

A group of approximately 15 people, mostly young adults, are posing for a group photo in front of a rustic wooden building with a large open doorway. They are dressed in a variety of medieval or renaissance-style clothing, including dresses, tunics, hats, and crowns. Some are holding props like a sword or a cup. The scene is outdoors with trees visible in the background.

Starting in SCA Rapier FENCING

Written by Lady Virginie de Champagne

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SCA Fall University 2024

With the participation of MoDs and the Order of the White Scarf.

Introduction

Welcome to "Starting in SCA Rapier Fencing." This class is designed to assist newbies in SCA Rapier Fencing by providing essential information and resources. It was created with the participation of Masters of Defense and the Order of the White Scarf.

Class Goals

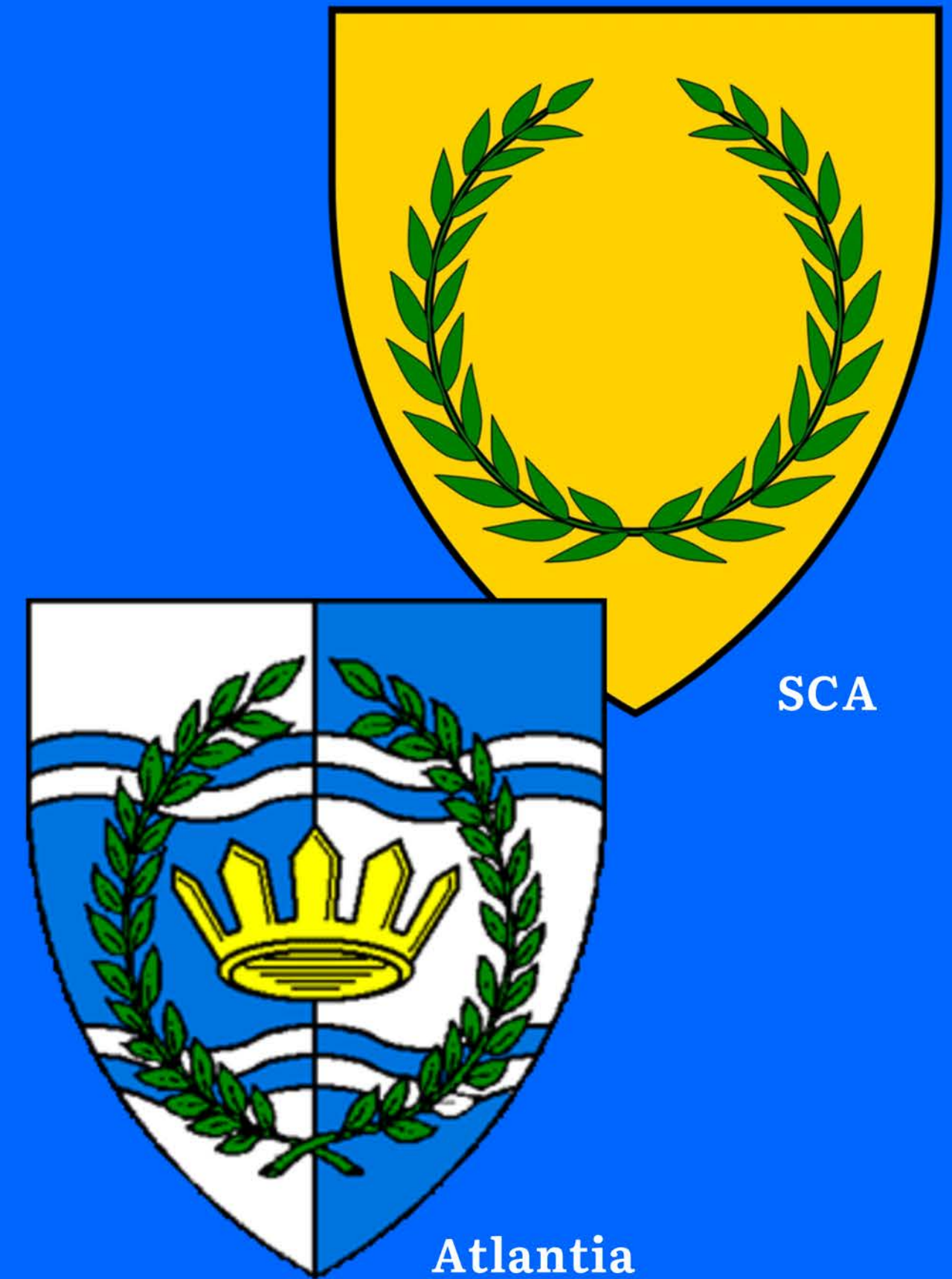
- Learn about SCA Rapier Fencing.
- Get to Know the Local Rapier Community.
- Recognize Ranks and Roles.
- Get ready for your first practice(s).
- How to participate in Rapier activity at events.



What is SCA Rapier Fencing

SCA Rapier Fencing recreates the thrilling swordplay from before 1600 A.D. It's about history, fitness, and fun with friends.

In Atlantia, our rapier community thrives on well-defined rules governed by the Kingdom Earl Marshal's Policy and the SCA's Fencing Marshal's Handbook to ensure safety and historical integrity. Understanding these rules is your first step towards engaging safely and effectively in SCA Rapier Fencing. **We welcome all who wish to explore the art of historical fencing.**



| Académie d'Espee

This guild, chartered by the Kingdom of Atlantia, **promotes historical rapier combat**. The Academie aims to enhance skills and camaraderie within the rapier community. Participation is optional but highly beneficial for those involved in rapier activities.

Guild Charter

“We, in representation of the Academie d’Espee of Atlantia, come before You, King and Queen, to request that, by Law and by the Right of the Dread Sovereigns of Majestic and Mighty Atlantia, we be recognized by Royal Charter as a Guild of Atlantia.”



Quick Differences Between Practices And Events

Practices

Baronies and shires organize skill improvement practices in a non-competitive environment. You can find local practices through your group's Chatelaine or online.

Participation is free and open to everyone. Non-members of the SCA must sign a waiver.

Events

Rapier fencing activities at events are scheduled at specific times and require payment and prior **authorization** to participate.

Engage, have fun, learn, and network at events listed on the Atlantia Calendar. Remember to ask questions outside of combat times to respect fencers.

SCA Rapier Practices

part 1



SCA Rapier Practices

Atlantia offers fencing programs for children and adults, each governed by specific age-related rules.

18+

Adults: Participate in the adult rapier program.

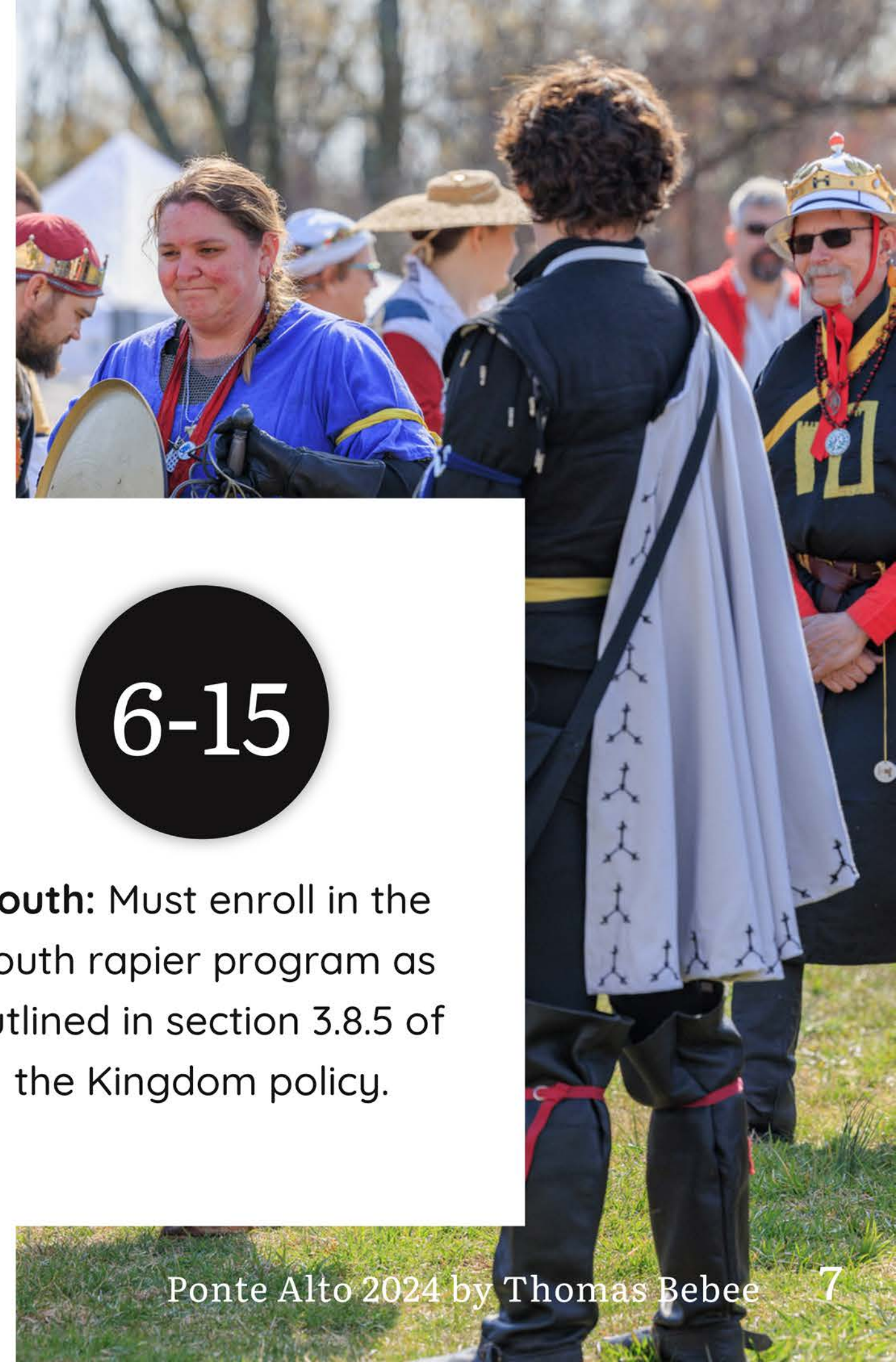
16/17

Older Teens: Can choose between the youth or adult programs, but are restricted to participating in only one.

6-15

Youth: Must enroll in the youth rapier program as outlined in section 3.8.5 of the Kingdom policy.

Note that the youth rapier program is managed separately by the Kingdom Youth Rapier Marshal, not the Kingdom Rapier Marshal.



| Requirements for Safety

In rapier combat, participants wear protective gear and use weapons with dull blades for safety. Volunteer marshals oversee activities, and the command "Hold" stops the action if any issue arises. **The community takes extensive measures to prioritize safety and well-being.**

Injury Prevention & SCA Combat Longevity*

Preventing injuries is crucial for the safety and longevity of the sport. Understanding body mechanics, wearing proper gear, and practicing correct techniques are essential. Master Baru le Bataillier (Bumi) offers a class and videos focusing on effective injury prevention strategies, increasing body awareness, and adapting to physical stress to help fencers enjoy the sport safely.



What to Bring to Your First Practice

Please wear comfortable athletic attire, including pants and sturdy shoes. Protective gear is essential for your safety. **Most local groups provide loaner gear, so more weapons/swords are usually available than participants.**

Ensure you have the necessary groin protection and rigid gear for vulnerable areas for practice. You are responsible for their safety equipment, which is unavailable for borrowing. However, it's okay if you don't have it for the initial practice focusing on footwork and blade techniques.

Atlantia Map by Torunn Heilari of Windmasters Hill



Kingdom of
Atlantia



Ponte Alto SCA Practice, Oct 2022

“Don't try to "win"
practices.”

– Noble Sigfríd

Additional Requirements To Start

part 2



To start fencing training, mental and practical preparations are necessary.

Mindset Requirements

- **Dual Perspective of Fencing:** Approach fencing as a competitive sport and a traditional martial art, balancing efficiency and precision in competitions with discipline, respect, and self-improvement.
- **Commitment to Learning:** Adopt a learner's mindset, valuing continuous improvement and skill acquisition over immediate results. This involves patience, resilience, and openness to feedback, which is essential for growth in Fencing.
- **Respect for the Practice:** Embrace the etiquette and honor core to martial arts, extending respect to fellow fencers, instructors, and the sport's traditions.
- **Goal-Oriented Approach:** Set clear, achievable goals for practice and competition to maintain motivation and track progress.

To start fencing training, mental and practical preparations are necessary.

Practical Requirements

- **Physical Fitness:** A basic level of physical fitness enhances the agility, strength, and endurance necessary for the sport.

If you have any injuries and fitness requirements, talk to your care provider to ensure you can practice this sport.

- **Regular Practice:** Commit to regular practice sessions to reinforce techniques and build muscle memory. Higher-level fencers are not obligated to coach or teach classes at practices, but many do so to support the Rapier community.
- **Engagement Outside the Fencing Piste:** Deepen your connection to the sport by engaging with the community and studying historical techniques and theories.
- **Feedback and Mentorship:** Actively seek input from more experienced fencers and consider mentorship to enhance learning experiences.

| Fight Gear to Acquire

Local fencing practices generally provide loaner gear, but it's beneficial for participants to acquire their equipment for a better and more hygienic experience. The first personal items to purchase after mandatory **protective gear for vulnerable areas** should be a **mask** and a **gorget**, as these are crucial for safety and are not always available to borrow.



Protective Gear for Vulnerable Areas
(Balaur Fencing Chest Protector)



Fencing Mask and Hood
(Racaire's Workshop)



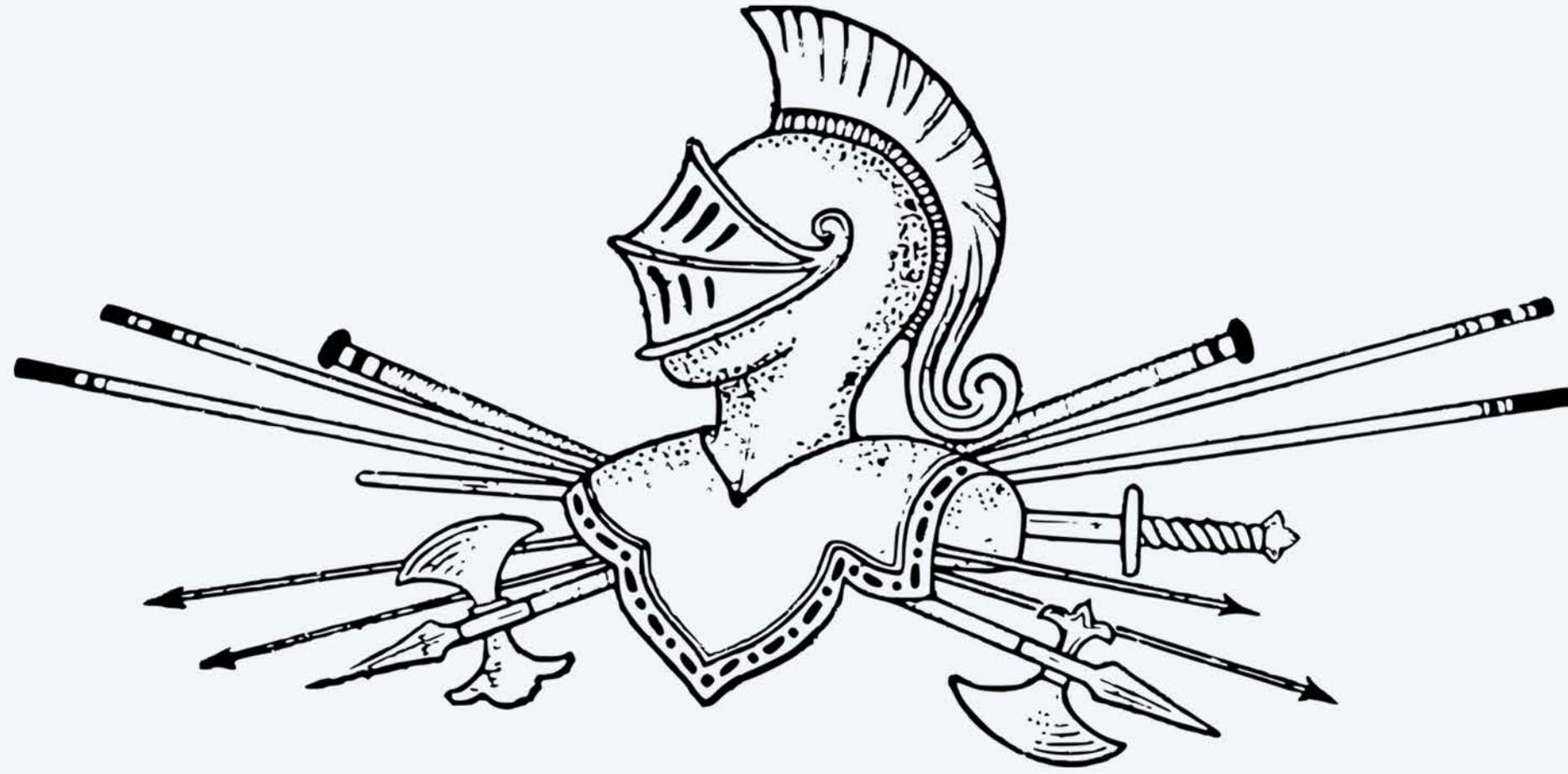
Fencing Gorget (That Gal's Gorgets)

| Sword & Garb

While swords and other defensive equipment are often available to borrow at practices, having your protective gear, especially items that require frequent cleaning, significantly improves your quality of life.

Newcomers should be aware of **the Gold Key**, which provides event attire to ensure participants adhere to the appropriate dress code. Contact the local Chatelaine for guidance on availability and appropriateness. Find more information on your local Facebook group and website.





“You're not training
against me, but
yesterday's you.”

- Duke Ragnarr Blackhammer

On Defining Personal Goals.

In the SCA

- When setting goals in SCA and fencing, consider your commitment level. It's essential to set clear goals and proceed at your own pace.
- Attending one practice a week without home practice can lead to **authorization in around six months**.
- More frequent practices may expedite your progress, but be cautious of conflicting advice and stick to one practice as your reference point.
- To advance in rapier, seek top fencers for a structured training plan and consider additional "homework" at home like solo drills, footwork, and lunges.

“Practice like you are going on an adventure.
Diligently & consistently.” - **Master Celric d'Ravelle**

On Defining Personal Goals.

Outside of the SCA

- **Historical European Martial Arts (HEMA)** is a popular alternative for getting more practice time.
- However, HEMA practices tend to be less uniformly regulated. For instance, a local HEMA club might require a 6-month Longsword course to fence Rapier.
- Personal experience suggests that HEMA provides opportunities to face various opponents. However, HEMA and SCA offer distinct learning experiences with sometimes little overlap, which may only suit some preferences.

Master Aeron Harper organizes **Lord Baltimore's Challenge**, one of the few overlapping events.

First SCA Event (Rapier)

part 3



Becoming an Authorized Fencer

In the SCA, individuals must pass a safety test called **authorization** to participate in competitive rapier fencing at events. The authorization process ensures familiarity with the rules. It demonstrates sufficient control for combat safety.

Authorizations are typically conducted at every SCA event before the activities (except for Pennsic - there is none). There are several categories of fencing authorization, including Light Rapier, Heavy Rapier, Cut & Thrust Combat, and Rapier Spear, and fencers must be authorized in each category they wish to participate in.



| Authorization

Authorization tests are conducted by impartial marshals and an usher who cannot be your regular practice partners. Doing mock authorizations at your local practice is recommended for practical experience and insights into the test expectations.

To prepare for authorization,

- Read the SCA's Fencing Marshal's Handbook.
- Familiarize yourself with Atlantia's specific rules.
- Participate in a mock authorization with your local marshals to familiarize yourself with the process.
- Create an account in Atlantia's Authorization Database.



| Local Events

To stay informed about local rapier activities in Atlantia, consider joining the Academie d'Espee's Facebook group. This public group is a hub for updates and discussions about rapier events within the kingdom.

Generally, Rapier fencing activities start after morning court, but it is better to check beforehand.

Authorizations often happen in the early morning before the first tourney.



Participate in your First Event

What to Expect (1/2)

1. Getting Ready at Home:

Gold Key is the best place to find properly fitting clothing when preparing for your first fencing event. Fencers will advise you on the required equipment, and you can borrow gear from your local practice for your first events, keeping it for the event weekend and returning it afterward.

2. Check-In Process:

When you arrive at an SCA event, your first step is to check in at the event registration, commonly referred to as “**Troll**.”

Here, you'll pay the event fee; if you're not a member of the SCA, you must sign a waiver to participate.

Participate in your First Event

What to Expect (2/2)

3. Authorization and Inspection:

Head to the Minister of the List (MoL) table near the fighting field or check-in area. You must be authorized to fight and understand the rules and safety requirements. Additionally, a marshal will inspect your armor and weapons to confirm they meet safety regulations before combat.

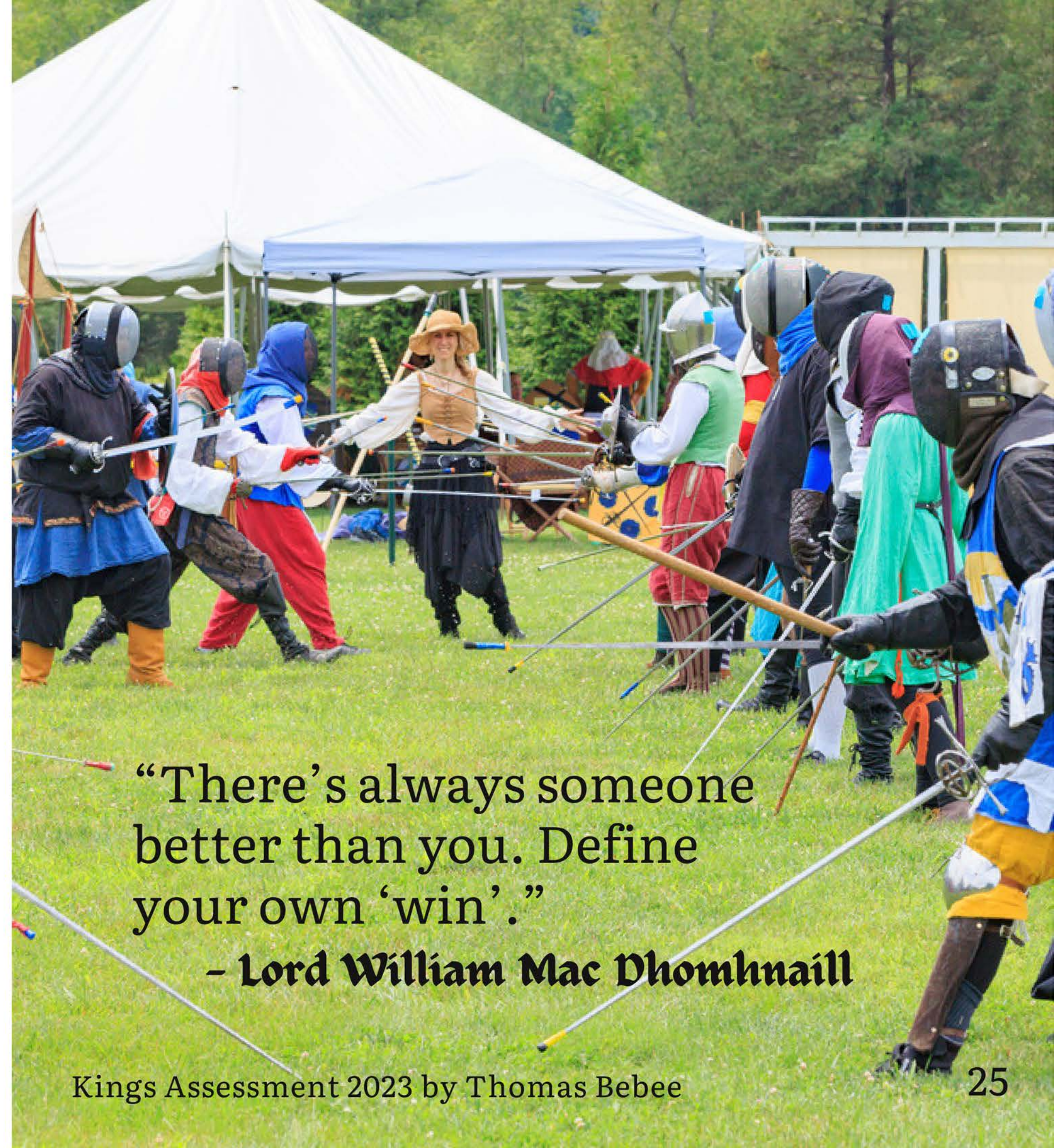
4. Participation:

There are different ways to approach events. You can use them as opportunities to grow personally, without competing against others, or as a chance to challenge yourself and improve your previous performances.

| Rapier Activities

The rapier field has two main types of activities: **tourneys and melees**. Tourneys usually involve one-on-one fights, while melees engage multiple fencers against each other. To participate, it is essential to know the rules of the activity, which may vary from one event to another. The authorization process usually includes familiarizing oneself with the rules and listening to the Marshal in charge on the field. If you have any questions, don't hesitate to ask.

For a comprehensive list of Rapier activities, consult the MOL Handbook.



“There’s always someone better than you. Define your own ‘win’.”

– Lord William Mac Dhomhnaill

Out-Of-Kingdom Events

When Atlantian fencers attend events outside their kingdom, they should remember that armor only needs to meet the minimum standards set by the Society. Different kingdoms have different rules for weapon styles. Familiarizing yourself with local rules on valid blows is crucial for safety and compliance.

Two major out-of-Kingdom events where Atlantian fencers often participate are **Pennsic (Slippery Rock, PA)** and **Gulf War (Lumberton, MS)**.



Recognize your peers on the Field

Understanding the rankings of peers is important for fostering camaraderie and navigating learning and practice environments effectively. In Atlantia, monarchs grant orders and peerages at court, while the Academie confers ranks. Orders are specific to Atlantia, while the peerage is a royal rank recognized throughout the Society.

Orders and Rapier peerage

- **The Award of Arms (AOA) of Rapier**, also known as the Order of the Sea Dragon, is given to those who excel in rapier fencing. Recipients are granted the title of Lord or Lady and can design their coat of arms. The award is represented by a necklace featuring a Sea Dragon.
- **The Order of the White Scarf** recognizes expertise and leadership in the rapier community. It is closely linked with the Provost rank within the Academie, but it is an independent honor granted by the Kingdom. Those who receive this honor wear a white scarf to symbolize their advanced skill level.
- **The Peerage of the Master of Defense (MoD)** is the highest honor, representing mastery and peerage status in rapier fencing. Masters of Defense wear a medallion featuring three crossed swords.

Ranks with Oaths

- **The rank of Scholar** is the entry-level position within the Academie for those authorized in rapier fencing. Scholars wear a blue scarf to signify their commitment to learning and improving their skills. This rank is open to all individuals interested in joining the Academie, regardless of their initial fencing level. The Scholar's Oath affirms their dedication to the Academie's ideals.
- **The Free Scholar** rank signifies an intermediate level of achievement within the Academie. Individuals at this rank wear a gold scarf, indicating their deeper knowledge and enhanced skills in rapier fencing. Free Scholars have moved past the basics and are committed to advancing their understanding and proficiency in the art, confirmed through the Free Scholar's Oath and Prize.
- **Provosts** in the Academie are advanced practitioners identified by a white scarf, demonstrating expertise in rapier fencing. They guide and mentor less experienced fencers, contributing to the community's growth. The Provost's Oath formalizes their commitment to these responsibilities and ideals.
- **The rank of Distinguished Provost** is reserved for members of the Order of Defense who are also part of the Academie. It signifies mastery in rapier fencing and a deep commitment to the Academie's values and community. Distinguished Provosts play a crucial role in shaping the direction and standards of the Academie, and they affirm their dedication to these high ideals through the Master's Oath.

Fencing community leaders, like Provosts, White Scarves, and Masters of Defense (MoDs), oversee events and practices. **Marshals** leading rapier activities can be identified by their black and yellow colors on a stick.

Conclusion & Next Steps



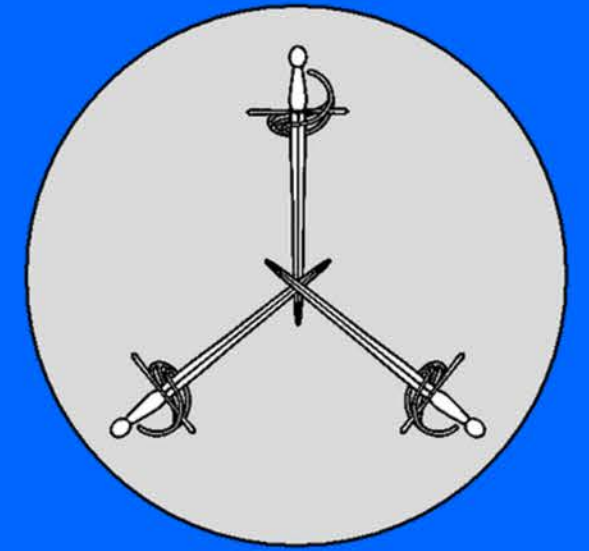
Thank you for reading this class! Be sure to explore the additional resources and local practice listings provided. Your journey in rapier fencing starts here, and we're excited to see where it takes you. If you have any questions or need further guidance, please get in touch with me.

YIS,

~Lady Virginie de Champagne

SCA Fall University 2024

Thank You Note



With the participation of:

- Magister Percival Aldridge (Percy)
- Master Armand Schermitore (Armand)
- Master Jacques Gonse (JG)
- Master Geoffrey Gamble
- Master Elphin ap Dafyd
- Master Cailin Blackwood
- Master Brian De Moray
- Master Darren Di Battista
- Master Ffernfael of Carleon
- Magistra Letia Thistelthueyt
- Master Raphael de la Rosa
- Lord Ulfarr Refskegg

Links and additional resources

Official Practices List

General SCA Resources

- [SCA Homepage](#)
- [SCA Kingdom Lookup](#)
- [Welcome to the SCA](#)

Rapier Combat and Atlantia Specific Links

- [SCA Rapier Combat Resources](#)
- [Kingdom of Atlantia Official Site](#)
- [Atlantia Kingdom Marshal's Office - Rapier Combat](#)
- [Atlantia Kingdom Marshal's Office - Practices](#)
- [Atlantia Governing Documents](#)

Academie d'Espee Links

- [Academie d'Espee Official Site](#)
- Academie d'Espee on [Facebook Group](#) - A community group for members of the Academie d'Espee guild.

Additional Resources

- [MOL Handbook](#) - Ministers of the List Handbook
- Guidelines on [Becoming an Authorized Rapier Fighter](#)
- Information on [Youth Combat](#)
- [Pennsic War](#)
- [Gulf Wars](#)
- [Lord Baltimore's Challenge](#)
- [The Awards of the Kingdom of Atlantia](#)
- [Ask a question to Bumi about sports injuries](#)

“Remember, swords are awesome.”

- Master Brían De Moray