

# Youth Authorization Manual

This manual is to be used in conjunction with the Policies of the Aethelmearc Youth Martial Academy to teach the Youth Authorization Class. Each section will be outlined and specific points and suggestions will be made, but rarely will the rules be restated.

## **Preparations for Giving a Class**

Before holding an Authorization class, you **MUST** plan ahead! Be sure that you are comfortable with the rules and the conventions of the activity. You will be asked many questions, some of which may not be clearly defined in the rules, so you will most likely have to draw on other resources at times. Never be afraid to simply state "I don't know, but I will get back to you with an answer as soon as I can." It is always better to not answer a question than to pass along incorrect information. Try giving a few "mock classes" for some friends first to become comfortable and possibly get some feedback. It is not necessary for your class to follow the same order as the rules, find what works best for you and still covers all the information. The more prepared you are, the better your class will be. Another important preparation to make is having lots of equipment for demonstration purposes. I suggest having multiple weapons at different stages of construction and a full kit of armor. Not only will having these items make it far easier for the people you are instructing to understand the necessary equipment, but by building and acquiring them you will increase your own knowledge as well. Make sure you have plenty of copies of the rules and all the necessary forms for everybody in the class.

## **Teaching the Rules**

### **I. Definition and Goals**

- . It is important to stress right at the beginning of the class, and many times throughout, that this activity is not just for children, but their parents must take an active role as well. Parents will be responsible for their own children at all times. **WE ARE NOT A BABY-SITTING SERVICE!**
- B. Make sure that everyone understands that no adult may strike any child at any time. There can be no exceptions to this rule, including parents training their own children. The possible legal ramifications from abuse of this rule could be disastrous.

### **I. Administrative Structure**

I suggest not spending too much time on this information. Most children will have **NO** interest in this whatsoever, and you will run the risk of losing your audience. The older children and some of the parents may have some questions, but don't belabor the point, just get the basics across.

### **II. Parental/Legal Guardian Responsibilities**

- . Discuss what "Present and Attentive" means. Try to get feedback from parents to make sure that they understand this. Stress the point that a parent cannot marshal and watch their child compete at the same time.
- B. Stress the point that a minor waiver **MUST** be completed at each and every event, sanctioned practice, etc. It may also become common practice to have a participating child's parent sign a second waiver at the list table even if one was already signed at Troll.
- C. Read the section on parent conduct verbatim to the class. You may get some scoffs, but make sure that everyone understands that the marshals will be taking this very seriously and

will not hesitate to ask a repeatedly disruptive parent to leave the list. It is in the best interest of the children participating that they are not party to unacceptable behavior.

- D. When you discuss the fact that injuries may occur, try not to scare anybody away, just make them understand that it is always a possibility. This would be a good time to ask for some comments or questions.
- E. The rest of the Parent Responsibilities are fairly straightforward, make sure everyone understands them.

## I. Marshallate Guidelines

Give a very brief overview of the marshallate structure; remind parents that they are all encouraged to become marshals and that they should contact their Regional Marshal about the next available training session.

## II. Authorization for Youth Martial Activities

- . Lead a discussion group with the children on what "honor" is, being aware of your target age. For the younger children, the concept of "honesty" may be important as well. Ask for examples and their thoughts. Have them brainstorm some examples of service they could do.
- B. Explain the authorization procedure, stressing that the applicant will be responsible for all of the information in the Rules and from the class.
- C. Quickly cover how authorization cards work.

## I. Minimum Required Armor

- . Headgear is well explained in the rules, show the class an example. Some lacrosse helmets have rather wide spacing, so some additional heavy gauge wire can be threaded through the existing bars for extra protection (cover the sharp ends). Mouthpieces are inexpensive and come in a variety of sizes.
- B. Have an example of a gorget.
- C. Use a volunteer to point out the kidneys and floating ribs. An oversized belt of medium leather with a backing of foam is easy to construct and works well to cover this area. The upper portion from a pair of hockey pants and boxing kidney belts are good modern equivalents. Point out the sternum and the xyphoid process. Upper body protection from sports such as hockey, street hockey, and lacrosse reinforced with a piece of heavy leather or plastic over the sternum and xyphoid work well. For girls wanting more breast protection than just padding, fencing chest protectors are inexpensive and easily obtained from fencing supply companies.
- D. Elbow pads for ice hockey or lacrosse will be the best. Pads that are designed for defensemen are made with a rigid elbow cup with internal fins that extend beyond the joint. Some pads for lacrosse will extend far enough down the arm to function as vambraces. Vambraces and half gauntlets have very few modern equivalents, they should be made.
- E. Even though there are many different styles of knee pads on the market that have rigid joint protection, very few of them extend far enough up and down and to either side of the joint to cover the growth plates. Attaching additional pieces of plastic or hard leather may be necessary. The pads should also be sturdy and secure enough to stay in place when running and bending.

F. Groin Protection is MANDATORY! Females should not wear cups that are designed for males if they desire greater protection than padding alone. There are modern cups designed for females, usually sold for softball, but they can be hard to find.

## I. Age Division Definitions

The age definitions should be fairly straightforward, but there may be some questions about moving up or down in the divisions based on size. Stress the points that this will only be done at the request of the parents and will be reviewed by the marshals on a case by case basis.

## II. Weapon Standards

### . Basic Weapon Construction

The best way to discuss weapon construction by demonstration. Have an example of each item necessary to make a boffer; a length of PVC, pipe insulation foam (domestic light duty, NOT industrial neoprene), pipe caps, PVC cement and purple primer (stress how caustic these are and how noxious the fumes are), strapping tape, earth pad or camp-rest foam, and, of course, duct tape. Have multiple weapons in each stage of construction, one properly capped and wrapped in strapping tape, another with foam properly added (the insulation spliced if needed and not overly compressed), and finally examples of a completed weapon.

### B. Great Weapons

For the 10-12 division, the only weapon allowed besides single-handed weapons is a great sword. For this particular division, the great sword will be built to the exact same specifications as a single-handed sword, just longer. For the other two divisions, all great weapons must be built out of one inch PVC. The construction for great weapons is basically the same as stated above, but the resulting finished weapon will be three inches wide with a four-inch thrusting tip.

## C. Construction Tips

Use as little duct tape as possible to cover the weapon. Duct tape has its own rigidity and using it excessively will negate the compression and "softness" of the foam. In areas with a large build up of foam and tape, such as a thrusting tip, pricking it many times with a pin will increase the airflow into and out of the foam and soften the tape. Most pipe insulation will not fit around the PVC cap, so it will be necessary to construct the tip from camp foam. Now matter what type of foam is being used, remember to compress it as little as possible during construction. Friction tape or tennis grips make an excellent hilt. Drilling a hole through the bottom PCV cap and keeping it clear of tape will allow airflow from the inside of the weapon. This will lessen some of the stresses on the PVC from temperature changes and compression. If you wish to use more foam than the minimum requirements, open cell or "pillow" foam may be used over the top of the closed cell foam. This works especially well for softer thrusting tips, mace heads, etc.

### . Weapon Sizing

Even though there are maximum lengths for weapons, there are a few ways to make

sure that a weapon is of the proportionate length for its user. A single-handed sword should be short enough for a person to just brush the ground with it while standing up straight with their arms at their sides. A great sword should stand between the center of the user's chest and the top of their head. A glaive should be between the users height and a foot taller than them.

## I. Shield Construction

The most important thing to be aware of when constructing a shield is the weight. An excessively heavy shield can be very hard to use, cause a child to fatigue quickly, and possibly cause muscle strains. If plywood is going to be used, make sure it is not of an overly dense construction. ABS or "Barrel Plastic" work well. Limiting the size of the shield will also diminish the weight. The other concern for shields is making sure there are no sharp points or edges. Rounding the corners of the base material before covering with hosing is important.

## II. Blow Calibration.

Make sure everyone understands what EXACTLY the calibration is for their age division. Ask the children for examples; maybe even let them demonstrate a proper blow on a wall. Explain to them what "touch calibration" and "active marshalling" is (this is especially important for the younger divisions). Stress to them that they can and will be removed from the list for hitting too hard.

## III. Educational Goals

For each age division there is a set of educational goals. Read and explain these to the class, but stick to the specific age group you are teaching. Stress the fact that these are the future goals, they are not necessary for authorization into that age group. Explain that these are some of the things that the marshals will be looking for as they move to the next division.

## IV. Conventions of Youth Field Combat

### . Honor, Courtesy and Chivalry

These can be rather nebulous concepts for some of the younger children to understand. Draw on your own personal experiences and try to use many examples. Have the children, and maybe even some parents, share some of their own experiences. It is important to make these points in a positive manner, taking the time to explain that the virtues have their own rewards and they are something that they can all feel good about. Stay away from too many stories of dishonorable acts and/or punishment for them. Once you have covered the general concepts, move the focus to specifically honor and chivalry on the field. Here you can make the point that it is a possibility that someone CAN be removed from the field for behaving in a dishonorable manner. Try not to scare them too much, but talk about some of the little things that might not be in the best behavior on the field.

### B. Obeying the Marshals

Discuss that, like all the other Martial Activities, the marshals are in charge and must be obeyed at all times. Stress that the youth program is "actively" marshaled. This means that a marshal has the right to say whether a blow was good or not, and the participants must obey. This will be especially true for the younger divisions where a touch can be a valid hit. Marshals also have the final say about equipment; if they feel that a weapon, helm, elbow pad, etc. is not acceptable, then it cannot be used. Marshals are there to make sure that

everyone involved is safe and following the rules.

- C. The remaining conventions should be easy to follow and explain as they are written in the rules. Depending on which age division you are teaching, there may be questions or some people may not be familiar with some of the terminology, so take whatever time is necessary.

## **Final Thoughts**

When giving these classes it is important to remember who your audience is. Children can be enthusiastic, attentive, and have incredible powers of retention, but if they become bored can lose interest quickly. Try to keep your classes lively and interactive and tailor your teaching style to each age group. It will also be important to keep the parents on track as well. There is a good chance that a parent will want to talk with you at length about something, but you will have to stick to your timetable. Never be afraid to tell the person that you have to continue and that you will be happy to talk with them further after the class. Classes should be no longer than 45 minutes to 1 hour. Once you are finished, let everyone mill about for a while, there is a good chance that there will be additional questions, personal concerns that someone did not wish to share with the class, or handle the equipment further. Good luck, and always remember that this is all for fun!