

Essential Information – Competition Sparring

This guide is intended for those who have yet to compete or who may be unfamiliar with certain aspects of competition sparring.

Preparation

The best way to prepare for sparring is to spar. Make sure you spar as many different people as you can in the lead up to a tournament, so that you will be better prepared to face opponents of varying styles, size and ability.

If you are nervous, don't worry – everyone feels nerves before a tournament, even experienced competitors. Remember, there is no reason why your opponent is not nervous as well, so try to give off an air of confidence – this will give you a psychological edge over an anxious opponent.

On the day of the tournament, make sure you have enough food and water for the day – do not eat too close to the time when you are due to be on the mat, though – and a towel is useful. Always warm up before sparring, and warm up properly. Go through a warm-up routine that will increase your blood flow, and then do some stretching. Find another competitor, a coach or anyone else from your club and try to go through some basic pad and sparring drills with them. Once warm, stay warm, relax and keep moving.



Equipment

Gloves, foot pads and groin guard (males only) are mandatory. Head guards, mouth guards and shin pads are optional. Groin guards must be worn on the inside of the dobok, and gloves must be close-fingered. All equipment must conform to the minimum standard as set out by the tournament organisers – torn foot pads, for example, as they could cut an opponent.

No jewellery, watches or other adornments may be worn. Hair may be kept in place using a soft elastic-type band only, no grips or slides are allowed.

All competitors with injuries that require bandaging or strapping of any kind must satisfy the tournament doctor of their need, and obtain approval before competing. No pins or hard material can be worn, neither can bandaging give extra support so that it gives an advantage to that competitor.

If the Centre Referee or any other official is not satisfied with any of your sparring equipment, it must be changed. If it is noticed after you have been called to the ring to compete, the Jury President will allow three minutes for you to make the change, after which, if the requested changes have not been made, the bout will automatically be awarded to your opponent.

The Ring

Sparring rings vary in size and type. The official AETF ring for senior tournaments is composed of 9 x 9 metres of padded matting, but some tournaments will use smaller dimensions, and some do not use mats.



Officials

On each ring there will be

- 1 Jury President
- 1 or 2 Jury Members
- 1 Centre Referee
- 4 Corner Referees

The Jury President will be the most senior black belt of the officials. He sits at the table at the front, presides over the ring and is the authority in terms of decisions and any disputes that may arise. He advises the Centre Referee, and monitors all Referees to ensure that they are fair and consistent. The Jury President announces the result at the end of each bout.

The Jury President will be assisted by one or two Jury Members. Their main duties are timekeeping, keeping track of the draw and announcing competitors.

The Centre Referee runs the ring itself. He will give all commands to the competitors, and it is he who decides when to stop the fight, award warnings, call for First Aid etc.

The four Corner Referees are the ones who actually look for and record any points scored. They will do so either on score cards or, as is becoming more common, electronically.



Scoring

At the end of the bout, the competitor who has scored the most points (minus any point deductions) wins. Points are awarded only by the Corner Referees. A Corner Referee will only score a point if:

- the attack lands on part of the legal target area
- the attack is executed correctly
- the attack is dynamic (delivered with strength, purpose, rapidity and precision)
- the attack is controlled on the target
- he sees it!

The target area is composed of two sections – the Head and the Body.

Head – the front and sides of the head and neck area

Body – the front and sides of the trunk of the body, from shoulders to belt (not including the arms).

NB the back and all parts of the body below the belt are considered to be illegal targets.

Different points are awarded for different attacks to different sections of the body:

1 Point	Kick to the Body Punch to the Head Jumping punch to the Body
2 Points	Kick to the Head Jumping kick to the Body Jumping punch to the Head
3 Points	Jumping kick to the Head

NB a technique will only be considered to be “jumping” if both feet are off the floor as the attack makes contact.



Warnings and Fouls

On the table at the front of the ring there will be a coloured board, red and blue, with numbers on it. The large numbers represent warnings, the small numbers represent fouls, against red or blue depending on the colour on the board.

Warnings are given by the Centre Referee, and can be received for a number of offences. For every three warnings accrued, one point is deducted from each referee's overall score for you at the end of the bout. So if you receive eight warnings, for example, two points will be deducted. There is no limit to the number of warnings that can be received. A warning will be given for

- attacking an illegal target
- stepping out of the ring (both feet)
- falling down (touching the ground with any part of the body other than the feet, whether intentionally or not)
- holding, grabbing or pushing
- leg sweeping
- faking a blow (pretending to be injured)
- intentionally avoiding sparring

- attempting to influence the Referees, for example by raising the arm after an attack to pretend that you have scored a point

Fouls are given by the Centre Referee for more serious offences. A point is deducted at the end of the bout for every foul that is received. If you receive three fouls in one bout you are automatically disqualified. A foul will be given for

- loss of temper
- insulting an opponent in any way
- biting or scratching
- attacking with the knee, elbow or forehead
- attacking a fallen opponent
- heavy contact

Further to this, the Jury President can **disqualify** a competitor for certain very serious offences, such as

- misconduct against officials, or ignoring instructions
- continued excessively heavy contact
- committing three fouls
- being under the influence of alcohol or drugs

Bout Procedure and the Centre Referee

The Centre Referee controls the ring, and will instruct the competitors largely in Korean.

He will call the competitors to the centre of the ring and prompt them to bow to the Jury, then to each other, and then to go into a ready stance before starting. He will signal the number of the round to the Corner Referees, and then start the sparring. You do not start sparring until the referee says *sijak*.

If at any time during the fight the Centre Referee says *haechyo*, it means that he needs to stop the fight for some reason (eg. to issue a foul or warning, to call for medical assistance, to consult the Jury President or to warn a coach), and you must stop sparring and step away from your opponent. When he is ready for you to resume sparring he will instruct you to go into a ready stance and then say *gaesok*. At the end of the round he will stop the fight by saying *goman*.

When in the ring, listen only to the Centre Referee. The round does not end when the whistle or bell sounds, it ends only when the Centre Referee says *goman*.

He will then send you away to your coach either until the the next round (usually there is a break of 30 seconds in two-round fights), or until the Referees have given their decisions to the Jury President. He will then call you back up to receive the Jury President's decision.

Centre Referee Commands:

<i>Hong</i>	Red
<i>Chong</i>	Blue
<i>Charyot</i>	Attention
<i>Kyong-Ye</i>	Bow
<i>Junbe</i>	Ready
<i>Il Hue Jong</i>	First round
<i>I Hue Jong</i>	Second round
<i>Sam Hue Jong</i>	Third round
<i>Sijak</i>	Start
<i>Haechyo</i>	Break apart
<i>Gaesok</i>	Continue
<i>Goman</i>	Stop
<i>Jung-Ji</i>	Time out
<i>Ju-Ui Hanna</i>	Warning
<i>Gam Jum Hanna</i>	Foul

At the start of a bout:

1. "*Hong, Chong*" – Centre Referee calls the competitors to their places in the ring
2. "*Charyot...kyong-ye*" – Centre Referee instructs competitors to bow to the Jury
3. "*Charyot...kyong-ye*" – Centre Referee instructs competitors to bow to each other
4. "*Junbe*" – Centre Referee instructs competitors to go into a ready stance
5. "*Il hue jong*" – Centre Referee signals to the Corner Referees that round one is about to start
6. "*Sijak*" – Centre Referee raises his hand and sparring begins

During sparring:

1. "*Haechyo*" – Centre Referee spots an attack below the belt by Red and instructs the competitors to stop sparring and move apart
2. "*Hong, ju-ui hanna*" – Centre Referee points to Red and signals to the Jury that he has given a warning
3. "*Junbe*" – Centre Referee instructs competitors to go into a ready stance
4. "*Gaesok*" – Centre Referee raises his hand and sparring continues

At the end of a bout:

1. A member of the Jury signals that the time is up
2. "*Goman*" – Centre Referee instructs the competitors to stop sparring and return to their starting positions
3. "*Charyot...kyong-ye*" - Centre Referee instructs competitors to bow to each other
4. Centre Referee motions for competitors to return to their corner
5. Jury President signals to Centre Referee that a decision has been reached
6. "*Hong, Chong*" – Centre Referee calls both competitors back to their original starting positions
7. Centre Referee takes hold of each competitor's hand, Jury President indicates the winner, Centre Referee raises that competitor's arm
8. "*Charyot...kyong-ye*" – Centre Referee instructs competitors to bow to the Jury
9. Competitors leave the ring



The Decision

At the end of a bout, the Corner Referees total their points scores and submit them to the Jury President (by hand if using score cards, or electronically), deducting any minus points. If three or four Corner Referees have given the fight in favour of one competitor, that competitor wins. If fewer than three agree on a winner, the result is a draw.

In the event of a draw, an extra period will be fought. This period is usually 1 minute, but this varies depending on the tournament. The warnings and fouls totals are reset to zero, and the extra round is fought in the same way as the first two rounds. At the end of the period, the Corner Referees submit their scores again and, if after this period the result is still a draw, the bout goes into "sudden death".

The fight will now be won by the first competitor to score a clear point. The Centre Referee will stop the fight when he sees a point, and then ask the Corner Referees to signal whether or not they also saw it. The point (and therefore the match) is awarded only if three or more Corner Referees signal that they saw the point. If fewer than three see it, the fight continues and is stopped for every point seen by the Centre Referee until three or more Corner Referees signal that they saw the point.



Coaches

Every competitor is entitled to have one coach at the side of the ring during sparring. A coach must wear tracksuit and trainers, remain seated in the chair provided and conduct himself in an appropriate manner. The Centre Referee has the power to warn and then disqualify a coach if he feels that he is behaving inappropriately.

A coach will normally be a senior black belt, who will give advice during the bout and between rounds, and act as your representative if there is any need to consult the Centre Referee or the Jury.

The coach should have your water and towel to hand and will use them to keep you cool between rounds.

Injury

If you sustain an injury during the bout, the Centre Referee will stop the fight and call for the tournament doctor or First Aid.

The doctor is allowed two minutes to decide whether or not a competitor is fit to continue, and four minutes to treat any injury. The doctor has the final say in whether a competitor may or may not continue.

If a longer time than stated is required to treat the injury, or the competitor is judged to be unable to continue, the match is considered to be over. If the competitor is unable to continue and the injury was caused as a result of intent on the part of his opponent, the match is awarded to the competitor.

Behaviour

You must conduct yourself with courtesy at all times, especially when in the ring. You are an ambassador for your association, your school and your instructor.

Treat all officials as though they were your instructor, and *never* argue with or talk back to any of the Referees or Jury. If you have a complaint, or wish to query something, speak to your coach, who will approach the Jury President or the Tournament Organiser on your behalf. Don't be concerned if a Referee from your club seems to ignore you, or if a Centre Referee seems unnecessarily stern – they have to distance themselves from competitors in order to remain fair and impartial.

Be sure to shake hands with your opponent and his coach after the bout, win or lose. Be magnanimous in victory and gracious in defeat.

Remember that tournaments are as much about enjoying yourself and meeting other Taekwon-Do practitioners as they are about competing. And don't forget to support your clubmates when they are in the ring!

After the tournament

Try to do a warm-down, and some stretching. Tournaments can leave people stiff the next day due to the cycle of activity and inactivity that can mean that muscles have cooled down between rounds. Tournaments put the muscles under a different kind of stress than is felt during normal training.

Even if you win, be sure to ask your coach and the spectators for advice, and study any videos that were taken of your bouts.

See also...



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