

Ye' H.A.W. Rules for Armor as Worn Melee:

The following shall be the Armor as Worn rule set for our group combat at Ye' H.A.W. 2026. This shall also further expand upon the examples given in the visual guide seen here:

▶ [Ye'H.A.W. Melee Equipment & Conduct Overview](#) (Note, some things are not covered by the video, and likewise the medium polearm ability to cut maille has been suspended.)

Overall Purpose: This Event is meant to bridge the gap between armored and unarmored practice by giving each a distinctive role within wider objectives and encouraging a cohesive combined arms environment. To avoid the melee's descent into anarchy, a basic structure for unit conduct has been created which participants are asked to study and practice under. This will ensure that on the day, everyone on the field shall be able to slot in alongside strangers and work in relative tandem.

In departure from years past we shall be moving away from the Lance formation and instead dividing participants into four categories. Pikes, Bills, Knights, and Shooters. This is meant to encourage engagements more closely resembling historical precedent of Italian or Hussite Wars and early combined arms.

Pikes will be the majority of the combatants, with varying levels of half to full armor, and carrying 8-12 ft spears/pikes. Those equipped with shorter spears shall also be attached to these formations, the most armored individuals positioned toward the front and outside. They are to move together as a single block under the command of a Sergeant.

Bills will be supplementing poleaxes in the line, carrying medium weighted halberds or billhooks, they will not be permitted to strike with them against people, however they are still permitted to thrust. But instead shall use them to hook, push, or entangle enemy pikes. Billmen are encouraged to wear half armor and will be in either their own smaller blocks or attached to the pikes.

Knights are the only participants permitted to carry heavy, armor-killing poleaxes. Made up entirely of $\frac{3}{4}$ to fully armored veteran participants of the event, they shall move in their own formation and are intended to be a special unit. They are permitted to strike at helmeted heads within the Pikes or Bills, but will be more focused on fighting their opposite numbers. This role is meant to be a challenge to undertake, requiring the most stamina and control.

Shooters are the smallest number of participants, also requiring pre-selection like the Knights. Armed with either Bows or Crossbows they shall act as a facade like years past. However, Crossbows shall be allowed to be deployed in certain scenarios and shoot at their opposite numbers, however may not be engaged in melee. Archers meanwhile shall never be under fire or threat.

Gear Requirements:

At the most basic level, participation in melee shall require full steel tournament gear. This pertains to:

Mask, back of the head protection, gorget, torso coverage with either padding or protective gear, rigid elbows and forearms, longsword sufficient hand protection, rigid shin and knee, and an athletic cup.

All skin must be covered, basketball shorts, short socks, or bare palms for sparring gloves shall not be permitted.

All equipment must be in good condition, well cared for, and lacking odor.

All Fencing Masks must be covered with some form of bright or signifying cover. For example a Hood or at minimal some bright pieces of tape. Any mask found not to have this shall be covered day-of with the ugliest duct-tape available.

As we shall be fighting outside, good shoes for such are recommended. Historical footwear is allowed and sabatons are not required.

For Armored participants, be they fully or partially armored, kit must meet the following:

Only steel armor shall be allowed, no titanium or aluminum. Hardened leather, regardless of real life protective value, shall be counted as modern protective gear and not armor. All Maille must be riveted, no butted costume armor.

The Armor must fit within the period of 1350-1580, no fantasy armor shall be permitted. All armor must be well fitting and of good quality, gauntlets must have good stitching.

All maille collars must have a trauma plate, full gorget, or other sufficient protection under or built in if not being worn under a bevor or are otherwise exposed.

All aventails must have sufficient padding or solid protection beneath them and a gorget must be worn underneath to protect the throat.

All helmets are subject to a pencil test, and should be as encompassing and enclosing as possible. Eye slits shall require bars or perf plates of sufficient diameter to prevent tips from entering them. Note that Helmets which are designed to fit over fencing masks are permitted, but should be marked with bright colours to prevent misidentification.

Any area not covered by armor must be guarded by modern protective gear, no exceptions.

Livery:

We want a colorful battlefield, and to help with target identification Livery is highly encouraged. If your lance has a particular color scheme then the wearing of surcoats, sashes, or carrying of a pennon on a spear is welcome. All fighters will be assigned to one of our four colors (Green, Blue, Red, & Yellow) and divided between two teams Team X and Team +. In a pinch, Coloured tape in your respective shape on an arm or breastplate does wonders. Personal or school heraldry may also be carried as long as they can be easily identified from distance.

Weapon Requirements:

All weapons in the melee will be synthetic; no steel shall be used in group combat.

Our event is focused on the application of armor and mixed troop cohesion with a focus on polearms and fighting of the period. As such no large center grip shields larger than 32 inches, however strapped shields such as rotella, targes, and heater types shall be permitted in some scenarios, as will bucklers. Note that centergrip round shields are expected in the Dark Age Melee scenario. Likewise, Strapped Rotella are expected in the Battle of Lepanto.

Longswords, messers, arming swords, simple side swords, stirrup hilt sabers, and the like shall be permitted. Basket hilts, and other later or more hand encompassing swords shall not be allowed. If you cannot use it while wearing a SPES Heavy or sparring glove, it's out.

Montante, Spadone, or Zweihanders shall only be allowed to pre-determined and approved specialists for the Battle of Lepanto scenario.

One handed axes are allowed to be used provided they are light enough to not cause injury. Single-handed Maces and Hammers shall be permitted in the Combat of the 30 scenario. They must be synthetic throughout or a light synthetic head upon a haft of 16 -18 inches (40.64 - 45.72 cm) long and no heavier than 4.39 lbs (1995 grams).

Daggers may be of synthetic or wood, the latter to be used with caution when against lightly armored targets.

All polearms must be well affixed to their shaft with either glue, screws, or tape. Hafts may be made of wood or rattan, and should be well cared for and not splintered or cracked. They shall be marked by tape to denote their class and must be of one of the approved makers: Arcem, PurpleHeart Armory, Helgi's History Shop, Descendant Leather, or Dominus.

Poleaxes & Halberds, as well as other weapons deemed to be armor killing shall be marked with Red Tape on or near the head of the weapon. A leather or plastic Rondel must be affixed at the upper midpoint of the haft and a hand must be above or touching it at all times. These are only permitted to strike against armored targets and those wielding them must be preapproved as a Knight.

Voulges, Billhooks, light Halberds and other medium polearms may be wielded by trusted individuals and can be used to bind and hook enemy weapons. Mediums should not be used to strike targets with anything other than a thrust. These shall be marked with yellow tape on or near the head.

Spears and partisans are subject to the same rules, and include the makers: Cold Steel, and Darksword Armory.

Pikes, defined as spears longer than 8 ft, act the same as spears and are to have bright orange tape or paint on the weak to increase visibility of possible breaks.

Light Axes such as Dane or Sparth axe style may be used and counted in the same manner as two handed swords, able to go through gambesons but not maille or plate, safe to strike with against unarmored targets within reasonable force. These shall be marked with blue tape on or near the head. For the Dark Age scenario these will only be in the hands of pre approved individuals.

Melee Conduct & Disallowed Actions:

The Armor as Worn Rules break down simply into this: Any Historical Armor counts for something, not every weapon can kill everything.

Padding such as gambesons, chausses, etc. grant immunity from one handed cuts. This includes if it is under protective gear such as the long sleeves on a gambeson under armguards. Two handed cuts of sufficient quality or any thrust will get through, or a strike from a one handed axe. (Padded coifs under your fencing mask do not count)

Maille grants immunity from cuts and single-handed thrusts (including flung thrusts or poolque'ing, although overhand thrusts with the spear might be called sufficient). Two handed structured thrusts will penetrate this, either in a two handed or half sword grip for swords. Doubled up maille shall not count for anything by itself but bear in mind that aventails over hauberks make self-judging a collar shot quite difficult.

Plate grants immunity from cuts and thrusts of any type. However, a sufficient blow to standard from a poleaxe, halberd, or others within that class of weapon shall get through. Note, outside of the Combat of the 30, axes should only be aimed at the helmeted head.

Anything not categorized in the above is protective gear and thus considered bare flesh, which can be wrought by any structured cut or thrust.

For Weapons, participants are welcome to carry whatever sidearms they wish and every fighter should hopefully be equipped with a main arm (pole weapon) of some sort.

Dual wielding of hand weapons is disallowed. I.E. two swords/axes, or sword and dagger/axe. The marshals reserve the right to tell participants to carry less weapons on their belt, no matter how well affixed.

Anti-plate weapons (marked with red tape) shall require the user to be approved by the event organizers; those using them must also be among the pre-selected knights, and may not be used to strike unarmored targets. When presented with such opponents, these should be used in the same manner as spears. Likewise while being used for striking, a hand must be above or on the rondel affixed in the upper middle of the haft, no choking up will be tolerated.

For example, if Joe is carrying a halberd and comes across Bill who is wearing a breastplate over his otherwise purely protective gear, Joe should not strike him but instead thrust at Bill or bind his weapon. If anyone is caught intentionally striking unarmored targets they shall be stripped of their right to use such weapons in the melee.

Lighter voulges or bills on shorter shafts (marked with yellow tape) shall be able to bind and entangle weapons, or arms to a certain extent. They may not be used to strike against unarmored targets but should thrust instead, they are allowed to percussively parry and sweep spears or pikes in the manner of cutting however.

Lighter axes like Dane Axes (marked with blue tape) and the like behave in the same manner as longswords and may be used to strike such targets, but have no armor-killing capability outside of defeating Padding. These may be carried by anyone with common sense during the Campaign, but are limited in the Dark Age melee.

Single Handed Axes, shall be able to kill padded targets, however have no ability to kill maille.

Striking with the haft of a weapon or with a shield is disallowed along with forceful pommels. Pommel strikes or pushing with the butt end of a haft to create distance or opening, as long as not done with too much force, shall be allowed but will not count as a kill.

Grappling and throws will be allowed, however, only between two combatants of equal armor level. If you do not have a breastplate, do not grapple anyone who does, and vice versa. Fully armored individuals may not be dog piled by lightly armored combatants for example. If two participants end up in a grapple, it may only be assisted by a team-mate's weapon, in which case any touch on target shall count as an out for the hit party. Grappling at the body is forbidden between/against shield users in all scenarios. Grappling for the weapons is allowed between any combatants, such as grabbing hafts or hooking weapons with your own. In the event of a throw, the action for that fighter is halted and they are considered to be in a yield state, should they be surrounded by enemies (for example having been thrown back into the enemy formation) this is an automatic out. If you instead are thrown in isolation and can get to your feet, the action may continue. However should the thrower put their point on you (note this means present a good threat with a verbal warning not a strike) then you are out.

For general melee conduct; to promote organization as well as cut down on long plan making sessions pre-scenario, each side shall have assigned officers who are Ye'H.A.W. veterans to take command and lead the way. Their orders are to be obeyed and Rambo'ing will not be tolerated.

The Captains will receive an overview of the scenario and decide a plan of action, they will dictate this to their Sergeants to carry out. Captains are permitted to take active command as a fighting participant however are subject to the same rules as everyone else. Alternatively Captains may serve as an extra marshal for their side, wielding a striped pole of two colors, letting their plan play out. They are not to be attacked during this role and serve the same as a marshal.

Sergeants shall be in charge of a block of infantry and carry out the will of the Captain, they are expected to act in the best interests of their orders however may lead their blocs on their own initiative if opportunity presents. They are expected to lead and fight if needed.

The Bannerman carries the blocs Colours and acts as an assistant to the Sergeant, repeating orders or even taking command in the event of their loss. Bannermen are expected to protect the Colours at all costs as they shall be serving as a respawn point for their unit. If they are felled, they must respawn at the set point and no other respawns can occur until they rejoin the unit.

A guide on Day 1's Campaign can be found here: [Ye'H.A.W. 2026 Day 1 Overview](#)

A full write up on the specific scenarios for Day 2 can be found here:

[Ye'H.A.W. 2026 Day 2 Scenarios](#)

General overview of Campaign scenario conduct:

All hits shall be self-called due to the circumstances. For this we shall be sure to calibrate all participants before the melee. However, when wounded in an unarmored area, air on the side of caution and fall back from the fight. We want armored fighters to have a purpose, as such we shall be requiring a well placed hit to bring them down. But neither are they superman, and so should be ready to accept a good hit. Clarification on what this looks like shall be presented in the rule video.

For this year we are going to mainly be fighting for time, over contested objectives. As such everyone will 'die' at one hit. Upon being struck you are encouraged to kneel or drop to your knees so as not to be struck again until such a time as you are able to exit the fight. If a participant wishes, they may respawn instantly by walking back to the designated point and then returning. However they may also stay where they fell and should their side win the engagement, then the bannerman may pick up the fallen.

If you are struck, in smaller engagements your weapon is to be held aloft and if needed a verbal clarification of "I'm out" or "Dead" or "Yield" can be said. If you have the room to retire from the field, attempt to do so without putting yourself further in danger or in the way of active engagements. Be sure to practice holding up your weapon or hands and recognizing that, as if you are lax about it you will most likely be stabbed again.

If you are in a larger fight, especially towards the middle of formations, or just part of a lot of action. If struck, drop to one or both knees and straddle your weapon. Keep your head down and if needed go to all fours to shield yourself, when the fight moves away from you or is paused, you may rise and retire.

If enough people are kneeling in a tight space a halt will be called. To ensure the safety of those fighting, this disallows dropping to a knee for any offensive opportunities as well outside of grapples.

Some of our scenarios shall allow for "respawning" at a set location instead of a banner. In this situation the struck fighter must walk back to a predetermined location and touch a marker. At which point they are welcome to sprint back to the fight if they so wish.

Marshalls shall be present and will call out fighters who have not acknowledged a good strike on them; their word is law.

Some of our scenarios feature 'Limited Field' this is to simulate the action taking place within a larger combat and so stepping outside of this designated area shall count as an out.

In the event of a weapon malfunction we would like to attempt to continue the action as that would occur historically. As such, if your weapon fails, attempt to discard it to a place of safety (for example falling back from the front of the pack, trading it with someone behind you, or casting it into a non player area.)

Our marshalls shall be equipped with whistles for commencement and halt of action, as such all vocal commands including the very useful Hold are on the table. When the whistle is blown however, all action is expected to cease and weapons are to be held skyward. Likewise using the hand signal of waving your palm out in front of your face in a 'cease fire' is encouraged. There is a special rule which can be used by the Marshalls, called "HORSE". If the majority of your formation is killed, your priority should be to fall back and rejoin at a rally point or fall in with another survivors. If a Marshal sees 1-2 fighters harassing a group of four or larger by themselves, the Marshal may call "HORSE" implying the use of cavalry. This will automatically take a life from both fighters. This is to encourage sticking to the formation.

In the event of needing a hold for a serious safety concern, participants are to call out for the Marshall loudly, and repeatedly, while making the cease fire gesture. Upon hearing this, others should stop fighting and mimic the same until a whistle is blown. We do not expect people to break sometimes decades of ingrained habits however and if you end up calling out Hold to achieve the same, you won't be penalized.

Disallowed actions include the following: Any form of percussive unarmed strike, with the exception of the Talhoffer/Fiore push kick to the torso (Note, this should be only for creating distance or making an opening and must be delivered like a shove, not a teap kick).

Striking with shields.

Throwing weapons as an attack (outside of Dark Age Melee).

Mortschlag.

Entanglement of legs with polearm hafts.

Wrap Shots to get around shields or during grapples.

Joint locks or breaks, including those caused by manipulating weapons or shields..

Rhino Hiding and Overuse of force.

Strikes to the back of an opponent (See video).

Striking opponents on the ground.

Penalty escalation and special rules

We would like to avoid handing out penalties of course, however, to ensure safety in the event that we must. This shall serve as an escalation guide and what to expect. There will be no arguing with a Marshal's call, period.

Verbal Warning: Example, small rule infraction or starting to play a bit too rough. These things happen, but an eye will be kept on you in case of repeat offense. You will be asked to return to respawn point and re-enter the scenario, no loss of a life however. Basically a white card.

Rulebreak Penalty: Example, more serious infraction of rules such as grappling outside of your gear level, a second call on excessive force, or striking the back of an opponent in a non-permitted way, or not stopping when scenario is halted. Discretion of the Marshal, loss of a life/lives within a scenario, removal from scenario. Yellow card equivalent.

Serious Rule Break Penalty: Example, repeat offense of any yellow card infraction following warning. Misuse of Heavy Weapon, such as choking up, striking at non-helmets, or wielding it when not certified. Striking with shields, wrap shots, unsportsmanlike behavior. This will result in loss of Heavy weapon privileges, removal from scenario, being put in the penalty box (Sitting out the next scenario). This is our Red Card and to receive one is to be put on very, very thin ice.

Ejection: Example, any infraction following a Red Card offense. Malice. Uncontrolled fighting. This is our Black Card, you will never fight armor on the continent again. I will ensure it.

Archery & Facades:

One of our greatest draws is the opportunity to fight around obstacles and this year to be under fire from Archers in new ways. As such some special rules must be considered in these situations. For fighting around the Facades, such as the walls or the door, caution should be observed in these tighter spaces as while the facades are solid they can still be knocked over. We shall secure them as much as possible but fighters should not lean on or against them if possible. These obstacles are not to be moved once placed by event staff. In the case of further demarcation a yellow rope may be used, this is to be treated the same as the walls and not crossed.

After the success of last year, the archers shall be returning and be more involved. During some of our scenarios they shall act as entrenched obstacles that are limited only by their ammunition, set at a safe distance and in such a way as to provide reasonable sustained fire. Note, out of safety concerns, fighters shall not be allowed to charge the Archer line as this can lead to catching an arrow much closer or harder than intended. More information found here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VoBSvfxkqb0>

Crossbows shall be permitted to be deployed in some scenarios and are allowed to shoot at one another. However infantry may never advance upon them.

For scoring, we are counting all arrows and bolts as being a substitute for the possibility of Gunpowder weapons as well.

As such, should an arrow hit anywhere on protective gear, padding, or maille, it counts as an out. Should an otherwise well armored fencer be wearing a brigandine without a solid central chestplate, this shall also be felled by an arrow. However, should an arrow strike solid plate, the fighter is unharmed, however should it hit close to the edge of the plate, such as a spaulder, it is up to the fighter to decide if they'd like to stay or not.

Survival Guide:

The following is to serve as a simple guide as to what you might expect as an individual in the melee from my experiences in them as well as what we are expecting in them.

1. There are no Heroes in the line.

Guard the folk next to you and stick to your job, seeking personal glory or forgetting you're part of a team, gets your team killed.

2. You are not equipped for every fight.

Unless you're carrying a heavy polearm, you shouldn't be hunting after knights. Stick to downing your opposite numbers and taking targets of opportunity. Likewise if you are hefting a knight killer, don't try to out spear a spearman, stick to headhunting armor or binding up weapons. For

Armor as well, you should not be focusing on the lightly armored men before you, bind their weapons, make gaps, and hunt other armor. If you're down to your sidearm, remember that the chips are down and you do not have a winning hand. Get away and re-arm.

3. Know your Role.

Your armor will protect you but also force you into certain duties. If you are encased, expect to be in the front, and be ready for a slog at times. Lesser armor should support their heavier fellows, taking their place if they fall. Lightly armored personnel should look to move swiftly and find angles as well as defend blind spots in the line.

4. Yielding is better than dying.

If you're cut off, bound up, or otherwise beyond help, fighting to the death just burns your energy and possibly costs you the chance to re-engage under better circumstances. Yielding does not cost you a life, merely makes you respawn. Run if you can, yield if you can't.

5. Fights are longer and shorter than you think.

Some of the engagements will take quite a while for a result, and staying in the thick of it for too long will drain you. Especially if you're in armor, cycle out and take a breath. On the flip side however, hesitation to act or letting the water boil around you is a sure way to lose.

6. Know who is next to you.

You will be shoulder to shoulder with both strangers and friends. Know what they are using and work in tandem. Your job isn't to get kills, it's to make opportunities for those around you and take the ones they make.

7. You're fighting Three, not One.

In the ranks, at any given time you will be faced with somewhere between three to five opponents before you. Do not focus for too long upon one, instead see who is the most dangerous to you or those around you, and prioritize them. Back rankers are out of reach, but no less of a threat.

8. The melee stops for nothing short of the Whistle.

We've lovely and courteous fighters who are used to stopping or trying to call out "hold" when a weapon is entangled, or someone falls, or other such things. However this is not meant to be a stop and go event. Fighters are trusted to not make a tricky situation worse and instead focus on their objectives, the marshals shall halt actions if they are concerned.