

What sports and martial arts comprise fencing?

Contributed by Administrator
Friday, 14 November 2003

The Olympic sport of fencing is comprised of three weapons: foil, epee, and sabre. All are fenced on a long rectangular strip, and electronic scoring aids are normally used to assist in the detection of touches.

The rules governing these three weapons are determined by the FIE (Federation Internationale d'Escrime). Briefly, the FIE weapons are described as follows:

Foil: Descended from the 18th century small sword, the foil has a thin, flexible blade with a square cross-section and a small bell guard. Touches are scored with the point on the torso of the opponent, including the groin and back. Foil technique emphasizes strong defense and the killing attack to the body.

Epee: Similar to the dueling swords of the mid-19th century, epees have stiff blades with a triangular cross section, and large bell guards. Touches are scored with the point, anywhere on the opponent's body. Unlike foil and sabre, there no rules of right-of-way to decide which attacks have precedence, and double hits are possible. Epee technique emphasizes timing, point control, and a good counter-attack.

Sabre: Descended from dueling sabres of the late 19th century, which were in turn descended from naval and cavalry swords, sabres have a light, flat blade and a knuckle guard. Touches can be scored with either the point or the edge of the blade, anywhere above the opponent's waist. Sabre technique emphasizes speed, feints, and strong offense.

The most popular of eastern fencing techniques is kendo, the Japanese "Way of the Sword". Kendo is fought with a bamboo shinai, intended to resemble a two-handed Japanese battle sword. Combatants wear armour, and strike to the top or sides of the head, the sides of the body, the throat, or the wrists. Accepted technique must be observed, and judges watch for accuracy, power, and spirit. See the Japanese Sword Arts FAQ for more information.

Other martial arts that include elements of swordsmanship are:

Aikido -- self defense against armed and unarmed attackers. Includes using and defending oneself against Japanese sword techniques.

Arnis, Escrima, Kali -- Phillipino stick and knife disciplines.

Iaido -- the Japanese art of the sword draw (also Iaijutsu and batto-jutsu, more combat-oriented variants of the same).

Jogo do Pau -- a Portuguese stick-fighting discipline.

Jojutsu -- a Japanese stick-fighting discipline.

Kalaripayitt -- includes sword and weapons techniques from south India.

Kenjutsu -- the unadulterated Japanese martial art of the sword.

Krabi Krabong -- a Thai martial art that includes many sword forms.

Kumdo -- A Korean variant of Kendo.

Kung-fu -- a Chinese martial art that includes many sword techniques.

La Canne -- French Boxing, with a single-handed stick, using rules similar to classical fencing.

Le Baton -- similar to La Canne, but with a longer, 2-handed stick.

Maculele -- Afro-Brazilian machete forms, related to Capoeira.

Mensur -- German fraternity "duelling", with schlaggers.

Modern Pentathlon -- the "soldier's medley", a sport that recreates demands placed on a pre-20th century military messenger: running, swimming, shooting, equestrian jumping, and epee fencing.

Pentjak Silat -- Indonesian arts that include sword and stick forms.

Single Stick -- an ancestor of sabre fencing, fought with a basket-hilted wooden rod.

SCA duello -- rapier-like fencing in the round, with off-hand=20 techniques. Additional info on the SCA can be found in the newsgroup rec.org.sca.

SCA heavy lists -- medieval-style heavy combat, with rattan weapons, armour, and shields. Additional info on the SCA can be found in the newsgroup rec.org.sca.

Shinkendo -- real-sword-oriented variant of Kendo.

Tai Chi -- another Chinese martial art that includes many sword techniques.

Lastly, it should be pointed out that stick/baton fighting, shield use, and related infantry tactics continue to be a part of modern riot police training.