

West Kingdom Melee Training Manual

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Introduction

- A melee is any combat between two or more Combatants. Two-on-one combats are classified as melee regardless of whether they are conducted on a list field or on the open field.
- The headings in this manual indicate vital areas. The perspectives explore these areas from either side of the marshal's staff to provide both points of view. Each section includes suggestions for melee training. Suggested training methods are just that: suggestions. Do what works for you and your people.
- Melee may be faster paced than tournaments. This pace presents challenges to communication. Additionally, issues multiply when there are more than two Combatants on the field - both Combatants and Marshals must understand these issues.
- If you ever have any questions or problems please discuss them with the Marshallate and/or choose the solution that provides the greatest degree of safety for all. For questions about specific rules, please refer to the West Kingdom Rapier Combat Standards.

Authorization Requirements

- The fighter must hold a current WK basic rapier authorization.
- The fighter must have received training in melee with an advanced marshal at a West Kingdom event or practice.
- Topics to be included in training are covered in the WK Rapier Melee Manual (reference Appendix C).
- This requirement may be waived if the fighter has equivalent training or experience (such as an authorization from another kingdom).
- The fighter must demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the WK Rapier Combat Standards and conventions that pertain to melee combat.
- The fighter must demonstrate safe offense and defense in a melee scenario or scenarios, including death from behind.

Rules for Melee Combat

- The RMIC will determine the number of marshals required to maintain the safety of the combatants.
- In melees, combatants are engaged with all opponents immediately upon the call to "lay on". Fighters may strike any opponent with any legal blow if they are within the 180 degree arc of the opponent's front. A fighter who approaches an opponent from behind shall not deliver a blow until he is within that frontal arc. A

fighter may never deliberately strike an opponent from behind. The legged fighter may re-orient to face the action

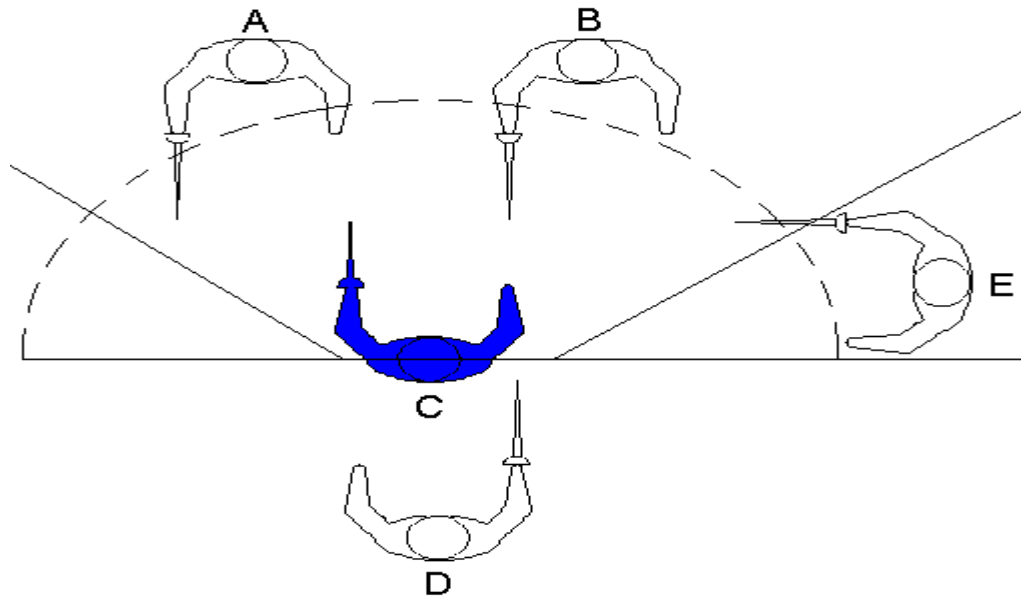
- Killing from behind is allowed if it has been announced beforehand by the RMIC.
- The Society norm for "death from behind" in melees shall be: If a melee scenario allows killing from behind, a fighter does so by laying the rapier blade over the opponent's shoulder, to at least a third of the blade, while calling "Dead, my lord" (or other short, courteous phrases) in a loud, clear voice. Reaching around the neck is forbidden. The opponent will be deemed "killed" from the instant the blade touches his shoulder and shall not attempt to spin, duck or dodge away. Daggers may also be used but care must be taken not to punch or strike the fighter with the guard or quillions of the dagger when so used. If death from behind is not allowed in a given melee, a fighter who deliberately ignores an attacker behind them, or repeatedly maneuvers to keep their back to an attacker (thereby preventing any attack on them) may be considered for misuse of the rules and obstructive behavior.
- In special scenario melees (e.g., bridge or town battles), additional restrictions may be imposed by the marshals as needed.
- Cut and thrust rapier as a combat form may not be used in melees at this time.
- Do not drop, throw, set down, or otherwise leave anything on a melee field during combat. Items may be handed to a marshal, but only at the marshal's discretion.

Expected Behavior in Melee Combat

- Obey the Marshals.
- Stay in control of your temper and behavior at all times.
- Excessive force is forbidden. Throwing blows with consistent calibration is a key safety component demonstrated during an authorization.
- Stop everything when you hear a hold called and assume a non-threatening position. Do not discuss tactics during a hold.
- Conduct obstructive of normal combat, such as ignoring blows, misuse of rules etc. is forbidden
- Running into an engagement is forbidden.
- A Combatant may decline any challenge without dishonor. Melee is not a tourney; you don't forfeit anything by not fighting someone unless you're the last person standing on your side, in which case you fight or yield.
- Combat starts when the Marshal in charge calls 'Lay On', after receiving acknowledgement that all participants are ready. Putting your 'tips up' is a common indicator that you are ready.
- Have Fun!

Engagement

- Engagement is a nebulous concept with many exceptions to the rule- -it consists of "passive" and "active" sub-parts. During the ebb and flow of combat, Combatants enter and exit "active engagement" with opponents.
- Once the Marshal calls 'Lay On', everyone is automatically "engaged". However that engagement is active with nearby opponents and passive with opponents that are out of range.



- To clarify the concept of engagement, let's look at the engagement of the Combatants in the preceding diagram.
- The frontal arc is demonstrated here for Combatant C. As we can see, Combatant C is actively engaged with Combatant A, B and E. Combatants A and B are in his visual arc. Combatant E is at his side and out of visual range, but within the frontal arc. In most likely in a "passive" engagement. Combatant D is behind Combatant C and not engaged, assuming no death from behind.
- Let's assume that Combatants A and B have just approached Combatant C. They are both within Combatant C's visual arc, and thus should come onto guard, and then proceed with combat.
- Combatant E has approached Combatant C from the side while Combatant C is engaged with A and B. So long as he is within the 180 degree arc of C he may attack. Because C may not know you're there, be positive you are more than 1 degree inside that arc so there are no misunderstandings.
- When attacking an opponent who is unaware of your presence from the edge of the frontal arc, extending your blade in front of his/her mask while informing him/her of your presence ("Death from the Side") is considered courteous. Not all fighters recognize this courtesy – do not let shots to your blind side and opponents who do not yield disturb you.
- Combatant D has only 2 options with respect to Combatant C. He must announce his presence to Combatant C and wait for verbal or physical acknowledgment, or move to place himself in the frontal arc of Combatant C. Combatant C may not refuse to turn around or simply ignore Combatant D to avoid active engagement.
- If the Death from Behind convention is in force, Combatant D may choose to make a death from behind on Combatant C.
- If Combatant D is allied to Combatant C, s/he is free to attack either A, B or E, as they are all within each other's frontal arc.
- Determining what is 'ahead' of the person is difficult, but a common sense approach helps. Head position serves as an indicator. Opponents advance in the direction of their line of sight. If you can not see their eyes, you may not be in the frontal arc.

- Just as in single combat, an opponent in an active engagement may be struck from behind if s/he turns his/her back on you. This convention can be misunderstood. Use it sparingly.
- Participants should be aware that they are likely to be hit from a blind spot during melee.
- You may use range (retreat) as a means of avoiding active engagement. However your opponent may continue to press.
- A legged Combatant may reorient him/herself towards an engagement. Reorientation is difficult during active engagement. Legged Combatants should be engaged from the front or killed from behind as the conventions of the scenarios allow.

Friendly Troops

- If you kill a person who is on your side in a melee they are just as dead if they were on the other side.
- Care should be taken not to slay anyone who is on your side in most scenarios. In some resurrection scenarios killing a legged, ally is advisable. It is considered courteous to ask for permission prior to killing him/her.

Breaking Through

- Body contact is forbidden in rapier combat, so the application of brute force to break a line is not allowed. You and your weapons must be under control at all times.
- You may parry blades and pass a line safely by stepping through a gap.

Conventions

- Conventions cover several aspects in melee combat including death from behind and scenario specific rules.
- Conventions should cover any aspects of the scenario that could be misunderstood.
- Conventions should be fully explained in written or verbal form to all Combatants and Marshals prior to the start of combat.

Death from Behind

- If in effect, it must be announced before combat commences.
- It is important that death from behind is performed safely.
- An opponent may begin to retreat in the middle of death from behind. Make sure they will not run into blade tips, quillions, or your body.
- Never hit your opponent when killing from behind.
- Seated Combatants can still perform death from behind by laying their blade by their opponent's side as high as they can place it safely.

Projectile Weapons

- Be creative but remember to think of the safety of the competitors, marshals, and spectators when including projectiles in a scenario.
- Make sure there is adequate distance between the spectators and the field.

- Marshals may need eye protection depending on the nature of the projectiles used.
- Rubber Band Guns create a different feel to a scenario. Marshals should consider limiting guns or shot to avoid the 'paint ball' experience for Combatants. If running a scenario multiple times, consider excluding RBGs from one or more repetitions.
- RBG stocks should be made of solid, sanded wood without any fractures, splinters, cracks or other defaults to the grain of wood. It must be able to withstand the stresses of combat.
- RBG barrels may be made of metal tubing. Acceptable tubing includes ski poles, electrical conduit, lead piping, or 3/4" inch steel piping.
- RBG barrels must be securely fastened to the wooden stock.
- RBGs must not contain any jagged metal or splintered wooden edges.
- Any muzzle that can receive the tip of a rapier must be blocked.
- RBG Shot shall be made from commercially available surgical tubing, must not contain any metal parts, and may be connected with a plastic plug that is covered in rubber itself.
- RBG shot should always be sized appropriately to the gun in use.
- For further information on Combat Archery in Rapier. Please refer to the WK Combat Archery rules and WK Rapier Appendix B.

Scenarios

- Scenario conventions need to be described and discussed before combat commences. They should be explained clearly and concisely so that both Combatants and Marshals understand.
- Participants should ask questions if the conventions need clarification.
- Keep it safe, but treat the Combatants as adults.
- Marshals should cover boundaries and physical hazards in scenario planning. Walk over the location, noting obstacles. Holes, logs, rocks etc may force you to declare the site unsuitable for the scenario envisaged.
- If something is on the field, push it, walk on it, shove it with your foot, poke it with a sword, and see what it will do. Hay bales in some limited cases are quite safe to walk on, but check to see what there is to fall on. Picnic tables in parks are usually set well into the ground and are safe to walk on, but don't let someone run over one. Fighting from a tabletop may look cool, but is actually a weak defensive position. Generally discourage people from trying it. Fighting OVER a table is fine.
- In the case of tables and chairs, they should not be moved during a melee. The complex spatial circumstances add spice to a scenario, but people have enough to keep track of without someone pushing a table behind a group of people fighting.

Deaths

- When a Combatant is killed in a melee, s/he should place his/her weapons above his/her head, call out "dead" in a loud voice and then to leave the field. No

“dead” Combatant should lay on the ground as they might be stepped upon or fallen over.

- The “dead” Combatant should leave the field with their weapons above their head via the shortest path so as not to get in the way of any of the other Combatants.
- Dead Combatants should not leave the field through their opponent's line.
- Some scenarios present physical barriers that prevent the dead from leaving the field. In these cases, Combatants should fall in a balled up position with weapons tucked into the body. Marshals should call hold periodically to allow the dead to clear the field.
- Dead men tell no tales. Combatants may not talk while leaving the field. If it is a resurrection battle, they may communicate after they resurrect.

Safety

- Safety is the prime concern of both Combatants and Marshals.
- Melee carries several specific safety issues.
- Each one of these issues will be discussed in turn so that the Marshals and Combatants are aware of them.

Communication

- Communication keeps this high-paced form of combat under control and safe. Clear communication between all Combatants and Marshals is essential.
- Clearly call any blows that strike you. Let opponents know if a shot hit flat, was too short, just hit garb, was a little stiff, or good.
- Communicate problems to the Marshal and also clearly communicate with the other Combatants on the field. Note what your opponent's armor looks like so you can find them later to ask about a particular shot or so you can identify them for the marshals.

Control

- Melee is a fast-paced, intense form of combat full of issues. A Combatant's adrenalin level will be increased.
- Extra caution should be taken with regards to calibration in melee combat. This awareness extends to being hit as well as controlling the power of an attack.
- Increased excitement and adrenalin ‘desensitise’ a Combatant with the unfortunate side effect of encouraging people to hit harder.
- There is no shame in removing yourself from the field, if you lack to control to take or throw blows at that moment. Combatants should be given the option of removing themselves from the field before they are forced off by a marshal.

Terrain

- Because melee combat may be conducted out of the controlled space of the list field holes, sticks and trees become a concern.
- Combatants should remain aware of their environment.
- Boundaries and obstructions are features of the game.
- Some are natural; some, man-made.

- Holes are not obvious at first glance. People may fall into a hole and injure themselves. When communicating, be aware that the word “hole” sounds like the word “hold” in the middle of combat.

Holds

- There are two types of “Holds” in melee combat, the general hold and the local hold.
- In a general hold all combat on the field ceases as per usual with rapier combat. Many wars require that Combatants ‘take a knee’ during holds. Each Marshal and Combatant should repeat the call to ensure it has been heard by all of the Combatants. Only the RMIC of the melee may lift a hold, regardless of who called it.
- Local holds affect one area of the fighting – a particular Marshal’s “zone of control”. Marshals in melee combat may operate in a zone allowing each Marshal to oversee a particular area, rather than trying to observe the whole field.
- The procedure for calling a local hold is a Marshal calls, “Local hold” to which the Combatants in the area respond. Combat in other areas of the field may continue fighting.
- Local holds may be used to sort out problems without affecting the whole field. Issues may be resolved quickly so that the combat can continue. Local holds may be lifted by the “zone” Marshal and/or by the RMIC of the melee. Typically they are used at very large melees such as those at inter-kingdom wars.)

Dangerous Actions

- Wild actions should be avoided.
- Any action that a Marshal construes as dangerous should be pointed out to Combatants.
- Combatants should be aware of terrain when running across the melee field.
- There should be no running into an engagement. Combatants must stop running before the time weapons impact their opponent’s weapons or body. well before they come into weapons range.

Role of Marshals in Melee

- The Marshal’s primary role in melee is to oversee safety on the field. Marshals should not interfere with the flow of combat unnecessarily.
- The Marshals must define conventions and other pertinent details of the combat prior to ‘lay on’.
- Include the scenario with conventions, the boundaries, and major obstructions that may be present on the field.
- Explain clearly and concisely. Expect questions and requests for clarification.
- No combat should commence until all participants understand.
- The entire field must be visible to the marshals as a group. An individual marshal may be responsible for a zone, but there need to be a sufficient number of marshals so that all fighters and all areas are monitored.

- Hazards, boundaries, and encroachment by spectators all increase the need for marshals. Be sure you have enough marshals to control the field as well as watch the fighters.

Training Techniques

- Learning attacks and defence when facing multiple opponents is difficult.
- Distraction from a third party is part of melee. You may be required to parry one person while completing the attack on another. If attention is on the parry, the attack will be completed blind.
- One drill is to let the trainee have a few practice lunges at a pell, then attack with his/her eyes closed.
- The objective is for the trainee to take ALL force information through his/her hand and wrist. S/he should adjust his/her grip so that once sufficient force is achieved s/he AUTOMATICALLY eases off by bending/flexing wrist, shoulder and elbow.
- Once the trainee masters this exercise vary the distance and environment. Include off-line attacks.
- The ultimate objective is to parry effectively while safely attacking another target, offline, using peripheral vision only.
- Wild parries are a concern in new melee Combatants as they can degenerate into uncontrolled motion and whippy/chopping strikes, even accidental ones. A ragged, 'windscreen wiper' parry with a metal blade has serious results when it meets with knuckles.
- Remind trainees about footwork and the tactics of range; a half pace to one side should take one of them out of range, or at least narrow their line of approach, allowing a more controlled defence.
- Practice footwork on different types of ground, even walking on or over things. Slips and passes become even more useful in melee! Redo footwork drills cluttered spaces so trainees develop spatial awareness.
- Holding practice single combat bouts in obstructed areas improves field awareness.
- This can cause distress to some, and should be tested for and worked on in training prior to their being authorized. In all cases, Combatants should be encouraged to achieve active engagements during melees.
- When a Combatant walks onto a list field, s/he should assess how big it is, what shape it is, what the surface is like (slippery, rocky, etc). Melee is an extension of that. Combatants should know where they can fence, and how to deal with what they are allowed to do.
- Let trainees try walking on a good solid table. Most will find the situation too precarious and too vulnerable. Don't discourage that – it is! Teach them how to cross an obstacle safely (a table, for example, may be crossed by sitting on one side, facing in the direction you intend going, and swinging the legs across. It 'can' be done safely even while engaged).
- Marshals should warn Combatants of dangerous ground and define where they can and cannot go, but that doesn't excuse the Combatant from being aware of his/her own circumstances and position!
- One method to build awareness of multiple opponents and the concept of teamwork is to start with a group using single rapier only, and begin with two

people attacking one. The pair learn teamwork while the single learns to move and defend against two. Swap positions so each has a turn alone.