

# Inspections of Fencers in Aethelmearc

## Dona Elisa inn Rau Hara

As per Corpora, all fencers must have their armor and weapons inspected by a warranted marshal prior to fencing both at practices and at events. (BTW - this means that if you are training an MIT and have them doing all of the inspections, you MUST be paying careful attention to everything that they are doing. You are still responsible if anything goes wrong.) Marshals must ensure that the armor and weapons meet the standards set in the official Policies of the Marshal of Fence.

- **ARMOR INSPECTION -**

The fencer's armor must be tested while ALL of the armor is being worn. If there are any questions about specific pieces of the armor (like the mask) it should be examined separately later.

No skin shall show anywhere on the fencer's body, regardless of the position or stance of the fencer. None!

Any armor that prevents proper calibration and acceptance of blow must be disallowed. This includes excessively loose armor and anything that alters the shape of the body, such as padded shoulders, or excessively large codpieces. If you are not sure, test this by having the fencer close their eyes and then throw some shots and ask if they felt it. You should also throw some shots that don't go anywhere near them and ask if they felt those.

If a necessary piece of gear, such as a knee or wrist brace with metal reinforcement, creates a small area where blows cannot be felt, the fencer MUST tell each of their opponents about this prior to each bout to prevent both confusion and frustration.

Armor that could trap a blade, and potentially break it, is not allowed (like slashed oversleeves with lots of pockets where a blade could get trapped).

- **Head Gear**

The fencing mask must completely cover the front and sides of the head and be securely attached. This means that the mask must have a new elastic band on the back (there must still be some spring to the elastic and it must actually touch the back of the head) or a fabric tie of some form must be used. Check the mesh for any rust or significant dents. Press on the mask with your thumbs to see if it flexes. If you suspect the mask is not safe or is not a 12 kilo or better mask, you can suggest that it be punch tested (this is completely at the owners desecration, and is not currently a requirement in Aethelmearc). The mesh must not contact the wearers face. Check to make sure that the bib is securely attached and that there are no holes between the frame of the mask and the bib. The back of the head must be covered with a piece of standard four-thrust armor, either firmly attached to the mask frame, or by a hood or cowl of the same material. In

either case, the covering must extend low enough to cover the back of the neck. If you poke them just under the hood you should hit them between the shoulder blades. Carefully check the side of the mask, where the hood attaches to the mask frame, and make sure there is not a hole leaving the skin just below the ear exposed.

- **Neck Protection**

The throat and neck protection is required from the bottom edge of the jawbone down to the bottom of the collarbone. The minimum (for foil/epee) is 4 oz. leather with at least 1/4 inch resilient padding or equivalent (schlaeger requires a minimum of 8 oz. leather). The bib on a modern fencing mask by itself is not sufficient. Additional protection for the throat and neck may be a high, stiff collar, a gorget, a cowl, or the equivalent. Have the fencer look up and slide your hand under the bib. You should not touch skin. Ask the fencer to tilt their head and check again. Make sure that weapons cannot easily slide under the neck protection (this is especially a problem with metal or waxed leather gorgets that do not fit their owners properly).

- **Body Armor**

Standard four-thrust armor must cover the body from the top of the shoulder to the base of the groin and must also extend below the underarm area for at least a full hand span. Ask the fencer to raise their arms and check to make sure that both of the underarms are covered properly. The side of the fencer must be covered by standard armor to just below their hips. If they bend to the side and their armor lifts up to expose their waist, or they expose their sides or belly when they lift their arms, they are insufficiently armored. The edges of any closure must overlap by at least 3 inches. If possible, poke through along the closure and make sure that you do not touch underneath their armor (but behave yourself while doing this:). The lower arms must be covered by at least one layer of tight-weave material.

- **Gloves**

Leather gloves must be worn on both hands. Ask the fencer to hold out their hands and check the gloves for any holes. The gloves must overlap the wrist openings of the sleeves by at least 3 inches, and cover any cuff opening. A blade should not be able to go up the sleeve. If gloves designed for electric equipment are used, the openings for wires must be sewn shut.

- **Personal Armor**

Men must wear a cup. You may -not- test for this by thumping them! Ask if they are wearing a cup. If they say yes - go on with the inspection. If they are stupid enough to say yes when they are not wearing a cup, they deserve what they get. Women must have their groin covered with four-thrust armor, or be wearing enough skirting that a low line thrust cannot hit them in an area with less than four-thrust protection. Once again - you may not check this by hand! If they are obviously not sufficiently covered (i.e. they are just wearing jeans and there is a clear shot to their groin) they do not pass inspection. Additional breast armor for females is left to individual discretion. Whatever they choose to wear, it must not interfere with blow calling. (BTW - for all of the guys out there - women have two breasts. This means that there will be a space in the middle where the garb may stick out with no body underneath it. If you think that you have gotten a clean shot on the chest, but they did not call it - this might mean that you are tagging the garb, but not the person. Instead of getting mad about it, call a hold and discuss it. )

- **Legs and Feet** All portions of the lower body must be covered with at least one layer of fabric. Spandex, cotton gauze and nylon tights are unacceptable. Cotton-poly blends and sweat pants are acceptable. Skirts are acceptable as long as they do not trip the wearer and no skin is exposed even in an extended lunge position. If skin can be seen through the material, the material is too thin. Footwear must completely enclose the foot and the ankle must be covered sufficiently that no skin shows in an extended lunge position.

- **Weapons Inspection**

A qualified marshal must inspect all offensive weapons.

- **Foils and Epees**

The blades should be straight or have a single gradual bend. Hold the blade up and line it up against something that is straight, like the edge of a distant table, lines in the ceiling or distant list ropes. Always check both sets of edges (i.e. check the blade and then turn it 90 degrees in your hand and check it again). Thrust the blade lightly into the floor with the natural bend of the blade and then hold it up and look along the blade again. Has an S-curve appeared? Is there a kink in the blade? Now thrust it against the bend and check to make sure that an S-curve or kink has not appeared. Does the blade bend the other way now? If the blade curves first one-way and then another, it is not a good blade. The blade should retain -one-gradual curve.

NEVER bend a blade in your hands to try to "straighten a bend." To properly train a blade hold your foot a few inches over the floor and run the length of the blade under your foot applying only light pressure. Do this a few times to see if you can train an S-curve out of the blade. If the S-curve does not go away, or re-appears after a couple of thrusts, the blade does not pass.

Visually check the blade for any rust, burrs, cracks or other flaw that might indicate a weakness in the metal. The hilt should be checked for sharp edges or points, and you must check that blades cannot be caught or broken with the hilt. Make sure that there are no holes in the guard that the button of a weapon can fit through. If you are not sure about a blade - ask other marshals.

While you are inspecting a weapon you must ask yourself these questions - "Am I willing to face this blade on the field? Am I willing to let a brand new fencer face this weapon?" If the answer to either of these questions is no - don't pass the blade.

**Tips** must be secured to the blade with tape that contrasts in color with BOTH the weapon (i.e. no silver duct tape) and the tip. If the tip is red the tape should be yellow. There should be enough tape on the end of the blade that it can be clearly seen across the lists. Tape must -not- cover the end of the tip. Check to make sure that the tip is not worn through or cracking. Tug gently on the tip and make sure that it does not pop off.

- **Daggers**

Flexi-daggers, Safe-flex daggers and the like should be inspected as above.

- **Schlaegers** Only schlaeger marshals can inspect schlaeger blades. If a fencer comes up with a schlaeger blade make sure that they are wearing appropriate neck protection.

Ask the fencer how the blade was tipped. Before placing a tip on the blade, the point of a schlaeger blade needs to be filed or cut down flat. The

tip of a schlaeger blade needs to be covered with a metal casing or washer, and then covered with a rubber archery bird blunt. The tip should not be excessively loose and padding, such a pieces of leather, can be used to hold the tip firmly on the blade. Anything else needs to be carefully inspected to make sure that the point of the schlaeger is completely encased and signs of weakness, such as cracks or worn spots can be detected.

The rubber tip of the schlaeger must be taped to the blade itself with electrical tape or woven cloth tape in a color that contrasts with the blade and the tip. Tool dip is not an acceptable substitute. The tape must not cover the end of the rubber tip, but should leave enough of the tip showing that a marshal would be able to see if the rubber tip is wearing through.

Run your bare hand along blade and check for rough spots, burrs or sharp areas. Any sharp edges or burrs must be filed smooth. Check for rust. Now you finally get to check the bend and straightness of the blade.

Open guards and hilts may be used so long as they present no sharp edges or protrusions, which would present a hazard to the fencer or an opponent.

- **Everything else**

There are a wide variety of parry objects that can be used in the list, ranging from cloaks to mugs to puppets. Take a quick look at each of the items that the fencers intends to take into the list. Bucklers cannot be greater than 20 inches in diameter (or 315 square inches for any other shape) and the edge needs to be covered sufficiently to prevent splintering or jagged bits. No spikes or areas where a blade can be caught and broken.

Cloak may not have metal weights or chains. Neither can any other non-rigid parry object.

When inspecting a non-traditional parry object, critically examine it for any possible hazard - Can it trap a blade and break it? Can it break/shatter and cut or blind someone?

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Remember - even with armor that you are familiar with, inspect it carefully. You may be saving someone's life.

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If you have any questions or comments about this article please let me know. Mail me at [etb@geology.buffalo.edu](mailto:etb@geology.buffalo.edu).