

## Cymbrogi School of Western Martial Arts Open Tournament

# Gesellen Fechten 2024

## Rules and Guide

### Introduction

*Gesellen Fechten*—from the Middle High German word *geselle*, itself derived from the Old High German *gisellio*, used to describe *gisellio* journeyman associate fellows of the guild. Our choice to reference this historical title in the name of our event was not casual, but was intended to imply the mission of our tournaments.

Anyone can enroll in an open event; to approach one as a *Geselle*, however, is to come in fellowship to learn and teach. Those who come with that mindset show up ready to express their own Art, and have an open mind to gather insights from their encounters with the Arts of others. Our event celebrates this spirit of mutual improvement, and the camaraderie that results from it.

From the beginning, our School's goal has been to provide the most realistic Western Martial Arts combat experience possible in our tournaments, while reasonably safeguarding the health of the participants. This goal is also sought within the wider HEMA community, but can be elusive—in our experience, the best way to handle this situation is to make the rules governing competition as simple as possible. A few particularly dangerous actions are disallowed, but otherwise, all options are equally damaging to you as a competitor. When you are afraid of getting hit in the head, you protect it; when you are afraid of getting hit everywhere, you follow suit. While it may seem paradoxical to some, we have found that raising the stakes for small failures makes overall better and more patient fencers. As an added bonus, it also improves the flow of judging and scorekeeping. The points are simple, so that the focus is right where it should be: on the fight, instead of on how to quantify who hit who slightly better.

So, welcome one and all to our eighth Gesellen Fechten! Let us strive together as competitors and comrades to make this year's event the best one yet!

## Section I - Longsword

### Gear Requirements

All gear is subject to ringside review and approval. Any missing equipment except clothing and athletic cup can be borrowed at the event if you do not have your own, first come, first served. If you are unsure of whether or not your gear qualifies for the event, please reach out the tournament organizers prior to your arrival.

- Steel feder made by a recognized smith and with a maximum blade length of 105 cm. Blades should be free of burrs and in good condition.
- Mask with occipital protection
- Hard gloves
- Jacket
- Elbow and knee protection

- Gorget, standalone or built into gambeson/jacket
- Clothing that leaves no skin exposed
- Athletic cup for men
- Chest protector for women (recommended, not mandatory)

## **Matches and Rounds**

- A “Match” consists of a number of Rounds, depending upon the phase of the tournament, and represents each fencer pairing.
- Rounds do not have a time limit, and end with one of three results: 1 point gold fencer, 1 point black fencer, or Double-Kill.
- Non-Elimination matches do not necessarily have a clear winner, and both fencers can theoretically leave one with no points.
- If no victor is determined by the final round of an Elimination match, the fencers will continue to fight “Sudden Death” rounds until one is determined.

## **Tournament Progression**

- Fencers will initially be seeded into three tier levels (A, B, C) based upon their HEMA Ratings fencing record and past Gesellen Fechten performance. Fencers will be seeded into pools within their tier based upon their relative calculated rankings.
- After the first round of pools concludes, fencers will be seeded into a second round of pools based upon their performance in their first pool. This begins the Elimination phase of the event, as the rankings after the second round of pools will be used to make the first cut to the roster.
- After the second round of pools concludes, fencers will be ranked based upon their cumulative performance in their first two pools, and cuts will be made to each tier’s roster. The remaining competitors will be seeded into a third round of pools.
- At the conclusion of the third round of pools, the fencers will be ranked and each tier’s roster will be reduced to the top 4 competitors. These fencers will fence in a Finals pool.
- The fencers in the Finals pool will fence and be placed according to their cumulative performance against the other fencers within the Finals pool.

## **Tournament Officials and Roles**

There will be one Referee, two or four Judges and a scorekeeper for each ring.

### **Match Flow**

- There will be either one or two Judges for each combatant, depending upon the phase of the tournament. The fencer that they’re judging for will be distinguished by whether they have a black or a gold baton. Judges with a black baton will look for strikes delivered FROM the combatant with a black armband. Judges with a gold baton will look for strikes delivered FROM the combatant with a gold armband.
- At the start of the match, the Referee will verify that the scorekeeper is ready to begin. He or she will then check with the judges and fencers, in that order. Once everyone is ready, he or she will start the fight.
- Judges are encouraged to move around the ring during the Match to maintain a good view of the action.
- When a Judge witnesses a clean hit for his or her fencer, the Judge will call “Point.” The referee will then call “Halt” to the combatants and stop the round. Fencers should stop combat

immediately, but should stay on guard until it is clear that the halt has been acknowledged by both sides.

- At Halt of the round, the Judges will immediately lower their heads to prevent being influenced by the other Judges or Fencers.
- The Referee will first ask for the Fencers' opinions by calling out "Fencers?"
- The fencers will then indicate whether they hit their opponent (lift sword overhead), whether the opponent had a clean hit on them (sword pointed at opponent), or will choose not to claim or award a point (sword resting at side).
- The Referee will then ask for the Judges' scoring by calling out "Judges?"
- The Judges will then indicate whether their fencer hit his or her opponent (baton out) or did not (baton at side). If necessary, the judge can raise their hand to call the Referee over for clarification.
- The Referee will tally up the votes and announce the result. The Scorekeeper will record it.
- At the conclusion of the Match, the Referee will ask the Judges to rotate their starting positions clockwise around the ring.

### **Referee Responsibilities and Prerogatives**

- To halt combat, either in acknowledgement of a Judge's call or to stop an unsafe situation
- To warn or disqualify fencers for intentionally or recklessly causing unsafe situations
- To adjudicate between the Fencers and Judges to determine the winner of a Round. If necessary, the Referee can cast a tie-breaker vote.
- To negate the Round and re-do it, If the result of a Round was neither clear victory for one combatant nor a clear double-kill
- To determine the outcome of ringen-am-schwert (see "**Ringen-am-schwert**," below)
- To determine a strike's quality if it is in question

### **Fencer Prerogatives**

- If a Fencer needs to call a "time-out" for any reason, they must verbally get the attention of the Referee by calling "Time-Out Ref" or something equivalent.
- If a Fencer has a question about how a match was decided, they are allowed to ask the Referee for clarification. This is so Fencers can get clarification about a decision, not so they can argue about the outcome.
- If a Fencer feels like a scoring action against them was missed, the Fencer may call "Halt" and point at their opponent to indicate an that action.
- If a fencer decides to leave a match for any reason, the match will be considered a forfeit.

## **Scoring**

### **At the Sword**

- Thrusts, hews (cuts), slices and pommel strikes are all considered "Scoring Actions."
- Any Scoring Action with quality will end the round. There are no differing point values for different targets.
- If a hit is considered to be "light" or struck with the flat, the Judges may overlook the strike or the Referee may throw it out.
- Hews can be made to any part of the body but must have at least a forty-five-degree arc from start to finish.
- Slices must be made to a vulnerable target area (wrists, underarm, belly, head or neck) with a pushing/pulling pressure.
- Pommel strikes must be made with control, and only to the mask.

- One handed strikes of all types will be highly scrutinized for quality.
  - In the event that a two-handed blow is delivered within the same timeframe as a one-handed blow (two tempi, regardless of the order of attacks), the two-handed blow will be given “priority” and the one-handed blow will be disregarded.
- “Ring-outs” are not considered a scoring action unless they occur as part of a grappling exchange (see “**Ringen am Schwert**, below). If one or both combatants exit the ring without being in a grappling exchange, the combatants will be stopped and reset in “Krieg” (close striking distance) in the center of the ring.

### **Ringen am Schwert**

There will be times when fencers get bound up at close range. In these cases, wrestling at the sword is permitted and can result in a Scoring Action.

- Scoring Actions unique to Ringen am Schwert include throws, disarms and opponent containment with clear dominance. Examples of clear dominance are:
  - Lifting (but not slamming) your opponent
  - Establishing a mount position after both opponents end up on the ground (due to a trip or slip). If fencers do end up fighting for dominance on the ground, the Referee will perform a 10 count to determine dominance. If none is established, the fencers will be reset in Krieg (close striking distance) in the center of the ring.
  - Forcing the opponent out of the ring while maintaining standing control over them
- Valid scoring actions with the weapons during a Ringen am Schwert engagement will end the round.
- While this event is being held indoors on artificial turf (as opposed to a venue with a concrete or wooden floor), a throw with intent from almost any height can be damaging, even with mats. When approaching someone in order to throw them in this competition, it is more important that you show control of them rather than throwing them powerfully to the earth. While a basic hip toss or trap is less-likely to seriously injure someone, any throws that involve a lift and drop will be sternly evaluated for “excessive force,” and may result in disqualification. At the end of the day, we want everyone to go home in one piece, whether you win that round or not.

### **Illegal Actions**

- Striking to the back of the head
- Striking to the groin
- Striking with the crossguard
- Striking with a part of the body (punches, kicks, etcetera), with the exception of “push-kicks” used to create distance
- Mortschlag strikes
- Throwing the weapon or parts of the weapon
- Continuing to fight after “Halt” is called
- Intentionally ending a round by stepping out of the ring
- Reckless or unsportsmanlike behavior, including throws that endanger the health of the thrown person
- Arguing with event staff or being disrespectful, in or out of the ring

Performance of an Illegal Action will result in a warning. Cumulative warnings may lead to forfeiture of the match, and in extreme cases, expulsion from the event. All warnings will be documented and recorded on the Scorecard.

## **Section II – Mixed Steel**

The Rules and Requirements for the Mixed Steel event are the same as those for the Longsword event, with the following exceptions or additions:

### **Gear Requirements**

All gear is subject to ringside review and approval. Any missing equipment except clothing and athletic cup can be borrowed at the event if you do not have your own, first come, first served. If you are unsure of whether or not your gear qualifies for the event, please reach out the tournament organizers prior to your arrival.

- Steel arming sword, sidesword, saber, broadsword or messer made by a recognized smith and with a maximum blade length of 92 cm measured from the cross. Blades should be free of burrs and in good condition.
- Fencers have the option of using an off-hand tool. Requests to use any tool not explicitly described here must be approved by the tournament organizers:
  - A steel, wood or synthetic bucklers whose longest dimension does not exceed 14". Any buckler that isn't round or that is made of wood must be pre-approved. Bucklers cannot have any spikes or protrusions other than a rounded boss, and must have rims that are rounded for competition use.
  - A parrying dagger made by a recognized smith, and securely tipped.
  - A cloak or cape
- Mask with occipital protection
- Either a hard glove or a combination of a soft glove and a complex hilt for the sword hand
- A hard glove for the off-hand. A soft glove is acceptable if the off-hand tool is a buckler or has a complex hilt.
- Jacket
- Elbow and knee protection
- Gorget, standalone or built into gambeson/jacket
- Clothing that leaves no skin exposed
- Athletic cup for men
- Chest protector for women (recommended, not mandatory)

### **Tournament Progression**

- Fencers will initially be seeded into pools based upon their HEMA Ratings fencing record and past Gesellen Fechten performance.
- After the first round of pools concludes, fencers will be seeded into a second round of pools based upon their performance in their first pool. This begins the Elimination phase of the event, as the rankings after the second round of pools will be used to make the first cut to the roster.
- After the second round of pools concludes, fencers will be ranked based upon their cumulative performance in their first two pools, and cuts will be made to the roster. The remaining competitors will be seeded into a third round of pools.
- At the conclusion of the third round of pools, the fencers will be ranked and the roster will be reduced to the top 4 competitors. These fencers will fence in a Finals pool.
- The fencers in the Finals pool will fence and be placed according to their cumulative performance against the other fencers within the Finals pool.

## **Scoring**

### **At the Sword**

- The following “Scoring Actions” may be made with the following tools:
  - Swords: Thrusts, hews (cuts), slices, and pommel strikes
  - Daggers: Thrusts and pommel strikes
  - Bucklers: Buckler strikes, which must be made with the boss of the buckler, not with the rim.
- Any Scoring Action with quality will end the round. There are no differing point values for different targets.
- If a hit is considered to be “light” or struck with the flat, the Judges may overlook the strike or the Referee may throw it out.
- Hews can be made to any part of the body but must have at least a forty-five-degree arc from start to finish.
- Slices must be made to a vulnerable target area (wrists, underarm, belly, head or neck) with a pushing/pulling pressure.
- Pommel strikes must be made with control, and only to the mask.
- “Ring-outs” are not considered a scoring action unless they occur as part of a grappling exchange (see “**Ringen am Schwert**, below). If one or both combatants exit the ring without being in a grappling exchange, the combatants will be stopped and reset in “Krieg” (close striking distance) in the center of the ring.

### **Ringen am Schwert**

There will be times when fencers get bound up at close range. In these cases, wrestling at the sword is permitted and can result in a Scoring Action.

- Scoring Actions unique to Ringen am Schwert include throws, disarms and opponent containment with clear dominance. Examples of clear dominance are:
  - Lifting (but not slamming) your opponent
  - Establishing a mount position after both opponents end up on the ground (due to a trip or slip). If fencers do end up fighting for dominance on the ground, the Referee will perform a 10 count to determine dominance. If none is established, the fencers will be reset in Krieg (close striking distance) in the center of the ring.
  - Forcing the opponent out of the ring while maintaining standing control over them
- Valid scoring actions with the weapons during a Ringen am Schwert engagement will end the round.
- While this event is being held inside on artificial turf (as opposed to a venue with a concrete or wooden floor), a throw with intent from almost any height can be damaging, even with mats. When approaching someone in order to throw them in this competition, it is more important that you show control of them rather than throwing them powerfully to the earth. While a basic hip toss or trap is less-likely to seriously injure someone, any throws that involve a lift and drop will be sternly evaluated for “excessive force,” and may result in disqualification. At the end of the day, we want everyone to go home in one piece, whether you win that round or not.

### **Illegal Actions**

- Striking to the back of the head
- Striking to the groin
- Striking with the crossguard
- Striking with the rim of the buckler
- Striking with a part of the body (punches, kicks, etcetera), with the exception of “push-kicks” used to create distance

- Mortschlag strikes
- Throwing the weapon or parts of the weapon
- Continuing to fight after "Halt" is called
- Intentionally ending a round by stepping out of the ring
- Reckless or unsportsmanlike behavior, including throws that endanger the health of the thrown person
- Arguing with event staff or being disrespectful, in or out of the ring

Performance of an Illegal Action will result in a warning. Cumulative warnings may lead to forfeiture of the match, and in extreme cases, expulsion from the event. All warnings will be documented and recorded on the Scorecard.

## **Section III – Single Rapier**

The Rules and Requirements for the Rapier event are the same as those for the Longsword event, with the following exceptions or additions:

### **Gear Requirements**

All gear is subject to ringside review and approval. Any missing equipment except clothing and athletic cup can be borrowed at the event if you do not have your own, first come, first served. If you are unsure of whether or not your gear qualifies for the event, please reach out the tournament organizers prior to your arrival.

- Steel “rapier” made by a recognized smith. Blades should be free of burrs and in good condition. Blades must be securely tipped.
- Mask with occipital protection
- Lightly-padded leather or lacrosse gloves, at a minimum
- Jacket
- Elbow and knee protection
- Gorget, standalone or built into gambeson/jacket
- Clothing that leaves no skin exposed
- Athletic cup for men
- Chest protector for women (recommended, not mandatory)

### **Tournament Progression**

- Fencers will initially be seeded into pools based upon their HEMA Ratings fencing record and past Gesellen Fechten performance.
- After the first round of pools concludes, fencers will be seeded into a second round of pools based upon their performance in their first pool. This begins the Elimination phase of the event, as the rankings after the second round of pools will be used to make the first cut to the roster.
- After the second round of pools concludes, fencers will be ranked based upon their cumulative performance in their first two pools, and cuts will be made to the roster. The remaining competitors will be seeded into a third round of pools.
- At the conclusion of the third round of pools, the fencers will be ranked and the roster will be reduced to the top 4 competitors. These fencers will fence in a Finals pool.
- The fencers in the Finals pool will fence and be placed according to their cumulative performance against the other fencers within the Finals pool.

## **Scoring**

### **At the Sword**

- Thrusts, hews (cuts) and pommel strikes are all considered “Scoring Actions.”
- Any Scoring Action with quality will end the round. There are no differing point values for different targets.
- A solid thrust to any part of the body is considered a scoring action.
- Hews to the head, neck, arms and legs are scoring actions. If a hit is considered to be “light” or struck with the flat, the Judges may overlook the strike or the Referee may throw it out.
- Pommel strikes must be made with control, and only to the mask.
- “Ring-outs” are NOT considered a scoring action. If one or both combatants are forced out of the ring, the combatants will be stopped and reset in “Krieg” (close striking distance) in the center of the ring.

### **Ringen am Schwert**

There will be times when fencers get bound up at close range. In the rapier event, throws and takedowns are not permitted, and action will be halted at this point. There are some limited actions that may be taken by the empty off-hand, however:

- The open off-hand may be utilized for parries, but is still considered vulnerable to quality thrusts and cuts.
- The open off-hand may grasp the opponent’s blade, but only in a way that holds it momentarily captive. Twisting of the blade or attempts to disarm the opponent are not allowed, and any lengthy exchanges where the opponents are bound up will be halted and reset.
- Limited pushing or grasping actions to the opponent’s arms and shoulders as part of a larger attempt to contain their weapon are allowed, but should not proceed to full-on grappling.
  - Example: Pushing the opponent’s elbow or shoulder to change the orientation of their blade or body somewhat is acceptable, but taking control of the opponent’s arm with a joint lock is not.

### **Illegal Actions**

- Standing joint locks, throws and takedowns
- Attempting to disarm the opponent
- Twisting or greatly bending an opponent’s blade during a grasping containment
- Striking to the back of the head
- Striking to the groin
- Striking with the crossguard
- Striking with a part of the body (punches, kicks, etcetera)
- Mortschlag strikes
- Throwing the weapon or parts of the weapon
- Continuing to fight after “Halt” is called
- Intentionally ending a round by stepping out of the ring
- Reckless or unsportsmanlike behavior that endangers the health of the opponent
- Arguing with event staff or being disrespectful, in or out of the ring

Performance of an Illegal Action will result in a warning. Cumulative warnings may lead to forfeiture of the match, and in extreme cases, expulsion from the event. All warnings will be documented and recorded on the Scorecard.

## **Section IV – Saber**

The Rules and Requirements for the Saber event are the same as those for the Longsword event, with the following exceptions or additions:

### **Gear Requirements**

All gear is subject to ringside review and approval. Any missing equipment except clothing and athletic cup can be borrowed at the event if you do not have your own, first come, first served. If you are unsure of whether or not your gear qualifies for the event, please reach out the tournament organizers prior to your arrival.

- Steel saber made by a recognized smith and with a maximum total length of 105 cm. Blades should be in good condition and free of burrs, and must measure at least 16mm edge-to-edge at the guard. The total weapon weight must be between 620g to 950g.
- Mask with occipital protection
- At least a leather glove for the sword hand and a hard glove for the off-hand
- Jacket
- Elbow and knee protection
- Gorget, standalone or built into gambeson/jacket
- Clothing that leaves no skin exposed
- Athletic cup for men
- Chest protector for women (recommended, not mandatory)

### **Tournament Progression**

- Fencers will initially be seeded into pools based upon their HEMA Ratings fencing record and past Gesellen Fechten performance.
- After the first round of pools concludes, fencers will be seeded into a second round of pools based upon their performance in their first pool. This begins the Elimination phase of the event, as the rankings after the second round of pools will be used to make the first cut to the roster.
- After the second round of pools concludes, fencers will be ranked based upon their cumulative performance in their first two pools, and cuts will be made to the roster. The remaining competitors will be seeded into a third round of pools.
- At the conclusion of the third round of pools, the fencers will be ranked and the roster will be reduced to the top 4 competitors. These fencers will fence in a Finals pool.
- The fencers in the Finals pool will fence and be placed according to their cumulative performance against the other fencers within the Finals pool.

### **Scoring**

#### **At the Sword**

- Thrusts, hews (cuts), slices and pommel strikes are all considered “Scoring Actions.”
- Any Scoring Action with quality will end the round. There are no differing point values for different targets.
- If a hit is considered to be “light” or struck with the flat, the Judges may overlook the strike or the Referee may throw it out.
- Hews can be made to any part of the body but must have at least a forty-five-degree arc from start to finish.
- Slices must be made to a vulnerable target area (wrists, underarm, belly, head or neck) with a pushing/pulling pressure.

- Pommel strikes must be made with control, and only to the mask.
- “Ring-outs” are not considered a scoring action unless they occur as part of a grappling exchange (see “**Ringen am Schwert**, below). If one or both combatants exit the ring without being in a grappling exchange, the combatants will be stopped and reset in “Krieg” (close striking distance) in the center of the ring.

### **Ringen am Schwert**

There will be times when fencers get bound up at close range. In these cases, wrestling at the sword is permitted and can result in a Scoring Action.

- Scoring Actions unique to Ringen am Schwert include throws, disarms and opponent containment with clear dominance. Examples of clear dominance are:
  - Lifting (but not slamming) your opponent
  - Establishing a mount position after both opponents end up on the ground (due to a trip or slip). If fencers do end up fighting for dominance on the ground, the Referee will perform a 10 count to determine dominance. If none is established, the fencers will be reset in Krieg (close striking distance) in the center of the ring.
  - Forcing the opponent out of the ring while maintaining standing control over them
- Valid scoring actions with the weapons during a Ringen am Schwert engagement will end the round.
- While this event is being held inside on artificial turf (as opposed to a venue with a concrete or wooden floor), a throw with intent from almost any height can be damaging, even with mats. When approaching someone in order to throw them in this competition, it is more important that you show control of them rather than throwing them powerfully to the earth. While a basic hip toss or trap is less-likely to seriously injure someone, any throws that involve a lift and drop will be sternly evaluated for “excessive force,” and may result in disqualification. At the end of the day, we want everyone to go home in one piece, whether you win that round or not.

### **Illegal Actions**

- Striking to the back of the head
- Striking to the groin
- Striking with the crossguard
- Striking with a part of the body (punches, kicks, etcetera), with the exception of “push-kicks” used to create distance
- Mortschlag strikes
- Throwing the weapon or parts of the weapon
- Continuing to fight after “Halt” is called
- Intentionally ending a round by stepping out of the ring
- Reckless or unsportsmanlike behavior, including throws that endanger the health of the thrown person
- Arguing with event staff or being disrespectful, in or out of the ring

Performance of an Illegal Action will result in a warning. Cumulative warnings may lead to forfeiture of the match, and in extreme cases, expulsion from the event. All warnings will be documented and recorded on the Scorecard.