

## WMAW CHALLENGE TOURNAMENT

There has long been a great deal of discussion, interest and debate in the virtues and methods of competition in refining and testing martial arts skill, and a strong divide between traditional martial arts and combat sports. In recent years, this same interest, debate and specialization has become a part of the Historical European Martial Arts community, with various sub-communities ascribing different levels of importance, emphasis and virtue to formalized competition.

### TOURNAMENT RATIONALE

Our own views on the subject are similar to those eloquently expressed by new WMAW instructor Roger Norling in "The Wreath or the Cash" at his HROARR website: <http://www.hroarr.com/the-wreath-or-the-cash-on-tournament-fighting/> and the WMAW Stealth Tournament, derived from a proposal by Maryland KdF member Ben Michels, is an attempt to put some of these ideas in practice. The tournament has been developed with the following precepts in mind:

#### Mental

1. Competition is a good test of physical skill as well as character;
2. Human nature is to instinctively "game the rules" - any set of rules;
3. If combatants don't have a chance to fail both physically and personally in a match, you do not have a martial arts competition, you have a sports competition. Athletically rewarding, but one step further removed from actually developing combatants instead of just athletes.
4. Judged combat *can* lead to awarding technically better fencing, but it also reduces the character test on combatants, as they are absolved from calling hits and learn to "sell" points. This can be seen unilaterally in everything from American football to Olympic fencing and is one of the things that *should* differentiate a martial arts competition from combat sport.
5. Conversely, while the combatants calling their own hits can lead to sloppier fights and hard feelings, it also tests their character publicly, as those who fail to do so, reveal their poor sportsmanship in front of their friends, colleagues and fellow competitors.

#### Physical

1. Fencing is the Art of Defense, and we see far too many double-hits in sparring;
2. The current emphasis on the After Blow in all fights, rather than the original "king of the hill format" has actually encouraged double-hits as people game the After Blow to negate an attack.
3. No one likes to be eliminated in "sudden death", one-hit fits, but that is the reality of a lethal fight with sharp swords. As Fiore dei Liberi wrote: "in one missed parry lies death".
4. Most fencing tends to be like vs like weapons, whereas the various masters all assert that their art works in all manners of combat, against all weapons.
5. No set of rules can accurately reflect real combat, only reward realistic tactics and deemphasize unrealistic ones.

With these rules in mind, we present the WMAW Challenge Tournament. We have nicknamed it the "Stealth" Tournament, because most of it will be happening while the event is running! Here is how it works.

## **GENERAL RULES**

The tournament will be fought in two rounds - an open Challenge and invitational Finals.

### **Challenge Round**

- Is open to all attendees with the requisite equipment;
- Begins during Thursday night free-fencing and runs all through Friday classes, concluding with Friday night free fencing;
- Fights are conducted privately and judged on the honor system, based on the stated *Scoring Conventions* (see below).

What this means is that there will be a designated fighting area, one "officer" the Recorder of Deeds. You challenge someone to combat, each with your agreed upon weapons (see Weapon Categories, below) and the Recorder writes down who is fighting and with what weapons. When the bout is over, you report your scores, using the following metrics:

- Overall Victor receives 2 pts;
- The person who scored the first blow receives 1 pt;
- If there were any double hits during the match, both parties lose 1 pt.
- Therefore, in any match a combatant could score between 3 and -1 points.

These rules are not meant to be "realistic", simply to prioritize drawing first blood and avoiding double-hits. No matter how many double hits, for the sake of simplicity, only 1 pt is lost. However, additional double hits are not refought, so if you rack up too many double-hits, the victory in that match is going to go with who scored the first blow, and your overall score is going to go down!

After the Challenge Round ends, total scores for each combatant in each Weapon Category will be totaled, and the top two combatants for each category will move to the finals, to be fought as an exhibition during Sunday's lunch period.

### **Finals Round**

The Finals are a formally judged match, based on the rules designed by Sean Hayes for VISS. You can find those rules at <http://chivalricfighting.wordpress.com/2013/08/14/tournament-rules/>

The goal of this set of rules is to provide a framework for fighters to employ good historical and martially correct technique, to give officials a clean and consistent method to evaluate the fighters, and to provide immediate feedback through the refereeing to the fighters and to the spectators. It is not intended to simulate a "real" or antagonistic fight, as the combination of protective gear, blunt swords and friendly

play rules out such a scenario. The rules will use a combination of judging by Priority of Action that is used in classical fencing, which is designed to promote clean, martially correct technique; and a Weighted Scoring System.

### Priority of Action

Classical fencing uses a system referred to as "Priority of Action." This system analyses each action of a given exchange between the fencers and assigns them priority based on the time in which the actions were performed, as well as basic correctness of each action.

### Weighted Scoring System for Blows

Any individual action is assessed, in sequence, for Contact, Technical Quality, Control and afterblow. Judges are encouraged to be conservative in their assessments. The sum of points, including the adversary's afterblow (if delivered) can result in a score of between 0 and 4 points for a single exchange.

### Officials

The bout is overseen by one marshal, who is responsible for safety, calling priority of action, and polling the judges, as well as four line judges. Two judges are assigned to watch each fencer for hits. Judges also observe the entirety of the action so they can follow the marshal's calls.

## **WEAPON CATEGORIES**

Combatants may choose to fight in any of the following categories (and may participate in as many as they like):

- Longsword
- Cut and Thrust Sword (inclusive of sword alone, sword and buckler, or sword and dagger)
- Thrusting Sword (Inclusive of rapier, rapier and dagger, rapier and cloak or smallsword)

What defines which category you are fighting in is what you are armed with, not your opponent. Thus, if two combatants wish to meet in the field with longsword vs. rapier and dagger, they are welcome to do so - with one person receiving a score in the Longsword category and the other in the Thrusting Sword category.

## **SCORING CONVENTIONS**

Matches are fought until one person has scored five clean hits. A "hit" is defined as follows:

- a cut or thrust to anywhere on the body;
- a pommel or buckler strike to the face;
- a disarm
- a takedown

For interests of simplicity and safety, the following actions are forbidden:

- grappling after the primary weapon has been disarmed;
- groundfighting;
- dagger vs. dagger fighting

#### **REQUIRED EQUIPMENT**

**Equipment required for the tournament is as listed in the *WMAW 2013 Free-Fencing Conduct and Equipment Standards* with the following additional requirements:**

- Back of head protection, in the form of a hard shell or padded flap attached to the mask or heavily padded arming cap worn beneath;
- Additional throat protection beyond a mask bib and jacket collar is required;
- Nylon or wooden weapons are expressly forbidden. Steel weapons only!
- Hanwei Feder Longswords are expressly forbidden.