

**“DEFENSIVE EXCELLENCE with Abzug”
v1.1 (2025) of the IGX
COUNTED BLOWS TOURNAMENT RULESET**

SECTION I: “QUICKSTART” RULES

<1.23r> “Although, as they say, to have begun well may in all things practically half acquit you, yet equally on the other hand a poor finish may ruin and bring to nothing everything that was well and properly done up to that point, as may daily be seen. Now so that it does not befall you in combat, that after you have laid on well and soundly pressed after, you end up getting shamed at the last, I will here properly explain to you how the withdrawal (Abzug) shall take place...”

(translation: Dr. Jeffrey Forgeng)

<1.23r> “Although it has already been stated that a good Beginning relieves almost half of the effort in all things, a bad End can still destroy and ruin everything that was previously done well, as this can be seen in practice. To avoid this befalling you in fencing – that you, after having attacked well and having pushed back safely, are left covered in shame just at the End – I want to actually explain to you here everything about how the Withdrawal (Abzug) should occur...”

(translation: Dr. Rebecca Garber)

- Joachim Meyer, 1570

HISTORICAL REFERENCES ON CONCEPT OF COUNTED BLOWS:

https://irongateexhibition.com/igx_historical_rules_set.html

OVERVIEW: During a Pass, 2 Fencers attempt to receive as few blows as possible, while trying to land more blows (always with Finesse, i.e. with competitive speed YET with light, highly calibrated force control) than their opponent. The ideal is that these blows are as deep as possible and are followed by the *Abzug* / withdrawing beyond their opponent's measure. Passes do not stop after a single blow lands, but rather continue until the combined number of blows thrown by both Fencers reaches a threshold of thrown blows (8-10) OR a Fencer has landed a blow and withdrawn from their opponent's measure as declared by the Bout Ref (with other staff supporting). Additionally, for **LONGSWORD ONLY** Passes may end by grapple dominance or a throw. During a Pass, each Fencer has a Judge dedicated to counting the number of blows landed on them. A Bout consists of a series of completed Passes (5 per Bout), and ideally ends with one Fencer achieving the highest Excellence Tier (defined below) to win the Bout. In addition to the Ref and 2 Judges, a Table monitor will track scores and an Intensity/Excellence monitor will help watch and hold both Fencers accountable for maintaining appropriate force calibration, as well as help note Passes with fencing Finesse and excellence.

HIGH LEVEL CHANGES FROM LAST YEAR (2024, the inaugural year, “Defensive Excellence” ruleset):

- Terminology updates: Exchange → Pass; Match → Bout; Category → Tier
- An additional new Judging Staff role is being introduced to help support Fencer safety and accountability: the Intensity monitor
- Concept of “Advantage” has been simplified/removed
- Rather than ending a Bout immediately by achieving the highest Tier, Fencers are encouraged to continue fencing as cleanly as possible. In each Pass hits landed are normalized to a maximum of 1 blow for the winning Fencer and added together after 5 Passes to create their point total. Additional points are awarded if a Fencer lands a deep blow without receiving any blows in return. accruing as many high Tier achievements as possible
- Passes can end immediately if a Fencer is able to hit and then exit their opponent’s measure (i.e. perform the *Abzug* / Withdrawal), thereby demonstrating they are no longer in danger. Fencers are rewarded for performing withdrawal by having blows subtracted for that Pass
- Ring-outs are no longer scoring actions, but merely reset with Fencers in the center of the ring, still required to finish the Pass with any remaining thrown blows
- Both longsword and dueling saber are being represented and tested this year. The rules for both will be identical, with the exception that dueling saber will disallow grapples and disarms(?) (though hand-checks will be permitted and a dropped sword will award the opponent a point – read full rules for full details and nuances)

HIGHLIGHTS:

- This format prioritizes defense over offense, but still requires good offense in order to win.
 - Fencers are expected to throw blows (cuts and thrusts) at competitive speed BUT such that **all blows must land with highly controlled force calibration (very light touch), i.e. a dynamic that can be summed up by the term “Finesse”**. A useful comparison for mental calibration: treat your opponent as if they were wearing NO protective gear, yet still needing to have physical contact be made with your weapon (e.g. leaving a red/bloody welt or *blutruhr* as described from a German Fechtshule). Are the blows you are landing truly avoiding breaking skin, much less avoiding injury and death?
 - To aid Judges, sprayable chalk on the blade (which wipes off with a damp cloth with ease) may be used during finals to help validate that blows have landed. A chalk mark is NOT required for a landed blow to be declared, if Judging staff are confident (e.g. chalk may have worn off to the point it’s not a reliable marker before it can be re-applied).
 - Additionally, evidence of a chalk mark does not itself guarantee a blow will be counted (e.g., a slice to both arms will leave 2 chalk marks but will only be a single blow). As with all tournament

fencing, *clear actions* are the best way to ensure visibility for judges - chalk is of most value for confirmation when judges are uncertain if contact was made (e.g., a blow through the weak of ones sword on the farside of the judges view)

- As an extra force calibration tool, Fencers are encouraged to still cut with the edge BUT be allowed to turn their edges to flats just before a blow is landed, i.e. striking with the flat *is* allowed. The nuance is that Fencers are still expected to demonstrate good cutting mechanics, i.e. generally cutting with the edge rather than constantly swinging bludgeoning blows with the flat.
- *Abzug* - Once a Fencer has landed a blow, their scores will be further enhanced if they are able to withdraw and exit their opponent's measure. Doing so stops the Pass immediately (as indicated by the Ref and Judging staff); if this is not possible, then the Pass ends once the total combined number of blows reaches the threshold of thrown blows (i.e. 8-10, as indicated by the Ref).
 - This applies to both Fencers, and performing *Abzug* will give bonus scoring within a Pass as long as blows were landed (i.e., if a Pass turns messy with blows against each Fencer, Fencers are incentivized to back out from the exchange)
- As a result of a combination of factors (e.g. highly controlled force calibration, withdrawing from measure once a blow has been landed) all designed to help incentivize fencing with finesse, this should result in a dynamic that encourages tactical offense while still prioritizing defense, and should help avoid continuous fencing that devolves into escalation of excessive force.
- The cognitive load on the Judging staff is relatively LOW with sufficient practice (as this format is relatively novel compared to other conventional HEMA tournaments that end Passes based on a single touch): Refs focus on counting combined blows thrown, and Judges focus on counting blows landed on a single Fencer; all Judging staff help track whether a Fencer has managed to exit their opponent's measure once a blow has been landed.
 - There is no need for Refs or Judges to distinguish between the tempi of actions between Fencers.
- This ruleset puts Fencers in an environment where they must continue fencing even after a blow has been landed, and even beyond a single tempo. This is a skill set that many Fencers lack, without realizing they lack it.
 - This emphasis on fencing in longer phrases helps mitigate – and even removes – several other complexities common to tournaments that use single-tempo afterblow conventions, including:
 - Cardable behavior linked to escalation in aggression due to quality or visibility requirements
 - Lockout time (1 tempo, 1 second, a specified number of steps, etc)
 - Premature holds and reset of Passes

SUMMARY OF PASS/BOU PROCESS:

- For each Pass:

- Both Fencers fence until either combined number of thrown blows reaches the threshold (8) OR one Fencer hits the other and then manages to *Abzug* / Withdraw from the opponent's measure.
 - LONGSWORD ONLY - Passes can also conclude via demonstrating dominance in a grapple (i.e. several second count by the judges, does not need to be vocalized) or performing a disarm with subsequent withdrawal (i.e., successfully disarm *and get out* - if disarmed and and you are able to throw your opponent, a blow can still be rewarded to you). Note that as disarms do not score in and of themselves, unlike dominance in a grapple, the sword can be pitched to free up both hands to grapple. For scoring purposes, both of these actions will give a Fencer the *Abzug* bonus.
- Based on the performance in the Pass, the following Excellence Tiers will be awarded to 1 or both Fencers:
 - **Bloody**: Fencers have either landed the same number of blows against one another, or they have each received 3 or more blows from their opponent. While each landed blow in a Bloody Pass has non-zero benefit, it ranks among the lowest in value and is therefore not only tactically ill-advised, but also a potentially card-able offense (i.e. excessive aggression).
 - **Dirty**: A Fencer has received 1 or 2 blows struck by their opponent, but has landed a greater number of blows on their opponent than they have received, e.g. (2,1), (3,2). Each landed blow in a Dirty Pass is beneficial, though with decreasing effectiveness, so scenarios like (3,1), (4,2), or any combo where the Fencer is landing significantly more blows than necessary instead of withdrawing in the *Abzug* is not only tactically ill-advised, but also a potentially card-able offense (i.e. excessive aggression).
 - **Defensive**: A Pass has ended with the number of thrown blows combined across both Fencers reaching 8-10 as indicated and halted by the Ref, and no blows have landed. While Defensive Passes reward both Fencers, it is still beneficial for each Fencer to attempt to land blows, as any Clean Pass is substantially better for the winner than a Defensive Pass would have been.
 - **Clean Shallow**: A Fencer has received no blows struck by their opponent, but has landed at least 1 blow on their opponent. All blows landed have been to shallow targets. It is not beneficial to land additional shallow blows in a Clean Shallow Pass; performing a single blow and

then withdrawing with the *Abzug* will yield the best result both tactically and numerically.

- **Clean Deep:** A Fencer has received no blows struck by their opponent, but has landed at least 1 blow on their opponent. At least one blow landed has been to a deep target. It is not beneficial to land additional blows in a Clean Deep Pass. It is not beneficial to land additional blows in a Clean Deep Pass; performing a single blow and then withdrawing with the *Abzug* will yield the best result both tactically and numerically.
- *Abzug/Withdrawal:* After a blow is landed, judges and the director are watching for Fencers to break measure to call halt. Fencers are rewarded for doing so, see below.
 - The Defensive Tier is the only Tier that does NOT have a possible *Abzug* modifier.
 - It is only beneficial for a Fencer to *Abzug* only when they have landed at least 1 blow on their opponent.
 - The fewer times a Fencer has received a blow, the more beneficial it is for that Fencer to *Abzug*.
- **Scoring for each Bout:**
 - Each Pass is scored by the number of blows landed/blows against for each Fencer normalized so that the highest value is 1. As the number of blows landed/received determines scoring within a Pass and is normalized to a total of 1, there are significant diminishing returns to additional landed blows.
 - Winning a Pass nets at most 1 point unless a clean deep hit is landed.
 - e.g. if Fencers have each hit each other once (i.e. (1,1)), then if Fencer A hits B once more, that will make the effective score (2,1) normalized to (1, 1/2). Going from (1,1) to (1,1/2) creates a 1/2 marginal point value for the additional hit.
 - e.g. if from (2,1) Fencer A hits Fencer B an additional +1, that will make the effective score (3,1), normalized to (1, 1/3) for a 1/6 marginal point difference from the last hit ($1/2 - 1/3 = 1/6$)
 - *Abzug* bonus is scored by subtracting 1/2 of a blow against the Fencer performing *Abzug* for a given Pass. If both Fencers perform *Abzug*, 1/3 of a blow is subtracted from each Fencer.
 - It is still beneficial to *Abzug* when losing but it is not beneficial to *Abzug* if you have not landed a blow - if there is an ongoing messy exchange and you aren't sure you can cleanly land an additional blow and get out, you will benefit from just backing out.
 - Since *Abzug* can only be called after a hit is landed the Defensive Tier is the only Tier that does NOT have a possible *Abzug* modifier.
 - Each Bout is scored by the ratio of the sum total of normalized blows landed from each Pass, with a bonus to overall blows landed for clean exchanges with a deep

hit (a clean deep rewards 2.1x the score of a clean shallow exchange and is the **only way** to earn more than a single point from a Pass)

- *Defensive* Passes (i.e. where neither Fencer lands a blow on the other within the 8 blow limit) award each Fencer 3/4 of a hit to their total - this does not count against either Fencer and is the only result with a net positive for both Fencers.
- Cards are issued at judge discretion for infractions including but not limited to - excessive force, charging without control, excessive Passivity, blows initiated after hold is called, exposing back of head (note - Passing through with sword guarding over the back like *Posta di Donna* or *Zornhut* is not considered exposing back of head)
 - Yellow cards will remove one blow from the Fencers blows landed for the match
 - Red cards will remove three blow from the Fencer's blows landed for the match
- Black cards will expel the Fencer from the tournament and the Fencer may be prohibited from future participation in IGX events.
- **For the Tournaments:**
 - Up to 2 Rounds of Pools will be conducted, depending on time available
 - Invitational Longsword will include 2 Pools of 5 (10 Fencers total) for each Round
 - Dueling Saber will include 5 Pools of 5 (25 Fencers total) for each Round
 - After completion of the Rounds of Pools, a final Round of Single Elimination will be conducted based on the top 8 Finalists (determined by Wins then tiebroken by cumulative ratio results and, if needed, quantity of highest excellence tiers; see below). The Round of Single Elimination Bouts will culminate in a final pair of Bouts: 1 Bout for 1st & 2nd place; and 1 Bout for 3rd & 4th place. Additional Bouts for 5th & 6th and even 7th & 8th may take place time permitting.

SIMPLIFIED SUMMARY OF SCORING

- **For each Pass:**
 - **If the Pass is Defensive:**
 - Each Fencer gains points equivalent to three-quarters of a Clean Shallow hit without *Abzug*.
 - **If the Pass is NOT Defensive:**
 - If both Fencers land Blows, it is better for a Fencer to have landed as many blows as possible on their opponent.
 - If only one Fencer lands Blows, it is never better to land more Blows except when the Blow would increase the Excellence Tier from Clean Shallow to Clean Deep.
 - **Effect of an *Abzug***
 - If only one Fencer lands Blows, it is always best for that Fencer to *Abzug*.

- It is only beneficial for a Fencer to *Abzug* if they have landed Blows, or if their opponent has landed multiple Blows and has not yet *Abzug*'d.
- An *Abzug* somewhat reduces the Blows the Fencer who performs the *Abzug* has received that Pass. If this Fencer has not been hit that Pass, the number of Blows they have received will become negative.
- The efficacy of an *Abzug* is reduced when both Fencers *Abzug* at once.
- The efficacy of an *Abzug* is reduced the more Blows the Fencer who has landed the most Blows in that Pass has landed.
- **Effect of a Clean Deep Pass**
 - A pass with an Excellence Tier of Clean Deep is worth slightly more than two equivalent Clean Shallow Passes.
 - An *Abzug* in a Clean Deep Pass is worth slightly more than two equivalent *Abzug*'s in equivalent Clean Shallow Passes.
- **For each Bout:**
 - A Fencer's overall performance across all Passes will be combined to create that Fencer's "Bout Ratio".
- **For the Tournaments:**
 - A Fencer's overall performance across all Bouts will be combined to create that Fencer's "Cumulative Ratio".

METHOD OF SCORING (FOR NERDS WHO LIKE NUMBERS):

- **For each Pass:**
 - **If the Pass is Defensive:**
 - Each Fencer gains 0.75 to their "Total Blows Landed" score.
 - **If the Pass is NOT Defensive:**
 - The number of Blows each Fencer receives are counted into their "Blows Received". For example, if the Blue Fencer lands 2 Blows and the Yellow Fencer lands 3, the Pass result will be 3/2.
 - If one Fencer *Abzug*'s, their "Blows Received" is reduced by one half, i.e. if the Blue Fencer *Abzug*'s, a Pass result of 3/3 will become 2.5/3.
 - If both Fencers *Abzug*, both of their "Blows Received" are reduced by one third, i.e. if both Fencers *Abzug*, a pass result of 3/3 will become 2.6667/2.6667.
 - The Pass result is then divided by the maximum of the two numbers, i.e. a Pass result of 3/4 becomes 0.75/1, a Pass result of 2/2 becomes 1/1, and a Pass result of 0/3 becomes 0/1.
 - If the Excellence Tier of the Pass is Clean Deep, the Pass result is multiplied by 2.1, i.e. if a Pass result is 0/1 and a Clean Deep, it becomes 0/2.1, and if a Pass result is -0.5/1, it becomes -1.05/2.1.

- Each Fencer then adds their “Blows Received” to their “Total Blows Received” score and their opponent’s “Blows Received” to their “Total Blows Landed” score.
- **For each Bout:**
 - A Fencer’s “Total Blows Landed” divided by the sum of that Fencer’s “Total Blows Landed” and “Total Blows Received” is that Fencer’s “Bout Ratio”.
- **For the Tournaments:**
 - A Fencer’s “Total Blows Received” and “Total Blows Landed” scores from each Bout are summed to form the Fencer’s “Cumulative Blows Received” and “Cumulative Blows Landed”. That Fencer’s “Cumulative Blows Landed” divided by the sum of that Fencer’s “Cumulative Blows Landed” and “Cumulative Blows Received” is that Fencer’s “Cumulative Ratio”.

SECTION II: FULL DETAILED RULES

“DEFENSIVE EXCELLENCE” COUNTED BLOWS LONGSWORD TOURNAMENT RULESET

HISTORICAL REFERENCES ON CONCEPT OF COUNTED BLOWS:

https://irongateexhibition.com/igx_historical_rules_set.html

SUMMARY: During a Pass, 2 Fencers attempt to avoid receiving blows while trying to land more blows (always with Finesse, i.e. with competitive speed YET with light, highly calibrated force control) than the other that are as deep as possible and then withdrawing beyond their opponent's measure (performing *Abzug*). Passes do not stop after a single blow lands, but rather continue until the combined number of blows thrown by both Fencers reaches a threshold of 8-10 thrown blows as declared by Bout Ref OR a Fencer has landed a blow and withdrawn from their opponent's measure as declared by the bout Ref (with other staff supporting). During the Pass, each Fencer has a Judge dedicated to counting the number of blows landed on them. A Bout consists of a series of completed Passes per Bout. A Bout will contain no more than 5 passes, and ideally ends with a Fencer winning by achieving the highest Excellence Tier (defined below). In addition to the Ref and 2 Judges, a Table monitor will track scores and an Intensity monitor will help watch and hold both Fencers accountable for avoiding excessive actions (e.g. force, aggression, etc).

HIGHLIGHTS:

- This format prioritizes defense over offense, but still requires good offense in order to win.
 - Fencers are expected to throw blows (cuts and thrusts) at competitive speed BUT such that **all blows must land with highly controlled force calibration (very light touch), i.e. a dynamic that can be summed up by the term “Finesse”**. A useful comparison for mental calibration: treat your opponent as if they were wearing NO protective gear, yet still needing to have physical contact be made with your weapon (e.g. leaving a red/bloody welt or *blutruhr* as described from a German Fechtshule): are the blows you are landing truly avoiding breaking skin, much less avoiding injury and death?
 - To aid Judges, sprayable chalk on the blade (which wipes off with a damp cloth with ease) may be used during finals to help validate that blows have landed. A chalk mark is NOT required for a landed blow to be declared, if Judging staff are confident (e.g. chalk may have worn off to the point it's not a reliable marker before it can be re-applied). Additionally, evidence of a chalk mark does not itself guarantee a blow will be counted (e.g., a slice to both arms will leave 2 chalk marks but will only be a single blow). As with all tournament fencing, *clear actions* are the best way to ensure visibility for judges - chalk is of most value for

confirmation when judges are uncertain if contact was made (e.g., a blow through the weak of ones sword on the farside of the judges view)

- As an extra force calibration tool, Fencers are encouraged to still cut with the edge BUT be allowed to turn their edges to flats just before a blow is landed, i.e. striking with the flat **is** allowed. The nuance is that Fencers are still expected to demonstrate good cutting mechanics, i.e. generally cutting with the edge rather than constantly swinging bludgeoning blows with the flat.
 - *Abzug* - Once a Fencer has landed a blow, their scores will be further enhanced if they are able to withdraw and exit their opponent's measure. Doing so stops the Pass immediately (as indicated by the Ref and Judging staff); if this is not possible, then the Pass ends once the total combined number of blows reaches the threshold of thrown blows (i.e. 8-10, as indicated by the Ref). This applies to both fencers, and performing *Abzug* will give bonus scoring within a pass as long as blows were landed (i.e., if a pass turns messy with blows against each fencer, fencers are incentivized to back out from the exchange)
 - LONGSWORD ONLY - passes can also conclude via demonstrating dominance in a grapple (i.e. several second count by the judges, does not need to be vocalized) or performing a disarm with subsequent withdrawal (i.e., successfully disarm *and get out* - if disarmed and and you are able to throw your opponent, a blow can still be rewarded to you). Note that as disarms do not score in and of themselves, the sword can be pitched to free up both hands to grapple. For scoring purposes, both of these actions will give a fencer the *abzug* bonus.
 - As a result of a combination of factors (e.g. highly controlled force calibration, withdrawing from measure once a blow has been landed) all designed to help incentivize Finesse fencing, this should result in a dynamic that encourages tactical offense while still prioritizing defense, and should help avoid continuous fencing that devolves into escalation of excessive force
-
- The cognitive load on the Judging staff is relatively LOW with sufficient practice (as this format is relatively novel compared to other conventional HEMA tournaments that end passes based on a single touch): Refs focus on counting combined blows thrown, and Judges focus on counting blows landed on a single Fencer; all Judging staff help track whether a Fencer has managed to exit their opponent's measure once a blow has been landed.
 - There is no need for Refs or Judges to distinguish between the tempi of actions between Fencers.
 - This ruleset puts Fencers in an environment where they must continue fencing even after a blow has been landed, and even beyond a single tempo. This is a skill set that many fencers lack, without realizing they lack it.
 - This emphasis on fencing in longer phrases helps mitigate – and even removes – several other complexities common to tournaments that use single-tempo afterblow conventions, including:

- Cardable behavior linked to escalation in aggression due to quality or visibility requirements
- Lockout time (1 tempo, 1 second, a specified number of steps, etc)
- Premature holds and reset of Passes

Tournament Structure:

- **Pools:** This tournament will take place over the course of a series of pools (likely 1 round but dependent on time), followed by a round of finals.
 - We will aim to place 5 fencers per pool, but exact pool size may vary based on participant numbers – generally no fewer than 4 and no more than 6.
 - Finals will consist of a single elimination bracket of 8-10 finalists, and the winners of the semi-final bouts will fence for 1st & 2nd place, while the losers of the semi-final bouts will fence for 3rd & 4th place. If time permits, bouts for 5th & 6th place and 7th & 8th place may also take place.

Staff:

- **Ref (1):** Counts the total number of sufficient thrown blows thrown during a Pass, starts and halts Passes particularly if a Fencer has successfully withdrawn from measure after landing a blow, receives and adjudicates solicited feedback from Fencers at the end of passes, and announces scores and penalties.
- **Judges (2):** Counts the number of blows landed on each individual Fencer and identifies if any of the blows are Deep, and helps identify if a Fencer has successfully withdrawn from measure after landing a blow – 1 Judge assigned to each Fencer. Judges may also help the Ref to identify penalties.
- **Table Monitor (1):** Works with Ref to validate and track blows landed, Excellence Tiers, and Bout results.
- **Intensity Monitor (1):** Works with Ref to give feedback at the end of each Pass (or even to interrupt a Pass if there is sufficient cause for concern of force escalation) on whether force needs to be lowered/recalibrated for the next Pass. Assessing force escalation can involve input from the Fencers, e.g. “How likely do you feel you would have been significantly injured if you had been wearing no protective gear?”

Judging Style Guidelines

- There will be one Ref and two Judges per ring. The Ref will be equipped with a wooden pole to make visual indications of instructions, judges will be equipped with wooden poles to separate Fencers if need be during hold.
- **Ref'ing Language:**
 - Refs should refer to competitors as “Fencer,” and may differentiate the Fencers by the color of their side of the ring (Ex. “blue fencer” and “yellow fencer”).
 - If pronouns are necessary, Refs should use gender neutral pronouns when referring to Fencers.
 - Refs will use the phrase “Ready, fence!” to begin a Pass.
 - Refs will use the word “Hold!” to end a Pass.

- Hold should be called loudly and firmly. The call should last approximately one second. Only the Ref should call Hold unless there is a safety concern.
 - A Ref should only call Hold once, unless the Fencers do not respond to the initial call.
 - Hold should be called as soon as 8-10 blows are reached or a fencer has performed Abzug following a landed blow.
- When a Pass ends, each Judge will visually indicate how many blows they saw land on their assigned Fencer. The Ref will then compare the blows struck and determine the Excellence Tier met
- If a Pass is ended early (such as due to a safety hold), the Pass will be reset, and will not be counted
- When a Ref gives a penalty, they must provide one of the reasons detailed in the "Penalties" section below.

Pass Format:

- The Ref will use a marshal pole to indicate the beginning and end of each Pass
 - The Ref will use the words "Ready, fencer!" to begin an Pass
 - "Ready" is a command, not a question. It is the responsibility of the Fencers to speak up if they are not ready to begin the Pass.
- The Ref will watch and count the number of sufficient thrown blows thrown by both Fencers. When 8-10 sufficient thrown blows have been thrown, the Pass will be ended.
 - The Ref will use the word "Hold" to end an Pass
 - A **sufficient thrown blow** is defined as:
 - A thrown attack that **would have posed danger to the defending Fencer if the defending Fencer had not blocked the attack.** A sufficient thrown blow does NOT need to land in order to be counted towards this total.
- Judges will indicate the number of blows they saw land on their assigned Fencer. Judges will also indicate whether any of the blows struck landed on a deep target.
- The Ref will announce the Pass winner and Excellence Tier. The table staff will record this information.
- **Bouts** continue for five passes.
- Each pass is scored by the number of blows landed/blows against for each fencer normalized so that the highest value is 1. As the number of blows landed/received determines scoring within a pass and is normalized to a total of 1 there are significant diminishing returns to additional landed blows.
 - Winning a pass nets at most 1 point unless a clean deep hit is landed.
 - e.g. if fencers have each hit each other once (i.e. (1,1)), then if fencer A hits B once more, that will make the effective score (2,1) normalized to (1, 1/2). Going from (1,1) to (1,1/2) creates a 1/2 marginal point value for the additional hit.

- e.g. if from (2,1) Fencer A hits fencer B an additional +1, that will make the effective score (3,1), normalized to (1, 1/3) for a 1/6 marginal point difference from the last hit ($1/2 - 1/3 = 1/6$)
- *Abzug* bonus is scored by subtracting 1/2 of a blow against the fencer performing *abzug* for a given pass. If both fencers perform *abzug*, 1/3 of a blow is subtracted from each fencer.
- Each bout is scored by the ratio of the sum total of normalized blows landed from each pass, with a bonus to overall blows landed for clean exchanges with a deep hit (a clean deep rewards 2.1x the score of a clean shallow exchange and is the **only way** to earn more than a single point from a pass) .

Scoring:

- **Target Areas:**
 - Deep Targets:
 - Head
 - Throat/Neck (reminder: especially important to strike with Finesse here)
 - Torso
 - Shallow Targets:
 - Arms (upper and lower)
 - Legs (upper and lower)
 - Hands
 - **Illegal Targets (expect to be subject to penalty):**
 - Groin
 - Back of head
 - Back of body, including spine
 - Feet
 - All worn equipment within on-target areas is considered to be valid targets.
- **Valid Blows/ Actions:**

Half-swording is allowed. Any action made while half-swording must still meet all other criteria of the action in order to score.

- **Cuts**
 - Cuts should make obvious, intentional contact with the opponent. Incidental contact will not be considered a scoring cut.
 - Cuts should generally land with the edge from the top half of the blade. As an extra force calibration tool, Fencers are encouraged to still cut with the edge BUT be allowed to turn their edges to flats just before a blow is landed, i.e. striking with the flat **is** allowed. The nuance is that Fencers are still expected to demonstrate good cutting mechanics, i.e. generally cutting with the edge rather than constantly swinging bludgeoning blows with the flat.

- Cuts should be initiated with a chambering action in order to make cuts discernible and clear to judges. A cut made without a chambering action may not be considered quality.
- Cuts to the hands ARE allowed, with the following strong caveats: 1) hand hits are often very difficult to distinguish from a successful parry with the hilt, so Fencers are reminded that depending too heavily on hand hits as a tactic is probably not a good primary strategy (i.e. please have something else in your technical toolkit to demonstrate for this tournament); 2) even with Finesse, hand targets are especially susceptible to injury, so all Fencers are expected to take great care with controlling hand hits, which are therefore especially at risk of excessive force calls; and 3) given how susceptible hand targets are to injury, turning cuts into light blows with the flat on hand targets is especially encouraged.
- Slices: slices should simply be a special subset of cuts that are initiated with CONTROLLED CONTACT from the strong to set up a regular cut (likely a draw cut). Contact on the opponent with the edge made on the strong of the blade IS allowed; this contact is NON-scoring but can be used as a method to ultimately set up a SCORING cut with the edge of the weak end of the blade, with the following strong caveats: 1) Finesse is still expected, and excessive force with the strong of the blade will be a potential cardable offence that Judging staff will watch for; and 2) rather than striking with the edge on the strong of the blade, PLACING the edge or flat of the blade on the opponent in order to push or provide leverage IS allowed and should be treated as Schneiden or Slicing from the German KdF tradition, similar to controlling your opponent by manipulating their body with a controlled push. If the push also includes travel to the edge at the weak or tip of the blade, then this CAN then be recognized as a successful blow (i.e. draw slice).
- One-handed blows (cuts or thrusts) are illegal and may be subject to penalty.
- **Thrusts**
 - Thrusts should make obvious, intentional contact with the opponent. Incidental contact or passe thrusts will not be considered scoring thrusts.
 - Thrusts do NOT need to bend the blade in order to score.
 - Thrusts do NOT need to plant the point in order to score. A thrust that slides off of protective equipment (such as a fencing mask) will still count as a scoring action, so long as the initial thrust was valid in landing on the target.
 - A thrust is considered valid if it lands on a generally perpendicular angle to the target. A thrust that lands on a generally parallel angle to the target is not considered valid.
 - One-handed thrusts are NOT ALLOWED
- **Grappling - LONGSWORD ONLY**

- Grappling at the arms and at the body are allowed, as are trips and throws.
 - **A throw will count as a blow to a Deep Target, and will end the Pass. All blows made during and prior to a throw will still be counted.**
 - Throws must be made with control- explosive throws, slams, throws meant to land an opponent on their head, or throws that disallow an opponent from falling safely (performing a breakfall) are illegal and will be subject to penalty.
 - A throw will be counted if any body part other than the feet are in contact with the ground (e.g., if someone trips and recovers by kneeling a throw would be landed against them.)
 - This applies to sacrifice throws as well - if a fencer performs a throw and their knee makes contact with the ground their opponent will also score a blow against you.
 - Judges may halt a grapple at any time for safety reasons (e.g., potential to fall on a sword)
 - Joint locks or manipulations, submissions, gouges, pulling on/ removing protective gear, placing body parts or weapons underneath an opponent's protective gear, and strikes with a body part of any kind are illegal and will be subject to penalty.
 - In order to score via grappling (without a throw), a Fencer must demonstrate that they are able to make a strike with their own weapon. **A score made via grappling will end the Pass. All blows made during and prior to the indication will still be counted.**
 - **When demonstrating a strike with the hilt, crossguard, or pommel, a Fencer must clearly indicate that they are able to strike their opponent WITHOUT MAKING CONTACT.**
 - When indicating a strike, a Judge will count to 2 seconds- the indication must be maintained for the entire 2 second count in order to score.
 - **When demonstrating a strike with the blade, a Fencer should make contact, rather than indicate.** When striking, thrusts and slices are allowed as normal. When making a cut, a Fencer must place the blade carefully on the opponent, as if they were initiating a slice, and never deliver a full force cut or chop. When grappling, Judges will be very generous with quality, and will count any blade

placement as a cut. Fencers are encouraged to place the flat of the blade on the opponent in order to indicate a cut.

A Fencer should never make contact with the pommel, hilt, or crossguard, and doing so will be subject to penalty.

- **Reminder:** Additional blows yield significant diminishing returns and excessive overbearing or attempts to “run up the point total” during grapples may be subject to penalty. Remember that no exchange will yield more than a single point for the winning fencer.
- Fencers are encouraged to gain control of the opponent/ their opponent’s weapon before attempting to indicate a strike during grappling, as any blows made by the opponent will be counted against the Fencer.

- **Grappling - SABER ONLY**

- Grappling is limited to pushes - blade grabs, or grabbing the opponent may be subject to penalty. Attempts to throw in saber **will** be subject to penalty.

- **Disarms**

- If a Fencer loses their weapon for any reason (other than safety, such as dropping their weapon to alleviate force from a thrust), that Fencer will be considered disarmed. **A disarm will count as a blow to a Deep Target, and will end the pass. LONGSWORD ONLY:** as throws are scoring, a fencer will only be considered disarmed once their opponent has withdrawn from the Fencer’s measure,
 - **LONGSWORD** Ex. A Fencer’s weapon is taken from them by their opponent during a grapple, who then withdraws from measure. This is a disarm.
 - Ex. A Fencer drops their weapon without an action being taken by their opponent,. This is a disarm in saber only. In longsword their opponent must get out of measure to achieve the disarm (e.g, if in a grapple a fencer may discard their sword to attempt a throw or disarm)
 - Ex. A fencer delivers a thrust to their opponent, and drops their weapon to alleviate force upon landing the thrust, e.g. if the opponent also move into the accelerating thrust. This is considered an action taken for safety purposes, and is NOT a disarm. Hold will be called and the pass will be resumed per the Ring-Out rules with all prior actions counted (e.g., if four blows were exchanged and each fencer was hit once, the pass will continue for four more blows and additional hits landed will be added to the 1-1 total)

- **Ring-Out:**

- If a Fencer places two entire feet outside of the ring for any reason outside of grappling, this is a ring out. A ring-out will NOT end a pass, but rather both Fencers will return to the center of the ring with swords bound and be required to continue fencing for the number of thrown blows still outstanding in the pass.

If an action occurs that ends a Pass before the thrown Sufficient Blows threshold (8-10 blows), the Pass is ended and all blows that occurred during the Pass are still counted, including the action that prematurely ended the Pass (e.g. disarm, grappling action in longsword - *Abzug* does not count as a separate blow).

Regardless of the nature of the blow, **Fencers are expected to be exhibiting (in fact actively showing off) the highest degree of control possible:** throwing fast blows with clean structure that land with crisp, light contact. Actions made recklessly or with excessive force will be subject to penalty.

Scoring:

- Based on the performance in the Pass, the following Excellence Tiers will be awarded to 1 or both Fencers:
 - **Bloody:** Fencers have either landed the same number of blows against one another, or they have each received 3 or more blows from their opponent. While each landed blow in a Bloody Pass has non-zero benefit, it ranks among the lowest in value and is therefore not only tactically ill-advised, but also a potentially card-able offense (i.e. excessive aggression).
 - **Dirty:** A Fencer has received 1 or 2 blows struck by their opponent, but has landed a greater number of blows on their opponent than they have received, e.g. (2,1), (3,2). Each landed blow in a Dirty Pass is beneficial, though with decreasing effectiveness, so scenarios like (3,1), (4,2), or any combo where the Fencer is landing significantly more blows than necessary instead of withdrawing in the *Abzug* is not only tactically ill-advised, but also a potentially card-able offense (i.e. excessive aggression).
 - **Defensive:** A Pass has ended with the number of thrown blows combined across both Fencers reaching 8-10 as indicated and halted by the Ref, and no blows have landed. While Defensive Passes reward both Fencers, it is still beneficial for each Fencer to attempt to land blows, as any Clean Pass is substantially better for the winner than a Defensive Pass would have been.
 - **Clean Shallow:** A Fencer has received no blows struck by their opponent, but has landed at least 1 blow on their opponent. All blows landed have been to shallow targets. It is not beneficial to

land additional shallow blows in a Clean Shallow Pass; performing a single blow and then withdrawing with the *Abzug* will yield the best result both tactically and numerically.

- **Clean Deep:** A Fencer has received no blows struck by their opponent, but has landed at least 1 blow on their opponent. At least one blow landed has been to a deep target. It is not beneficial to land additional blows in a Clean Deep Pass. It is not beneficial to land additional blows in a Clean Deep Pass; performing a single blow and then withdrawing with the *Abzug* will yield the best result both tactically and numerically.
- *Abzug*/Withdrawal: After a blow is landed, judges and the director are watching for Fencers to break measure to call halt. Fencers are rewarded for doing so, see below.
 - The Defensive Tier is the only Tier that does NOT have a possible *Abzug* modifier.
 - It is only beneficial for a Fencer to *Abzug* only when they have landed at least 1 blow on their opponent.
 - The fewer times a Fencer has received a blow, the more beneficial it is for that Fencer to *Abzug*.
- **Scoring for each Bout:**
 - Each Pass is scored by the number of blows landed/blows against for each Fencer normalized so that the highest value is 1. As the number of blows landed/received determines scoring within a Pass and is normalized to a total of 1, there are significant diminishing returns to additional landed blows.
 - Winning a Pass nets at most 1 point unless a clean deep hit is landed.
 - e.g. if Fencers have each hit each other once (i.e. (1,1)), then if Fencer A hits B once more, that will make the effective score (2,1) normalized to (1, 1/2). Going from (1,1) to (1,1/2) creates a 1/2 marginal point value for the additional hit.
 - e.g. if from (2,1) Fencer A hits Fencer B an additional +1, that will make the effective score (3,1), normalized to (1, 1/3) for a 1/6 marginal point difference from the last hit ($1/2 - 1/3 = 1/6$)
 - *Abzug* bonus is scored by subtracting 1/2 of a blow against the Fencer performing *Abzug* for a given Pass. If both Fencers perform *Abzug*, 1/3 of a blow is subtracted from each Fencer.
 - It is still beneficial to *Abzug* when losing but it is not beneficial to *Abzug* if you have not landed a blow - if there is an ongoing messy exchange and you aren't sure you can cleanly land an additional blow and get out, you will benefit from just backing out.
 - Since *Abzug* can only be called after a hit is landed the Defensive Tier is the only Tier that does NOT have a possible *Abzug* modifier.
 - Each Bout is scored by the ratio of the sum total of normalized blows landed from each Pass, with a bonus to overall blows landed for clean exchanges with a deep

hit (a clean deep rewards 2.1x the score of a clean shallow exchange and is the **only way** to earn more than a single point from a Pass)

- *Defensive* Passes (i.e. where neither Fencer lands a blow on the other within the 8-10 blow limit) award each Fencer 3/4 of a hit to their total - this does not count against either Fencer and is the only result with a net positive for both Fencers.
- Cards are issued at judge discretion for infractions including but not limited to - excessive force, charging without control, excessive Passivity, blows initiated after hold is called, exposing back of head (note - Passing through with sword guarding over the back like *Posta di Donna* or *Zornhut* is not considered exposing back of head)
 - Yellow cards will remove one blow from the Fencers blows landed for the match
 - Red cards will remove three blow from the Fencer's blows landed for the match
- Black cards will expel the Fencer from the tournament and the Fencer may be prohibited from future participation in IGX events.
- **For the Tournaments:**
 - Up to 2 Rounds of Pools will be conducted, depending on time available
 - Invitational Longsword will include 2 Pools of 5 (10 Fencers total) for each Round
 - Dueling Saber will include 5 Pools of 5 (25 Fencers total) for each Round
 - After completion of the Rounds of Pools, a final Round of Single Elimination will be conducted based on the top 8 Finalists (determined by Wins then tiebroken by cumulative ratio results and, if needed, quantity of highest excellence tiers; see below). The Round of Single Elimination Bouts will culminate in a final pair of Bouts: 1 Bout for 1st & 2nd place; and 1 Bout for 3rd & 4th place. Additional Bouts for 5th & 6th and even 7th & 8th may take place time permitting.
- **Detailed Scoring (FOR NERDS WHO LIKE NUMBERS - prior information should suffice for most):**
 - **For each Pass:**
 - **If the Pass is Defensive:**
 - Each Fencer gains 0.75 to their "Total Blows Landed" score.
 - **If the Pass is NOT Defensive:**
 - The number of Blows each Fencer receives are counted into their "Blows Received". For example, if the Blue Fencer lands 2 Blows and the Yellow Fencer lands 3, the Pass result will be 3/2.
 - If one Fencer *Abzug's*, their "Blows Received" is reduced by one half, i.e. if the Blue Fencer *Abzug's*, a Pass result of 3/3 will become 2.5/3.
 - If both Fencers *Abzug*, both of their "Blows Received" are reduced by one third, i.e. if both Fencers *Abzug*, a pass result of 3/3 will become 2.6667/2.6667.

- The Pass result is then divided by the maximum of the two numbers, i.e. a Pass result of 3/4 becomes 0.75/1, a Pass result of 2/2 becomes 1/1, and a Pass result of 0/3 becomes 0/1.
- If the Excellence Tier of the Pass is Clean Deep, the Pass result is multiplied by 2.1, i.e. if a Pass result is 0/1 and a Clean Deep, it becomes 0/2.1, and if a Pass result is -0.5/1, it becomes -1.05/2.1.
- Each Fencer then adds their "Blows Received" to their "Total Blows Received" score and their opponent's "Blows Received" to their "Total Blows Landed" score.
- **For each Bout:**
 - A Fencer's "Total Blows Landed" divided by the sum of that Fencer's "Total Blows Landed" and "Total Blows Received" is that Fencer's "Bout Ratio".
- **For the Tournaments:**
 - A Fencer's "Total Blows Received" and "Total Blows Landed" scores from each Bout are summed to form the Fencer's "Cumulative Blows Received" and "Cumulative Blows Landed". That Fencer's "Cumulative Blows Landed" divided by the sum of that Fencer's "Cumulative Blows Landed" and "Cumulative Blows Received" is that Fencer's "Cumulative Ratio".

Gear Requirements

Protective equipment will be inspected at the start of each pool. Feders will be inspected upon check-in.

- **Protective Equipment**
 - Full Skin Coverage
 - No skin may be exposed- including the back of calves and palms of hands
 - Fencing Mask
 - No dents or holes in mesh
 - Back of Head Protection
 - Puncture-Resistant Jacket
 - Must be minimum 350N rated
 - Puncture- Resistant Thigh Protection
 - Must reasonably cover the front and sides of the upper leg
 - Thigh protection must be minimum 350N rated OR be sufficiently padded or rigid so as to still be puncture- resistant.
 - Acceptable protective gear may include: 350N fencing trousers, 350N or padded fencing skirt, a garment made of several layers of fabric such as a historical kilt, jacket or gambeson that covers the thighs, or other rigid or

padded thigh protection. - Leggings, gym shorts, or sweatpants alone are not sufficient.

- Rigid Throat Protection
- Rigid Chest Protection
 - **Chest Protection is required for ALL FENCERS, regardless of sex**
- Hard Elbow Protection
- Hard Forearm Protection
 - Gloves with rigid protection that covers the forearms is sufficient
- Hard Knee Protection
- Hard Shin Protection
- Purpose-Built Longsword Gloves
 - Light gloves and lacrosse gloves are not sufficient. No Red Dragons, Thokks allowed if Longsword Peripheral is attached
- Groin Protection
 - Required if anatomically appropriate
- **Feders**
 - Must be purpose-built longsword feder
 - Blunt longswords are not acceptable
 - Sword-shaped feders are acceptable
 - Must flex at or below 45 lbs
 - Must be within 33-42 inches in blade length
 - Must be within 2.5-4 lbs in weight
 - Must be reasonably straight
 - Blades with major warps will not be permitted
 - Must have a crossguard
 - Must be free of rust, burrs, spikes, and all other major damage

Penalties

The goal of this Ruleset is to specifically penalize and correct **reckless or unsafe behavior** within the ring. As such, cardable actions are those which jeopardize the physical, emotional, or mental safety of participants, staff, and/or spectators. Refs are given complete discretion in deciding if and when to card participants. While situations that will likely warrant a card are outlined below, Refs should use common sense and their best judgment when assigning cards. There are no automatically cardable offenses, as Refs should consider each situation individually.

Cards do not automatically escalate. While escalation is optional, Refs are encouraged and empowered to escalate cards whenever they feel it is appropriate.

- Ex. A Ref may assign a Yellow Card for a first offense, or they may immediately escalate to a Red Card
- Ex. A Ref may opt to give a second Yellow Card to the same participant, or they may opt to escalate to a Red Card.
 - Refs are encouraged to escalate cards for repeated offenses

- **Levels of Penalty:**

- Verbal Warning: no point penalty
- Yellow Card: - 1 blows from match total
- Red Card: -3 points from match total
- Black Card: ejection from tournament
 - If a Black Card is issued, the receiving participant may also be subject to ejection from other tournaments, as well as prohibition from future IGX events. Such decisions will be made by event organizers on a per-case basis.

- **Cardable Actions**

- **EXCESSIVE FORCE:** Performing any action that the Judging Staff deems to be beyond what is necessary for finesse fencing, e.g. likely to injure an opponent wearing no protective gear; and any other activities deemed unnecessarily reckless or dangerous, including but not limited to:
 - Striking an opponent with too much force
 - Consistently attacking the opponent with repeated blows (i.e. “spamming”) with no regard for personal defense
 - Making leaping or jumping attacks
 - Pushing or shoving an opponent
 - Removing protective gear during a pass
 - Performing any other illegal action, as defined within this Ruleset
- **EXCESSIVE CHARGING:** If fencers pursuing to deny *Abzug* are unable to halt their movement within a timely fashion after hold is called they may be carded. Finesse is expected for more than just bladework. Excessive charging penalties likewise can be expected for recklessly closing to grapple in longsword, and a virtual certainty if an opponent is tackled or bowled over.
- **PASSIVITY/COLLUSION:** Fencers are expected to Fence with the intent to land blows and strike the opponent whenever reasonable opportunities arise. Cardable offenses include:
 - Allowing your opponent to strike you with little/no effort to defend (i.e. excessive passivity)
 - Pre-meditated efforts to allow your opponent to win passes or bouts.
- **SABER ONLY:** Any form of grappling, including any sort of body or blade grab, throw, or trip - checking the opponent with the palm is permitted.
- Exposing the back of the head during a Pass
- Striking any off target area (back of head or body, groin, etc.)
- Striking with the pommel, hilt, or crossguard
- Striking with excessive force with the strong of the blade
- Cutting or thrusting with one hand in longsword
- Planting on the opponents foot to grapple
- Failing to cease all action when a Hold is called
 - Performing a revenge strike (immediately subject to Black Card)

- Arguing with or disobeying Judging Staff
 - Influencing Judges (as defined below) may be considered disobeying Refs if done repeatedly
 - Exhibiting any other conduct within the ring which creates a hostile or unsafe environment for spectators, staff, or other fencers
 - Throwing gear
 - Insulting or yelling at other persons
 - Responding with excessive anger to ranking or judge decisions
 - Violating the IGX Code of Conduct
 - Refs may also assign a card for any action they deem unsafe which does not explicitly meet criteria given here but otherwise poses a safety risk.
- **Other Prohibited Actions**
 - Violating the IGX Code of Conduct, in or out of the ring
 - While actions taken outside of the ring are not cardable, they will be taken just as seriously as actions taken within the ring. Harassment or other violations of the IGX Code of Conduct will be immediately addressed by event staff, and may result in expulsion, suspension, or other punitive action.
 - Improper interaction with Judging Staff (defined below)
 - Repeated prohibited interaction with Judging Staff may become a cardable action
 - **Fencer's Rights and Interaction with Judges**
 - Fencers are strongly encouraged to have 1 coach accompanying them at the ring.
 - Fencers and their coaches may raise a hand to provide feedback on pass actions, ask questions, request clarification on a scoring/ penalty decision, or raise safety concerns with the Judges. Fencers may not argue with the Judges, nor may they make friendly/casual conversation with Judges during a Bout.
 - Fencers and their coaches are empowered to approach Judges or other staff (not during an ongoing Bout), if they feel there has been an oversight related to safety or penalty. **If a Fencer is injured, suspects injury, or has been caused pain by an opponent, they should immediately approach event staff.**
 - Coaches may not speak with Fencers or Judges during an ongoing pass, except in the case of a safety concern.
 - Coaches may not yell out advice, encouragement, etc. to Fencers during a Pass
 - Fencers have the right to deny an Excellence Tier/ a point. Fencers may not deny Excellence Tiers or points to their opponent. Fencers must wait until the Ref has announced the score for the Pass before denying a point.
 - To deny a point, the Fencer should clearly state to the judge "I'd like to deny the point." A Fencer may only deny a pass that was awarded in their

favor (i.e. if a fencer thinks a dirty pass against them should have been a clean/a shallow should have been deep *they cannot deny*)

- Judges may decline the denial for any reason determined.
- Fencers should remain calm and collected following each Pass. Excessive celebration or anger may be considered to be influencing the Judges, and therefore subject to penalty.
 - Fencers may not self call in any way- including, but not limited to:
 - Tapping their body where they believe they were hit.
 - Correcting Judging Staff.
 - Early point denial
 - Arguing with Judging Staff.
 - Announcing a hit made by themselves or their opponent.
 - Attempting to end a Pass before a hold is called by Judging Staff, except for safety reasons.