

Combat Wombat Clash 2026

Ruleset and Gear Requirements

Welcome to the Combat Wombat Clash, a **beginner-focused** longsword tournament!

This tournament has several goals:

- To allow newer fencers to spar against completely new opponents from other clubs
- To give them a taste of various tournament aspects without hard pressure
- To foster a healthy balance between offensive and defensive actions
- To foster clean, technical fencing and fair and honest (self-)feedback
- To get together with (new) friends and have fun!

To achieve these goals, we will have a (still somewhat experimental) three-phase tournament setup:

1. Protect the Wombat!
2. Attack the Wombat!
3. Appease the Wombats!

But before we get to that, let's focus on the most important aspect of any martial art activity:

Safety

For ALL matches **SAFETY COMES FIRST.**

It is your responsibility to:

- Make sure you know which protective gear your opponent has/doesn't have
- AND Make sure you tell your opponent which gear you have/don't have
- Not do any of the illegal actions below
- Fence with enough control so that if gear fails or the opponent makes a mistake (e.g., show back of the head) you're able to stop/divert your strike in time
- Discuss up-front with your opponent if there are actions they are uncomfortable with (e.g., grappling, hard hitting) and then **don't do those things**
- **Not hit too hard / uncontrolled.** We recognize that a certain degree of force is needed for "proper" fencing, but given that this is a beginner tournament, we will strongly prefer slower/more controlled fencing and actively penalize overly hard/uncontrolled actions with warnings.

Illegal actions

At ALL POINTS during the tournament, the following actions are illegal:

- Wrestling to the ground / throwing the opponent
 - We will have no mats, so we cannot do safe throws
 - Standup wrestling (~ringen am schwert, sword grabbing, disarms, ...) is allowed, as long as it happens safely. Judges can stop the exchange if it looks too dangerous.
- Hitting the back of the head / neck, entire back / spine
- Hitting the groin and feet
- Kicking or punching the opponent
- Leg/arm/head locks or twisting joints unnaturally
- Strikes with crossguard (especially to the helmet) (no Mortslag!)
- Ring out (judge stops exchange on ring out)
 - If repeated ringout of defender is due to excessive pressure of attacker, judge may issue a warning to attacker.
 - If repeated ringout of defender is **not** due to excessive pressure of attacker, judge may issue a warning to defender and award points to the attacker.
- Hitting the opponent after HALT/STOP has been called by a judge
- Generally uncontrolled strikes (too hard, too fast. Especially for one-handed strikes!)
- *Hitting areas where the opponent has no proper protection*

- Getting angry (e.g., yelling at your opponent, judges. Throwing equipment)
- Not respecting other fencers and their wishes
- Protesting against awarded points with the judges

If these actions occur, the punishment may vary from a warning over a point penalty to an immediate exclusion from the tournament. The severity of the punishment will be decided ad-hoc by a marshal, the head judge and/or the tournament organization and is final. We will tend to be more strict than loose, in order to foster a safe environment.

Warnings will be recorded after every match and persist across the tournament. If a fencer receives **3 warnings, they are immediately disqualified** from the tournament without an option to protest this decision. Depending on the severity of an illegal/dangerous action, the fencer can also be immediately disqualified, even if they have not yet received prior warnings.

Phase 1: Protect the Wombat!

Short, 3-exchange bouts with many opponents. Count your own score (no judges).

This first phase focuses on **defense first + clean hits**.

We do this primarily in how you keep score:

→ you don't count "damage done", you count "damage taken"!

Procedure:

- You challenge an opponent of your choice (they can decline)
- You decide together which weapon to use (steel or nylon feder)
- You discuss which protection each fencer has/doesn't have and what both fencers feel comfortable with doing (for example: no ringen am schwert, no hits to the leg because of missing protection there)
- You wait for 1 of the paddocks to become available
- You fence for 3 exchanges.
- You go to the scoring table together and self-report the final scores.

You start each individual exchange with 2 lives (so 6 total lives spread across 3 exchanges)

The *exchange* ends when at least 1 fencer loses at least 1 life.

Fencers keep track of where they **GET** hit, not where they themselves hit the opponent.

If a fencer is hit, they **deduct** 1 or 2 lives of their total for that exchange, depending on the hit:

Hits for 2 damage = a "killing blow". Examples:

- Hit to the head
- Stab to the chest
- Disarm / grappling domination
- Good, **controlled** pommel strikes to the mask

Hits for 1 damage = everything else (except illegal actions, see below)

Doubles and (valid, in-tempo) afterblows score full points.

Possible lives left combinations at the end of an exchange:

2-0 is best; a clean killing blow

2-1 is a clean tag hit

1-1 is a double/afterblow tag hit

0-0 is a double/afterblow killing blow

After the 3 exchanges, players self-report their total **remaining** lives (max 6, min 0) to the scorekeeper.

Example match:

Exchange 1: Fencer A hits B on the head and successfully blocks the afterblow
A has 2 lives remaining, B 0

Exchange 2: Fencer B hits A on the hands while A hits B on the upper arm
Both fencers have 1 life remaining

Exchange 3: Fencer A hits B on the leg with a one-handed gayszlen and retreats
(Spectators boo loudly)
Fencer A has 2 lives remaining, Fencer B has 1 life remaining

Fencer A reports 5 lives to the scorekeeper, Fencer B reports 2 lives

In case of disputes, let yourself be guided by the “**DON’T BE A DICK**” sentiment:

In case of an unclear exchange, fencers just re-start the exchange.

In case of doubt between 1 or 2 lives, deduct 2 lives.

Only the opponent can decide to not count a hit (opponent decides on sufficient quality, intent, and valid afterblow timing).

This phase will run for about 1.5 hours, so you have plenty of time to fence with many different people and catch your breath in between.

Only fencers with **8 or more bouts** (at least 1 match every 11 minutes) in phase 1 will be considered for phase 2!

While there will be no judges for this phase, we will have several “marshalls” walking around the paddocks to keep an eye on general safety of the bouts and to potentially provide feedback to the fencers.

Phase 2: Attack the Wombat!

More traditional top 32, top 16 and top 8 single eliminations with judging

This second phase focuses on **simulating a “typical” tournament setup**

Here, you get points based on the “damage” you deal to your opponent.

All fencers who fought 8+ bouts in phase one will be ranked based on their average number of lives left ($\text{SUM}(\text{lives left}) / \text{amount of bouts fought}$). From this we will distill a top 32 for [a typical single-elimination bracket system](#) (seed 1 will fight seed 32, seed 2 fights 31, etc.).

Tie breakers to determine top 32 rankings (in case 2 people have the exact same final score):

- Person with most matches wins
- Person with highest median score wins (most consistent fencer)

- Person whose first name comes first in the alphabet wins
- Person who wins 1 bout of “rock paper scissors” wins

Procedure:

- You get assigned an opponent, a paddock and a time to fence
- You decide together which weapon to use (steel or nylon feder)
- You discuss which protection each fencer has/doesn't have and what both fencers feel comfortable with doing (for example: no ringen am schwert, no hits to the leg because of missing protection there)
- You are expected to be at your assigned paddock, **with all your gear on, ready to go**, when your timeslot arrives. If you are not, your opponent might be assigned the win without a fight.
- You fence for 10 exchanges. Score is recorded throughout by judges and table crew.
- If you win, you advance to the next round (top 16 or 8). If you lose, it's the end :(

Score system:

3 points:

- Hits to the head (including neck and neck protection areas)
- **Thrusts** to the (upper) torso
- Good, **controlled** pommel strikes to the mask
- Dominance in ringen am schwert and/or successful disarm

2 points:

- Hits on the t-shirt area (elbow excluded) and upper legs (knees excluded)

1 points:

- All one-handed strikes and thrusts (gayszlen), no matter the target
 - Exception: One-handed strikes or thrusts **with opponent sword control** (e.g., after grabbing and holding a sword) are worth normal points equal to their target
- Hits to targets other than the head or t-shirt/shorts area

Valid afterblows (within 1 tempo of first hit) and double hits **score fully**

Judging procedure

- Each paddock has 1 head judge and 1-2 line judges
- Head judge yells START / FENCE / BEGIN / ...
- Fencers start fencing the exchange
- When any of the 3 judges sees a valid hit, they can yell HIT / STOP / HALT / BREAK / ...
- Fencers **keep fighting until a judge jells something**, then stop and go back to their corners
- The three judges convene in the middle to (quickly) discuss what they saw
 - Head judge first proposes interpretation. Line judges agree or give their version of the events
 - In RARE cases, the head judge can ask fencers directly what they think happened / where they were hit

- Judges return to their posts
- Head judge (quickly) communicates what they saw (Red fencer hit blue fencer on the head with a clean hit) and assigns points to each fencer by yelling them to the table (Red fencer 3 points)
 - Table (loudly) repeats the score back to the head judge
 - If the 10th (last) exchange is about to begin, table also yells LAST EXCHANGE

Judges are allowed to disregard certain hits if they feel there was not enough quality or intent

- Examples: hits that barely glance the helmet/gloves, hits that were clearly unintentional, hits where the sword was moving very slowly, ...
- In general though, **judges should NOT be too strict**; it is a beginner tournament and **we don't want people escalating force/speed or lose control** because they feel their hits are not being called.
- If judges disregard hits, they make this clear to the fencers when the exchange is done, so they can improve.
- For this reason, it is important that fencers keep fencing until a judge yells for them to stop, not when they themselves think a hit occurred (it might be of insufficient quality)

Phase 3: Appease the Wombats!

Semi-finals and finals where winners are decided by popular vote

This third phase focuses on **impressive technical fencing and sportsmanship**
Here, you get points by how much you can impress the audience :)

The general setup is the same as for phase 2, though all matches will be fought in a single paddock in sequence. There will still be judges who decide on exchanges and assign score. However, the score will not be the (final, single) factor that determines the winner.

This is because the winners of these matches are **chosen by the POPULAR VOTE of the audience:**

- After the match, the head judge counts down from 5. At 0, all non-fencers (including judges and friends/family present!) move to stand behind the fencer who they feel "**most deserves to win the match**". The fencer with the most "audience votes" wins.
- In case of a tie, the head judge is the tie breaker.

Deciding who "most deserves to win" is intentionally vague. What "good fencing" looks like is different for everyone and can encompass many different things, weighted personally through your own experiences and expectations:

- How many points were scored / suffered
- Mistakes made
- Cleanliness of the fencing

- Structure / posture / technicality / physicality / ...
- Variety of techniques utilized
- Ability to execute on a plan
- Sportsmanship / behavior towards opponent (hitting hard, fencing at their level, denying points, ...)
- ...

We expect all voting audience members to **not just vote for their own club member/friend** (should they be in the fight), but to vote fairly and neutrally for the one they feel deserves to win based on the fight.

- This is one of the reasons we restrict participation to 4 members per club chapter
- People should regard fellow club members/trainers not voting for them as an opportunity to learn / get feedback on what they can improve, instead of as a slight or a negative comment on their fencing!

We plan a few simple, low-cost (but fun and fluffy!) prizes for the top 3-4. Enough to make a good memory, but not enough to feel like you absolutely **MUST WIN** to get a prize ;)

Gear requirements

To keep this tournament beginner friendly, we will have slightly relaxed gear requirements (compared to “normal” longsword tournaments).

We will also allow fencers to use nylon/plastic feders (and will provide loaner swords for those) instead of steel feders if they don't (yet) feel comfortable with steel feders. However, preference should still be given to steel where possible. It is not allowed to fence steel against nylon. If at least one of the fencers in a bout really does not want to use steel, the other must also use nylon.

Minimum gear required:

- HEMA-ready fencing helmet with back of the head protection (can be overlay). The helmet should not be visible damaged (torn mesh, holes, (deep) dents)
- HEMA fencing jacket with proper padding / protection
- Throat protector (worn below the vest)
- Elbow protection (either separate or as part of the vest)
- HEMA gloves fit for sparring (for example SPES lobster gloves are good, Red dragon gloves or lacrosse/hockey gloves are not!)
- For men/AMAB: cup/toque (worn inside trousers)
- Clean shoes fit for an indoor sporthall
- Long trousers that cover the entire leg

We explicitly do **NOT** accept non-HEMA gear, such as metal reenactment protective options.

Recommended extra gear:

- Breastplate (worn underneath the vest)
- Upper leg protection (padded pants, overlay)
- Shin and knee protection
- Forearm/wrist protection (if not part of the gloves / vest)
- For women/AFAB: cup/toque

If you bring your own steel feder, it is expected to be fit for HEMA (not too stiff, not too short/long, blunt edges and a properly blunted tip, no spikes/sharp ends, ...). Non-feders (e.g., longsword simulators) will most likely NOT be accepted.

If you're unsure about proper gear, ask your more experienced club members or trainers to help.

At the start of the tournament, all gear will be checked by experienced fencers. It is possible that some of your gear will be rejected if we feel it is not safe enough. In that case, you are allowed to try to find replacement gear (e.g., loan from others) and get everything re-checked. If you do not have compliant minimum gear at the start of the tournament, you cannot participate. If at any time during the tournament you want to/need to change gear, you need to get it re-checked by the organizers.

Note that the tournament organizers will NOT provide loaner gear besides the nylon feders. You are expected to bring your own gear. You can of course loan gear from your club mates if it fits you properly (e.g., not too large masks that can easily come loose). If you loan gear from others, make sure you don't share it with too many people at the tournament... we don't have a lot of waiting time during the eliminations to wait for 2 people from the same club to swap gear between every bout because they only brought 1 set.

At no point are the tournament organizers responsible for damage done to gear, nor for injuries caused or sustained, even if the gear was checked and found to be sufficiently protective for participation.

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