opponent.
- Careless endangerment of the judges, staff, other fencers and or guests.
- Ignoring the commands of the judges.

Black card: loss of match

A black card has to be confirmed by the tournament manager. The tournament manager can directly disqualify a participant if they deem the behaviour too dangerous.

- If a fencer is late for their bout more than 2 minutes (without medical reason).
- Receiving a second red card for the same offence.
- Receiving a third red card for different offences.
- Physical violence outside of the rules.
- Purposeful use of force to injure within the rules.

The judges are not obliged to follow the progression and may issue any card at any time.

Yellow and red cards don't transfer to the next match.

Any card other than yellow after a black card leads to disqualification from the tournament.

A judge may and should use verbal warnings before rules are broken, but also when they might observe behaviour that is close to breaking them.

Tournament Organisation

A schedule for the competition will be announced before the tournament. All fencers must be present for registration and follow the schedule, including any changes made by the organisers during the event.

All fencers must register with the event's staff and present their equipment for inspection before the tournament begins, at the time specified in the schedule. If any piece of gear is found to be unsuitable, it must be replaced during the allocated time.

It is expected that all fencers will be familiar with the rules before the event. Videos regarding judging will be prepared and provided to all participants beforehand. There will be a brief discussion of them and scoring before the bouts start.

Fencers will have time for preparation, gearing up and warming up before the start of the competitions and there will be breaks during the days.

Fencers are expected to be continuously present during the competitions and only use the break time when it's specifically allocated. Fencers will have to present themselves according to a schedule at the playing fields.

Fencers are allowed to have a coach/assistant at the event and at their corner during the bouts but this person is not allowed to enter the playing field and disrupt the bouts. The coach/assistant can talk with the fencers between the exchanges but are not allowed to talk with the judges, the other fencer or their coach/assistant or yell during the exchanges. If the coach/assistant disrupts the fencers or judges, staff members will remove them from the area. Any calls for breaks and challenges must be made by the fencers only and only they can talk with the judges (translation is allowed if necessary).

Any general complaints about staff/judging behaviour or performance should be directed to the Organising team outside of the bouts.

Each match will have 2 judges. One will be the main judge that will call the commands and results from the exchange and the other will be the second judge but **both must be in agreement for the exchange results**. Each playing field will have a team of scorekeeper and timekeeper that will be responsible for inputting the match points. There will be a monitor with the current score and time elapsed, visible for fencers and judges. Each playing field will be marked by GOLD and WHITE fencers. The bouts will be conducted on a rectangular playing field, sized 8×4 m with an additional 1 m safety zone from each side.

Fencers arrive at the playing field in full gear and the judges make a final gear check. Once it is all approved, the fencers go to their starting positions and salute each other and the judges. Fencers' starting position before each exchange is between a starting line and the short side of the playing field.

If there is equipment failure or light injury (not requiring medical attention) it must be resolved immediately and the judges can give additional two minutes at their own discretion. If a fencer requires medical attention, the medic has 5 minutes in the pools or 15 minutes in the

elimination phase to clear the fencer to continue the match and if it will take more time, the injured fencer forfeits the match.

If an injury is treated and the fencer cleared by the medic to proceed before the start of the next bout, they can continue with the tournament. If the injury however is major enough that the medic would not clear the fencer, or it takes longer to be treated, at the start of the next bout, the injured fencer would forfeit all remaining matches from the competition.

In case the bout is stopped for any reason before reaching the point limit or time limit, the match will be scored the following:

- For receiving a black card - loss and 0 points for the fencer that received it and win for the other fencer with points awarded as per current result.
- For medical injury - loss for the injured fencer, but points for both fencers awarded as per current result.
- For any other reason - for the judges to discuss with the Organising team and reach a decision.

Space for free play for the currently non-playing fencers or those not competing on that day will be available, as long as they do not disturb the competition.

Open Longsword competition specifics

There will be 5 playing fields available for the competition. The fencers will be split into four pools of 10 people each. All 10 fencers from one of the pools will be geared and prepared when called to their playing fields. Each fencer will fence for 3 matches in a row according to a schedule with small breaks between matches. The matches will be judged by the 10 fencers from one of the other pools - 2 judges per playing field. Judging will be expected from all participants in the Longsword tournament and cannot be opted out from.

After the 3 matches have concluded all fencers and judges will have a break while the other pair of pools judge and fence. This process will be repeated until the pool matches are concluded.

Other competitions specifics

There will be 2 or 3 playing fields available for the competition and the fencers will be divided into pools of at least 4 or 5 fencers each. Each field will accommodate one pool of fencers at a time. All fencers of a pool will have to be geared and prepared when called to their playing fields. They will fence their pool according to a schedule. The “arming sword” and “sword and buckler” competitions will be played with weapons provided by the organisers and usage of other weapons will not be allowed. The judges will be pre-selected experienced fencers. Once a pool finishes there will be a small break and time for gearing up for the other pools and the procedure repeats itself.

Rankings for all competitions

The fencers are ranked at the end of the pools and after the elimination rounds to determine who is going in the next phase in the following way:

1. Number of wins - higher is better.
2. Number of draws (in the pools) - higher is better.
3. Points scored - points against = X - higher is better.
4. Number of exchanges where both fencers were hit - lower is better.
5. Who won in a match between the two fencers.
6. A new match is played until a win for one fencer. In case of another draw at time's end - sudden death for one point.

After the pools, there will be break time for all fencers while the results are checked by the staff and the highest scoring fencers from each pool are selected for the next phases - playoff pools/elimination rounds.

In the next phases, the top fencer by the above ranking will fence the last one, the second best will fence the second to last, etc., unless they've shared a pool - in which case they move a place higher.

Video review

Video review will be available at the elimination phase of all tournaments. Operators chosen from the staff will film each exchange in high frame rate video, and will be ready to present the footage to the judges at any point. Only the judges will look at the videos.

During a video review the judges can call for a stop of the clock.

A judge can confer with the video footage at any moment on their own discretion.

Each fencer has the right to protest a call by the judges and ask for a video review.

Judges can deny video review requests at their own discretion if they deem the fencer abuses it (usually after a couple of video requests proving the fencer wrong).

A hit that is seen on the video might still be scored as not valid at the judges' discretion.

No other video footage will be looked at, outside the one provided by the organisational staff.

Conduct and behaviour

It is expected that all participants will act in a friendly and cooperative manner during the event towards the staff, guests and other fencers.

The organising team and staff will observe and keep order outside of the fencing area. The judges will keep the order inside the fencing area during bouts.

Behaviour outside of fencing

All participants and guests must take proper care of their belongings and equipment, and must move around the competition areas with care and attention.

All participants and guests should not disturb anyone currently in a match - fencers, judges, and other staff. Such behaviour will result in removal from the premises.

No participant or guest should insult, attack, threaten or harass anyone present, participants or staff. Such behaviour will result in immediate removal from the premises.

Behaviour during fencing

All fencers agree to follow the rules in this ruleset when they enter the tournament.

All fencers should follow the guidance of the judges and the organising team.

All fencers should be present on time for their matches, fully equipped and prepared.

All judges should be present on time for their matches.

All fencers should behave in a sportsmanlike manner during the bout. It is not allowed to throw equipment, interrupt the judges, and behave in a manner that disrupts the bout and the judging.

All fencers should salute the judges and each other at the beginning of the bout, and salute at the end.

All fencers should strive to use only permitted actions, keep control of their weapon and body at all times during the bout.