

Melee Basics by Tegan

October 27, 2024

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Chapter 1. The Rules

Under Kingdom and SCA law, melee fighting has specific rules. All fighters need to be familiar with these rules:

1. Participation

- a. Participants at events may only participate in activities in which they have authorized, with the exception of authorizing activities (this is different than for practices)
- b. All participants must know and follow the rules and policies of the SCA, the Kingdom of Atlantia and of the event itself.
- c. All participants must report to the Minister of Lists (MoL) and either show proof of waiver on file with the SCA Office of the Registry or execute a waiver.
- d. Marshals assume that all participants believe they are acting in a safe and courteous conduct at all times. Participants are responsible for demonstrating this by their actions before, during, and after the activity.
- e. Participants are responsible for conducting themselves in a controlled, courteous, and safe fashion at all times, and must accept the criteria of the activity marshals for these characteristics.

2. 4-on-1 Rule

- a. No more than four fighters shall attack a single opponent

3. Establishing “engagement”

- a. Fighters may only attack opponents with whom they are engaged.
- b. To engage an opponent, fighters must establish eye contact and be in the

- forward arc (front 180 degrees, defined by the shoulders) of the opponent.
- c. Fighters may not attack opponents who cannot see them. If combatants are engaged and then turns their backs, or if they are charging past an opponent, the opponent may throw one blow immediately after the combatant turns away. After that, engagement has been broken and the combatant must be engaged again.
 - d. A defenseless combatant may not be struck. In melees, defenseless is having no weapons and no shield in hand. An otherwise defenseless person who remains in an active line, grabbing spears or blocking enemy movement, etc. will not be considered defenseless and may be stuck.
 - e. A hold will not be called for fighters who loses a weapon in a melee.
 - f. Archers don't need to engage you, but you need to engage them.

4. Line Fighting

- a. Fighters who are members of a formed unit (such as a shield wall) that is fighting another formed unit, they may strike and be struck by any opponents in that unit
- b. If a breakthrough occurs in a segment of the unit, fighters in that segment may both attack and be attacked by passing opponents.

5. Calling Holds

- a. When hold is called, every participant must cease the marshaled activity at once, place their weapons on the ground if applicable, and stand in place, or kneel if directed by the marshal, until directed otherwise by a marshal.
- b. The marshal for some group combat activities may declare a "bubble hold" option before the activity begins. In a bubble hold, the marshal may direct participants around the cause for hold to act as informal line marshals, informing other participants who approach the bubble of the perimeter of the hold. Participants who are directed in this fashion must hold their equipment in a fashion that will indicate that they are not combat ready, i.e., holding a bow horizontal or a sword by the blade.

5. Marshal's Court

- a. Usually happens at big wars where fighters don't know each other and Kingdoms have other expectations; you JUST don't know who you are hitting and the person's expected calibration is.
- b. What will get you there? 1) **EXCESSIVE FORCE**, 2) **LACK OF ENGAGEMENT**, 3) **DISHONORABLE BEHAVIOR**, and 4) and for archers **ARROWS TOO HARD**
- c. If it happens:

- Don't panic, keep your cool
- Do not yell at marshals, use expletives, be aggressive, etc.
- If Atlantia Legal Defense Team can help, it will
- Tell your side of the story calmly; stick to the facts; don't embellish
- Be respectful and deferential to the marshals

d, Official Process

1. If participants have grievances regarding the conduct of an activity or of marshals or individuals involved in an activity, resolution will be conducted immediately after the activity by the MIC of that activity. The MIC-Activity's decision can be appealed to the MIC-Event by the aggrieved individual.
2. Participants must give truthful information in cases where reports must be made. Falsification of information may result in sanctions as determined by the MIC-Event and KEM.
3. All participants, regardless of office or rank, must obey the directions of the marshals while involved in a marshaled activity. This applies to marshals as well.
4. Dishonorable Behavior Defined

Repeated behavior of unsportsmanlike nature will result in sanction at the marshal's discretion. Such unacceptable behaviors include, but are not be limited to:

- Abusing or arguing with marshals, MoLs, event staff, or attendees
- Name calling/taunting of other participants
- Pushing or other physical contact outside of a combat activity
- Excessive swearing
- Spitting at another participant or a marshal
- Purposefully delaying the activity by any method
- Throwing equipment in a fashion that indicates anger or loss of control
- Any other behavior the marshal finds inappropriate on the field

e. Sanctions

- Best case scenario - no error or just asked to stop fighting for the rest of the event - NOT an "administrative sanction"
- Worst case scenario - card gets pulled - "administrative sanction"
- Remember who you represent - yourself, Kingdom, knight, household, friends, consort, etc.

6. Sources

- a. SCA Armored Marshal's Handbook
- b. Atlantia Earl Marshal's Policy

Chapter 2. Before the Fight

1. Conditioning

- Know your level (gym rat, weekend warrior, couch potato, etc.) and adapt (runner, reinforcer, etc.)
- Proper warm-up, proper cool-down
- Bring hydration, snacks, sunscreen, etc.

2. Armor

- Inspect straps, buckles, rivets, ect. before the fight. Bring equipment to fix
- Bring all weapons and gear needed for those weapons (gauntlets, elbow pads, etc.)

3. Know the Scenario

- What is the objective (last man standing?, for time?, for control?, get an object?)
- Check the terrain (high ground, low ground, natural barriers, hazards)

4. Take Me to Your Leader

- Who is in charge? Who is commanding?
- What are the rally calls? (fall back, “blue!”, “Spike!”?)
- Know your team/side and who is on it (natural households and units v. people who don’t fight together much)
- Know your weapon composition (shield heavy?, spear heavy?, archers?, etc.)
- Know your experience (belt heavy?, new fighters?, etc.)

Chapter 3. Basic Terms of Art

1. Advance - move forward
2. Fall back - move backward
3. Flank - go around
4. Stay (NOT HOLD!) the line - stay in place
5. Shield Wall
 - Good starter tactic
 - Establishes position/controls an area
 - Protects from archery fire
 - Slow for taking ground
 - Won’t last long against a working spear line
6. Charge
 - Good for taking ground
 - Is shield heavy

- Must be well-timed
 - Will result in losses
7. Column Charge
 - A charge in a lane or corridor
 - Good for busting through a line
 - Involves some set up and planning
 - Must be well-timed
 8. Pulse Charge
 - An immediate frontal assault to gain position
 - Only for short period of time
 - Good on bridges and limited fronts
 9. Step Maneuver
 - Army advances step by step
 - Timed manner
 - Slow and safe
 10. Calvary Unit
 - In Atlantia, a shield-heavy, mobile unit (without actual horses)
 11. Skirmish Unit
 - What Anglesey is
 - Think huntsmen or woodsmen
 - Good for smaller groups with mixed weapons
 - Good for creating a skirmish line and filling gaps
 12. Kill “pocket” or killing “cup”
 - Spears back out and let shields and polearms, great weapons in
 - The counter to a charge
 13. Reserves
 - Unit whose purpose is determined later
 - Engagement is delayed
 14. Advanced Terms
 - Zipper
 - Wedge
 - Hammer and Anvil

Chapter 4. The Real Basics

1. **Know the objective and rules**
 - Single death

- Kill everyone
 - If you have numbers, don't stall the attack
 - You don't have numbers, time the attack
 - "Leg 'em and leave 'em!"
 - Resurrections and control scenarios
 - Mind the time
 - Establish a pace between pushes
 - Resurrect in groups for more effectiveness
 - Object scenarios
 - Figure out how to use assets the best (runners, blockers, linebackers, "Ducal Death Squad", etc.)
- 2. Communicate**
- Communicate, communicate (and then keep communicating)
 - Use flank captains to relay commands
 - Call out threats when you see them
 - Parrot/echo your side's commands so all can hear
 - Kill the other side's "communicator"/cut off the head of the snake
- 3. Movement**
- Best movements are not always forward - think sides and backwards
 - Shields on ends are good for turning FLANKS
 - Pizza v. french fry
- 4. Be Engaged**
- When on a line, be doing something, even if it's just a distraction
 - If you're going to die, die slow
- 5. Strategies**
- Working spears beats static shields
 - Charging shields beats static spears
 - Working spears need to take out other working spears
 - Kill pocket stops charging shields
 - Put shields on corners
 - Pole arms/great weapons in kill pocket to stop charge
 - Archers to take out spears and other archers
 - Shieldmen can kill archers
- 6. Allies**
- Know allies' strengths (Mobile unit? Shield wall? Gap filler? Weapons composition?)
 - Coordinate and time movements; have each other's FLANKS

Chapter 5. Conclusion and Resources

1. Learn the rules of the scenario

2. Sit in on war meetings and/or talk to commanders
3. Seek out opportunities (volunteer for group captain, triad leader, left/right shark, flag getter, baton protector, etc.)
4. If you see something, say something (commanders can die too)
5. You don't have to be a great singles fighter to be an effective melee fighter
6. Learn lessons from defeat; every opportunity is a chance to improve
7. Find your pod (fight with friends, baronial buddies, household, etc.)
8. Remember who you represent (household, Kingdom, knight, friends, family)
8. Be respectful of marshals

Resources:

- Tegan's Stuff:
 - <https://www.teganofanglesey.com/fighting/written-resources>
- Atlantia Basic Melee Training Manual:
 - <https://www.marshal.atlantia.sca.org/documents/AtlantianArmyBMTManualV1.pdf>