

Schützenfest

Handbook

Schutzenfest

During the height of the Holy Roman Empire, city-states would compete with one another through a type of event called a Schutzenfest, or “shooting fest”. Ostensibly, these were ways for regional municipalities to get together and bond through martial games, but they also served a purpose of gauging the prowess of each town’s local militias. All manner of skills were tested, from wrestling to archery to armed melee combat, with crossbow shooting ranking among the most prized and heavily accolade skills. This event is an attempt to recreate this style of competition for amusement and learning, while trying to ensure a relatively safe means of practicing the martial skills of the past.

Each competition featured at this Schutzenfest has been carefully researched, selected, and structured to create a list of events which are either directly linked to or very heavily inspired by their historically attested to counterparts. It is our hope that these events will provide a unique and friendly way to compete with one another in some of the more obscure or overlooked aspects of HEMA, and that all participants will grow as fencers, historians, and friends throughout it’s course.

Event Lineup

Longsword:

Longsword:	Archery:	Crossbow:	Wrestling:
Fighting at the barrier	Shooting the Clout	Precision Shooting	Wrestling in the Hole
Fencing to the Bloom	Splitting the Wand	Timed Shooting	Wrestling in the Ring
Belgian Tournament	Shooting at the Marks	Shooting at the Marks	Wrestling to the Throw

Terminology:

Overall Schutzenfest- The full list of all activities and sub-activities

Event- A collection of three competitions, each individually executed and scored

Competition- One particular sub-activity within the category of an overall event

Event Champion- The competitor with the highest score in a given event

Schutzenfest Champion- The competitor with the highest score across all competitions

Individual competition victory criteria:

A Winner will be chosen for each of the four events, based on the particular events' scoring formats. The two types of formats are as follows:

Win/Loss: A clearly established winner will receive a proscribed number of points upon winning a given competition. These points will contribute to their general event score, as well as to their overall Schutzenfest score.

Accrual: Points will be accrued in the proscribed manner for each Accrual competition, and will contribute to general event score as well as overall Schutzenfest score.

The winner of a given event will be the competitor with the highest score in that event. The overall Schutzenfest champion will be the competitor with the highest overall score, and will be awarded the Champion's Purse.

In the instance of a tied score at the event level, the tied competitors will draw straws to choose which competition will be held as the tie-breaker. In the instance of a tied score at the overall Schutzenfest level, the tied competitors will draw straws to choose which **three** competitions will be held as the tie breakers (The competitor who draws the shorter straw chooses two competitions, and the competitor who draws the longer straw will choose the third)

Longsword Events: Descriptions and Penalties

Fighting at the Barrier: Format- Win/Loss Three Points

Equipped with a fencing mask, jacket, gloves, and elbows fighters will take their places on either side of a wooden barrier and they will fight in turns one after the other, each turn consisting of five attempted hits¹, while a chosen back foot remains planted. During one competitor's turn, the other is obliged to try and parry/void. Three turns total will be given to each fighter, and once all turns are used the scores will be tallied and a winner declared for that match. The scoring area will consist of the entire body above the belt.

- 1) A "turn" is any action in which a blade makes contact with the opponent's blade, body, or the ground or barrier.
- 2) In the event of a tie, each fighter is given a turn of three strikes to resolve it. Repeat as necessary to declare a winner.

Fines:

Striking the barrier

Striking the ground

Strikes below the belt

Moving/Touching the barrier in any way

Moving the rear-planted foot

Rules for German Foot Tournaments at the Barriers: 1596

"As in the barriers rules, attributed to Tiptoft, but probably 16th c., blows below the belt, dropped weapons, and gripping the barrier are all penalized. In addition, breaking the weapon other than on the opponent, or breaking a sword by striking with the flat "shall have no reward" Fair and reasonable.

Everybody should take and draw his sword without a helper. Who uses his sword with both hands, or puts a hand on the barrier to help himself, shall have no reward, but changing the hands while striking is allowed.

Those who get so near to the barriers that their body touches it, and those who stand too far away from it, not as is right and proper, when they should perform their thrusts and strikes as required, shall withdraw without reward.

Who steps back with both legs or redraws head and body as in fear, and wants to dodge the thrust or strike, shall earn no reward."

Fencing to the Bloom: Format- Win/Loss Seven Points

Equipped with a fencing mask, jacket, gloves, and elbow pads fighters will take their positions in an arena. Each fighter will have a small bag full of water taped to the top of their mask¹, and will try to break the bag on the opponent's mask while defending their own. The match is over when one bag is broken, and the winner is the fighter whose bag is still intact².

- 1) If an extreme height difference exists between the fighters, the taller one will have the water bag taped to the side of their mask.
- 2) In the rare event of both bags breaking at once, the fighters are to be re-issued up to two more bags each. If this does not resolve the tie, both fighters lose.

Fines:

Thrusting

Wrestling

Attacking any part of the body other than the head³ (though the head is the only valid target- attacks to other openings can be strategically threatened but if they hit, the attacker will be fined)

Maintaining a Kron or High Tag guard for excessive amounts of time

- 3) Reasonable allowance will be given for incidental strikes to forearms and shoulders, though they will be penalized if they become excessive

Fencing to the Bloom

Fighting to the bloom was a common feature of both Fechtschle and judicial duels, and involved two fencers fighting to the first bleeding head wound. This was thought of as a way to exhibit precision, restraint and control, as it requires all of these to specifically hit the top of the head without killing your opponent.

Franco-Belgian Tournament (Brugge Rules): Format- Win/Loss Five Points

A king of the hill style tournament where each fencer is given three lives¹ and fencers continue to cycle through until all their lives have been spent. Fencers will be equipped with only masks, gloves, a plastron, and elbow pads. All hits must be made with the flat of the sword. All double hits and afterblows are awarded to the king, and the valid target area² adjusts when the king is beaten.

- 1) “Lives” is defined as a collection of points to be lost throughout the competition. Each fencer is allocated three and every time they lose a round, a life is lost.
- 2) Initially, the entire body above the waist and above the elbows, is valid. Each time a strike removes the king, the target area adjusts so that only hits above where that hit landed can remove the subsequent king. The highest point this threshold can rise to is ear level.

Fines:

Thrusting

Cutting with the edge

Pommel strikes

Cross to Cross

Wrestling

Hitting below the waist or below the elbows

Due to the relatively low-gear setting, excessively powerful strikes will be harshly punished, and the offending fencer will be ejected after two such offenses.

Franco-Belgian Competitions

Franco-Belgian rulesets are among the most thoroughly documented competition formats we have access to, and were very popular throughout parts of France and Flanders. Similar to fencing to the bloom, these were exhibitions of skill and control, and featured heavily limited target areas to keep fencers safe (broken hands make for bad workers after the event is done, for example).

Archery Events: Descriptions and Rules

Clout Shooting: Format- Accrual

Competitors will assemble at the top of a hill and be given four arrows each, and three competitors may shoot at once. A large piece of fabric will be placed 75 yards from the shooters, and they will do their best to hit the cloth or hit as close as possible to it. Up to three rounds of four arrows will be shot per competitor, with the best round being recorded for scoring.

Scoring is as follows:

- 5 points for hitting the target
- 2 points for landing within the inner ring
- 1 point for landing within the outer ring

Fines:

- Drawing a bow when the shooting area is not clear
- Overdrawing a bow
- Aiming a drawn bow any direction other than towards the clout
- Crossing the designated shooting line

Clout Shooting

The ability to judge distance accurately and deliver a precise shot over a considerable range is reflected in two archery disciplines that became very popular during the 16th century, but are probably a lot older. In clout shooting the target was originally simply a scrap of cloth ('clout') pegged to the ground at a distance of 160 to 240 yards.

Splitting the wand: Format- Accrual

Competitors will assemble near the base of a hill, in front of three “wands”, or wooden slats. Each will be given four arrows, and three competitors may shoot at once. The wooden slats will be placed 20 yards from the shooting line, and competitors will try to land arrows at any point in their slat. Up to three rounds of four arrows will be shot per competitor, with the best round being recorded for scoring.

Scoring is as follows:

- 5 points for landing in the slat in the first round
- 2 points for landing in the slat in the second round
- 1 point for landing in the slat in the third round

Fines:

Drawing a bow with nocked arrow when the shooting area is not clear

Overdrawing a bow

Aiming a drawn bow with nocked arrow any direction other than towards the range of wands

Crossing the designated shooting line

Shooting at a slat other than your own

Splitting the Wand

Another once popular archery game, of which next to no written records survived, was wand shooting, or ‘splitting the wand’. The wand was a wooden pole or lathe, anything between two and five inches wide, stuck into the ground at a certain distance from the archers, sometimes a few feet in front of a butt as an arrow stop. With the narrow target standing up to six feet tall, judging distance correctly was not as essential as precise aim, taking side winds into account, and a clean release, so the arrow would not stray sideways. It is conceivable, though by no means proven, that wand shooting had originally been a method of training to send arrows through the narrow vertical openings of loopholes or arrow slits in town or castle walls, once more emphasizing the important role of archers in sieges.

Shooting at the Marks: Format- Accrual

Competitors will assemble at the top of a hill and be given twelve arrows each and three competitors may shoot at once. Four targets will be arranged in front of the competitors, and they will be tasked with hitting the targets when they are called out by the scorekeeper. One round will consist of each competitor shooting three arrows at each target, and three rounds will be given with the best round being recorded for scoring.

Scoring is as follows:

5 points per arrow in each target in the first round

2 points per arrow in each target in the second round

1 point per arrow in each target in the third round

Fines:

Drawing a bow with nocked arrow when the shooting area is not clear

Overdrawing a bow

Aiming a drawn bow with nocked arrow any direction other than towards the marks

Crossing the designated shooting line

Shooting at a mark out of order, or one which is not the current target.

Shooting at the Marks

In shooting at the marks distances varied and the principle was similar to that of clout shooting. The marks were wooden posts spread over a large area and often obscured by natural obstacles such as hedges, a group of trees, the brow of a hill or the like, the layout somewhat reminiscent of a golf course. Ballistic shooting was once again required in order to get one's arrows as close as possible to the mark, but this time, distances had to be estimated accurately as well.

Crossbow Events: Descriptions and Rules

Precision Shooting: Format- Accrual

Competitors will assemble at the base of a hill and be given three bolts each and three competitors may shoot at once. Targets will be placed at 40 yards from the shooting line, and each competitor will be assigned a target. Competitors will shoot three rounds, with the best round being recorded for scoring.

Scoring is as follows:

- 5 points for hitting the center
- 4 points for hitting the red ring
- 3 points for hitting the blue ring
- 2 points for hitting the black ring
- 1 point for hitting any other part of the target

Fines:

- Shooting a crossbow at a time other than when permitted
- Mishandling a crossbow in any way
- Dry firing a crossbow
- Crossing the designated shooting line

Aiming a crossbow any direction other than towards the target(s), especially when loaded, will result in ejection from the crossbow events

Precision Shooting

Inspired by an event known as "shooting the popinjay", this is meant to exhibit accuracy in shooting, which was incredibly important in the offensive side of a siege. With defending archers hiding behind crenellations on castle walls, precision was absolutely necessary to pick them off the ramparts and prevent them from firing at the attacking army.

Timed Shooting: Format- Accrual

Competitors will assemble at the base of a hill and be given five bolts, a target will be placed at 40 yards from the shooting line, and competitors will shoot three rounds. A clock will be running for the duration of each round, and competitors will attempt to complete each round in the shortest time possible. Final times will be subtracted from 180 to determine score.

Each accurately placed arrow will reduce overall time as follows:

20 seconds reduction for hitting the center circle

10 second reduction for hitting the blue/red rings

5 seconds reduction for hitting the black/white rings

Fines:

Shooting a crossbow at a time other than when permitted

Mishandling a crossbow in any way

Dry firing a crossbow

Crossing the designated shooting line

Aiming a crossbow any direction other than towards the target(s), especially when loaded, will result in ejection from the crossbow events

Timed Shooting

While the use of crossbows enabled individuals to shoot with incredible amounts of force relative to traditional bows, they required more time to load and shoot than their earlier counterparts. In situations such as sieges, rapidly loading, aiming, and firing crossbows was an incredibly important skill and one which required great practice to master.

Shooting at the Marks: Format- Accrual

Competitors will assemble at the top of a hill and be given three bolts each and three competitors may shoot at once. Three targets will be arranged in front of the competitors, and they will be tasked with hitting the targets when they are called out by the scorekeeper. A round will consist of one bolt shot at each target per competitor, and three rounds will be given with the best round being recorded for scoring.

Scoring is as follows:

5 points for hitting the target

2 points for landing within the inner ring

1 point for landing within the outer ring

Fines:

Shooting a crossbow at a time other than when permitted

Mishandling a crossbow in any way

Dry firing a crossbow

Crossing the designated shooting line

Aiming a crossbow any direction other than towards the target(s), especially when loaded, will result in ejection from the crossbow events

Shooting at the Marks

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Wrestling Events: Descriptions and Penalties

Wrestling in the hole: Format- Accrual

Wrestlers will take their places, with one inside of the pit and one outside of it, and in a typical over/under hold. The defending wrestler in the pit will try to drag the opponent into the pit with them, while the other wrestler tries to pull the defending wrestler out. Turns will last for up to two minutes, after which the wrestlers will switch starting positions. One round will consist of two turns so that each wrestler will compete in both roles, and the best two out of three rounds will constitute a match. If no victor is established within a given round, that round may be redone up to two times.

Scoring is as follows:

5 points for winning a turn within 45 seconds

3 points for winning a turn within 90 seconds

1 point for winning within 120 seconds

Fines:

Chokeholds, or any attempt to beat your opponent via submission

Attempting to drag a wrestler out of the hole by their neck

Locks against the natural motion of a joint

Using any part of the body to kick, punch, or otherwise strike at the opponent

Wrestling in the Hole

Asymmetrical games where competitors are each working towards different goals to achieve victory were incredibly popular and common in the middle ages. Rule systems which require competitors to work with different advantages/disadvantages was a useful way of creating instances to train specific skills, such as trying to pull someone off of a horse while on the ground or practicing leg hooks/throws while only standing on one foot.

Wrestling in the Ring: Format- Win/Loss 4 Points

Wrestlers will take their places, and the defender will place their chosen foot into the ring, while the attacker raises one leg and remains that way until the round is finished. The defending wrestler must keep their chosen foot rooted in the ring as they attempt to force the attacker to have more than one point of contact on the ground, and the attacking wrestler will attempt to remove the defender's rooted foot from the ring. One round will consist of two turns so that each wrestler will compete in both roles, and the best two out of three rounds will constitute a match. If no victor is established within a given round, that round may be redone up to two times.

Scoring is as follows:

5 points for winning a turn within 45 seconds

3 points for winning a turn within 90 seconds

1 point for winning within 120 seconds

Fines:

Chokeholds, or any attempt to beat your opponent via submission

Locks against the natural motion of a joint

Using any part of the body to kick, punch, or otherwise strike at the opponent

Wrestling in the Ring

Asymmetrical games where competitors are each working towards different goals to achieve victory were incredibly popular and common in the middle ages. Rule systems which require competitors to work with different advantages/disadvantages was a useful way of creating instances to train specific skills, such as trying to pull someone off of a horse while on the ground or practicing leg hooks/throws while only standing on one foot.

Wrestling to the throw: Format- Win/Loss 7 Points

A king of the hill style tournament where each wrestler is given three lives¹ and fencers continue to cycle through until all their lives have been spent. A life is lost when one fencer has more than two points of contact on the ground.

- 1) “Lives” is defined as a collection of points to be lost throughout the competition. Each fencer is allocated three and every time they lose a round, a life is lost.

Fines:

Chokeholds, or any attempt to beat your opponent via submission

Locks against the natural motion of a joint

Using any part of the body to kick, punch, or otherwise strike at the opponent

Wrestling to the throw

Trips and throws are heavily featured in medieval wrestling sources, and competitions which highlight these skills have been prevalent in almost every martial and athletic event since antiquity. An excellent way to train both endurance and battlefield/general combat skills, games such as this would have provided good opportunities to display prowess and knowledge of one of the most fundamental aspects of fighting; as mentioned by Hans Dobringer, “Alles ist Ringen”.

