



Slovak Federation of Historical European Martial Arts

General rules for the longsword tournament fighting

Version 1.3.2

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0. Revisions

Version	Date	Changes	Author
1.0	15.1.2014	First version of the longsword rules	Anton Kohutovič
1.1	24.3.2015	Changes in equipment requirements (chapter 5.)	Martin Fabian
1.2	29.7.2015	Attacks to the legs no longer have RoW, target priority no longer in use, rings on crossbar forbidden (chapter 6.4 and chapter 10.1.5)	Anton Kohutovič
1.3	12.1.2016	RoW redefined as <i>Vor</i>	Anton Kohutovič
1.3.1	14.1.2016	Formal changes in the <i>Vor</i> rule, changes in scoring (chapter 9.) – aligned with <i>Vor</i> rule	Martin Fabian
1.3.2	16.1.2016	Formal changes in <i>Vor</i> rule, added definitions of simple attack, complex attack, direct and indirect attack	Anton Kohutovič

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
- **Tempo** – is the basic unit in which a simple fencing action can be done
- **Indes action** – is an action which is executed in the same time as the opponent's action

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
- **Evasion** – it is an action of the body when a potential target avoids being hit by prolonging the distance or by other movement

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 on marks which are at least 3m away from each other.
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. Only special HEMA 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. 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.
3. 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.
4. Additional protection of the arms or elbows is required if the jacket doesn't provide sufficient protection itself.
5. Every part of the body must be covered. No open space must be left between the gloves and the jacket.
6. An additional fencing plastron is mandatory for female contestants

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 a FIE certified pants or other approved protection (Kevlar, aramid etc.)

6. Weapons

1. Only straight-bladed, European-type simulators are allowed in the tournament. The so-called fechtschwerts or fechtfeders are preferred. A longsword must consist of a blade with two edges, a cross-guard, a handle and a pommel. Longswords must be made of proper steel (no aluminum, plastic or wooden swords will be accepted) and comply with certain qualities, see below.
2. The blade must not bear signs of heavy damage, must not be bent, broken or ruptured. The edges must be round and blunt.
3. A blade may contain a wide ricasso, also known as schilt, which must have round and blunt edges.
4. The cross-guard must be straight and must be round at both ends. Additional protection (e.g. in a form of rings) is not allowed.
5. The pommel must be smooth and have no studs.
6. The flexibility of the blade is measured with a 1 kg heavy weight which is attached to the point of the blade with the sword held on a firm ground (e.g. a table etc.). The allowed flexibility is from 7-15%, where the individual figures mean the ratio of the deviation caused by the weight compared to the length of the blade in cm multiplied by 100.
7. The minimum width of the point is 1cm.
8. The point of the blade must be either flared or rounded to prevent potential penetration.
9. The point of balance of the sword cannot be more than 9cm away from the cross-guard.
10. The point of the sword must be covered by a red/white/blue tape for a better visibility.

11. The overall length of the sword must be within 120-140cm.
12. The weight of the sword must be between 1500 to 1800g.

7. Fencing match

7.1 Beginning, breaks and the general course of the match

1. Both fencers assume their respective places in the arena, with the first fighter standing right from the referee.
2. 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
3. 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!"
4. 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.
5. The referee stops the fight with the signal "Stop!"
6. 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
7. A clear offensive action which ignores the referees signal to stop the fight will be penalized with a yellow card.
8. 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.
9. If the exchange was halted and no point was given, fencers start the next exchange on their marks
10. 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. However, if a doublehit occurs, under specific conditions, the referee may consider one fencer to have the priority, or the *Vor* (see chapter 10.).
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).

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
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 and the point will traverse approx. at least 20cm.
 - c. **Slice**; using the edge of the sword against whole valid area. A slice must be a movement which is defined by a pushing or pulling of the blade against the valid area in a visually distinctive way.
 - d. **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 hit is considered valid only if the performing fencer held their weapon with at least one hand on the handle in the moment when the contact occurs.
10. A competing 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.

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 three types of dominance:

1. **Wrestling**; a point for dominance may be awarded to the fencer who has a clear control of the situation (meaning they assumed control) in a way their opponent is not able to move, to use their weapon in a counter-attack or escape the dominance using their own means
2. **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 and the opponent immediately loses the *Vor* as well.
3. **Disarming**; a fencer disarms the opponent. The fight is immediately stopped by the main referee.

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. To throw the opponent by lifting them with their both feet above the ground.
7. Attack an unarmed opponent.
8. Attack an opponent lying on the ground.

10. The *Vor* rule

10.1 Principle

1. The term *Vor* (also *Nach* and *Indes*) is a concept which stems from the original division of timing and classification of various actions as presented by the so-called *Lichtenauer's* lineage and understood within the broader theory of fencing.
2. The *Vor* rule serves the sole purpose of evaluating and judging certain specific situations in which a simultaneous hit occurred, but not as a result of mistakes of both fencers.
3. To gain *Vor* means to gain an offensive initiative; if such situation occurs, the other fencer should react to the attacker's offensive. If a fencer doesn't react with a proper defense against the offense of the fencer with *Vor*, it will be considered a mistake and a suicidal move. The main goal of the *Vor* rule is to penalize such behavior and discourage fencers from behaving in such manner.
4. If a fencer had gained *Vor* and a simultaneous hit occurred, then the fencer with *Vor* will be awarded with one point (for a valid hit).

10.2 Gaining the *Vor*

1. A fencer will gain *Vor* if neither of the fencers are *Vor*, he or she then commences a noticeable simple attack from an adequate distance towards their opponent and with the potential to hit the opponent. Simply said, if the opponent didn't react they would get hit.
2. A fencer standing in *langort* is *Vor* until their sword gets out of the line (either by their doing or as a result of the opponent's action) and will not point anymore towards their opponent.
3. If both fencers commence their simple attacks simultaneously, at the same time (or in an indistinct timeframe) and they both hit, neither of the fencers will gain *Vor*. Such a doublehit is considered to be a mistake of both of them and both are awarded one point.

4. A complex attack (such as a *Fehler*, a *Durchwechsel*, etc.) will gain *Vor* only if the opponent reacts to the attacker's feint and will try to parry defensively the initial, feinted attack. If the other fencers doesn't react to the attacker's feint, their complex attacks will not gain *Vor*.
5. An attack aimed towards the lower openings (from the waist below) cannot gain *Vor*.

10.3 Loss of *Vor*

1. A fencer will lose their *Vor* if they interrupt their direct attack, if they change the target area of their attack or if their opponent stops or changes the course of their attack.
2. In case if a fencer parries and the attacker wants to maintain their *Vor*, they have to attack a new opening sooner, then their opponent finishes their parry (in *Nach*). If the attacker fails to connect the attack, they lose *Vor*. Both fencers may then gain *Vor* according to rule 10.2.1.
3. If no hit is achieved during an *Indes* attack, the countering fencer gains the *Vor* and attacker loses it.
4. If a fencer loses *Vor*, the other doesn't automatically gain it. A *false vor* means that a fencer thinks they are *Vor* but according to the rules they have lost it or haven't gain it at all. In such case, the resulting doublehit awards both fencers with a point.

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!