



Klassisches Fechten Soest

Protocols of Engagement: English Version

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"The real thing."
Baron César Lecat Bazancourt,
Secrets of the Sword (1900)

Introduction

The following Protocols are only intended to clarify practice based on fencing theory. They demand fencers be familiar with theory based on the logic of the sharp point and fencing “to hit and not be hit.” Klassisches Fechten Soest rejects bureaucratic rule-based fencing as a mass sport in favour of duelling practice. We insist that fencers, not rules and officials, do the fencing. It should not be necessary to prescribe the correctness of a list of specific actions and techniques. We are serious fencers who have returned to the demanding standards that existed before Olympic competition subverted them in the twentieth century. Please note these Protocols give latitude to fencers for participation in evaluating the assault and, even, setting its conditions by agreement. It is for this reason the term protocols is used instead of rules. All fencers in KFS adhere to the Protocols, and visitors to Soest are expected to follow them.

Where we make prescriptions, they are clear enough to apply as general applications of theory, and that is their intention. We agree with the great Aldo Nadi that there is only one fencing. Foil, épée, sabre, and historical swords such as rapier and broadsword (from which the fencing sabre is derived) should be subject to the demands of fencing theory and duelling practice. Priority based on units of fencing time, not “right of way” to award the hit with either foil or sabre in instances of the double touch, should always be clear.

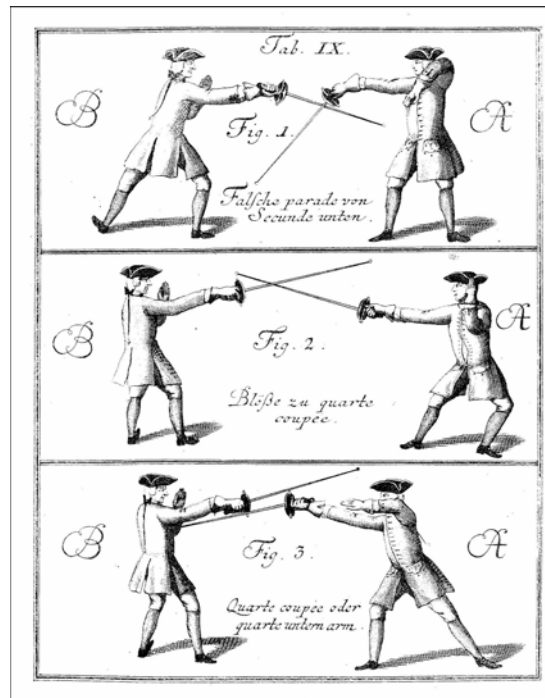
“Since fencing adheres to the principles of the duel,” writes William M. Gaugler in *The Science of Fencing* (1997:293), “...double hits must be avoided because in actual combat they would result in both swordsmen being wounded.” For 300 years the double hit was regarded as deliberate or a result of ignorance. The purpose of fencing rules for the last 100 years has been to solve the double-hit problem. KFS adheres to the judgment of Francesco Marcelli, *Regole della scherma* (1686) that *tempo comune*, the modern basis for evaluating the double touch, is *tempo falso*, and we penalize both fencers for the double.

The Protocols make fencing understandable to any observer. They are not an innovation. They are a return to basics eroded after the founding of the Fédération Internationale d’Escrime in 1913. Few if any modern fencers could survive in competition before the first publication of FIE rules, titled *Règlement pour les Épreuves* (1919). This is a significant difference from *Règlement d’Escrime*, since FIE rules for competition are about how to score points, not about how to fence, and have been unstable in practice.

Modern fencers would be helpless before 1913 because of the dominance of Cold War-era methods to exploit scoring technology. Épée and sabre were still used in the European duel then, so good technique mattered. For example, foil, as the training weapon to perfect technique, was not an event in the 1908 Olympics and was given only a public demonstration. The épée rules in 1908 were for a one-touch fight in which both fencers lost when a double hit occurred; unfortunately, they succumbed to competition pressure by providing for the *pointe d’arrêt*. With sabre, parries and ripostes were clear in three-touch fights with lightweight sport sabres; Hungarians and Bohemians, for whom the sabre was the traditional duelling sword, impressed Western Europeans with their ability to parry aggressive assaults.

By insisting that the foil is the training weapon for all fencing, historical, classical, and theatrical, or for any competition, and making formal fights with all duelling swords one-touch encounters, KFS demands stricter fencing than anyone else does today.

Where we make detailed specifications (for example for weapons), it is to make the Protocols applicable to all fencers, or to exclude equipment (i.e. the *pointe d’arret*) which detracts from strict, theory-based fencing. Provisions for modern foil are based on our insistence that it is the training weapon for all duelling swords. We also make such “rules” as are necessary for modern requirements of safety and the restoration of fencing basics. This last type of provision informs the small size of our *piste*, which is drawn from historical precedent.



Anton Friederich Kahn,
Anfangsgründe der Fechtkunst (1739/1761)

The Protocols

The setting:

All KFS fencing encounters are initiated with the salute and concluded with the salute and handshake. KFS has no need for an elaborate statement of rules of conduct. Our entire membership is in accord on following the same good manners we expect in the world at large. KFS protocols are not designed for competitive events only. KFS allows formal challenges between individual fencers outside the tournament setting.

Formal challenges will be administered by a president, although with countervailing checks. He or she is the chief officer ensuring safety and courtesy in the assault. A formal challenge must include a salute to the president at its beginning and conclusion. The president is charged with monitoring the pace of the action, calling the fencers to the line, to the first position and salute, to the *en garde*, and to the assault. He or she may halt the action at discretion, and is responsible for announcing the outcome of the assault. His or her announcement should be clearly audible and given in appropriate and correct fencing terminology.

A timekeeper will be appointed to assist the president.

Each fencer will be accompanied by a second, whose role will be like that of the second in the formal duel, advising and representing his or her interests. Seconds are responsible for selecting the ground and maintaining the placement of *piste* markers in outdoor venues. The seconds, with the president, are to enforce courtesy and safety by alerting the president and both fencers when inappropriate or unsafe behaviour or actions take place.

If, in consultation with the seconds, the president rules a violation of courtesy or safety has occurred, he or she will issue a warning. A second occurrence will result in forfeiture of the challenge.

KFS uses a *piste* 6.3-meters in length and 1.8 meters wide, with a clearly demarked center line. Outdoor venues shall be marked safely at line intersections by weighted red cloth strips measuring no larger than 30 by 10 centimeters. If a fencer places one foot outside any of the boundary lines, a warning will be issued by either fencer's second and confirmed by the president. A second occurrence will result in forfeiture of the challenge.

No coaching will be permitted during a formal challenge; this constraint applies to any visiting teacher of whatever rank or title, to the KFS director of training and training staff, and to the gallery.

Fencers are expected to acknowledge a hit by halting the action, gesturing to the line in which it was received, and raising the free or off hand. The seconds are to signal with an upraised hand when they perceive a hit and participate in consultation with the president in its evaluation.

Any of the three officers of the engagement—president and seconds--may require a fencer to explain how he or she gave or received a touch. This question must occur before the president's announcement of the outcome of the assault. A fencer must answer audibly and in appropriate fencing terminology.

A well-informed fencer should be aware of terminological issues. KFS acknowledges differences in meaning for fencing terms in multiple languages or among a wide range of modern and historical authorities, and expects others to do so. We use German terminology whenever possible, and William M. Gaugler, *A Dictionary of Universally Used Fencing Terminology* (1997) as a standard reference for other usages. In the event of a failure to reach agreement, a ruling by the KFS director of training or designated presiding assistant will be final.

At the conclusion of all formal KFS events, the senior fencer present, regardless of claimed rank, or whether a visitor or not, will be expected to fence the winner.

Equipment:

All fencers are to wear fencing jackets, tunics, or their equivalent rated or tested at a minimum of 550 newtons in the formal assault. There is no color code for fencers' clothing. A plastron must be worn underneath jackets or tunics. Long pants or knickers with socks fully drawn are required for safety. Breast protectors and groin cups are required. Gloves should be sturdy and have a cuff at least 13 centimeters long. Since KFS often fences outdoors, fencers should be attentive to venue with regard to footwear. We require a minimum three-weapon mask capable of sustaining a 12-kilogram punch test. Black mesh only is allowed. Colored mesh, Zivkovic, or other plexiglass masks are strictly prohibited. We prohibit "historical" costumes since they belong to theatrical fencing and public demonstrations, and our focus is on technique.

KFS puts no restrictions on the grips of modern foils and épées. Foil guards of whatever shape or style shall not exceed 120 millimeters in diameter. Épée guards of whatever shape, size, or historical style are allowed.

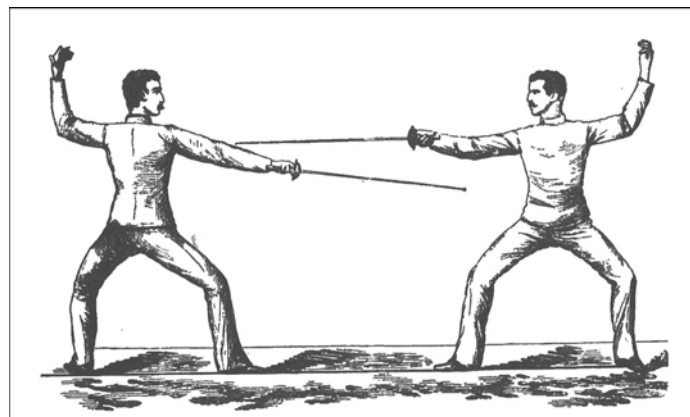
Foil blade lengths may range from 76 to 89 centimeters but must exhibit a flexible foible, and weigh less than 500 grams. There is no formal requirement for épée blade length. All buttons must be securely wrapped and padded with surgical tape.

Sabre blades must be no longer than 88 centimeters and the total weapon must weigh less than 500 grams unless fencers agree to use historical sabres. There are no restrictions on sabre grips or guards. There is no minimum or maximum blade length or weight for historical edged swords.

Since the objective of KFS is clarity of technique, the *pointe d'arrêt*, a crude, unsafe scoring device, is not permitted. The use of chalk or other markers is likewise not allowed. Please note the definitions of a valid hit for each weapon, below.

The use of the wrist strap by Italian-style fencers and the French martingale are permitted. Visitors' equipment will be subject to inspection for safety by the KFS training staff. Sufficient provision for replacement of equipment unsafe or damaged is the responsibility of the fencer.

There will be no exceptions to listed requirements or exclusions. KFS reserves the right to exclude other items that do not meet with its requirements of safety or its mission to restore the European fencing tradition. Any and all appeals must be to the KFS training staff, with a final decision resting with the director of training or designated presiding assistant.



**Invito di mezzocerchio Masaniello Parise,
Trattato teorico-pratico della scherma (1884)**

Foil:

We share the delineation of the target area with Gaugler, *The Science of Fencing* (1997:19): "...it extends in front from the upper limit of the collar out to the arm seams and down to the lines of the groin, and in back from the upper limit of the collar out to the arm seams and down to a horizontal line that passes across the top of the hip bones." The use of the upper sword arm as part of the target area, a French idea dating from the early years of the twentieth century, is inappropriate for foil as a training weapon and we reject it as everyone else did 100 years ago.

The duration or number of touches constituting a foil engagement is to be agreed upon by either the group sponsoring a tournament or by the individual fencers and their seconds. Unless otherwise negotiated, the default tournament format will consist of direct elimination with the order of combatants determined by lot.

A valid attack or counter-attack should be executed with a fully extended sword arm initiated ahead of the extension, advance, or lunge. Forward movement alone never confers priority. Valid hits can be performed while stationary or retreating.

A visibly bent foible in the target area, signalling the equivalent of a puncture wound, is required for a valid hit. *Coups plaqué*, or flat hits, are a product of inadequate technique. This provision applies to hits with the foible achieved by high, theatrical angulations or with the Olympic-style *esquive*. If a hit is so evaluated it will be disallowed.

Priority is a function of units of fencing time and inheres not in the parry but in the riposte. For a parry to be sufficient, it must fully remove the threat posed by an attacker's point so that it passes or would pass the defender's target area upon the extension, advance, or lunge or is otherwise off-target or halted.

Body evasions do not confer priority, and if accompanied by a thrust (*inquartata* or *volte*) they will be regarded as counterattacks. The retreat in tension never establishes priority. These conditions apply to sabre actions; see below.

If a double touch occurs for any reason, both fencers shall be penalized one touch each. Use of the unarmed hand is prohibited, although we acknowledge its use in the *passata sotto*.

Épée (Espée/Estoc, "Rapier Alone," Smallsword, Spada, Spadino, etc.):

KFS recognizes only one-touch épée. There is no restriction on the target area. Fights will have a 10-minute limit, and if no hit is achieved, both fencers will be penalized one point each. By mutual agreement fencers may use the unarmed hand, but not an additional weapon, to parry. Fencers can agree to use the modern standard épée or historical duelling swords with different blade lengths. A valid hit must be the equivalent of a puncture wound. Hits with the foible resulting from theatrical angulations or the Olympic-style *esquive* will be disallowed. The double touch in épée will result in a one-touch penalty for each fencer, ending the challenge.

Sabre (Broadswords, etc.):

KFS recognizes only one-touch sabre. With one exception, the KFS sabre target area conforms to that specified by Gaugler, *The Science of Fencing* (1997: 193): "...the head, arms, and torso above a line extending through the highest points where the thighs and trunk meet." Fencers may agree to make the whole body the target area following valid historical precedent. The discipline of the sabre assault follows that of foil, with the exception of a 10-minute time limit and a one-point penalty for both fencers if neither achieves a hit. Only palpable hits, simulating a cut or puncture wound, made with the rebated end or point, cut, and counter-cut of the blade will be valid. A double touch will result in a one-point penalty for each fencer, ending the encounter.