

# MARSHAL FIELD DUTIES

(Extracted from the obsolete MidRealm Rapier Rules, Rev 2.5, Section 3)

## INTERVENING IN A BOUT

### **Intervening when asked by a combatant**

Judging blows is primarily the responsibility of the combatants, but if the combatants ask for an opinion, the marshal should give it as to the “cleanness” of the blow and what was hit, or state that an opinion cannot be given (due to blocked vision, etc.). It must be strongly emphasized that the combatant who wants an opinion on a blow should ask the opponent involved first. To do otherwise is discourteous. If possible, the struck combatant should make the decision.

### **Intervening when NOT asked by a combatant**

In some cases it becomes obvious that blows are not being acknowledged properly. Intervening in a bout when the participants have not requested assistance is one of the stickiest situations marshals can find themselves. On the one hand, we want the combatants to be the first, best arbiters of the bout. On the other, we are charged with enforcing the Rules of the Lists and conventions of combat, to include calibration of blows, and cannot in good conscience stand by when there is a concern that the blows are being missed by combatants. What follows is a recommended protocol for unrequested intervention:

1. Call “HOLD,” preferably as soon as there is a natural break in the action. Wait a second to see if the “break” occurred because one of the combatants is waiting to see if his opponent will register the blow. This may be all it takes to start the dialogue. If not, advance when it is safe to do so.
2. Ask the question in a non-confrontational way and not directed to either combatant. “Gentles, is there anything you need to say?” Pause to see if the dialogue starts.
3. If no one speaks up, address the combatant who threw the blow in question. Ask them if they thought the blow was good. Pantomime the blow while asking, using the recipient as a model. This identifies which blow you mean and it might serve to jog the memory of the recipient. If the combatant who threw the blow indicates that the blow was not good this should pretty much be the end of it. Only in the most extreme of circumstances should a marshal pursue the matter past this point. Resume the bout with a brief apology for interrupting the action.
4. If the combatant who threw the blow indicates that they thought the blow was good, direct your question to the recipient. Avoid sounding accusatory but repeat the comments from the combatant who threw the blow. Encourage the combatants to talk to each other.
5. If the receiver indicates that they did not feel the blow was good, do a quick inspection of the armor in the area of impact to see if there is a physical explanation. If you find something, point out the problem and offer to give them a reasonable amount of time to

correct it. Ask the recipient, given what you have found, if they'd like to reconsider accepting the blow.

6. If nothing is found to explain the discrepancies or the recipient is unwilling to accept the blow, the marshals must make a decision. The marshals present in the lists should quickly confer.

7. The senior marshal will then approach the combatants and offer a brief summary of what has happened to that point, ending with the consensus opinion of the marshals. Pause and let the combatants consider some more and try to come to a resolution.

8. If none is forthcoming, the senior marshal must make a quick decision based on their own observations of the blow, the subtleties of interaction between the combatants, and the consensus of the marshals. If the senior marshal feels there is sufficient cause, then they should inform the recipient that the blow is to be counted as good. If not, let the bout continue.

There are several "themes" running through this process that marshals should keep in mind as a guide in this situation.

1. The marshals should make every effort to let the combatants resolve the bout themselves, and encourage the dialogue.
2. The marshals should stay professional, courteous, and impartial.
3. The process should not be lengthy or drawn out. None of these steps takes more than a few seconds.
4. While the marshals have the authority to arbitrate blows it should be an *\*absolute\** last resort.

### **Dealing With Unacceptable Technique Issues**

Other problems that may require action by the marshal include dangerous offensive techniques and illegal defensive techniques. The latter are covered fairly well by the rules, and conventions of combat. Dangerous offensive techniques are more serious and require prompt attention. Any combatant doesn't appear in control of the weapon or parrying device, or uses an obviously or patently dangerous technique should be dealt with in three steps:

1. Warning at the first offense.
2. Banning of the technique for the duration of the bout at the second offense.
3. Forfeiting the fight at the third offense.

### **Dealing With Equipment Failures**

- The most serious type is loss or failure of head protection. If a helmet/mask comes off a combatant, or otherwise fails in the course of combat, the combatant is deemed immediately defeated. The reason for the occurrence must be carefully ascertained and steps taken to prevent reoccurrence.
- In the case of other equipment failures, the marshal should allow a reasonable amount of time to repair or replace the equipment.

## Responding to Behavioral Issues

- Since our system depends heavily on personal honor and integrity, certain expectations and behaviors take on higher values than normal. Marshals may bar participation in martial activities if a participant is obviously impaired by drugs, alcohol, or a medical condition. This falls under the Rules of the Lists of the SCA, Inc. #3, which states in part that all combatants must be ...“acceptable to the Crown or their representatives”.
- Marshals are cautioned that the exhibited behavior or condition must be such that a prudent person without specialized behavioral or medical training would have concern about the safety of the participant, their opponents or spectators.
- In the absence of such behavior but where the marshal suspects that such a condition exists, the marshals may question the participant about the situation and offer advice on the safety and chivalry of their actions and try to persuade them to voluntarily excuse themselves.
- If that fails, the marshals may take it upon themselves to advise other participants of the marshal’s concerns and let the participants decide for themselves whether or not they will compete with the affected party.
- Finally, marshals are reminded that they are not obliged to marshal any activity and may excuse themselves without penalty.

The above situations are fortunately few and uncommon. The personal safety and honor of the participants are our primary concern and the marshals should reinforce this by example:

- Address your concerns to the source: If a combatant has complaints about the behavior of an opponent, the first response of anyone hearing such, whether marshal, combatant, or otherwise should be, “Have you talked to your opponent about this?” If the answer is no, the listener should insist that such a discussion take place before any other outsiders are involved.
- Maintain objectivity and neutrality: marshals brought into the matter when they did not witness or notice the action in question should refrain from taking sides. Instead they should get all parties face to face for a full discussion. If a tournament has been characterized by a high number of complaints, all the combatants should be brought together to bring problems into the open before they become permanent hard feelings.
- Maintain Honor: There are many rules, conventions, and directives concerning fighting and marshalling. No matter how much we codify, fighting will always be (and rightfully so) a matter of subjectivity we call HONOR. There are three “matters of honor” that, if adhered to by marshals and combatants, will insure both safety and enjoyment:
  - Take care of each other on the field
  - If there’s a discrepancy or problem on the field, talk right there and then and straighten it out. Don’t ever be afraid to call “HOLD” and tactfully - “ASK THE QUESTION.”
  - Give your opponent the benefit of the doubt. This means: If you’re not sure of the blow that hit you ask. If you’re not sure of the blow you threw let your opponent decide. These guiding principles overridingly serve both honor and prowess.