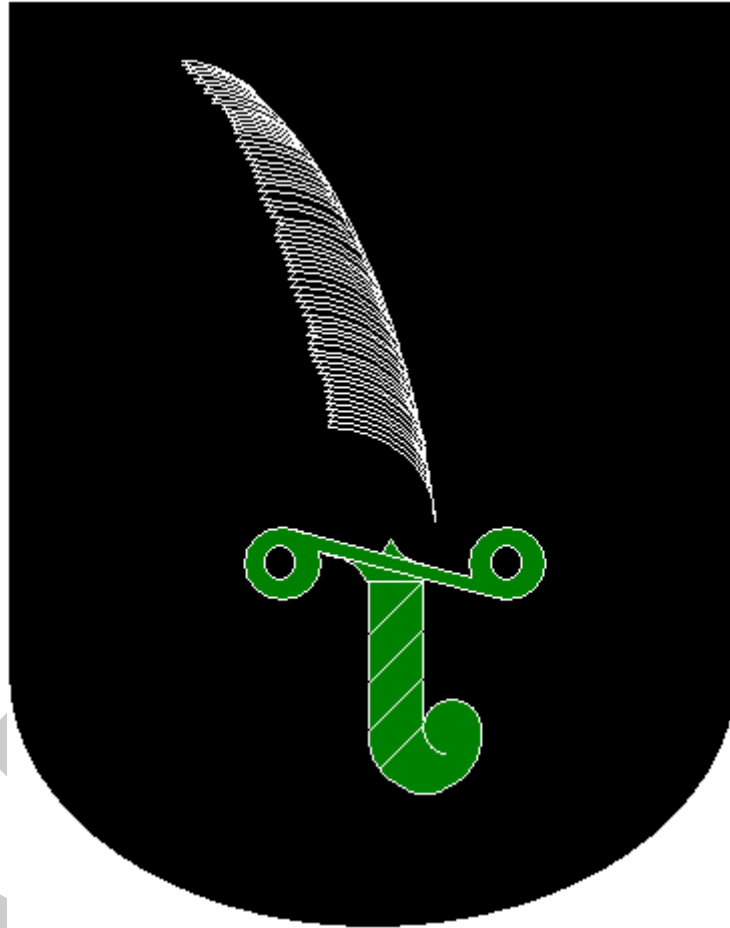


# DBFC

## Drakkenguard's Book of Feather Combat



Written by Tyrnnan Bjornson (aka Elexi Stormcrow)  
Commander of the Drakkenguard  
Mundanely known as Jariah Whitacre

**Version IV**

Thursday August 16, 2007

Dear Reader,

*In the summer of 2004 where one of my friends fondly recites "When the Drakkenguard was just one man"; I was requested by Lord Zorgon of the Hazard and Autocrat of Sea Dog Nights and Gypsy Carnival to host a new set of contests that we were naming the "Dog of the Sea Tournament". With the help of many friends and SCA family, I was able to pull off a very good tournament that made people want more.*

*Over the next two years I was not able to host the games like I had before, but this time only take care of the Boffer Contest. But while only focusing on the fighting aspect of the Tournament, many groups kept coming up to me and discussing with me the nature of boffer combat and how it was both a positive and difficult thing at non-sanctioned events. They expressed many times how difficult it was to get started with so FEW resources online since the sanctioned SCA events only looked at boffer combat as training for smalls.*

*It was then that got me thinking of how I could help those who loved boffer combat as much as I did, and perhaps finally get the SCA at large to see the benefits to supporting this style of martial combat.*

*The Feather Combat name started to be passed around, and a small set of rules began to circulate around just a couple households. In 2006 a small petition was signed by over 300 members of the SCA, both card carrying and non. This small petition to approach the SCA at large with a sanctioned rules set for Feather Combat has now turned into a book. Soon, with the help of many more names and signatures, this book may become the helping hand that lets all of the SCA know that we are serious about our combat style, and will give us the edge to see it as a sanctioned martial sport.*

*My thanks goes to the house Whispers, the Iron Ring, the Leo's Pride, the house of Rogues, the Black Hand, and my own house, the Drakkenguard (amongst many others). This thanks is for all the support and passion you have shown to supporting not only my idea's of fairness and safety, but to also provide a good environment for Feather Combat. Without all of you, the idea would still only be that, a simple idea.*

*I would also like to thank Laurein Blackthorne for all her patience and support in making the DBFC look as good as it does.*

*In further editions to come, I hope to see the DBFC grow to a bulging book that stays both safe and fair, while still supporting the amazing amount of fun that we enjoy in this simple style of martial combat. Only with hard work and determination will we make this happen, as a unified group behind one great idea.*

*Happy Hunting,*

*Sincerely yours,*

*Master Elexi Stormcrow, Tyrnnan Bjornson*

*Commander of the Drakkenguard*

*Personal Guard to Margarette Fae of the House Whispers*

*And Guardian to Jormangands Treaty*

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**NOTE: Things to come**

This version is by far not the complete edition that the Drakkenguard has. In later versions of the DBFC we plan on detailing rules for many different things.

Here is a list of just a few:

- Styles of battles from skirmishes and raids to full competitions and wars.
- Rules for marshals and marshal certification
- Rules for healers
- The ever changing “quotes section”

With support and help from everyone, and many more who will come to the call of our “banner”, the DBFC may yet become An-Tir's answer for all those who wish to compete, but until now were not able.

## Section One: Boffer Construction

### Materials

All boffers have three things in common. PVC, Foam and Duct Tape.

Weapons made with golf clubs, kite bars, and light materials such as these are not allowed in FEATHER COMBAT. The reason for this is it gives an unfair advantage towards weapons that should be heavier (i.e. A broadsword made with a golf club core would be infinitely lighter than one made of PVC and would negate the skill of the combatants over a lighter weapon that should be roughly the same weight).

Weapons made with bamboo cores (NOT RETAN) are allowed for POLEARMS ONLY. The bamboo must be completely covered in duct tape SECURLY, this prevents splintering if the bamboo shatters and scratches gained from glancing strikes.

### Accepted PVC

The reason that the core of the boffer is PVC is because it is about the right weight, has the right flexibility, and is a resilient material. To many times have we seen individuals using golf club or broom stick cores that cause serious injury.

- The best PVC is ½" to ¾", schedule 40.
- Do not fill PVC with anything. You may NOT weight the PVC with anything on the inside.

### Foam

The reason we use foam is an obvious one. It pads the solid core and makes taking a hit easier. The rule of thumb with foam is to use enough of it so that you have compression of about a 1" to 1 ½". That does not mean using only a 1" to a 1 ½" foam, that means that the foam must squish at least that much.

- Soft cell and hard cell accepted.
- It is best to pad the core of the weapon with pipe insulation foam of the appropriate size. This gives a good base to work from.
- Striking areas, as stated before, needs about a 1" to a 1 ½" compression. We have found using another piece of uncut pipe insulation laid on top of the core will provide adequate padding compression.
- If using hard cell for any striking areas, it must be padded with soft cell to cushion.

### Duct Tape (and other kinds of tape)

Duct Tape works best as binding strips for most everything on the boffer.

- Duct tape must cover all foam and be used LENGTH wise. Never SPIRAL wrap. The reason is that if you spiral wrap the duct tape it will drastically decrease the amount of compression you have.

- Electrical tape can be used to wrap handles (spiral wrapping accepted) and is often suggested to mark striking surfaces. Wrapping handles helps prevent the weapon from splintering if it happens to break in combat.
- Grip tape can also be used but only on handles.

### **THRUSTING TIPS**

Though not all boffers are thrusting weapons, they must have some sort of “tip” as to not harm other opponents while in use.

- As stated before all thrusting tips must have at least 1” to 1 ½” or more compression of soft cell foam. **NOTE:** pole arms weapons **MUST** have at least 2” to 2 ½” or more of compression of soft cell foam. The reason for more this is because pole arms are heavier, taking a bit more to deflect than the normal thrusting tip.
- Remember, though, that if you can feel the PVC beneath the foam, add more padding. This rule is observed even if the minimum requirements are met. If you can feel the PVC, it won’t be allowed on the field.
- Each tip must be larger than an eye socket. And while many will complain that this makes their boffers look odd or misshapen, we must remember that this is for safety.
- All sharp edges must be rounded down to make sure as to not harm anyone if struck.
- All striking areas must be clearly marked (black, red, and yellow show up nicely on duct tape).

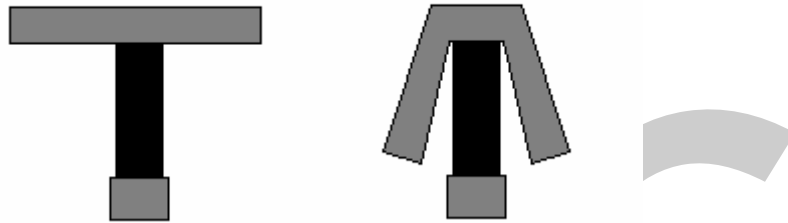
### **Striking Surfaces (blades, bludgeoning heads, etc.)**

- As stated before, all striking surfaces must have at least 1” to 1 ½” or more compression of soft cell foam.
- Remember, though, that if you can feel the PVC beneath the foam, add more padding.
- If you use hard cell foam (such as shaping an odd sword blade, an axe head, etc.) all striking areas must be padded with soft cell foam.
- All striking areas must be clearly marked.
- If a pommel is expected to be a striking tool, it too must be padded with the same amount of soft cell foam.

### **Handles and Cross/Hand-guards**

- All handles must be covered in tape. Any other type of wrapping may be used over that. This prevents splintering if the weapon is broken. It is also suggested that you spiral wrap the tape.
- All types of guards must compress. Hand guards must be able to compress at least 1” to a 1 ½” and cross guards must be able to bend completely back on themselves.

### *Crossguard fully bent*



- You can reinforce cross guards by using more duct tape. Keep in mind that a rule of thumb states “More duct tape = stronger reinforcement”.
- Hand guards must be at least a 1” thick of foam for decent protection. This also helps protecting others in case the guard happens to strike an opponent.

All handles that belong to weapons such as axes, maces, or any weapon with a large handle must be padded with courtesy foam. This foam should extend almost fully to the hand grip of the weapon. This helps prevent possible injury from unintentional strikes.

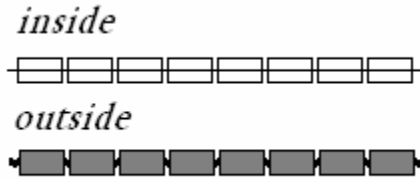
Handles cannot have exposed PVC and the pommel must be covered in some fashion.

## **FLAILS**

Most times in the past I have seen flails that are both dangerous and work. But mostly those that worked did not function like a flail. We have come up with a decent way to make flails safely.

Flail heads must be made of all soft cell foam.

- The “chain” being made should use a core of spun duct tape or rope (any kind is fine).
- The “chain” can be no longer than 1' in length. This prevents the flail from wrapping fully around appendages and causing serious harm to opponents.
- The flail “chain” will be constructed more as a “hinge” than an actual chain. The chain is best made by cutting pipe insulation foam into 1” sections. Taking a few of these, duct tape the entire piece of foam and then piercing either side. Then taking the spun duct tape or rope and threading them through the pieces of foam until they touch. By filling up the piece of rope or spun duct tape and you will have made a “chain” that will not harm.
- Make sure the "hinge" of the "chain" is stiff and sturdy, and does not bend more than 45 degree angles.



If your flail looks like this, you've done a good job and it should act accordingly while not causing serious damage to your opponent.

### **THROWN WEAPONS**

- Thrown weapons must be fully made of foam. This prevents from any number of things that can possibly cause serious harm other opponents.
- All sharp edges must be rounded down to make sure as to not harm anyone if struck.
- Weapons such as javelins must also be made completely out of foam.
- The handle does not need to be padded with soft cell foam, but the striking surface **MUST** have at least 3" compression of soft cell foam.
- **BOTH** ends of the javelin must be padded with soft cell foam.
- The striking area of the javelin **MUST** be twice the size of a normal thrusting tip. (Double the size of an eye socket). Even though this may make the javelin unbalanced, this will prevent the javelin from causing severe damage.

### **SHIELDS**

Shields have been made out of numerous things in the short lived history of boffer combat. The following allows for light to heavy shields that are made safely for both wielder and those opponents you face.

- It is recommended that shields be made from **PLASTIC** only, or out of all foam. Wood, metal, or any other material will not be allowed on the field. It is too heavy and can cause serious damage.
- All edges must be padded with at least 2" to 2 ½" of compression of soft cell foam. This prevents gouging.
- All areas of a shield must be covered in duct tape. The reason is much the same as that of handles, it prevents splintering if broken.

### **POLEARMS**

Polearms can be made of bamboo or 1" PVC.

- As stated in the **THRUSTING TIP** section, all polearm thrusting tips must be 2" to 2 1/2" inch compression of soft cell foam.

Polearms are defined as two handed weapons of greater than 5 feet in length. All other weapons shorter are spears or great weapons and are to be made using the normal construction rules. (I.e. a great axe is not considered a polearm and must be made from PVC).

All handles must have courtesy foam. Due to possible strikes from the haft itself, this foam should extend two feet minimum below the striking end, but may be made out of closed cell foam. This prevents possible injury from unintentional strikes.

### **WHEN IT'S ALL SAID AND DONE**

Beyond these basic minimums, boffer weapons can be as large or small, as odd or period, as real or unrealistic as you can make them. Make a period looking broadsword complete with silver duct tape for a blade and brown electrical tape for a handle with "etched markings" in the handle from black electrical tape; or make a gigantic replica of your favorite anime sword, it doesn't matter.

It should be noted that since we are trying to duplicate medieval times and weapons, that some research goes into the items that you make, that we make an attempt to be somewhat realistic. Once again, as stated in the Forward, we need to convince the SCA that we want to do this for good reasons that the SCA was founded on: historical reenactment with a creative flair.

## Section Two: Rules of Engagement (Melee)

### Where to hit and where not to?

In feather combat, much like heavy, there are extensive descriptions of what is allowed in combat. This list is a full description of what is considered legal striking areas and kills.

### What's considered legal striking areas?

The first thing that should be noted is that you may only be harmed by a weapon that has a marked striking area. If the weapon does not have a marked striking area, you don't have to take the hit. **NOTE:** that means Marshals of feather combat must inspect all weapons entering combat for legal striking areas.

- Torso. This includes shoulders, stomach, and anything above your hips.
- Limb. If the limb is an arm, you must drop the item in your hand or ask your opponent if it is acceptable to "switch". This means that your opposite arm is now dead and you keep the one that was struck. This allows for people with bad arms or wrist problems to continue fighting.
- If the limb is a leg, you must either "post" your dead leg, or "bunker". "Posting" consists of the combatant that has been "limbed" to plant their leg and pivot around it, not moving it. The only time you may move it is when you are dragging to peruse or retreat from an opponent.
- If two limbs are struck, it's considered a kill.
- Draw slashes are considered good so long as you have an edge marked on your weapon. If it does not have a striking edge, it only counts if the weapon either "hits" or "stabs" your opponent. Drawing your weapon across from arm to torso would not count as a kill if the weapon did not have a striking edge.
- DO NOT parry with a dead limb. If a Marshal catches a deliberate parry, you will be counted as killed. It is considered good form to remove the limb from striking distance (such as placing your hand behind your back).

### Illegal Striking Areas

These are places that you do not count if struck, and things not to do in combat.

- Any strike above the neck. The neck does not count as a kill, shoulder does. So, if you are struck in the shoulder first, and the weapon then slides to the neck, it is still counted as torso.
- Groin. **NOTE:** in most tournaments, hits to the groin and neck are considered "illegal". In most tournaments, three or more strikes of this nature will be considered grounds to remove you from the day's lists. Be aware of your strikes!
- Below the wrist or ankle.
- Same limb. If you strike the same limb twice, it does not count as a kill. You must strike two opposing limbs. This rule is negated if the individual with a missing limb asks for a "switch".

- Posting a dead leg. If a marshal sees that you are placing weight on the dead leg (such as jumping or while dragging for balance) then you will be asked to bunker. Three repeated offenses will result in removal from the combat.
- Do NOT strike with a shield. If anyone carrying a shield uses it to hit another opponent, even if the shield is fully padded, they will be removed from the lists entirely.

### **Shield Breakers**

Some weapons are considered shield breakers. Weapons of this manner are considered so heavy and large that a strike to a shield would render them “destroyed”. For some tournaments and contests, these rules may be denied.

- All shield breakers must be two handed.
- All shield breakers must be large weapons.
- It takes two strikes on a shield to “destroy” the shield. At that time, the shield must be discarded immediately. An opponent may call for a “hold” in combat to discard said shield.
- If a shield breaker hits a shield, but would be considered a "glancing blow" then the shield bearer can ignore the strike in regards to the shield breaking limit.

### Section Three: Rules of Engagement Cont. (Firearms)

#### What's the deal with firearms anyway?

To answer that question, we need to look at the time period that we are playing in. Currently, firearms such as the Matchlock (1475 CE) and Wheelock (1500 CE) are available depending on the time period in which your persona comes from.

The Flintlock was not made until after 1600 CE, which means that by SCA rules, Flintlocks are out. If this is so, we need to design the rules to fit this style of firearm.

#### Firearm Basics

A good place to start is rubber-band guns. If we can convince most of the fighters to use them, problems would be less. But considering that we, as a reenactment group, enjoy some sort of realism to our activities, we also enjoy using cap pistols for the loud BANG.

It goes without saying that all "firearms" presented such as "paintball", "air soft", or the like will NOT be allowed in Feather Combat. Because of this, we have to treat the firearms with some heavy rules.

If firearms are made of alternative materials, please note, the firearm MUST LOOK like a firearm and be roughly the same size of an actual period firearm.

#### ALL GUNS (cap or rubber band) must use the following rules:

- 20 seconds must be counted between shots. Historical documentation states that the most elite gunmen could only fire off a total of 2 ½ shots per minute (with having to prep powder, shot, and wad, guns took a moment in between shots to fire again). 20 seconds between shots is exceedingly fair (and without having to stand and imitate re-loading the gun, no less!)
- Can only fire 1 to 2 shots at most! Unless there are multiple barrels, a gun could only fire one round at a time. A good way to prevent you from firing more shots than available is to load only 1 or 2 rubber-bands/caps.
- If you cross a water line, water trap, or area designated as water, all shot are wasted. The reason for this is that your "powder" has gotten wet and is no longer useful. **NOTE:** there are two exceptions to this rule. If you hold up your gun while crossing a water area, then you will have ONE shot left to your gun. Also, if you are actually carrying a sealed powder horn, your powder will be considered saved.

#### Cap pistol and rifle rules

Because of the difficulty in tracking "who shot who" in a cap gun fight, the following rules will be followed to help even out the playing field with cap guns.

- You must have eye contact with your opponent to make your shot count. This keeps combatants honest and fair.
- Cap guns only count as a kill if you are less than 10' away. If you are over 10' away, but still had eye contact, the shot CAN be counted as a limb or a weapon (but this is up to your opponent). **NOTE:** if you are shot and the

distance is over 10' but there was eye contact, it would be good sportsmanship to take a limb or drop a weapon or shield as “broken”.

- Any shot over 20' is counted as a miss. The reason for this is because most firearms were extremely inaccurate over ranges beyond 15'.
- Because of the difficult nature of long ranged combat, and for fairness and purposes of accuracy, cap rifles are only as accurate as cap pistols. Rubber-band rifles are still legal wherever they land.

### **When melee meets firearms**

- A gun can be used ONLY to defend ones-self. A gun can take being hit ONCE and then you must discard it and it is considered “broken”.
- If a shot hits a shield, the shield must be discarded and is considered “broken”.

### **Bombs**

Bombs are hard to deal with, especially since they are radius weapons. For the sake of argument and possible problems, the following rules apply to bombs.

- Bombs should be asked about on both sides before combat begins. If both sides agree, then they can be used.
- Bombs can be ether water balloons or “boffer” worthy. Since they are a “thrown” weapon, they must be made of all foam! This prevents bombs from possibly injuring people. Many have argued over this, but there should be NO EXCEPTION to this rule.
- Bombs must be marked as such. Any item thrown or rolled that is supposed to be a “bomb” that is not labeled as one will not be counted.
- If a bomb is a water balloon, all people hit with water are counted as killed or wounded depending on where the water hits. Bombs that are padded have a radius of 10 feet. Meaning from point of impact, the bomb kills those within 5 feet on all sides.
- Bombs do not have fuses. Where the bomb lands is where the impact is, just like water balloon would react.
- DO NOT throw a bomb if you cannot see where it will land! Many problems have come up with non-line of sight bombs hitting unsuspecting non-combatants and smalls while in a closed encampment. This is unsafe and irresponsible of the combatants and will NOT be tolerated what so ever.
- If bombs are used in such a fashion, even after being warned, the Head Marshal will remove you from the lists and games entirely for the event.

### **Cannons**

Cannons have been discussed time and again with many problems. More than bombs even. Here are the following rules with dealing with cannons.

- All cannon projectiles (called shot) must be made of foam.
- All cannons must be manned by no less than 2 individuals.

- If a cannon has a single shot of foam, the person hit with the cannon ball, along with those standing directly in front of the cannon (within 5 feet of the cannon) is considered killed.
- If a cannon is considered “grape shot”, when the cannon is fired, a hold must be called (preferably by one of the individuals on the team handling the cannon) AFTER the cannon is fired and the “shot” has landed.
- For “grape shot”, cannons must have a 20 foot rope attached to them. This is the range of the cannon. The rope is unfurled when the hold is called. At the end of the 20 foot rope, three feet are counted on ether side of the rope. All individuals within the cone shape are considered killed.
- Water disables cannons for 1 minute. So count to 60, if you’re manning the cannon, before it can be fired again.

DBFC

### DBFC Approval and Comments Form

**Mundane Name:** \_\_\_\_\_ **DOB:** \_\_\_\_\_  
**SCA Name:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Paying Member:** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Years associated with the SCA:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Member #:** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Organization or Household:** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Titles or Awards gained:** \_\_\_\_\_  
**E-mail address:** \_\_\_\_\_

**What do you like about the DBFC?**

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**What do you think could be changed about the DBFC?**

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**What is your biggest problem with Feather Combat?**

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**Why do you enjoy Feather Combat?**

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**Please return this filled out form to the Commander of the Drakkenguard, Elexi Stormcrow, via an event or by e-mail.**

**Email: [DBFCmail@yahoo.com](mailto:DBFCmail@yahoo.com)**

**Thank you for your assistance and support.**