

# **The English Country Backswording Association**

## **English Country Backswording Rules** **– Updated 21-4-16**

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## Introduction

English Country Backswording (ECB) is a traditional English contact sport. An ECB match is called a 'Bout' (as in boxing or wrestling).

A bout is between two players, known as 'Gamesters', using Backswording cudgels of regulation size, and who are wearing appropriate protective head and arm protection. The bout is overseen by two sticklers (marshals) who are also in the ring and who take station approximately at right angles to the players.

Bouts are played in a ring no more than 30 feet in diameter.

When bouting, Gamesters should fight with the same mind set as if they are using sharp live blades.

Players take their positions, salute both each other and the sticklers, then on the command 'Bout', begin the fight.

Bouts have no time limit, although a limit may be previously arranged. A bout can be stopped at any time for 'Time Out' by a call of 'Halt' from either a player or a stickler.

Traditionally, the object of the bout was to raise an inch of blood from the scalp of the opposing Gamester anywhere above the eyeline; and this would immediately win the bout. This practice, has, however, been adapted in order to comply with modern 21st Century health and safety requirements as follows: the noted English swordsman George Silver (circa 1550s to 1620s) argued that the downright blow is the surest way to end an encounter, and so, following this old master's advice, it is deemed that a blow given to the head should be received in the sport of ECB with the mindset as if given from a sharp live blade.

Therefore, in the sport of ECB, when a modern Gamester delivers a strike to his opponent's head, he scores a point, the term for which is a 'Blood'. The stickler will halt the bout and announce the scores.

A bout is won when one of the Gamesters has successfully gained 3 bloods in total. It is then deemed that one of those bloods would have raised the required inch of blood as was required in the traditional sport of English Country Backswording. It stands to reason that if a Gamester were to receive a blow to the head in fight from a live weapon that they would hardly continue to press on.

The emphasis should be on defence of oneself at all times in order to prevent being indiscriminately struck.

Blows to any other part of the body, arms or legs do not score, but (if legal within the rules of the sport) can be tactically used to draw the opponents guard in order to gain the all- important stroke to the head.

Repeated hitting of a body area that the opposing Gamester is failing to cover is called a 'Roasting'. By giving an opposing Gamester a roasting you can draw their ward to a different area when applying a feint, false or deceit and so aid in 'winning or gaining the place' and scoring the all important Blood.

The off-hand (non-sword arm) is not used to receive blows or parry, and is kept out of range by being held behind the back whilst gripping a sash that is around the Gamesters waist.

There is a simple reason for this. If Gamesters were using live blades, a Gamester's arm would be of no use to ward with, as it would be cut to ribbons in no time! Therefore, use of the off-hand equates to bad form in the sport of ECB where no closes or grips are allowed.

Blows should only be warded with the Backswording cudgel, as would be the case when fighting with sharps. The practice of ECB should teach the principles of good swordsmanship. If not, the Gamesters will simply develop poor form and bad muscle memory. If this was then applied in an actual self-defence situation it would be no surprise that a student learning such bad form would run the risk of placing their arm/hand/fingers in great danger of hurt from an attack by a villain with a blunt or bladed weapon.

**“But if a man that have perfection of fight shall fight with one that have it not then must the unskilful man go to wrack and the other go free” - George Silver (1599)**

What needs to be firmly understood at this point is that in bouting the emphasis is on perfection in fight **not** rustic hard hitting.

Gamesters are encouraged to have a mind to what damage would be caused to them by every blow that they fail to slip or ward with their Backswording cudgel. Haphazard and random striking should be discouraged at all costs. Simply put, if a Gamester allows themselves to be hit, it is a lesson that he (or she) has a weak area in his or her defence.

Therefore, by striving to apply the perfection of the true fight in to bouting, it not only encourages and enhances a Gamester's skill in defence, but also provides a most excellent spectacle to behold.

To watch two Gamesters of ECB fighting with the perfection of true fight: warding blows, slipping, counter cutting, thrusting, using feint's, deceits, indirection, draws, applying correct footwork and at all times looking to break through their opponent's defence to win or gain the place without cause of hurt to come to them is a wonderful sight to behold indeed and is the heart and soul of the sport of English Country Backswording.

## **ECBA BACKWORDING RULES 2016**

### **ECB - A CONTACT SPORT**

**Disclaimer** - Martial arts tournaments are potentially dangerous activities. Before beginning any martial arts training or exercise program, you should first consult your physician. Bumps, bruises, scrapes, scratches and soreness are commonplace, and most competitors will encounter this sort of minor injury from time to time in tournament. More serious injuries are possible, including sprains, strains, twists, cramps, and injuries of similar magnitude, and competitors can expect to experience these injuries from time to time. The possibility of more serious injury exists; including fractured or broken bones and torn ligaments, although such serious injuries are rare. As with any physical activity, there also exists the remote possibility of crippling or death. The organisers implement strict rules to reduce any injuries that may occur to a minimum. However, as a participant, you must understand and accept that you will be engaging in a contact sport. By entering a tournament, you are affirming that you understand the above statement of risk, and accept any and all responsibility for any injuries mentioned herein. You assume responsibility for your own safety, understanding and accepting all risks involved with competing in a martial arts tournament. By assuming this risk, you completely absolve all officials, event organisers, and affiliates of any ECBA tournament from liability for any injury as a result of you competing in said tournament.

**By entering into tournament you will be required to confirm you have read and understood this Disclaimer and completed a PARQ (Physical Activity Readiness Questionnaire) honestly and that any questions that you may have had were answered to your full satisfaction.**

### **THE TOURNAMENT RING**

Ring size to be 30 feet in diameter. An exterior ring should also be erected at public events creating a 4-foot 'no mans land' between the inner bout ring and the general public.

## EQUIPMENT

### Cudgels

Backswording Cudgels should be cut to the ECBA official competition length of 41 inches overall. No more than 3/4" to 1" thick at the centre point (Most coppiced cudgels taper to a degree towards the tip). Cudgels should be cut from Ash, Hazel, Blackthorn, Whitethorn, Crab apple or other native UK wood traditionally used for cudgel making. The tip should have its edges rounded off but leaving a flat tip. The hand should be protected by a waxed hardened leather or wicker pot secured by a wooden peg 1" from the butt end of the Backswording cudgel. The pot should freely move along the cudgel and not be fixed. This allows for the pot to be slipped along the cudgel if a thrust should make contact in play.

All tournament cudgels will be supplied by the ECBA club running the tournament. All competing Gamesters will need to supply their own pots. If an entrant does not have a pot on the day then there will be club ECBA pots available for entrants to borrow.



### **NO RATTAN, BAMBOO, KILN-DRIED OR SYNTHETIC CUDGELS ARE ALLOWED**

### Body Protection

Personal protection should consist of the following -

A fencing mask (non-painted) preferably with rear of head protection

A forearm Guard/Vambrace, for the protection of the sword arm, is to be worn by every Gamester. Vambraces may be made from leather or synthetic material. **Metal arm guards are not allowed.** Vambraces may include elbow protection, or you may wear a separate elbow pad. Both the sword-arm and the off-arm may be protected in this manner to accommodate ambidextrous Gamesters. All Gamesters may choose to protect both arms.

A box/groin protector (optional)

Knee and shin guards (optional)

A leather glove on the cudgel hand (optional)

Club T-shirt or adequate plain cotton T-shirt or Period shirt – **NO Gambesons, Fencing Jacks or like body protection**

Track suit trousers, cargo pants, britches or the like are to be worn. **NO SHORTS**

Sash to be worn around the waist – to be held by the off hand

Boots or trainers (The arena is on grass which can be slippery, especially when wet)

Women may wish to wear a chest protector.

**NO SANDALS**

**NO BARE LEGS**

**NO BARE FEET**

**PLAYERS MUST WEAR APPROPRIATE CLUB KIT OR PERIOD CLOTHING** (If period clothing is required for an event all entrants will be informed)

### **SCORING**

1. Only a clean strike or blow (called a 'Blood') to the top or side of the opposing player's head above the eye/ear line (but NOT the back of the head) will score.
2. Three Bloods need to be made by a Gamester to win the bout. A strike or blow only counts as a Blood if it is deemed by the stickler/s to have been sound enough to have produced an inch of blood had no fencing mask been worn.
3. Blows that strike down or across the front of the mask are not considered bloods for if the mask was not being worn, the blow although, close to the forehead, would have missed.
4. No blows are allowed to the groin, back of the head, or neck.
5. Strikes or blows to other parts of the body do not score but are fully allowed. (They are used only to draw the opponents guard away from their head.)
6. Thrusts towards the face, although permissible in the modern game due to safety masks being worn, will not be counted as scoring a blood should they land on the mask.
7. Harrying thrusts to the body are allowed if used with control, but, like blows or strikes to the body, do not score.

### **THE LOOSE HAND (OFF-HAND)**

1. The loose hand should be placed on the hip or behind the player's back.
2. The loose hand must not be used to block, grab or bat the opposing players cudgel nor should it be used to take the grip of an opposing player.
3. Failure to comply with the above rule may result in the offending player receiving a warning that could result in disqualification of said player. (Traditionally the off hand was lashed/tied to the gamesters leg to prevent it from being used illegally.)

**(See also The Off Hand Rule below)**

## **The Bout**

### **Beginning a bout**

1. The Competitors, or 'Old Gamesters' as they were known, are called in to the ring by the sticklers. The Chief Stickler will use the phrase: "Players, take your positions".
2. Gamesters will enter the ring and move to the centre facing each other with sticklers facing each other centrally and at right angles to the players one on either side.
3. The Chief stickler will announce the word "Salute", at which point the Gamesters and the Sticklers will raise their sticks in front of their faces and salute each other in turn.
4. The sticklers will then briefly examine the Gamesters cudgels for cracks/splits and their general fighting attire, making sure that the Gamesters are ready to fight. Each Stickler will place one end of his stickling stick on the ground between the players, the two stickling sticks thus creating a 'V' shape.
5. The Chief Stickler will announce: "In your own time"; and the Gamesters will raise their cudgels and shout: "God save our eyes!" as homage to the Gamesters of old.
6. The Chief Stickler will call: "Players ready!"; at which point the Gamesters will tap their cudgels against the other's twice to indicate that both players are safe and ready to start; each then steps the back foot away and takes up a fighting position in the traditional hanging guard (True Guardant) stance.
7. The Chief Stickler will shout "BOUT!" and at that moment the two Sticklers will raise their stickling sticks from the low 'V' to vertical and so opening the gate for the play to begin.
8. Play will then engage.

**This is not single-stick static play**

English Country Backswording employs the full range of movement and footwork that is to be found in true sword play. Gamesters therefore should use the full area of the ring in which to fight.

Sticklers will endeavour to stay each side of the fighting Gamesters at all times. This may result in the sticklers changing sides more than once depending on the speed of play and movements of the Gamesters.

### **During the bout**

1. Players must exercise gentlemanly behaviour throughout a bout.
2. A bout is not timed.
3. A bout only stops on a call of "Halt!".
4. If needed a 'Time out' may be called for e.g. water or change of cudgels, readjustment of fighting gear etc.
5. When a blood or warning has been made or thought have been made, a call of "HALT" will be given and Sticklers will call for players to take their positions back in the centre of the ring.
6. Players MUST return to their start points and must not engage the sticklers or argue a call.
7. Sticklers will confer. The 'Blood', 'No blood', 'Warning' or 'No warning' will awarded and the Chief Stickler will raise his or her arm which is closest to that player and make the appropriate call.
8. When three bloods or warnings have been called and the players have again taken their positions in the centre of the ring, the chief stickler will announce the winner of the bout.
9. The players will then salute and the bout ends.

### **Calls of Halt**

1. At any time a call of 'HALT' can be made by either the Sticklers or the Gamesters.
2. Sticklers may call a halt for many reasons: see Stickler Rules below.
3. When a halt is called, Gamesters should immediately disengage and move apart.
4. Sticklers will then either:
  - a. ask the Gamesters to go back to their start positions or
  - b. they may call a halt followed by the command "BREAK" to separate the Gamesters; followed by the command "DOUBLE TAP" upon which call Gamesters will double-tap their cudgels

and take their guardant fighting stance; then the stickler will call “CONTINUE” and the bout will continue from that area of the arena without first having to return to the start positions in the centre of the arena.

5. Gamesters may also call a halt if they are in difficulty or have good reason to at any time during a bout.
6. If a Gamester calls “HALT”, he or she should immediately lift his/her cudgel in to the air while simultaneously moving away from the opponent.
7. The Sticklers will immediately intervene and deal with the reason the halt was called.
8. Any call of halt by stickler or Gamester needs to be clear and loud as it can easily be drowned out by loud and enthusiastic spectators.

### **The Rules**

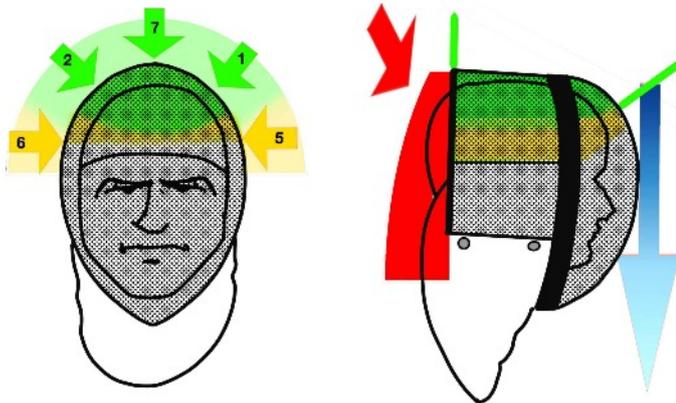
1. As stated above, a blood can only be scored on the head above the eyeline but not on the back of the head (please see the scoring zone diagram below).
2. The first Gamester to score three bloods wins a bout.
3. A blood which is made after a call of “Halt” is not scored.
4. Any blow, strike or thrust given after a halt will result in a warning.
5. Double bloods or bloods scored simultaneously (an uncertain just action commonly known as a ‘Just Action’ or ‘Mutual’) is scored as ‘No Blood’ to either player as this is bad form and players have effectively killed each other.

### **Scoring Zone – Scoring a clear ‘BLOOD’**

1. The only way to score a ‘Blood’ is to strike the opponents head within the scoring zones shown in the diagram below.
2. The perfect placement of a blood is in the **GREEN** zone. The numbers in the diagram are a guide to the angles of the scoring cuts. Cuts 1, 2 or 7. Any cuts landing within this range are scoring bloods.
3. The **AMBER** zone represents the extremity of the scoring zone and the numbers on the diagram are a guide to the angles of cuts. Cuts 5 and 6 to the sides or strikes that rake down the front of the mask .
4. Bloods can be scored in this zone IF they are clearly spotted by and called by a Stickler. However in the speed of play it can be very hard for Sticklers to call a clear Blood in the amber zone and therefore there is a higher possibility that a call in the amber zone may result in a **‘NO**

**Blood'** if the Sticklers are left with any doubt as to whether it was a clean strike.

5. The **GREY** zone is a totally non-scoring area. Strikes to this zone will not score and play will continue unless there is a cause for the Sticklers or a Gamester to call HALT.
6. The **RED** zone. No strikes are permitted to the back of the head at any time and can result in a warning or a disqualification by the Sticklers.
7. Glancing blows/strikes to the head or strikes/harrying thrusts that just touch or scrape a player's mask will not be deemed to have scored a blood.
8. When a blood is scored the stickler/s will shout "HALT" and play must stop at this point.



### **Gentlemanly play and Warning offences**

1. English Country Backswording is by its nature a contact sport. However, excessive brutality is not tolerated and will result in disqualification of a player.
2. A blow or strike should land with controlled force where permissible by the rules of play. (See the Permissible Force Scale below.) Speed is a player's best weapon rather than rustic hard hitting.
3. **Gentlemanly play** is expected at all times. Excessive rough play will result in a warning or disqualification from a bout.
4. Striking after a call of "Halt" will result in a warning.

5. Gamesters are allowed to call a halt at any time if they feel a need to. If a Gamester does this he or she should fly out away from their opponent, hold their cudgel high and call "HALT!" loudly.
6. (Also see '**Calls of Halt**' above.)

### **Closes, grips, kicks and other like strikes**

Unlike open swordplay where closes, grips, kicks, throws, strikes with the off-hand or use of the cross guard/basket or pommel of the sword are allowable these are NOT allowable in the sport of English Country Backswording.

1. At no times should Gamesters break the rule of measure and come to the close and grip or use the off hand/arm to ward blows or strike/grab their opponent or their opponent's cudgel.
2. At no time shall a Gamester kick or attempt to kick his opponent or make or attempt to make any strike with the leg or knee.

Breaking the above rules will result in a Warning being given.

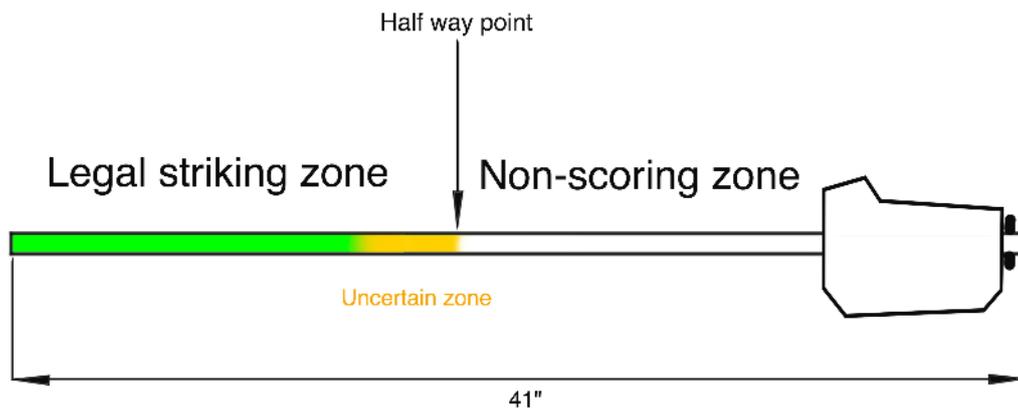
Also see **Clubbing Hits, Permissible Force Scale, and Non-Permissible Target Areas** below

If a player receives three Warnings during a bout, he will be disqualified from that bout.

Glancing blows/strikes to the head or strikes/harrying thrusts that just touch or scrape a players mask will not be deemed as a blood.

## The Rule of Measure

The sport of ECB should always be played at good measure. There is no coming to the close and grip in the sport and the sport is one of excellence in swordsmanship skill played at measure. Therefore Gamesters should avoid coming in to a close fight distance. The ability to play at measure means that neither player should come in to a close distance where the use of 'Clubbing' blows can be delivered using the lower half of the cudgel (the Forte) and pot/hilt.



To maintain good measure while maintaining good footwork and using the area of the combat arena, Bloods can only be scored using the leading half of the cudgel (The Foible). See the legal scoring zone diagram above.

The **GREEN** zone is the preferred range of the cudgel to both score a Blood and maintain correct measure to give the Gamester time to fly out with cover, opposed to being in close fight when striking with the non-scoring zone and leaving themselves open to an unavoidable counter blow.

The **AMBER** zone is still in the scoring zone of the cudgel BUT to strike within the amber zone means the Gamesters' measure is very close and Sticklers may not be able to make a clear call of blood if a strike is landed within this zone. Also strikes to the body with this area of the cudgel can be seen as 'Clubbing hits' which can result in a warning being given.

The **WHITE** zone below the midpoint of the cudgel will not score a blood and is not allowable to be used to strike anywhere on your opponent. At this range the rule of measure is broken and at such close distance a Gamester would be deemed to be 'Clubbing' their opponent, as opposed to landing a clean cut, which will result in a warning being given.

## **Permissible Force Scale**

On a scale of 1 to 10. 1 being a very light touch to 10 which is to land a blow with bone/cudgel breaking force on an opponent. Gamsters should be looking to land strikes at no more than around a level of 5 to 6 on the body (enough force to sting) and no more than 3 to 5 to the head (enough force to score a clean blood).

Gamesters may strike an opponent's cudgel in play with greater force but must show control when landing a blow on the opponent especially to the head.

**“Rustic hard hitting is for rage where as the keen cut and thrust is for the lucid mind” – Pete ‘Buzzsaw’ Holland**

## **Non Permissible Target Areas**

1. The body as stated above is a target but does not score.
2. Areas that are **NOT** allowed to be hit are –
  - The groin
  - Intentional blows/strikes to joints such as wrists, knees, elbows etc
  - The neck/throat
  - The back of the head
  - Knees and below (Shins, Ankles, Feet)
  - Intentional strikes to the opposing Gamesters Pot

## **Cuts, Thrusts and the BDB**

All the full range of cuts, 1 to 8 are allowed as long as they avoid the non-permissible target areas.

Thrusts are allowable to the body above the waist and to the front of the fencing mask.

These should be delivered within the Permissible Force Scale and are used only as harrying thrusts to open up an opposing Gamesters guard. **Thrusts to the mask cannot score a blood.**

## **The BDB (Bull Dog Bounce)**

A BDB is a jumping technique which allows a Gamester to strike over the top of another Gamesters guard. It is a technique that has been used in ECB for many years and is allowable within the rules (see below). It is so named after the famous Bedfordshire Gamester Steve 'The Bulldog' Williams.

1. A BDB (Jumping attack where both feet momentarily leave the ground) is only allowable if the jump is **vertical**.
2. It is not allowable for a Gamester to launch themselves physically towards an opposing Gamester in order to crash in to them or break the rule of measure.

### **The Off Hand Rule**

The off hand is to be placed behind the back, the Gamesters sash to be held. The off hand is not allowed to be used to ward strikes, to take the grip of the opponent or their cudgel or to strike the opponent in any way. The off hand and arm are a permissible target to be struck with a cudgel except intentionally at the joints.

If the hand comes out from behind the back at any time and is struck this is within the rules and can be used to create a flinch. See Flinches and Roastings below.

It is the responsibility of a Gamester to make sure their off hand is securely kept behind the back via use of the Gamesters sash.

### **The Off Hand Rule – Re: Arm protection**

Some Gamesters are ambidextrous and therefore arm protection is allowable on both arms of all Gamesters whether they are ambidextrous or not in order to make the game play equal for all Gamesters.

### **Flinches and Roastings**

Tactical play and good swordsmanship is essential in English Country Backswording. This may be through feints, draws, falses, deceits or indirection, however '**Flinches**' and '**Roastings**' are unique terms given to country backswording play.

### **A Flinch - Applying the Permissible Force Scale**

This is when a Gamester makes a strike/trust using the **PFS** to strike an opposing Gamester, the resulting contact causing the opposing Gamester to 'flinch' or drop their guard due to the discomfort felt from said action. This then opens the place to effectively score a blood.

## **A Roasting - Applying the Permissible Force Scale**

A roasting is the result of landing multiple strikes/thrusts to a particular weak spot in an opposing Gamester's defence using the **PFS**. For example if a Gamester finds that they are able to hit home to an opposing Gamester's thigh throughout a bout but not resulting in a flinch, this will inevitably start to cause mild stinging discomfort to that Gamester hence the term 'roasting'. Through giving a roasting the Gamester, who is repeatedly struck may eventually start to favour and ward/defend that area of their body more. Thus when a feint is then thrown at that area and a ward is made it will open the place to gain a possible blood.

## **The Sains Gentlemanly Rule**

The Sains Gentlemanly Rule is so named after Dr Mark 'The Iron Giant' Sains a renowned Gamester of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, whose exceptional skill and exceptional gentlemanly conduct in the combat arena has become a shining example to all those who compete in the sport of English Country Backswording. So much so that his unparalleled ability to be courteous and well-mannered to his fellow Gamesters at all times is the perfect example of how a Gamester should behave while competing in English Country Backswording.

For this reason The Sains Gentlemanly Rule was introduced as it encapsulates the way all Gamesters, Male or Female, should conduct themselves while competing in the sport.

The word 'Gentlemanly' is used generically and applies to both men and women and is not meant to be taken as being gender specific.

*The rule is simple:* at all times Gamesters should be courteous to their fellow Gamesters, the Sticklers, and any other ECBA official, staff, volunteer or member of the general public that they come in to contact with at any ECBA event.

Examples of gentlemanly behaviour are -

1. If a strike lands with excessive force, Gamesters should acknowledge that a strike may have landed too hard or in a sensitive area by making an apologetic gesture and backing off to offer a moment's respite to the opponent.
2. Gamesters should not seek to cow or bully a weaker or less able/confident opponent with overly aggressive play. Gamesters should aim to win a bout through good play at all times.
3. Gamesters should maintain true distance and seek to follow the principles of the true fight throughout a bout; avoiding gamesmanship and exploitation of the rules (such as, for example, deliberately taking body shots so as to trap the opponents cudgel and expose their head, or deliberately seeking to intimidate your opponent into backing out of the ring)

4. Gamesters should avoid deliberate targeting of the protective pot of their opponents cudgel in order to cause hurt to the opposing Gamester's hand. However, if a Gamester uses his or her own pot to ward against strikes from their opponent then it is their own fault if hurt or injury is incurred to themselves.
5. Gamesters should never verbally goad an opposing Gamester whether they themselves feel it's only just playful banter.
6. Much like 'The Man of the Match' award that is given in other sports, **'The Sains Award for gentlemanly conduct'** will be given to one individual Gamester at the end of a tournament. This individual will be chosen by the Sticklers and event officials.

### **Breaking The Sains Gentlemanly Rule**

1. A Gamester should comply at all times with the ECBA Rule Set and never lose control of his or her temper.
2. It is in a Gamesters own interest when placed under pressure to stay calm and courteous at all times, therein lies a Gamester's chief ascendancy over others who impulsively betray their motions with exhibitions of anger, physical aggression, verbal obscenities and extremely poor sportsmanship.
3. Any Gamester that is judged to be acting un-gentlemanly or discourteously towards their fellow Gamesters, the Sticklers or any other ECBA official, staff, volunteer or member of the general public will be given a warning or even a disqualification if deemed necessary.
4. In exceptional circumstances a disqualification and a ban from all future ECBA events can be served.

## **Sticklers**

A bout will be presided over by 2 sticklers (referees). They take their names from the long sticks they use to traditionally protect themselves from the player's cudgels during a bout and to separate players if they come to an ungentlemanly close.

### **THE STICKLERS WORD IS LAW – Re: the old English term ‘A stickler for the rules’**

There is one Chief stickler who will take charge of each bout. The chief stickler will lead the starting etiquette and announcing scores and judgements throughout a bout.

The second stickler has the same authority at all times during a bout as the chief stickler.

Players must not hit the sticklers and sticklers need to be aware of their own space and measure to avoid interfering with play as much as maintaining the Gamesters measure from each other during play.

## **Ringside Sticklers**

From 2016, 2 to 4 ringside Sticklers will be introduced for tournaments. The ringside Sticklers are only to be called upon by the Chief Stickler and Second Stickler to verify a call of blood or no blood when an immediate decision can not be reached.

## **Calls - Bloods, Warnings and Disqualification**

1. Bloods have to be landed using the PFS rule and must land in the permissible area of the mask required to score.
2. Scoring area- Above the eye and ear line on the front part of the mask. (see diagram and explanation above)
3. In a bout both Sticklers MUST agree on if a blood was cleanly struck in the scoring area of the mask.
4. Sticklers must be unanimous in their decision.
5. Sticklers have 10 second from the point they return players to their start positions to make their 'Call'.
6. If both sticklers agree it was a Blood it is awarded.
7. If both sticklers agree no blood was scored then no blood will be awarded.
8. If both sticklers call a mutual blood has been scored (both players strike to the scoring zone) then a call of 'mutual, no blood' will be called.
9. If one stickler calls a blood and the other does not and the 10 second rule has lapsed then through indecision a call of no blood will be made.
10. If one stickler calls a blood and the other is unsure, the sticklers have the permitted 10 second rule to decide if it is to be awarded or not.
11. If a player argues with the sticklers prior to a call being made then a stickler can not award a call that would be in favour of that player.

**The above rules apply also to warnings**

## **Warnings**

- Warnings can be given out during a bout.
- If a player receives 3 warning during a bout they will be disqualified from that bout.
- If a player is disqualified the bout is awarded to the remaining player and the score at that point in the bout is marked down as this may affect the final outcome of qualifying rounds. If a player is disqualified in two bouts they will then be disqualified from the tournament.
- Intentional blows/strikes/thrust to a stickler will result in immediate disqualification.
- Physically attacking due to loss of control an opposing player inside or outside the ring will result in immediate disqualification.

## **Warnings are given for the following -**

- Ungentlemanly behaviour or foul language towards a player or sticklers
- Arguing excessively over a stickler's call as this can be seen as a player trying to influence the sticklers call in a dispute. (disputes should be dealt with outside the ring after a bout.)
- Excessive force when landing blows/strikes/thrusts to the opposing player
- Continual exiting of the ring or pressing in to the ring ropes
- Non-engagement – Both Gamesters should look to engage within the bout. If the Sticklers deem that a Gamester is continually refusing to engage they will stop the bout and give said Gamester a warning.
- The use of the off hand to ward against blows
- Striking with the off hand
- Taking the grip of an opposing player
- Kicking - strikes with the feet or the knees
- Stamping on feet or Head-butts

## **Stickler hand signals**

Sticklers keep in contact with each other continuously throughout a bout. Communication is by both verbal commands and a range of specific hand signals. Typically 75% of the communication between Sticklers during a bout is non verbal and therefore it is necessary for Sticklers to be fully versed in these signals. Below is a list of these signals and there meanings.

<b>STICKLER HAND SIGNAL</b>	
<b>SCORING SIGNALS</b>	
	<p style="text-align: center;"><b><u>NO BLOODS SCORED</u></b></p> <p>When a Halt is called and a Gamester/Gamesters have a current score of zero bloods the Chief Stickler will raise their hand in the direction of one or both Gamesters depending on each of their current scores and announce "NO BLOOD/S"</p>
	<p style="text-align: center;"><b><u>ONE BLOOD</u></b></p> <p>If a blood is scored by either Gamester the Chief Stickler will raise their hand towards the Gamester that has scored the blood and indicate with one digit that one blood has been scored and announce "ONE BLOOD TO (Player 1 or 2 OR the Gamesters name)"</p>
	<p style="text-align: center;"><b><u>TWO BLOODS</u></b></p> <p>If a further blood is scored by either Gamester the Chief Stickler will raise their hand towards the Gamester that has scored the blood and indicate with two digits that two bloods have been scored and announce " TWO BLOODS TO (Player 1 or 2 OR the Gamesters name)"</p>
	<p style="text-align: center;"><b><u>THREE BLOODS – WINNER</u></b></p> <p>If a further blood is scored by either Gamester the Chief Stickler will raise their hand towards the Gamester that has scored the blood and indicate with three digits that three bloods have been scored and announce "THREE BLOODS TO (Player 1 or 2 OR the Gamesters name). PLAYER (1 or 2 or the Gamesters name) WINS"</p>
	<p style="text-align: center;"><b><u>NO BLOOD</u></b></p> <p>If a Halt is called but no blood has been scored, the Chief Stickler will raise their hands and make a 'X' symbol using their arms and the stickling stick and announce "NO BLOOD"</p>

## BLOODS

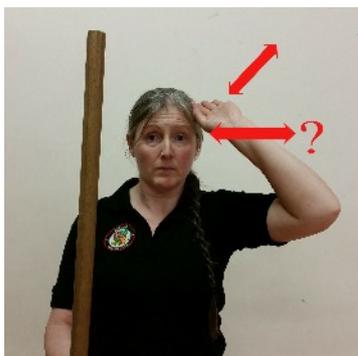


A blood is scored when it lands above the eye line to the top of the forehead as shown in the photograph. The Stickler should indicate by use of either hand that the blood was on target and landed in the scoring zone by moving their hand up and down to show the opposite stickler the point of contact.



A blood can be scored to the side of the head as shown in the photographs as long as it lands in the scoring zone (see the section on scoring zone).

However if a strike lands horizontally and close to the eye line the Sticklers will confer to decide whether the strike was within the striking zone before awarding a blood. If there is any doubt as to whether a strike is or is not a blood it will be called as a 'NO BLOOD'



## MISSES



If a strike skims or misses the top of a Gamesters head, Sticklers will show this by moving their hand forwards and backwards above their own head to indicate that it was a miss.



If a strike glances down the side of a Gamesters head or misses, Sticklers will show this by moving a hand vertically up and down at the side of their own head to indicate it was a miss.





If a strike scrapes down or misses the front of a Gamester's mask, Sticklers will indicate this by moving a hand vertically up and down in front of their own face.



A strike that misses the back of a Gamester's head is indicated by a Stickler by moving a hand up and down vertically behind their own heads.





A strike that makes contact with the back of a Gamester's head or neck is indicated by a Stickler by dipping their own head forward and tapping the back of their own head to indicate the strike landed.

**WARNING**

This is an illegal strike and can result in either a verbal warning, an official warning or in extreme cases a disqualification.



Strikes that land on the forearm or upper arm are indicated by the Sticklers tapping their hand on the lower or upper arm part of their own arm. This indicates that a strike in a non-scoring zone has landed. This applies to all non-scoring strike that land. See 'Strike that land in a non-scoring zone' below.



If a strike looks like it may have scored a blood but in fact it has landed on the Gamester's cudgel as in St George's Guard, Sticklers will tap their stickling stick with the side of their hand in an up and down motion to indicate the strike actually landed on the cudgel and not the scoring zone of the head

**STRIKES THAT LAND ON NON-SCORING AREAS OF THE ARMS, BODY OR LEGS**

A Stickler may choose to tap their hand on to any area of their arms, body or legs to indicate to the opposite stickler, ringside judges and spectators the area that a strike or thrust has landed.

For example – If a strike were to land on an opposing Gamester's upper arm, one of both Sticklers may choose to tap their hand on their own arm in the same area of the strike that landed to indicate that they saw it land. This is helpful when a strike lands on top of the shoulder area where the strike may be blind sided to the opposing Stickler. If the Stickler that saw the blow land indicates that it is a miss and that it landed not on the Gamester's mask but the shoulder then the other Stickler will be aware that it was a miss and the

play will continue uninterrupted. These are optional hand signals due to the fact that in the speed of play it may not be possible to indicate every strike that lands in a non scoring area.

## **Commentary**

At some ECBA events the event organisers supply audio commentary equipment. Commentator's who use this equipment should make sure that the commentary focuses on being informative to the spectators only and in no way should the commentary be directed towards the Sticklers or the Gamesters.

It is not the commentator's place to disrupt or influence in any way what is going on in the fight arena.

Sticklers and Gamesters should in no way listen to or become involved with the commentary.

However ECB is a spectators sport much like many other sports where the audience is as much involved with the spectacle as the Gamesters are involved with the combat. The Commentators job is to engage the spectators, to inform the spectators, to give a running commentary to the spectators and to encourage them to cheer on each Gamester equally. There is a certain amount of gamesmanship in being a commentator and as such there is bound to be a modicum of 'Banter' as ECB is a spectators sport and has been a spectators sport for many centuries. Sticklers and Gamesters may choose to interact with the spectators in a fitting showmanship manner as long as it is in a positive manner and casts no negativity towards fellow Sticklers, Gamesters or members of the audience.

**"There is no cheaper defence purchased than through the kiss of the ash plant" - Old English saying**

**All the above rules were correct at the time of publishing 21-4-2016 The ECBA reserves the right to modify or update the rules at any time. If so all club members and those attending ECBA run tournaments will be forwarded the revised rule set.**

Contributors -

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