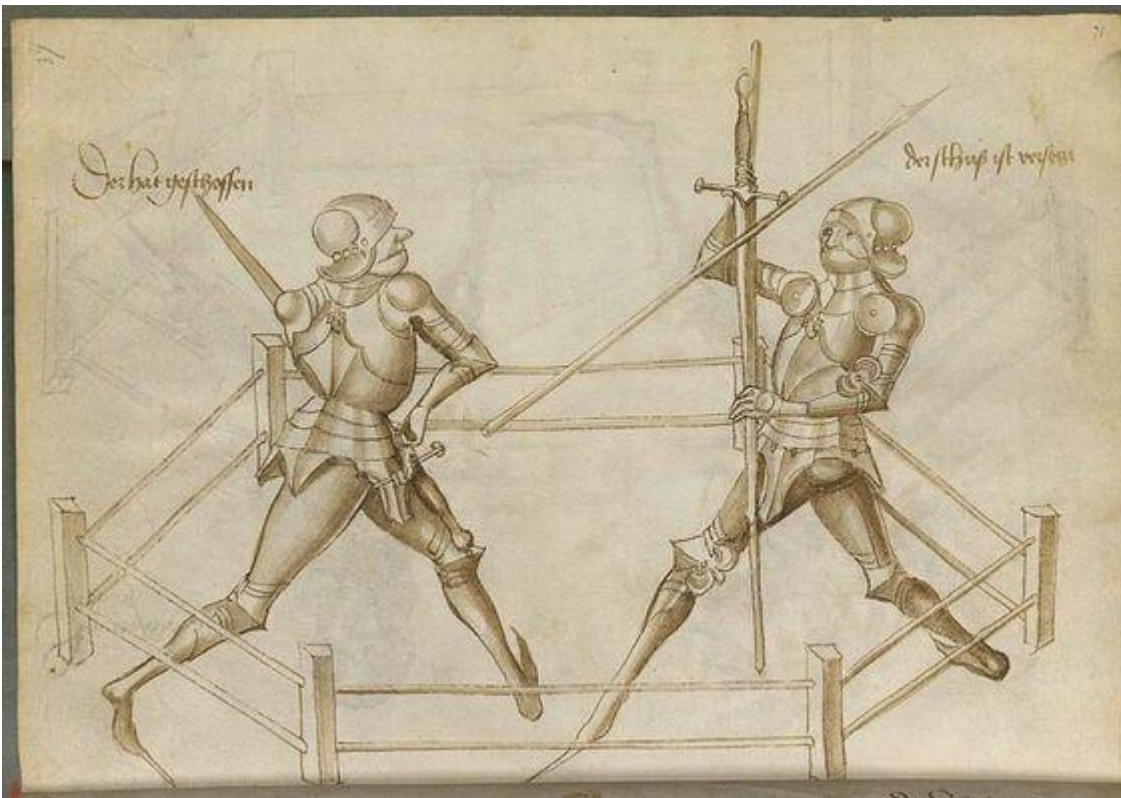




# Harnischfechten: Intergroup Combat Rules 14<sup>th</sup> & 15 Century.



*"Fighting to the manuals"*



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## Introduction

### Why have QLHF harnischfechten rules

The aim is to set out rules and standards for harnischfechten. The intention of harnischfechten is to reproduce historically accurate fighting in historically accurate armour in a way that is safe for modern participant.

This document aims to give a better understanding and outline information of intergroup harnischfechten rules.

Context of examples given below do not limit the scope of the rules. It is simply provided to give a better understanding. Ideally all involved should all know what is acceptable of them and what is not. Should anyone not understand, then they should not be taking part in any intergroup combat events until they understand the requirement for the event, they are about to partake in.

While the primary focus is points based combat, the rules will work equally for larger scale events.

### Sources

This document has been compiled from input from various QLHF members and from reference materials from other groups and historical sources. Specific sources will be listed at the end of the document. I want to thank all these who put these documents out and we offer full credit for all that we have taken on board, even though it may not be directly referenced. *Yes, we copied and pasted.*

## ARMOUR

In all cases the fighter will present armour befitting the time period they are representing. In all cases safety will be placed above accuracy. The balance between these two ideals will be at the sole discretions of the Group Marshal.

Combatants will have armour that fits well, functions properly and safely for the wearer, and is well maintained. Rusty steel is not well-maintained and does not fit the ideal of suitable display.

The regulations for a deed's armour and weapons, will be announced in advance.

Historically consistent armour will most likely be treated as such. Safety equipment, not being consistent with historical armour, will generally not count as armour with respect to fair blows.

- Helmet grills.
- Hidden additional plates.

In every case, the final decision about suitability of armour for safety and authenticity is that of the marshals.

## Armour Categories

### Unprotected:

This is anything (including required modern equipment that protects gaps in a combatant's armour) that does not fall into the other armour categories and includes soft leather and lightly padded and unpadded cloth. It also specifically includes perforated steel plate (such as used in a "Tindall hat" fencing mask). Any blow struck against an Unprotected target is a fair blow.

### Light Armor:

This is mail (which, being the default exemplar, is often used as a shorthand term for the category), properly hardened leather, properly constructed padded garments and other armours. Unless otherwise specified, Light Armor is proof against cuts but vulnerable to thrusts.

### Heavy Armor:

This is steel or iron plate, whether hardened or not. Armor of small plates, properly overlapped, can also count as Heavy. Unless otherwise specified, Heavy Armor is proof against most blows. See Fair Blows above.

## Specific Armour items

### Throat and neck protection:

To ensure the protection of the throat and neck a combatant must have either the first 2 dot points or the last dot point.

- Stiff leather and chain maille standard or hidden solid plate throat (preferred)
- Padded chain maille aventail
- Fully enclosed neck and helmet such as a Great Helm, Great Bascinet, Armet and other closed helms. Kettles with bevor must be fixed so as no allow penetration between the join.

### Face and head protections:

- Face plates should fully enclose the face so as not to allow the minimum weapons edge through. Mesh grills used here will be allowed for safety purposes but will count as unprotected for Fair Blows. The grill must be securely fixed to the helmet.
- At events where percussion weapons are allowed helmets must be 2mm mild steel or equivalent. Otherwise, the minimum thickness is 1.5mm.
- Fully enclosed neck and helmet such as a Great Helm, Great Bascinet, Armet and other closed helms.
- Multipart helmet such as Sallet or Kettles with beaver must be fitted so as not to allow penetration between the join.

## Gambeson

When the gambeson is worn as the primary means of protection (i.e. without armour), the gambeson is required to be no less than 12mm thick.

## A FAIR BLOW

Each event may set a number of blows to be achieved to win a bout. Generally, this will be set to between three (3) and five (5) fair blows. Each blow should have both form and clear intent. The number of 'fair blows' is meant to represent the ability to take some combat damage before being disabled and unable to continue. A 'fair blow' is one which can score against the armour category against which it is targeted.

These blows are struck with control, as the initial intent behind a fair blow is to cause harm or to kill to your opponent. The skilled combatant must therefore pull their strike, meaning decreasing the level of force behind the attack and aiming for acceptable areas of the body that are protected and able to endure without causing harm to person being struck.

*At each event the Group or Senior Marshall must establish what is a fair blow. This table can be used as a default list.*

Invalid strikes due to lack of form and/ or intent	Prohibited moves	Other
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An opponent walking into a sword</li> <li>• A weapon falling onto someone as it fell to the ground</li> <li>• Striking plate armour with a sword</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Blows to the spine and groin</li> <li>• Intentional strikes to unarmoured face and throat, hands and feet</li> <li>• Lack of restraint (attacking carelessly with a cross guard, etc.)</li> <li>• Blows landed with full force (not pulled)</li> <li>• Blows on the throat and neck with percussion weapons (see Thrusting and blows/cuts to the side of the helmet)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A cut or thrust to a fencing mask or perforated plate counts as all fair blows and the opponent is considered killed instantly</li> </ul>

Please refer to the sample weapon efficacy vs. armour chart for more details.

While we all accept the fact this is dangerous martial art and accidents do happen that can result in injury to one's self or others, should anyone be found doing such strikes intentionally, repeatedly or even just by being unaware, they are to be brought before the safety marshal on duty and it is up to the marshal to determine the level of seriousness and outlay consequences or punishment required. For example, a warning or removal from the event.

The attacker must take all care in landing a strike. All combatants must have suitable protection for the type of combat they are entering. If you have no back armour, make sure it is clear and your opponent knows this.



## Weapons vs. Armour Sample Chart

The table below is a sample only, specific scoring may vary in the rules for each event.

Weapon	Blow	Armour			Notes
		Unprotected	Light	Heavy	
Dagger	Thrust	Y	Y		With the point
	Cuts	Y			With the edge
Sword	Thrust	Y	Y		With the point
	Cuts	Y			With the edge
	Handle	Y			Pommel & Quillons
Spear	Thrust	Y	Y		With the point
	Cuts	Y			With the edge
	Shaft	Y			
Percussion weapons	Thrust	Y	Y		With the point and butt spike
	Cuts / Blows	Y	Y	Y	With the edge, hammer and hook.
	Shaft	Y			
Arrows and Bolts		Y	Y		

*Spears includes foot lance*

*Percussion Weapons can be assumed to have a butt spike.*

*Percussion Weapons includes all shaft-based weapons where the intent is percussive.*

The table refers to the armour which is the target of the blow and does not reflect the general status of the combatant.

The advantage an armoured opponent gets is the increased difficulty in landing a fair blow. So, in this way three to five blows are an effective measure for all combatants.

### Thrusting and blows/cuts to the side of the helmet.

Where the arming standard it appropriate thrusting upward and blows to the side of the helmet can be considered. This will be addressed in the event rules.

***A thrust can be considered a fair blow.***

For this to be allowed in the event, the armour standard must comply with the rules stated in the Armour Section.

***A strike to the side of the helmet can be consider a fair blow.***

To ensure safety armour standards for any event with upwards thrusting and strikes to the side of the helmet must meet the minimum standards in Armour Section.

### Harassing Blows

***Strikes made with a light touch or non-percussion point of the weapon.***

Striking out with the tip of the sword, pushing forward with the shaft of a percussion weapon, pushing out with a shield, striking with a gauntlet, half sword cut, ETC



These blows are ideally used to “harass” your opponent to not cause physical harm as the strike will have a low impact against full armour and therefore would not cause them to stagger or fall to a yield.

### Good behaviour on the field

- **Yielding and holding knights for ransom.** Yielding to your opponent’s when losing is imminent or when facing terrible odds is the most sensible thing to do and should be the norm rather than the exception. Holding an opponent for ransom mostly applies to the knightly class and is a variation on yielding with potential scenario consequences. Obviously, it should **occur before your maximum fair blows** have been struck against you. A yielding combatant should voice it loud and clear and disarmed himself before removing himself from the battle.
- **On using wrestling.** It is at the Marshal’s discretion whether wrestling will be allowed and if it is, what limitations are imposed on it. Wrestling can be limited to throws or a wider range of techniques can be allowed like binds and locks. If wrestling is permitted by the Marshal, a throw to the ground or an arm lock is not considered a ‘fair blow’. The situation requires a blow to the grounded or bound opponent, or better yet, the threat of a blow to encourage him to yield.
- In armoured combat hyperextensions of a joint is forbidden as you cannot easily access the position of a joint covered in plate.
- **Once a combatant is disarmed of his last weapon.** This does not count as a ‘fair blow’ in and of itself. However, it can be followed by one more ‘fair blows’ or wrestling. It is wise to yield to your opponent when you lose your last weapon.
- **Exiting the field.** If you leave the field, it counts as taking the maximum fair blows.
- **Slipping or tripping** is not considered a fair blow.
- **To strike a blow from behind,** you must ensure you will not cause injury. Strikes on the spine are not permitted. Your first blow should be with minimal force and momentum as the participant may not be braced for a hit from behind and you need to ensure there is armour at the point of contact. It must be noted that is the event is being judged by the Ladies, this strike will never win you Ladies Champion.
- **Ground combat, hitting a combatant on the ground.** Percussive blows are forbidden on a grounded opponent. Theatrical strikes such as to a breastplate (armoured body) are however acceptable.

### Rules for shield use

- Combatants using a shield must also protect the shield hand.
- A combatant with a shield can use the shield aggressively against the opponent’s weapon.
- A combatant with a shield can use the shield aggressively against fully armoured areas only. Head strikes should never be aggressive and should be limited to showing intent.
- Combatants may push with the shield, but ‘bashing’ especially at a run is not allowed.



## WEAPONS

This section outlines how weapons and armour will interact, that is, how blows will be judged.

The minimum thickness for all weapons will not be less than the minimum gap allowed for face and neck protection.

At no time can weapons be less than the QLHF General Weapon and Equipment Rules: 8.6

*Points of thrusting weapons (which includes swords) should be have a diameter greater than or equal to that of a 5-cent piece at its tip (20mm) and be approximately the thickness of a 20-cent piece (2.5mm).*

Marshals must declare the minimums to be used for each event. This will vary with the weapons being used but must meet all the rules stated above.

Marshals can insist that a weapon tip be covered such as with cloth, rubber or leather.

The rules will stand as written when synthetic or rubber like weapons are used. They have the advantage of generally being wider and have reduced impact. However, the armour rules do not change for these weapons.

## QLHF Edged Weapons By-Law

Where the Fair Blow, Weapon and Armour rules detailed in these Harnischfechten Rules are followed, the following rules in the QLHF Edged Weapons Rules are replaced by the above Fair Blow, Weapon and Armour Rules.

11.1.2 Spears are not to be used in a “pool cueing fashion” in order to gain additional reach i.e. allowing the rear hand to follow past the lead hand so that only one hand is in contact with the weapon shaft. Both hands should be at a minimum shoulder width apart to maintain optimal control of the weapon.

11.1.3 Spears are required to be angled downwards when thrusting to minimise the risk of thrusts skipping up to non-target areas.

11.3.7 Gambeson

The gambeson is a generic term used for the padded garment normally worn underneath armour.

When the gambeson is worn as the primary means of protection (i.e. without armour), the gambeson is required to be no less than 12mm thick and 8mm if worn under non-rigid armour. The gambeson must be of sufficient length to protect the groin, torso, the points of the shoulders and armpits.





- 11.4.5 Additional neck protection such as an aventail, coif or gorget must be worn in conjunction with the helmet if it does not offer adequate protection to the back and side of the neck.

## 11.4 Helmets

ALL

- 12.5 No Thrust (regardless of weapon) or horizontal blow is to be allowed above the armpit of the targeted person.
- 12.6 Any blow intending to land on the shoulder or head should be delivered vertically +/- 15 degrees to the top of the helm of the defender.

## 12.7 OFF-TARGET AREAS

Under no circumstances are there to be intentional: thrusts, blows, feint or any other “cut” made to the follow areas:

- Face
- Groin
- Elbows
- Neck
- Kidneys
- Knees
- Spine
- Hands
- Feet

Any contact with off target areas will be referred to the group and Senior marshal. Should the blow be made with intent, the offender will be removed from the field immediately. The group will be responsible for further disciplinary action. The QLHF committee reserves the right to take further disciplinary action for repeat offenders and groups.

Should a blow strike the face or neck that requires medical attention or be adjudged to be deliberately delivered with excessive force so as to cause injury: The QLHF committee will ask the offender to show cause as to why they should not be expelled from the QLHF. Any decision will be dependent on the nature of the offence, the standing of the offender and any other mitigating circumstances.

N.B . A number of off target areas and banned attacks, such as attacks to face and head, can be varied in combats that are covered under specific rules i.e late Medieval Harness Fighting rules, provided that:

- all parties are in agreement
- all combatants are trained in these techniques
- that protective armour is worn that covers the expanded target areas and that such armour meets the minimum safety requirements as set out in the adopted rules ( i.e. rigid face armour, occularium size etc)

All other rules in the QLHF Edged Weapons Rules will apply.



## MARSHALS

The following is present to assist organisers in preparing and supervising events. They are not meant to be prescriptive but to provide a base from which a Marshall can judge the requirements for their event. Remember each event will vary in intent and style and require different levels of supervision.

### Role of the Group Marshal

The Group Marshal is responsible for overseeing training and safety of a group's combatants, this includes authorising arms and armour for combat, not only from a historically authentic perspective but to adhere to minimum safety standards. Group Marshals are empowered to pull individuals from their training at any time for unsafe practices.

Group Marshals are responsible for setting the minimum standards for a private, internal or interclub tourney hosted by their group. The Group Marshal is responsible for nominating the Senior Marshal for the Event that their group is hosting.

The Group Marshal is empowered to remove a Senior Marshal that they have nominated if they are seen to act unfairly and dishonestly in the conduct of their office.

- Setting minimum safety standards
- Setting minimum armour standards
- Setting minimum weapon standards
- Setting conduct of combatants for Tournament

### Role of the Senior Marshal

The Senior Marshal is nominated by the hosting Marshal of the event, their role is to provide a safe fighting experience for those involved in combat, support crew, non-combatants and the public.

The Senior Marshal will be responsible for pre-fight brief and post-fight brief, they have the responsibility for ensuring all armour and weapon standards are met prior to the event.

The Senior Marshal is empowered to remove anyone from the tourney field for unsafe conduct at any time. The Senior Marshal is empowered to end combat for any reason at any time if they see it as a risk to the safety of anyone. The Senior Marshal is empowered to remove anyone from any further combat proceedings that they oversee for poor or unsafe conduct if they see fit.

A Senior Marshal will be equipped with a stout wooden pole, preferably white minimum 1 meter long. Flags at the end for getting a combatant's attention are advised.



## Role of the Flag Marshal

The Flag Marshal's role is to first and foremost to provide a safe fighting experience for those involved in any combat, and support staff. They are to support the Senior Marshal in their role and defer to their call in all matters.

Second to this, the Flag Marshals role is to call hits in any points or strike based bouts, this will free up the Senior Marshal to oversee the safety of the event, referee and liaise with combatants as needed.

Flag Marshals can act as a Senior Marshal when one is not present and will have the same powers and responsibilities.

- One Marshal will always be identified as the senior marshal, who has the final say if one is ever needed. The Marshal is always right. On the field a marshal's decision is final, the end.
- Marshals have the right to remove any participant that they deem unfit to continue whether them being deemed dangerous to themselves or to others, or is too inexperienced, or exhausted, or for whatever reason. This can be done while the scenario is running and doesn't require a halt.
- Marshals will inspect all the participants equipment to make sure everything is in good repair and that everyone meets the minimum armour requirement.
- Marshals will look out for dangerous situations, injured persons, etc. and will halt the fight immediately at the first sign of trouble, using by calling "hold" in a loud clear call. If this happens, the fighting stops at once and everyone takes a knee. Once the situation is under control, and if the marshals allow it, the scenario can resume.
- Marshals may also call hits against one side or participant if they consider the participant is not counting their blows correctly. After the scenario the marshal should explain the reasons. The Marshal is always right.

Harnischfechten Marshal guide: Minimum 1 Marshal to 4 combatants. 12 plus combatants add an additional marshal.

Marshals	Combatants
1	2-4
2	5-8
3	9-12
4	13+

## Group Training Events

The guidelines above relate to specific formal events such as History Alive. At intergroup training events Marshalls must be established safety guidelines in line the training or event, safety first.



## HOW A COMBAT SHALL BE CONDUCTED

### Starting Combat

Bouts are to begin on the call of the Marshal, this is traditionally on the call of “la celle alle” (lah say ah-lay). The pole is to be held between combatants and pulled up at the call signalling the beginning of combat.

### Calling Hold

All combat is to be ended at the call of the Marshal, this is to be held on the call of Hold. This must lead to immediate cessation of combat. If combatants do not end combat the Marshal is authorised to utilise their staff of office to strike the combatant in a manner to gain their attention while calling hold.

A marshal can call hold at any time for any purpose they see fit, failure to comply with the call of hold will result in expulsion from a bout.

### Pre-brief Guidelines

The rules for the event must be distributed to all combatants prior to registration.

All combatants must register the weapons with which they are approved on, by their group marshal.

Prior to the event the event marshals must:

- Inspect all weapons to be used (weight, edges and points)
- Inspect every combatants armour (gaps, quality and fit)
- Conduct a group briefing.

The group briefing must address:

- Identifying the Marshals and First Aid Officer
- Run through the combat rules for the event.
- Identify any variations or focus areas.
- Go over the program of events.
- Have combatants raise any concerns or issues, no back plate if covered by surcoat.
- Welcome and identify new combatants
- Take questions from the fighters.
- Any combatant may, without reproof, request a limitation of targets/blows struck due to lack of or inadequate armour or due to concern for a pre-existing physical condition.

### Post Brief Guidelines

Directly after every event the combatants and officials must assemble for a post-fight debrief. This meeting must be used to raise all issues and concerns. It provides a place where all issues can be addressed before all concerned.

Agenda items to include:

- concerns about the event,



- questions for other combatants and officials,
- discuss on the program and performance,
- raise any medical issues and congratulate each other.

There is more to a deed of arms than winning the most bouts. Thus, at the conclusion of the fighting, combatants shall meet in conclave to determine who among them best displayed fidelity to the goals and ideals of the deed of arms, said person to be named First Among Equals that day.

With the exception of injuries with delayed onset of symptoms, this is the only place at which issues should be raised. Raising issues about a fighter or official that have not been raised here demonstrates poor knightly conduct.

The group marshal must arrange for minutes of this meeting. The minutes are to be available to the Head Marshal of QLHF and to all participants.

## REFERENCES

In compiling these rules, the team have accessed numerous other rules set and treatises. Below are the ones we have had a more direct impact.

[Hoplologia fighting style.pdf](#)

[marshal handbook.pdf](#)

[Hans Tolhoffer: Fight Earnestly.pdf](#)

[Rules for Combat:](#)

[Dekoven-rev-1-final.pdf](#)

## Sample harnischfechten

Pursuing The Knightly Arts: [Binding of the queues!](#)

[Countering A Couched Armpit](#)

[Play of the Axe with Axe Review!](#)