



# Southeast Renaissance Fencing Open Ruleset

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The Southeast Renaissance Fencing Open (SERFO) is a tournament dedicated to promoting the practice and teaching of Historical European Martial Arts (HEMA) in the region. Most clubs in attendance are based in Georgia, Tennessee, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Florida. Participants come from a variety of backgrounds in terms of their choices of weapons, time periods, and manuals of study.

SERFO is a multidisciplinary event with a focus on Renaissance weapons, and we give equal footing to rapier and longsword fencing. SERFO is known as being a competitive but friendly and open event. We endeavor every year to be welcoming and supportive to all fencers. While the fencing is at all times intense and performed with a desire to win, we view winning as a secondary objective of fencing well. A victory for us is the fencer having fun and improving their overall skill. We hope that you have fun and plan to come back to SERFO again and again.

## 1. Match Procedure

### **Bullpen**

All tournaments at SERFO will use a bullpen gear check system. Fencers will report to the bullpen 30 minutes prior to their scheduled pool time in order to check in.

All gear will be checked for compliance by bullpen staff. Bullpen staff have final say on all gear decisions.

Once a fencer's gear has been checked and approved by bullpen staff, that fencer should **not** leave the bullpen. If the fencer does leave the bullpen, they will have to recheck their gear upon returning.

In the Eliminations Phase of each tournament, fencers will wait in the bullpen until their match is called. After winning a match, fencers will report back to the bullpen to await the next match.



## Match Setup

In the Pools Phase, fencers will be sorted into pools of and will fence each of the other fencers in their pool to determine placement in the Eliminations Phase.

In the Eliminations Phase, the top fencers from each pool will be seeded into a bracket. Matches will continue through this bracket until 1st, 2nd, 3rd, and 4th place fencers are determined.

When fencers are sent to a ring, either as a Pool or in the Eliminations Phase, they must first check in with the table staff to verify attendance.

Table staff will announce each match as well as the following "on deck" match.

Matches last for two and a half minutes (2:30) or until a fencer reaches the point limit. The clock will run continuously unless the Director explicitly calls for a pause. Directors and Judges are instructed to assign points quickly to avoid delays.

- o In the Saber Invitational tournament, matches last for 90 seconds or until a fencer reaches the point limit, and the clock will pause each time "Halt" is called.

In the scenario where time runs out to end the match, the final exchange will always last at least 10 seconds. If "Halt" is called when fewer than 10 seconds remain, the clock will be reset to 10 seconds for the final exchange. If the final exchange naturally lasts longer than 10 seconds, no adjustments will be made.

In the rare case that a fencer has a match immediately after their previous match, they are allowed a two (2) minute rest before they must report to the ring.



## 2. Scoring

Cuts must have edge alignment and clear intention in order to score. Cuts that are sloppy, uncontrolled, twist in the strike, or fall weakly against the target will be judged as lacking intention. If the Director or Judge is unsure, they should assume both good edge alignment and intention.

- o Cuts with the tip of the weapon are valid, but cuts that just barely scrape the target may be disregarded.
- o Cuts do not require any level of force beyond what is necessary to make contact.
- o A thrust scores with any amount of contact. A flex in the blade is not required.

Slices are scored if the slice is performed with at least half the length of the blade. Slices to the hands may be scored without this criteria if they are used to lever the opponent's arms to the side.

Blade grabs are permitted if the sword is not in motion; however, if the sword is able to slip or twist in the grip, then the opposing fencer will score.

If a fencer lands a strike and is hit in response within a tempo, it is scored as a failure to withdraw. The fencer scores one (1) less point than their target would normally allow.

- o *Note: For our purposes, a tempo is defined as the time it takes either fencer to complete another action after the strike or the time it takes the Director to call "Halt," whichever comes first.*

If both fencers strike each other during the same tempo, the exchange will be called a double. Scoring for doubles varies by tournament, as described in the sections below.


Grapples do not score but are allowed to set up scoring actions. In the case of *corps en corps* (body to body) action, the Director will begin a verbal five-count. If no scoring action is called in that time, "Halt" is called, the fencers reset to their starting points, and no points are awarded. Throws are **not** permitted at SERFO.

In the case of multiple scoring actions from the same fencer, only the first hit is scored.

If the opponent turns their back, falls down, or is disarmed, a fencer only needs to present a threat in order to score; they do not need to complete the strike.

### Fencer Input

Fencers may acknowledge hits they believe their opponent scored or decline hits they believe they did not score; however, they are not required or expected to do so.



After "Halt" has been called, fencers must wait until **after** the Director has awarded points before acknowledging or declining points.

Fencers may **not** call a hit that they scored or argue that they deserve more points than they were awarded.

The Director may choose to override any fencer's input.

### 3. Penalties

#### Disallowed Actions

*Delaying the Match* – any action that prevents the match from continuing at its regular pace. This includes intentionally stepping out of bounds, feigning injury, or being slow to return to the starting line after "Halt" is called.

*Striking the Floor* – over-swinging or any other action that results in a fencer's sword coming into contact with the floor.


*Interposition* – using a lower value target, such as an arm, to block a strike to a higher value target. This penalty will only be called when there is not a clear attempt to parry.

*Arguing with the Judges* – fencers in an active match may only address the Director, Judge, or Table Staff in order to clarify a call or in the manner specified in the Scoring section. Any other communication, especially disputing a call, will incur a penalty.

*Unsportsmanlike Conduct* – excessive celebration, taunting, or jeering meant to distract or demoralize a fencer.

*Reckless Behavior* – a broad category including most unsafe fencing practices. This penalty includes:

- o Striking the groin, spine, or back of head
- o Striking with the crossguard or knucklebow
- o Using excessive force, as determined by the Director
- o Striking after "Halt" has been called
- o Throwing or otherwise losing control of the weapon
- o Punching or kicking
- o Grappling throws and joint locks
- o Ducking or exposing the back

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- o Moving in an uncontrolled manner, such as striking while in midair or falling into a strike
  - o Leaping onto an extended point

*Loss of Temper* – excessive expression of anger or disagreement as exhibited by escalating with the Judges, the other fencer, or by throwing equipment, especially in a way that may threaten spectators. This penalty is, at minimum, a **Red Card**.

*Cheating* – attempting to circumvent the rules with behavior such as changing out gear after it has been checked. This penalty is, at minimum, a **Red Card**.

*Prohibited Substances* – attempting to compete while in any way intoxicated. This penalty is an immediate **Black Card**.

A Judge or Director may rule that another activity not listed here is a penalty at their discretion.

### **Penalty Cards**

*No verbal warnings will be given.* Any infraction of the rules will receive a card and be documented.

The levels of cards are:

- o White Card – the fencer receiving the card cannot score on the exchange. In the case of a double or failure to withdraw, the carded fencer's strike is disregarded, making the opponent's strike a clean hit.
- o Yellow Card – the fencer receiving the card cannot score on the exchange, and the fencer's opponent receives one (1) point.
- o Red Card – the fencer forfeits the match and is ejected from the current tournament.
- o Black Card – the fencer is ejected from the entire event.

Penalties for *Arguing with the Judges*, *Unsportsmanlike Conduct*, and *Reckless Behavior* are ineligible for a White Card. At minimum, these penalties are a **Yellow Card**.

If a fencer has received a White Card, the next instance of the same penalty must be, at minimum, a **Yellow Card**. Likewise, if a fencer has received two (2) Yellow Cards for the same penalty, the next infraction will earn a **Red Card**.

A Director can elevate any penalty to a higher card at their discretion



## 4. Equipment

The following requirements apply for **every** tournament at SERFO:

- o Fencing mask that is not deformed, rusted, or otherwise compromised
- o Rigid gorget that covers the full front of the throat
- o 350N-rated jacket appropriate to your weapon set
- o Close-toed shoes
- o Rigid groin protection for fencers with external genitalia
- o No gaps between gear and clothing – all skin must be covered
- o No modifications that compromise gear integrity or increase risk of injury (i.e. adding a PC fan to the inside of a mask), determined at bullpen staff discretion.

Rigid chest protection is **STRONGLY** recommended for all fencers, but not required

The Conventional Rapier tournament has the following **additional** requirements:

- o Tear-resistant gloves
- o A fencing rapier with a blade between 35 and 45 inches (89 and 114 cm) in length from crossbar to tip
- o A blunted tip cover affixed to the rapier

The First Blood Rapier tournament has the following **additional** requirements:

- o Padded back-of-head protection
- o Padded gloves
- o Rigid elbow and knee protection
- o A fencing rapier with a blade between 35 and 45 inches (89 and 114 cm) in length from crossbar to tip
- o A fencing dagger with a blade no longer than 18 inches (46 cm)
  - *Note: Flexi daggers are **not** allowed*
- o Blunted tip covers affixed to both rapier and dagger

The Longsword tournaments have the following **additional** requirements:

- o Padded back-of-head protection
- o Padded gloves with a rigid back, such as SPES Heavy Clamshells, HF Armory Black Knights, or Gabriel Five-Finger gloves; sparring gloves are also acceptable
- o Forearm protection or gloves with long cuffs that cover a sufficient portion of the forearm
- o Rigid elbow and knee protection
- o Rigid shin protection that covers from the top of the shoe to the bottom of the knee guard with minimal gap
- o A feder-style longsword with an affixed tip cover
  - *Note: blunt longswords, sharp longswords, fantasy styled longswords, etc. are **not** allowed*

- *The Sigi King and Castille Armory Longsword trainers are exempt from the above restriction. If you want to clear your trainer please contact the organizers to see if this is possible.*

The Sword and Buckler tournament has the following **additional** requirements:

- o Padded back-of-head protection
- o Sufficiently padded gloves, such as lacrosse gloves or similar
- o Forearm protection or gloves with long cuffs that cover a sufficient portion of the forearm
- o Rigid elbow and knee protection
- o Rigid shin protection that covers from the top of the shoe to the bottom of the knee guard with minimal gap
- o A fencing arming sword or side sword or a messer with similar flex; the blade must be no longer than 38 inches (96.5 cm)
- o A buckler or targa no wider than 16 inches (40.5 cm)

Adding ornamentation to gear is allowed, but all parts of a fencer's gear are considered valid targets. Gear that does not fit these requirements **must** be approved at the organizer's discretion.

In the case of equipment malfunction or failure, the fencer will be allowed two (2) minutes to fix or replace their gear. If the gear cannot be fixed in that time, the fencer forfeits the match but may continue in the event once their gear is repaired.



## 5. Other Circumstances

### Injuries

All injuries, whether maliciously inflicted or not, will be assessed by the staff medic. The Director can send any fencer to the medic for any reason. The medic will communicate with the fencer to determine if they are fit to continue. If the medic decides the fencer may continue, the fencer may take up to two (2) minutes to recover before resuming the bout. If the medic or fencer decides the fencer cannot continue, that fencer must forfeit that tournament

### Coaches

Each fencer may have one coach in their corner. A coach may **not** enter the ring during the match except to address a safety concern. A fencer is subject to penalties for all rules infractions their coach commits (e.g., *Delaying the Match*, *Arguing with the Judges*, etc.)





## 6. Saber Invitational

The point limit for the saber event is 5 points.

- o Strikes to any valid target—all targets above the waist—score one (1) point.
- o Blows on the blade (i.e., through the sword) will **not** score.

In the case of a tie, the match will be determined by the next clean hit.

Doubles are distinguished between true doubles, where neither fencer is at fault, and incontro doubles. True doubles are very rare and are considered no exchange and thrown out.

### **Incontro Doubles**

The fencer will be considered at fault, granting the point to their opponent, if:

- o They strike at their opponent without removing a point held in line against them
- o They seek their opponent's blade, fail to find it, and ignore the following counterattack
- o They strike their opponent in counter-time without having avoided the initial attack
- o They immediately replace or renew an attack against their opponent's parry and immediate riposte
- o They parry an attack but delay the riposte long enough to allow a renewal
- o They attempt a compound action with feints but are parried at any point in the action



## 7. Rapier

There are two rapier events: Conventional Rapier and First Blood Rapier.

Conventional Rapier is a single rapier event; First Blood Rapier is a rapier and dagger event.

If neither fencer scores before the time limit is reached, the Director will flip a coin to assign priority to one fencer. The bout will then continue for one (1) minute. If there is still no score at the end of that time, the fencer with priority wins.

### Conventional Rapier

The point limit for this event is 9 points.

- o Thrusts to a shallow target—the arms below the shoulder or the legs below the hip—count for one (1) point.
- o Thrusts to a deep target—the head or torso—count for three (3) points.
- o Actions other than a thrust, or thrusts to any target below the waist, do not score.
- o Doubles will be scored for both fencers according to their target.
- o *Corps en corps* actions will not be allowed in this tournament. If fencers arrive in grappling distance without scoring a hit, “Halt” will be called and fencers will reset.
- o If both fencers reach the point limit at the same time in the Pools Phase, the match will be recorded as a loss for both fencers. In the Eliminations Phase, the fencer with the highest score will win but will begin the next round at a disadvantage based on the number of points that were scored against them. This penalty will not exceed three (3) points.

### First Blood Rapier

The point limit for this event is 1 point.

- o Cuts, thrusts, and slices to any target, pommel strikes to the head, and disarms are scoring actions.
- o If a fencer steps outside the ring with both feet, their opponent scores.
- o In the Pools Phase, doubles and failure to withdraw will be counted as a loss for both fencers. In the Eliminations Phase, the bout will be refought.



## 8. Longsword

There are two longsword events: Open Longsword and Under-Represented Genders (URG) Longsword. Open Longsword is open to all fencers and is separated into three tiers: Tier A, Tier B, and Tier C. Tier placement is decided by tournament staff, but fencers may request different placement in advance of the event. URG Longsword is a tournament for all under-represented genders in HEMA.

The point limit for all longsword events is 7 points.

- o Strikes to a shallow target—the arms below the shoulder or the legs below the hip—count for one (1) point.
- o Strikes to a deep target—the head or torso—count for two (2) points. Flat and pommel strikes to the head count as valid strikes but are invalid to any other target. A pommel that is presented to the mask but does not make contact may be called a successful strike.
- o A strike with control counts for three (3) points. The criteria for control are explained below. The Director and Judge must agree in order to award control points.
- o If one fencer performs an action to disarm the other, that fencer may score one (1) point. If they disarm the other fencer and also present a threat before “Halt” is called, they may be awarded three (3) points for control instead. The fencer does not need to land a strike in order to present a threat.
- o In Tier A and Tier B Open Longsword, as well as URG Longsword, doubles are thrown out and neither fencer scores. In Tier C Open Longsword, both fencers score according to their target.
- o In the case of a failure to withdraw, the revenge strike must be made within a tempo. A successful revenge strike reduces the score by one (1) point.

### Control

- o Control describes a cut or a thrust to a deep target that controls the opponent’s sword at the time of the strike, whether through grapple or blade action.
- o Common examples are master cuts, absetzen-type actions, sword grabs, and thrusts performed from a bind.
- o Control cannot be awarded for pommel strikes or strikes to shallow targets or if the Director and Judge do not agree.
- o If a strike is awarded control points, it cannot also be judged a failure to withdraw.



## 9. Sword and Buckler

The point limit for the sword and buckler tournament is 7 points.

- o Strikes to a shallow target—the arms below the shoulder or the legs below the hip—count for one (1) point.
- o Strikes to the head count for three (3) points. Flat and pommel strikes to the head count as valid strikes but are invalid to any other target. A pommel that is presented to the mask but does not make contact may be called a successful strike.
- o **Cuts or slices** to the torso are counted as strikes to a shallow target and score one (1) point; **thrusts** to the torso are counted as strikes to a deep target and score three (3) points.
- o Doubles are counted as no exchange and thrown out.
- o In the case of a failure to withdraw, the revenge strike must be to an equal- or higher-value target. If a fencer strikes a deep target and is hit by an afterblow to a shallow target, that fencer scores the full three (3) points. A successful revenge strike reduces the score by one (1) point.
- o Strikes with the buckler are counted as punches and will be penalized. Pressing the buckler to the hand or arms is acceptable.