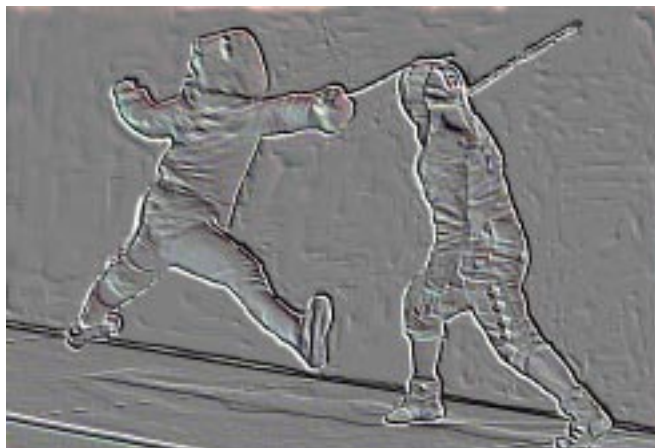


# HOW TO WATCH A FENCING BOUT!



Welcome to Fencing. If you have never watched Fencing before you are going to find it an exciting and complex sport. At times Fencing may appear to be doing little more than standing around and "psyching-out" your opponent, before engaging in lightning speed action, where split second timing can win or lose the bout.

This brochure will help you to learn some of the rules about fencing and to help you appreciate what you are seeing, from the subtle hand skill to the flash of speed and power.

We hope this brochure will aid in your enjoyment of our sport.

## **Some KEY information**

You will notice that the Athletes are fencing in a defined area, which is easy to see when they are fencing on a metallic fencing surface, or within a determined space on the ground. This area is called the fencing *Piste* or *Strip*. You will also notice that both fencers are attached by cords or cables that run from their weapons, through their jackets, to a nearby *scoring apparatus*. This apparatus will light up from time to time, with either coloured lights or coloured and white lights. Most importantly you will notice that each fencer is dressed in a "*fencing uniform*". This uniform not only provides them bullet proof like protection, but it also helps in some weapons in the detection of a hit. Oh! We almost forgot the well dressed individual that looks like they are directing an orchestra, is the referee, this individual determines, with the aid of the scoring box, who has scored valid hits and who eventually wins the bout.

## **Some TIPS to watching**

Fencing is physically and mentally demanding, where speed, strength, footwork, finger-work and psychology are essential to winning. These following hints should be helpful in giving you an eye for the game:

- Do not try to watch both fencers, focus on one fencer only (maybe even, cheer for them).
- The fencer who moves forward first is usually considered to be the attacker; this is usually accompanied with the blade point being directed towards the opponent's target area.
- The attacker's blade move may be parried (the blade is moved out of the line of attack) and the defender may then immediately riposte (attempt to hit the attacker).
- A fencer is defending when taking steps back, or when parrying and riposting.
- Watch the footwork, and notice how fencers try to maintain distance in order to either launch an attack with a lunge or to assure their defense if the opponent attacks. (The fencer with the best footwork usually wins.)
- Try to recognize the split second in which the fencer you are watching tries to provoke a counter action or a reaction from the opponent.
- To follow the actions in Foil and Sabre watch the Referee and make note of his hand actions.
- Also watch the small controlled movements of the Fencer's hands as the tiny movements they make can take years to learn.

## **The Field of Play, the FENCING PISTE or FENCING STRIP**

The fencing field of play is called "*The piste*" or "*Fencing Strip*"; it measures 1.50 to 2.00 metres wide and 14 metres long, marked off in the middle and a 2-metre line on each side from the centre as a start-up line. If a fencer steps off the end of the fencing strip, a hit will be awarded to the opponent. The strips, whether metal or just tape on the floor, help line up the fencers and keep order. The advantage of the metal piste is to prevent a misread hit by the score box when they accidentally hit the floor.

## The WEAPONS

*Foil* is the modern version of the earlier practice weapon, for the duel. The Foil is light and flexible and has a rectangular blade. The valid target is limited to the torso, which is covered with a metallic vest. This permits the hits to be registered by an electrical scoring apparatus reacting to a 500.1 gram (or more) thrust. Hits are delivered with the point only and the rule is based on the fundamental convention of the right-of-way. This means that there are defined rules of engagement, the referee plays an important role in the action, by making the distinction between the actions and who receives the scored hit.

*Epee* is the modern version of the historical dueling sword. Epee is heavier than foil with a rigid triangular blade. The valid target is the whole body and hits are made with the point only and registered by an electrical scoring apparatus, reacting to a 750.1 gram (or more) thrust. Epee hits are registered on the basis of which fencer makes the first hit, which mean that in this discipline, both fencers can react at the same time and create a double hit situations, where both fencers earn a point.

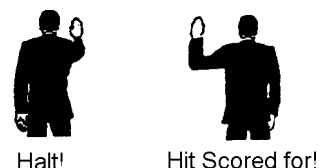
*Sabre* is the modern version of the cavalry sword. Hits can be scored with the point or the cutting edges on the target area, which is anywhere above the waist including head and arms, and registered electrically. The target area is covered with a conductive material to "sense" the touches. A hit also on the off target area does not stop the continuance of the fencing phase unlike the foil. Sabre is based on the fundamental convention of right-of-way. The rules are similar to those of foil in regards to defined rules of engagement, the referee plays an important role in the action, by making the distinction between the actions and who receives the scored hit.

### He Hits, he scores, or does he? SCORING

As you've been watching the scoring box has probably gone off several times, have you noticed the correlation between the coloured lights and the actual points being scored? When watching Epee it is most evident of what is going on, the coloured light goes on and a point is awarded to the side who's light has just come on.



In the other two weapons, (Foil & Sabre) it is important for the untrained eye to watch the Referee to follow the action. For example when there are multiple lights going off watch for the referee's hand movements, such as a hand being raise up in the air, this will let you know which fencer has just received the point.



In a round robin system, the competitor who scores the first five hits within four minutes is the winner. If the allowed time ends before five hits are scored against one fencer then the fencer who has scored more hits will win the bout. If a tie exists at the end of regulation time, the referee will toss a coin and will allow a minute of supplementary time. If the score remains tied after this supplementary minute, the winner of the coin toss will win the bout.

In a direct elimination system (as at the Olympic Games) a winner must be determined in all weapons by fencing successive bouts up to fifteen hits. A fencing match, in this case, consists of three three-minute periods with one minute of rest and coaching time between each three-minute period. As with the shorter five-minute bouts, if a tie exists at the end of regulation time, the referee will toss a coin and will allow a minute of supplementary time. If the score remains tied after this supplementary minute, the winner of the coin toss will win the bout.

## INFORMATION

Fencing is represented throughout Canada, with our National office located in Ottawa.

For more information visit us on-line at <http://www.fencing.ca> or give our National Office a call:  
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Simultaneous



Attack! /  
Counter-attack!



Not Valid!



Hit against!



Point in Line