

EDITION ONE

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In recent years I have prepared notes for use at Refereeing Seminars and written a lengthy article for The Sword, "FIE Guidelines for Refereeing". The Rules continue to be amended and through discussion of the Rules and Refereeing at the Seminars held at Opens my notes and guidelines have come to be amended. This booklet, which I hope will be updated as necessary, is an attempt by Mike and myself to provide in one place guidance to referees and to fill in the gaps between the "Rules" as published and refereeing as the FIE expects it to be done.

Keith Smith January 2002.

SECTION 1

December 2001 FIE Congress Decisions

A number of decisions were made at the congress, some relate to the way the FIE is organised and are not dealt with in these notes.

The Rule Changes, effective from 01.01.2002, have not yet been published in Rule Book format. The official FIE Digest of the decisions has been used to prepare the notes on these changes set out below. The FIE website has a “News” section in which amendments to the Rules are placed. The “Reglements” of the FIE (in French) are also posted on the Website, and the latest edition is as at November 2001 so a further update is due.

The December 2001 Rule Changes

Wireless Apparatus

Wireless recording apparatus will be used from the Last 32 in Grand Prix women’s and men’s sabre.

See through masks are not to be obligatory. The masks manufactured by Leon Paul, Negrini and PBT have been certified as conforming to FIE requirements.

Referee Qualification

FIE Referee Exam candidates may officiate at Junior World Cup Events but not at Senior A Grade events.

Time Limit

The time for each bout in pools and each relay (bout) in team matches is to be reduced to three minutes.

Falling

Falling is no longer an offence and is consequently no longer penalised.

Note: The F.I.E. removed the penalty for falling (chute) but the offence of making a hit whilst falling remains (coup tombant).

Passivity

The following text is taken from the FIE “digest” of the Congress decisions:

direct elimination match, should the fencers show themselves obviously unwilling to fight, the referee will orally warn the fencers; should they continue to be unwilling to fight, the referee will call “halt” and the fencers will go straight into the next period of fencing, without the one minute break and without the possibility of consulting with their trainers. Should they be unwilling to fight during the third period of fencing, the referee will call “halt” and the fencers will start a final minute of fencing preceded by drawing of lots to decide the winner should the scores be equal at the end of the minute. (Note: The General Assembly of the FIE will be entitled to adapt this decision if necessary.)”

You will also go through to one minute in the pool fights after the oral warning and then continued unwillingness to fight.

This is likely to be a tough one to referee and no guidance has yet been given by the FIE to help referees implement this Rule consistently.

Team Events

During Team Events, there must be a place reserved for the team members. Only the team captain and a trainer have the right to stay with the team fencers inside the

be 9 sq m in area and located between between 2 to 6 metres at each end of and separate from the piste zone, which must be 18m X 8m. During team matches, the members of the team on the piste must remain within the team members' zone reserved for their team.

During team events no member of either team may enter inside the limits of the piste zone without the permission of the referee. Should such an offence occur, the referee will inflict the penalties provided for by articles t.114, t.116, t.120 against the team at fault. The warning will be awarded against the team and will be valid for all the bouts of the match. In this case, if, in the same match, a fencer commits another offence of the 1st group, the referee penalises him, each time, with a red card (penalty hit).

8 Hits at Sabre

In direct elimination fights at sabre alone, the first period will end when either three minutes have passed or when the score of one of the fencers has reached 8 hits.

Lateral Boundaries

Crossing the lateral boundary (the side) of the piste with one foot or both feet will result in the referee calling "halt", the offending fencer will be penalised by his

A hit scored by the fencer who crosses the lateral boundary of the piste with one foot remains valid, if the action was launched before the command “halt”.

If one of the fencers leaves the piste with both feet, only a hit made by the fencer who remains on the piste with at least one foot is counted, even in the case of a double hit.

This means that you must be vigilant when a fencer is in the two metre zone. If the fencer who puts one foot off the side of the piste is within one metre of the end line, the loss of a metre will be likely to put them over the back line and will therefore result in a penalty hit.

Advertising

The surface area for advertising is increased to 75cm² per logo (4 logos, in total 300 cm²). Allowable area is extended to the collar of the fencing suit. A design will be provided showing the locations and dimensions authorised.

Blade Life

The life cycle of 5 years for the use of blades was cancelled, provided the manufacturer has conducted periodic controls.

Some proposals for changes to the Rules on Foil and Sabre have been delegated to a Commission which will report back to the FIE General Assembly 31 March 2002.

FIE Instructions – Or the way the FIE expect us to Referee.

Not all of the requirements which the FIE expect a referee to work to are specifically set out in the Rules. These conventions for refereeing are not optional and all FIE accredited referees are expected to follow them. To ignore these conventions is not an option.

These conventions are set out below in an attempt to provide a single point of reference.

General:

Conduct of Spectators and Coaches

If a spectator or coach disturbs good order then the penalties are first a warning, and second expulsion. [t.82, t.83] However, the FIE expect that a Red Card be shown when a warning is given, and for a Black Card to be shown when an expulsion is made.

On Guard

This must be in the classic sixte position with the point in the high line. At foil and sabre the fencer may not be in the “point in line” position. The fencer may have a

image of fencing and will help the referee concentrate on the position of the hand of the fencer, which is vital at the weapons with conventions.

At the 2001 World Championships all fencers, including epeeists, were required to come en guard in sixte.

Point in Line

The “point in line” is defined in the Rules [t.10] However the FIE Referees Committee have adapted the definition which should now be applied as follows:

“The point in line is when a fencer has a straight arm with the point of the weapon threatening the valid target of the opponent in the high line. The arm must not bend, otherwise the point in line loses priority. At Sabre the fencer must hit with the point and not the edge of the blade. The point in line is valid if the fencer is standing still, going backwards or going forwards. To stop the point in line having validity the opponent must deflect the opponent’s blade (beat, parry, prise de fer).”

The Attack

This is the initial straightening of the arm, with the point threatening the valid target of the opponent. In reality

attacks can be with the point or cutting edge.

There was a heated debate at a recent FIE Referee's Seminar about how you would attack the back shoulder and it was agreed that the point would need to be raised a little to allow this, but that if it was pointing at the ceiling, with the arm in a vertical position, then this was not an attack. It was added that the attack could be delivered with no foot movements, or with a step forward, a lunge, a step and lunge or a fleche (at foil).

The FIE have asked foil referees to be as strict in their interpretation of the attack as sabre referees. In my opinion this continues to be a difficult area.

The most important task at foil is to decide who started the initial offensive action and what happens to that action. It is important to remember that the attack is the initial straightening of the arm, causing the point to threaten the valid target of the opponent. Any subsequent bending of the arm **may** cause the right of way to pass to the opponent, depending on their actions. The arm of the attacking fencer does not have to be straight, but **straightening** and also threatening the valid target of the opponent.

The FIE referee's seminar has defined the attack as "the

target of the opponent. Any pause in extending the arm, or any bending of the arm once the attack has started, allows the right of attack to pass to the opponent". It was added that at sabre this can be with the point or the cutting edge of the weapon. It was stressed that the arm does not have to be straight, but does have to be continually straightening and proceeding towards the valid target of the opponent.

However, a fencer advancing with a point aimed directly at the ceiling is not threatening the valid target. The point must be straightening between the vertical point above the fencer and the opponent.

The FIE Referee's Seminar also concluded that the attack could be delivered with no foot movements, or with a step forward, a lunge, or a fleche (at foil).

N.B. at the Refereeing Seminar held at the Bristol Open in 2001 all those present, including active foilists and coaches, agreed with the above definition without exception.

Counter Attack

This may be made into the attack of the opponent. If made on the preparation of your opponent, it is not the

Parries

These may either be the traditional type, which oppose forte to foible to deflect the opponent's blade or more likely an attack on the blade i.e. a beat that temporarily deflects the point of the opponent and takes priority. These are now very common at sabre and foil.

Arm Judges

In practice when a Fencer requests these at a major championship the FIE always provide them.

Epee

When a fencer presents a weapon during a fight suspecting that it may not be working you should, before testing the weapon check all of the following: that there are two grub screws holding the point into the barrel; that the barrel is not loose; that the attachment device inside the guard is present and is in place; that the attachment between bodywire and spool has been used and that the wires inside the guard are connected. Only if all of these matters are found to be correct should you test the weapon and consider annulling the hit.

Referees are expected to tighten up the rules in the following areas:

1. Closer attention must be paid to the equipment regulations. For example coming onto the piste with a weapon that exceeds the blade bending limit – epee 1cm, foil 2cm and sabre 4cm – should be punished by an immediate yellow card. (The FIE restated this Rule at the December 2001 Congress in Havana – Referees will be expected to enforce this rule in FIE competitions or else they simply won't be used). Similarly, all the rules concerning clothing, such as the need for coloured clothing, must be strictly enforced.
2. To help publicity, the rule concerning the name on the back of the jacket must be adhered to. The characters have to be between 8 and 10 centimetres high and have a width of 1.5cm. They must be in dark blue and not handwritten. Instructions to this effect have been issued to National Federations. At a recent the Foil A Grade in Paris a fencer was thrown out for having an incorrect name on his jacket.

weapons. Simple bodily contact must receive a yellow card at foil and sabre and the referee must call halt at epee. Jostling or causing a shock to your opponent is penalised with a yellow card. Intentional violence will receive a black card. Referees who do not enforce this rule will not be used by the FIE and so referees should be very strict. Referees should also be stricter about shoulder inversion and covering at foil. The message seemed to be that, if in doubt give a warning and the fencers will obey!

4. The salute at the beginning and end of the fight is mandatory. A fencer who does not salute at the end of the fight will be suspended for the remainder of the competition taking place and from the following two FIE competitions in the weapon concerned. The points or titles obtained at the moment of the offence remain acquired. Referees should remind fencers at the start of a fight that they must salute and shake hands at the end of the fight or be penalised. [T.87]
5. Referees are reminded that a fencer may lift up his mask once the referee has called halt. However, if a fencer refuses to obey the

the “refusal to obey” rule and results in a yellow card.

6. Unjustified complaints to the referee will be penalised by a yellow card. For example, if a fencer asks about the phrasing of a hit in an aggressive manner, they could receive a yellow card. Only the fencer can speak to the referee during an individual competition, and only the fencer on the piste and the team captain in team matches. Coaches, team officials and spectators have no right to speak to the referee and should receive a warning the first time they try and be excluded if they continue (The FIE require that a Red and Black card are shown to Coaches and Spectators)[T.122]
7. To help the smooth running of competitions, fencers must be ready to fence when called. This means with all fencing kit on and with the appropriate weapon in hand or be penalised by a yellow card. If fencers come on guard and then have to pull up their socks or adjust their hair so that it doesn't cover the target, a yellow card should be given.

The FIE believes that the most common faults of referees are:

1. A lack of standardisation in fencing terminology and gestures (the FIE\ approved hand signals).
2. A lack of rigour in applying the penalties as prescribed by the rules.
3. A lack of knowledge of the rules.
4. Mistakes over defining the attack, especially at foil.
5. Not noticing that a fencer bends his arm during an attack and therefore loses the right of way.
6. Allowing attacks in which the attacker's arm is vertical and the point of the weapon pointing to the ceiling (foil).
7. Not separating attack and counter-attack.

faults during the bout.

9. Allowing non-regulation kit to be used and failing to confiscate equipment that fails the tests at the start of the fight.

10. Not knowing all of the rules by heart.

FIE sabre referees are considered to be the best at applying the conventions and rules correctly and in a standard way. Epee referees allow too much violence and foil is the worst refereed , because of confusion over the attack.

General Hints for Better Refereeing

This is not supposed to be an exhaustive list but some general points, which should improve the level of refereeing. There follows weapon specific guides in the later sections.

1. Understand the conventions of the weapon you are refereeing.
2. Referee as often as possible at each weapon that you referee.
3. Know the rules and penalties and apply them.

You should be able to pass with at least 80% the F.I.E. Theory Multiple Choice Exam.

4. Use the correct terminology.
5. Indicate clearly which fencer has scored the hit.
6. Referee at a suitable level as regularly as possible. This will keep you up to the mark and gain the confidence of the fencers.

No matter how good you are, you need to get into the swing of the fencing.

8. Try not to have to referee foil and sabre on the same day, or at least finish one weapon before starting another. The conventions are so very different these days.

9. Maintain good order on the piste. Use penalties if necessary.

10. Listen to the judgment of those you trust on your refereeing. This may be coaches, other referees or fencers. But do this after and not during pools.

11. Make sure you are in a good position to see the box and the fencing. This is vital at sabre and foil. I appreciate this is not always possible at some competitions where the pistes are very close together. Too many referees at Foil and Epee remain rooted to a spot in the middle of the piste. The two fencers and the box are a triangle, the fencers are the base line and the box the apex. If you end up stood behind one of the fencers you cannot see the arm extending (or being withdrawn) you can only see the advancing fencer.

12. Give clear and concise decisions. You are not the main attraction.

competition do have a drink or get outside the venue and get some fresh air. Sit down. Just standing up for hours can be very tiring.

14. In team matches identify the team captain, as only the fencer on the piste and the team captain can protest officially. Make them all sit well back from the end of the piste. There can only be one team captain!

15. Be aware that the position you watch a fight from can affect what you see or think you see. A well placed referee is in a better position to determine when an arm is straightening or being withdrawn than a spectator or coach at the far end of a piste. No angle is perfect, sometimes a move such as a ceding parry can be seen better from an oblique angle than side on, but such exceptions are rare.

Treat the fencers with respect. Be “firm but fair”, and always strive to be as consistent in your decision making as possible, don’t try to put right a decision you think you may have got wrong by a deliberate mistake.

Remember, a Referee cannot be removed once allocated to a poule, or bout, unless through ill health. This is an FIE anti nobbling rule.

You must be in a good position to see both fencers and the box, don't let the action move away from you. Do not remain rooted to a spot in the middle while the fencers disappear over the horizon. Keep up with the action.

1. Watch for the attack starting. Remember to watch for the arm straightening and threatening the valid target.
2. Remember the shoulder is the valid target as is the back, and so it will be impossible for the attacker to hit the back of the shoulder unless the arm is still slightly bent, but threatening the target.
3. The point in line must be with a straight arm and must constantly threaten the valid target of the opponent. The point in line must be in place before the attacker starts the attack or it will be out of time.
4. Beat parries are very common. These in effect are attacks on the blade. The F.I.E. calls this "attaque au fer". They are not a taking of the blade "pris de fer", but attacks on the blade, giving the right of way to the fencer who makes the beat.
5. Watch for fencers who substitute target. This means the back arm, the mask or reversing the shoulders.

hit scored and a yellow card. If in doubt call for arm judges. Likewise if the fencer calls for arm judges the FIE always provide them. [t.21, t.22, t.46,t.49, t.72,]

6. Watch the point of the blade closely.

7. Watch for any pause or bending of the arm, which may allow the right of attack to pass to the opponent.

8. Pay close attention to corps a corps. It is really a method to avoid being hit. It should be penalised. [t.20, t.87]

9. A fencer who runs forward with the arm not straightening is not attacking and is liable to be hit by the attack of his opponent.

10. A fencer advancing with a point aimed directly at the ceiling is not threatening the valid target. The point must be straightening between the vertical point above the fencer and the opponent.

11. Watch out for bent arms where the fencer is trying to “draw” their opponent’s action, often with a step forward resulting in their blade being parallel with the torso. This is a preparation unless the arm is

Merely having initiated a move does not give right of way to a fencer who is not yet attacking.

12. A fencer stepping forward with their wrist cocked to the side (point aiming away from the opponent) does not “attack” by merely straightening their wrist. The attack involves the straightening of the arm. Watch the fencer’s elbow.

The most important task at foil is to decide who started the initial offensive action and what happens to that action. It is important to remember that the attack is the initial straightening of the arm, causing the point to threaten the valid target of the opponent. Any subsequent bending of the arm **may** cause the right of way to pass to the opponent, depending on their actions. The arm of the attacking fencer does not have to be straight, but **straightening** and also threatening the valid target of the opponent.

We cannot stress how important it is to referee regularly. You need to have the same sense of time in your mind all the time. Also regular refereeing will gain the confidence of the fencers.

The Epeeist

Epee fencers know the rules, as it is their last resort having been hit. It is vital epee referees know the rules or you will end up in trouble.

The Weapon

1. Check it has two grub screws. If not then yellow card.
[FIE]
2. Check there is an attachment to hold the bodywire in the socket in the guard and that it works. If the bodywire comes out in a fight you do not annul the hit if the retaining device has not been used.
3. Check the barrel is not loose. If it is, do not let the fencer use it and if it is when asking for the annulment of a hit, the hit is not annulled. {FIE}
4. The blade may only have a one-centimetre bend.
[m.16]
5. The fencer must have two working epees at the piste and two bodywires. [t.45/1&3(b)]
6. The blade must be mounted so that the groove in the

7. Check that there is a pad in the guard and that it covers the wires in the guard. [m.5]
8. If the fencer asks for a hit to be annulled, check the wires in the guard are still attached. If not don't annul the hit [FIE]
9. The pommel or handle must not have any extra covering, which could hide a switch etc. [m.5]
10. Check the travel and weight correctly at the start of the fight. [m.19]

Start of the Fight

1. Check the weapon as above.
2. Check the rear fitting of the bodywire and there must be an attachment to hold the wire into the spool cable. If the wire comes out when the attachment has not been used , it is bad luck for the fencer and the hit is not annulled. [FIE & m.55]
3. Check all the other kit of the fencer.
4. Check the fencer has two working epees and two bodywires with them at the piste [t.41/1&3(b)]

1. Stay vigilant. When something goes wrong it always happens quickly.
2. Always watch the fencer who has been hit as they may ask you to test their weapon and annul a hit.
3. It is good sense to tell the fencers that if they do not present their epees to you, then you will not test it. (This is an area of the Rules which remains unclear. Make your intentions clear and you will have less trouble.)
4. Watch for hits on the floor. This can be difficult in a scrappy phrase.
5. Do not call halt too soon. This is a very common fault, especially amongst foil referees, who do little epee.
6. Watch for corps a corps. It is not warned, but it does stop the bout and annuls hits. [t.20, t.25, t.63] If the contact is more than simple corps a corps and amounts to jostling then a yellow card should be given.
7. Watch for turning. [t.21]
8. Watch for the use of the non-sword arm. This is commoner than people think. [t.22]

9. If, during normal fencing time, the score is even, say 2-2, then you toss a coin and fence one more minute. Every double hit is annulled and if the fight is won on the toss of a coin the score is V2-D2. If a single hit is scored, the score is 3-2. [o.17]. Remember, the fencers remain in the positions they were in when a double hit is scored in the extra minute, do not return them to their on guard lines.

10. In an epee fight no hit can be added to the score unless actually scored, with the exception of penalty hits. Thus at 4-4, double hits are cancelled. At the end of regulation time, the score written down is the actual score, i.e. it could be 1-1.

11. When a fencer asks for a hit to be annulled check that there are still two grub screws holding the tip in the barrel, if not don't annul the hit. This is not in the Rule Book but is the accepted F.I.E practice.

At the End of the Fight

1. Watch the loser till unplugged.
2. Write the score down correctly and get the fencers to sign the pool sheet or fight sheet.
3. Make sure the fencers shake hands.

After all of this have a little rest till called again.

It is absolutely vital that all those who wish to referee sabre do so regularly and at a good level. The top sabreurs now make great use of breaking the distance and scoring with tempo hits rather than the more traditional parries. Your regular refereeing at competitions will help to gain the confidence of the fencers.

1. Stand where you can see the fencers and the box. With the advent of electric sabre this is vital. Try to stand a reasonable distance from the piste as it gives you a better sense of the “tempo hits”.

2. Recognise who initiates the attacking action. Usually one fencer does start before the other and this fencer gets the hit.

3. The point in line is valid if it is in line before the attacker starts the attack and is in the high line, hits with the point and the arm is not bent at any time or the point taken away from the valid target. The line is potentially a risky move for a fencer and most sabreurs accept this. The line is valid going forwards, standing still or retreating. However, the fencer with a line who steps into an attack is taking the risk that his line will be misinterpreted as a counter attack with the line. It can be a tricky decision.

the right of way. For the opponent to score over the initial attack then his hit must arrive one period of fencing time in advance of the attackers. Foreign International Referees are much stricter about this than the vast majority of British Referees.

5. There seems to be some confusion over the phrasing of actions after an initial attack fails, usually when it is short. Real time still applies. A counter attack into the initial action is valid, however, if the fencer who made the failed attack starts to attack again before, or at the same time as, the opponent initiates an action, you ignore the failed attack. It is a new phrase. The fencer who made the failed attack is not penalized so that the opponent gets a free hit irrespective of whether the new attack is in time or not. There is not artificial time limit before a fencer can attack again after a failed attack.

6. Watch the speed of hand. International referees will reward the faster hand if the two fencers appear to attack simultaneously.

7. *Pris de fer* or *attaque au fer* on the bottom of the opponent's blade is not valid and are counted as parried. However, this is difficult to spot at speed, especially when the defending fencer is doing this move going backwards to try to take away the right of way of an attack.

two successive but fast attacks.

9. Do watch very closely to see if an attacking action actually hits first time, or does it need another hand action to score the hit? If it does the counter action may well be valid.

Refereeing Terminology

1. On guard
2. Ready
3. Fence/play
4. Halt
5. Attack
6. Parry
7. Riposte
8. Counter riposte
9. Counter attack
10. Remise or redouble
11. Yellow, red and black card
12. Offensive actions

13. Off target

14. Point for

Conclusion

To be selected by the FIE for world championships, referees will have to be active in at least two weapons and have refereed regularly at World Cup competitions. The FIE feel it is important that referees should be known by fencers and coaches, as this makes the task of refereeing easier. In connection with this last point, the FIE intend to prune the list of referees severely.

Refereeing is not an easy job and certainly is most difficult at foil at present. However, all referees must support each other, must have a good understanding of the rules and above all must understand the conventions at the weapon they are refereeing. We do not feel that you can referee well unless you do it regularly. Fencers and coaches also have to realise that, if they make the task of refereeing so unpleasant that many referees do not wish to continue, they cannot complain when there are no referees at a competition. This is particularly true when we are trying to encourage new blood into refereeing. It is certainly true that we can all work to raise to raise the level of refereeing, but it is equally true that many fencers and coaches are equally unaware of all the rules and indeed the conventions of the weapon.

The FIE expects refs to show they are in charge, use the FIE gestures. use cards with authority and maintain good

to the job and do not have hassle.

Keith Smith & Mike Thornton January 2002