

Tournament Etiquette in the East Kingdom

By Mistress Nataliia Anastasiia Evgenova

I have seen many fencers arrive at a tournament, fence and not be aware of the etiquette involved. They have lost their bout and simply hung their head and slunk off the list, thus making their opponent believe that something was wrong when the person just was disappointed in his or her performance. In order to help with the myriad ways that we conduct ourselves, I have decided to write a little on Tournament Etiquette. This paper reflects current culture in the East Kingdom and can be taken out of kingdom as long as you pay attention to the native guides in other kingdoms for changes.

You arrive at an event, you have checked through gate and found out where fencing is. Yay! Simple, right? Not so. There are many steps in order to negotiate your way through Society fencing and have fun.

The tournament starts. Oh Joy! Your name is called. Get your gear and present yourself to the list. Here is where we get into the Etiquette. You can hardly wait, can you??? If you have enough time, greet your opponent and agree to weapons forms. This sometimes just takes a nod of the head, or a more extended, "I would like to take rapier and buckler, what would you like? Oh, you would like to take case of 42" rapiers, okay, I think I'll take my rapier and dagger, thank you" while you do the dance of coming up with compatible forms. You are NOT required to match forms, and it is not considered a slight in the East if you do not. Be aware that if you travel, that some kingdoms DO consider it a slight if you do not match weapons forms. You should inquire if you are not sure. Do this quickly and report to the list.

Be on time. Listen carefully, or ask someone to listen for you for the call of the opponents. Not showing up for the list until late, when your opponent is already waiting is rude not only to your opponent, but to everyone else behind you waiting to fence. If for some reason you have an equipment or armor failure, a crying child or some other reason that is keeping you, inform the marshal so that they can either give you more time or rearrange the pairings. Don't count on this though. Talking to the MIC ahead of time if you have an issue is far more likely to cut you some slack than just being habitually late. Always apologize to the Marshal, and your opponent if you are late. Enter the list ready to fence.

The Marshal will ask you if you are satisfied with the arms and armor of your opponent. You must make some sort of acknowledgement at this time. Grunting is okay, but a "Yes, M'lord, or Yes, M'lady" is always welcome. You should really check, if your opponent has suddenly arrived at the list with something that you did not agree to, you should say so now. Whining about it afterward is not okay. More on that later.

The Marshal will then call out the salutes. The usual round of salutes consist of Crown, Inspiration, Crowd and Opponent.

The first, "Please salute The Crown of the East", is the salute to the Royal Majesties and/or the Royal Highnesses. It is customary to salute in their general direction (the

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marshal can indicate where they are), or face Eastward (again, the marshal should help you with this if you are not geographically inclined) if the Crown is not available. Practice some sort of formal salute, touching the flat of one's blade to one's head, bowing, reverencing (a very low bow), or other salute so that you are ready.

The second, "Please salute that person who inspires you this day". Hmmm.....touchy sometimes, but you should have someone who you can salute who inspires you. In our society, we do this not for our own glory, but for the greater glory of that person who inspires us to be better than we are. This may be The Crown again, it can be your sweetie, it can also be any number of people including your Baron/Baroness of your Barony, your teacher, your Don/Dona, your friend, your absent (fill in the blank) or any other person who is a personal inspiration to you. You do not have to identify this person, merely a salute is pro forma. And the salute can be anything from going over to this person and kneeling in front of them for the token word that will bring you to the great fencing heights that they just KNOW you will achieve, to a simple nod of the head to your Dona. Don't take up a lot of time with hearts and flowers though and bog down the list every time you get called, as this is also considered to be a little over the top.

The third, "Please salute the Crown assembled", is a happy Thanks for being here to the crowd who hauled their fannies over to watch fencing. A quick circular wave of the sword and body - much like a boxer in a ring - usually does the trick. Sometimes this salute is skipped.

The fourth, "Please salute your worthy opponent" is essential. You wish to show respect to your opponent and can be fairly quick and simple, or a more elaborate show. It can be a simple nod to your opponent, a salute with the blade, a reverence, or a simple hug or handshake with an exchange of respectful words. It often depends upon how well the opponents know each other and whether they wish to ham it up a bit for the crowd.

There is an optional salute that is often not stated, but I also find very polite. Saluting the marshal. Often after I have saluted my opponent, I step back and salute with my sword the marshal who is volunteering. Were it not for them, I wouldn't be able to fence and have fun, and many of the marshals have brightened just knowing that they have not been forgotten and that they are appreciated. I often accompany it with a "Thank you M'lord/M'lady marshal".

Okay, still with me?

Marshal calls lay on, fencing occurs, and the bout ends. Don't just turn around and leave the field. Yes, yes, some people do, but it isn't polite and we are not finished. If you rush off the marshal or your opponent will believe that something went wrong with the bout and will be concerned. If you are unhappy with your performance, or are unbelievably happy, you should still wait a few more seconds before you chastise yourself or open the champagne. The next convention is to meet in the middle so that the marshal can ask "Is everyone satisfied with the conduct of this bout". This is it. This is

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when you say you have a problem.

I repeat.

This is when you say you have a problem.

You can state your case in a polite way, but if you believe that you hit someone and they didn't call it, you need to say, "M'lord/M'lady, did you feel (fill in the blank)" and let them respond. This is the time when you say, "M'lord/M'lady, don't take that shot as it was late" This is the time you say, "M'lord/M'lady, that shot was hard", that way the marshal and the opponent can respond to it. Resolve things at this time. Otherwise, the answer to "Is everyone satisfied..." is "Yes, M'lord/M'lady" and then thank your opponent. You are not allowed to whine about a missed shot if you didn't bring it up and get it resolved. There is no way that the marshal can take care of issues unless you deal with it then. That person who hit you hard might have hit the past three people he or she has fenced hard, and only by saying something can anything be done about the situation. Any further polite remarks including fencing pickups, inviting them over to your camp for a drink, or meeting your lady or lord should occur as you are walking off the list so that the next set of opponents can keep moving the tournament along.

There. And now you have the etiquette involved in participating in an SCA tournament in the East Kingdom. If others have suggestions for items that I have missed, please contact the author.