BSIS Protective Equipment & Safety Standards

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# Introduction

The Brisbane School of Iberian Swordsmanship (BSIS) has an expected standard of protection for the various activities we do and for activities with more risk there is an escalating expectation of Protective Equipment. These rules are modelled on those of the School of Historical Defense Arts (SHDA), and reflect the standards of the HEMA community.

Safety is the responsibility of all members. Members should be mindful of their own safety, and attentive of safety risks in others, particularly sparring partners. Behaviour is the first line of defence, but safety equipment is a required contingency.

All members of BSIS will abide by the BSIS Protective Equipment & Safety Standards when participating in BSIS approved activities. This does not include cross training with other schools.

# 1. How activities are organised

In terms of equipment standards BSIS discriminates between various activities, or styles of play. This is formally divided into four levels; Training, Scholar’s Privilege, Light sparring, Competitive (tournament).

There are three levels of protective gear standards that almost correspond to this list. These are: Minimal Protective Equipment, Light Protective Equipment, Sparring Equipment.

# 1.1 Activities by level

The levels below encompass a spectrum of risk. Within each level, when deciding where on the spectrum an activity lies, matters taken into account would include speed, competency, and environmental concerns.

# 1.1.1. Training

a) This is for drills and controlled exercises.

b) This activity is preferably supervised.

c) If replica weapons are not in use the standard of equipment is likely to be Minimal Protective Equipment and is determined by supervising instructor.

d) If replica weapons are in use Minimal Protective Equipment is required.

e) If the activity is higher risk, Light Protective Equipment is recommended.

# 1.1.2. Scholar’s Privilege

a) Scholar’s privilege activities do not target head or throat.

b) This form of play is explicitly slow in intensity. Speed should be consistent and adjusted to the comfort of the slowest party.

c) For safety reasons, the mindset should not be fully competitive.

d) Focus is on skill and technique rather than speed or strength.

e) As some of our later-taught Destreza Actions require higher levels of tip control, it is not permissible for a member to use in Scholar’s Privilege techniques that the member has not been taught.

f) Minimal Protective Equipment is required.

g) If the activity is higher risk, Light Protective Equipment is recommended.

# 1.1.3. Light sparring

a) This is an escalation of the previous level.

b) A strong level of control/restraint is still expected, but higher intensity is permitted.

c) Preferably supervised and taking place within designated sparring time.

f) Targeting of head and throat is permitted, therefore

d) Light Protective Equipment is required.

e) If the activity is higher risk, Sparring Equipment is recommended.

# 1.1.4. Competitive (Tournament)

a) This is the level of intensity that is witnessed at competitive events such as tournaments.

b) This is often the level of intensity seen at other schools, and they will have their own standards.

c) The minimum level of equipment will be set by event organisers. Students of BSIS should maintain as a minimum the BSIS expectation of protective equipment at these events.

d) Intensity is often high. Students should be prepared to encounter opponents fencing at an intensity not often practiced within BSIS.

e) The objective for participants is usually to win and so fully competitive in mindset.

f) BSIS expectation of protective equipment is Sparring Equipment.

# 1.2 Drilling

Drilling is performing controlled exercises and has the goal of building up technique and skills while encouraging participation of members. It is explicitly not sparring or competitive. In reflection of this drilling requires the least amount of safety equipment and falls under the training category above (1.1.1). Drilling is preferably supervised.

# 1.3 Targets

At BSIS there is a culture of training with low levels of protective equipment and so it is necessary to address targets. A rule of thumb would be that you do not strike to areas that are unprotected, this is especially true if the activity falls under Training or Scholar’s Privilege in the activities section. Usually it is acceptable to indicate or place an attack upon someone who is unprotected. The equipment standards above lay out the gradual increase of acceptable intensity. If the opponent is not wearing a mask and throat protector, the head and throat is off-target. When making attacks there is an expectation that some areas are prioritised and some avoided. The prioritised target is the torso, or if wearing the appropriate level of equipment, the torso and mask.

Groin – there is no strategic advantage to aiming for the groin area of a person, and it cannot be assumed they are protected. With this reasoning it is best to avoid targeting that area, especially to avoid setting a habit.

Joints – joints such as elbows, knees and wrists are areas of particular risk of pain and injury and should be avoided as a general principle. If visibly protected then effort does not need to be expended to avoid them, but they should still not be the intended target of the attack.

# 1.4 Scholar’s Privilege

The practice of Scholar’s Privilege is formally taught within the school and reflects a belief in not passing on the burden of protection to equipment, and so requires participants exercise a greater degree of self-control to compensate. Categories above mention the levels of equipment and which two levels correspond to scholar’s privilege.

# 2. Protective Equipment Standards

With the activities in BSIS there are expectations of protective equipment which is the principle focus of this document. The equipment required exists on a spectrum and this document attempts to organise the escalation of expected equipment along that spectrum. Required equipment was listed earlier in this document and this is where to find what exactly the required equipment refers to.

The wearing of eye protection is required at any time a member or their training partner (including instructors) is using replica weapons. Gloves are required when using equipment that can rust, unless it belongs to the user.

# 2.1. Minimal Protective Equipment

This category is for the bare minimum equipment expected. When Minimal Protective Equipment is referred to it usually means to be determined by instructor. The intent of Minimal Protective Equipment is basic safety gear for very safe and controlled activities such as drills. This minimum standard requires protection for the eyes such as safety glasses. Another aim is that skin is not exposed, which can require the wearing of long pants and long sleeves.

# 2.2. Light Protective Equipment

The intent for this equipment is light forms of sparring. What is required is a fencing mask and throat protector. It is preferred that no skin is showing. It is recommended that students increase the protection worn if they desire. The minimum does not mean more protection is discouraged. Examples of other protection that while not required is recommended would be a puncture resistant and/or padded material (such as fencing jackets), hard elbow and knee protection.

# 2.3. Sparring Equipment

For activities are higher intensity, more protective equipment is required. These requirements are made with rapiers in mind, and other training tools would require escalating requirements to be determined by participants, instructors and the club.

Requirements include:

1. All protective equipment required by the event.
2. A fencing mask (preferably to FIE standards as tested in CE laboratory).
3. Throat protector, preferably rigid. Ideally a combination of rigid and padded protection.
4. Back of Head Protection, preferably by a professional supplier.
5. Puncture resistant torso protection to 350N rating is required. Additionally, padding is highly recommended. A rigid plastic chest protector is also recommended.
6. Gloves, of leather or similar.
7. Groin protection if anatomically appropriate.
8. Elbow and knee protection are recommended.
9. As mentioned, these requirements are designed for rapier. Other weapon trainers could warrant other equipment such as heavily protective gloves and leg and arm protection.

# 3. Weapon trainer standards

Weapons used are trainer weapons, intended to be comparable to sharp swords but blunt. Sometimes the weight, width, flexibility and balance will be altered purposely for safety and this is acceptable. Various trainers will require more levels of control and equipment to use safely. This is up to the judgement of the user and each participant should be aware of and comfortable with what the opponent is fencing with. Training weapons should have an appropriate level of flex, to be decided by school expectations. Training weapons are to be fitted with a tip cover such as rubber or leather and regularly be examined for burs.

# 3.1 Training equipment (weapons) and their use

Rules for activities are defined within the activity in question. Rules are usually assumed by common use within the school. Thrusts should not be punitive. Cuts should be restrained, and hard contact should not be expected to prove a viable cutting motion as viable cutting motions can be harmful to participants. Some drawing motion is appropriate to simulate viable cutting if done safely. Striking with excessive force is not permitted and is the key factor used to judge control. Level of force acceptable is defined by expected intensity for designated activity. Participants should know that there is a risk of bruising in practice.

# 4. Rules of Play

**a) Risk**There is an inherent risk to the activities we accept even in controlled practice. Students participating in activities should be mindful of how their actions can present risk to others, particularly partners in the various activities.

**b) Sharp weapons**

Accepted training tools are blunt trainers, with an expected level of flex. BSIS does not allow activities resembling any kind of sparring or free-play with sharp weapons. Acceptable use of sharp weapons is test-cutting as described in the Test Cutting Safety Guidelines.

**c) Awareness**

BSIS members are required to know this document and related documents (eg. BSIS Policies).

**d) Unsafe equipment**

Instructors and administrative team reserve the right to disallow equipment they believe unsafe. All members will be on lookout for safety issues. All members have the right to decline to work with equipment or persons they consider unsafe.

**e) Behaviour**

Participants are expected to be controlled in behaviour and should be coached towards that state of mind. Participants can be reprimanded if their conduct is believed to be uncontrolled in compliance with our policies.

**f) Disciplinary action**

Active or severe breaches of these rules can see disciplinary action. BSIS reserves the right to withdraw approval for activities, or in extreme cases remove students from the school.

# 4.1 Fencing conduct

**a) Intent**

BSIS seeks to recreate historical Iberian Fencing Styles in a safe manner.

**b) Hold**

When hold is called all participants are expected to cease their activity and attempt to identify immediate risks to safety, taking action to prevent risks if necessary.

**c) Harm**

There should never be an intent to cause real harm. If the historical use of a technique or action is at risk of causing serious harm it should be adjusted. Participants are to be mindful of the protective equipment being worn by all parties. All actions should be actively seeking not to cause injury.

**d) Issues and disputes**

Disputes should be resolved between the two parties, and if not resolvable by the two parties, should then be taken to a mediator such as an instructor, admin member or Well-Being Officer. This is expanded upon in ‘8. Grievance Procedure’ and reinforced in the Policies document.

**e) Impairments**

Participants with a condition that impacts control (such as illness or injury) will receive special safety provisions. They should not be under the influence of substances that would negatively impact control, such as alcohol.

**h) Injury**

Injuries are to be treated seriously. Appropriate action should be undertaken to address injuries. Participants should be mindful of any injuries received, and it is better to err on the side of caution and not continue fencing. Instructors can discontinue a bout if they believe there is an injury that warrants attention. Any injury severe enough to stop an activity should be reported and considered for documentation. If in the incident first aid is required, the incident must be documented.

# 5. Grappling

For the purpose of rules, grappling is defined as contact made to control the person’s body, an example would be grabbing their arm, or their hilt. Not all participants will be comfortable with grappling. Conclusions taught in the school are considered safe for general practice. Standing grapples are usually acceptable but should be agreed upon first between participants. Take-downs and joint-locks are examples of actions considered too dangerous for general practice. Only exceptional circumstances would allow them.

# 6. Roles and responsibilities

a) Brisbane School of Iberian Swordsmanship does not wish to create a strict hierarchy considering all members voluntary participants. Students are expected to listen to instructors who are considered more responsible for the safety and well-being of participants.

b) Students should remain conscious of safety, not just for themselves or their partner but general safety within the hall. They are responsible for themselves and others they are interacting with.

# 7. Grievance Procedure

a) Individuals are expected to attempt to resolve grievances with each other first.

b) If this is not possible, they should seek an arbitrator, such as an admin member, Well-being Officer or an instructor.

c) Hopefully legal action will not need to be involved, but such action would almost certainly involve the school’s insurer. The school’s insurer is ALHF: Australian Living History Federation Inc.

# 8. off-hand weapons

Guidelines for the use of off-hand weapons such as dagger, buckler, rotella, and cape:

a) Combatants trained at BSIS with these items (Scholar students and above) may do Scholar's Privilege with off-hand weapons.

b) Combatants trained by a school other than BSIS in the use of off-hand weapons may do masked free-play (Light Protective Equipment) with those weapons.

c) We recommend that combatants with no training in off-hand weapons wait in order to avoid learning habits that will later have to be unlearned. If combatants with no training in off-hand weapons choose to fence with off-hand weapons, appropriate safety protection is required.

# 9. Visitors

Visitors (members of insured HEMA clubs) to BSIS may not participate in Scholar’s Privilege as this is something we train and assess before permitting our own members to engage in and other schools will not necessarily understand this practice.

Visitors to BSIS wishing to participate in sparring other than Scholar’s Privilege may do so with a minimum of the BSIS required minimum for the activity level they are sparring at.

Visitors will be appraised by an instructor for safety before commencing masked combat. For visitors known to an instructor this appraisal may be informal.