

Basic Horses for the Well-Intentioned Or I Don't Have a Clue Yet but I Would Like to

Part II: I am not yet ready to or may never climb up on one of those beasts, but it does look interesting and I would like to do a little more, just not riding

Equestrian events have the potential to add a great deal to the medieval flavor of the Society. It looks really cool, and you can already imagine yourself up on top of a magnificent destrier charging along the list barrier at your opponent just like in *A Knight's Tale*. So what more is there to do? A lot. Like fighting, it is far easier imagined than done. Like fighting, it also requires a certain outlay of finances to get started for real and a certain amount of physical ability. (There is a reason that horses are under the marshal arts.) And just like fighting, it is not for everyone. Also just like in fighting where there are ancillary ways to participate without being a fighter, there are ways to participate in equestrian activities without actually being a rider.

Processionals: If you are not a rider, you still can “ride” a horse in a procession. You do not need to be authorized as a rider. You will be put on a calm horse (only if you agree) and someone will lead your horse, just like “pony rides” when you were a kid. You should be reasonably safe (although there are no guarantees with a horse) and it is not required that you wear a helmet if you are an adult. (Adults are encouraged to wear approved riding helmets if they want. Minors *must* wear approved riding helmets, even in a procession.) You will be expected to cooperate with the footman leading your horse who will be there because (s)he knows about horses. Obviously, for this option you will have to be selected by whoever is in charge of such things to be in the procession (it is good to be king!).

Please note: there are many generously sized folk in the SCA. Different horses have different weight limits which are based on breed, size, leg bones circumference, and activity level. Yes, in medieval times, people put very heavy burdens on horses—like Henry VIII in armor. Some medievals had more realistic notions, for example Rollo the First Duke of Normandy who was a Viking chief before he converted and settled down in France was also called Hrolf “Ganger” – or “the Walker” because he was too big for a horse. He was an exception and as a result many horse skeletons from medieval times show very bad arthritis in their backs. In modern terms, too heavy a burden may be abuse. If you are overweight, what is an acceptable burden for a horse to carry may not extend to you and any of the horses available.

Hayrides: Anyone can participate.

Auxiliary: There are ways to participate that do not require authorization. Costumers may want to try their hands at “my pretty pony” (horse barding) or costuming specifically for riders. (Have you ever pinned a hem on a lady riding side-saddle? It could be quite the challenge.) Leather workers, wood workers, metal workers may all find areas of interest in horse related paraphernalia. There is a wealth of horse related research to

uncover. If there is enough interest, I would love to see an official auxiliary branch of the Company of the White Horse.

Ground Crew: Anyone who is not authorized but is given permission by the Equestrian Marshal in Charge (EqMIC) to work in an “Equestrian Only” area is considered “ground crew.” (Note: this is different than Groundsmen. Ground crew do not need to be authorized, groundsmen do.) Unauthorized ground crew includes heralds, Ministers of the Lists, pages, scorekeepers, foot attendants, constables, and other non-hands-on volunteers. Although ground crew need not be authorized, they must attend a pre-activities meeting held at the event in order to participate and must be approved for their job by the EqMIC. They are also encouraged to attend equestrian ground classes. All participants in equestrian activities in the “Equestrians Only” area, including ground crew, must wear closed-toe footwear with a solid sole while engaged in said activities, whether mounted or not and whether authorized or not. Sandals, slippers, moccasins, and moccasin-type soles are inadequate. Ground crew are required to obey the marshals.

Groundsmen: If you think you want to become seriously involved in hands-on equestrian activities but aren’t sure if you want to actually ride or are still not a good enough rider to authorize, you may consider *authorizing as a groundsman*. (Note: this is different than Ground crew. Ground crew do not need to be authorized, groundsmen do.) In fact, if you plan on becoming a rider at some point, *you should authorize as a groundsman*. All riders should be groundsmen, but not all groundsmen need to be riders. You can authorize at several different levels depending on your experience or intent.

- 1) A Beginner groundsman must demonstrate the ability to safely handle the equipment and weapons needed for the equestrian activities. This includes the correct way to hand weapons to a mounted participant, maneuver around the horses, understand the rules of the activity, and demonstrate knowledge of basic horse safety.
- 2) An Intermediate groundsman must demonstrate the abilities of the Beginner and the ability to help with horses in a non-emergency situations.
- 3) An Advanced groundsman must demonstrate the abilities of Beginner and Intermediate and the ability to run and score the games and to help with horses in emergency situations.

Engaged Spectator: Not everyone wants or needs to get up on a horse. Some people may want to, but their bodies (knees, back, whatever) are past that stage. Others simply do not want to do hands-on. There are still many of ways to participate in equestrian activities. The first is to be an engaged spectator, and to be an engaged spectator, one should know a bit about the games.

The Ring Tilt is an exercise in lance/spear accuracy that is documented at least to the 15th and 16th century in Europe, and possibly to the 14th century in Arabic Manuals. Currently it is the state sport of Maryland. It is not as flashy as some of the games (like quintain) but is much harder than it looks, and is a crucial skill to

master prior to jousting. The rings demonstrate the rider's ability to place their spear such that the warrior could accurately target eye slots or chinks in an opponent's armor. There are various ways that ring-tilting can be set up. The rings are suspended from standards by Velcro, magnets or clips so when the ring is speared it comes away from its attachment to the standard without knocking the standard. Standard (sometime called Norman or Frankish), Old Norman, and Saracen (or Persian) styles of holding the spear are acceptable in most situations in *Æthelmearc*. Standard requires the rider hold the lance in the *right* hand with the lance across the horse's neck to target along the left. (Note, this is the only style permitted for jousting, and standard is preparation for jousting. It does not matter what hand a person usually writes with or uses, if you want to joust you have to become a "righty." Remember, left handed was considered the devil's hand when jousting was popular.) Old Norman style allows either hand, and is held overhand (note, the ring may not stay on the lance in this style and most Kingdoms will not recognize a ring taken off this way if it does not stay on until the end of the pass). In Saracen style, the spear is held on the same side as the target, on the right for right handed riders and on the left for left handed riders. The riders get a set number of passes at each standard. Usually there are several different size rings on each standard and the smaller the ring the more points the rider gets. This involves some strategy for the rider has to decide whether to go for a surer thing or more points. Multipliers may be used to award riders at a faster gait. For example, if the rider rides at a walk, the score is as is, if at a trot the score is multiplied by 2, and if at a canter by 3.

The Saracen Course (or Behead the Infidel) is a standard SCA game, although there is no proof it is historical to Period, but it is great fun. It consists of a row of four or five posts 5-6 feet tall in a line about 21-30 feet apart plus a marker post on each end. On top of the posts are targets resembling heads. The rider starts at the first marker and proceeds in a slalom, weaving in and out of the standards in a regular pattern while attempting to knock the targets off of their standards as they are passed. Only back-slice swings of mace or sword are allowed. The rider cannot hit the horse with his or her weapon and cannot swing the weapon towards the horse or in such a way that would cause the dislodged target to hit the horse. After passing the last marker post, the rider turns the horse around the last marker post and rides straight back to the starting/finish line without weaving or striking any missed targets. Scoring can either be for accuracy only, or for fastest time with penalties for lack of accuracy. This drill develops excellent targeting skills and proves control over one's mount, therefore is the basic drill expected for authorizing as an SCA rider.

The reed course sword drill is documented to 14th century Arabic training manuals teaching the correct and accurate use of a sword while mounted. The reed course can be either a single or double line of targets resembling "reeds" on standards 4-6 feet in height. The "reed" targets can be all the same length or in decreasing heights for a greater level of difficulty. The usual and most challenging version of this game is to use a double line of standards with a four or four and a half foot wide lane between the two rows of reeds. The standards are

set up in a staggered formation. Five standards are used for each side of the lane (and located halfway between two standards on the other side), standard on the same side of the lane are placed approximately 21 feet apart. The reeds targets for each side are usually of decreasing height. The rider rides their horse down the center of the lane between the two lines of targets attempting to strike the “reeds” off the standards with a sword—maces aren’t allowed. All sword swings must be backhand swings away from the horse. A reed target must be hit by the sword and fall free from its standard to count. A target falling off due to the post getting hit does not count. Striking the horse, forward swings, dropping the sword or breaking gait are disqualifications. Scoring is determined by the person responsible for designing the tournament, though usually: 5 points per 10 inch reed, 10 points per 8 inch reed, 15 points per 6 inch reed, 20 points per 4 inch reed, and 25 points per 2 inch reed.

Pig Sticking or Tent Pegging builds the skills necessary for accurately spearing objects that are low to the ground (as in wild boar hunting). Generally the objects in SCA games to be speared are Styrofoam and require a sharp point on the spear, but it is possible to use objects that do not require sharp points and which allows minors to play. (Minors may not use live steel on horseback.) This game may be done either with stationary or moveable targets. Stationary targets are placed on the ground in the center of the list area. The rider rides past the targets at their chosen gait and attempts to spear a target and raise it to the vertical. (This is tricky. Done improperly, the rider may impale the ground and vault him/herself off his/her horse.) For moving targets, the target is attached to a line on a coursing apparatus or something similar and may only be pursued from one side. Points are assigned for each properly speared target.

Quintain (also Tilting the Mock Knight) are martial training exercises dating to approximately the late 13th century. The most common form is a pivoting target with a counterweight on the opposite arm. If improperly struck or the rider was insufficiently quick, the counter weight would strike the head or back of the rider. This was to teach good follow-through after the initial impact with an opponent. Tilting the Mock Knight is a very similar game that involves a target that pivots out of the way (either sideways or down) when struck. These are high impact games. The Quintain or Mock Knight is placed in an open area of the equestrian list or tilting yard. The target shield of the quintain is turned to face the rider. As the rider passes the quintain (s)he will attempt to: 1. strike the quintain shield with a lance so as to make it rotate as many times as possible, or 2. on special quintains to hit the knock-out spot (in these, the shield doesn’t rotate). On the Mock Knight the goal is to strike the target with force. Mock Knight Apparatuses vary greatly, but the usual object is to push the mock knight down (sometimes back and out of the way). Scoring varies even more than the targets. Usually for a quintain, each full revolution (or half revolutions if the quintain is stiff) is awarded a certain number of points. If there is a counterweight on the quintain, a penalty is given if the rider or the horse is hit usually equal to the number of points of one revolution. Two quintains or mock knights may be set up opposite each other and the two riders set out at the same time opposite each other to in mock jousting,

Quintain can also be done using a “squire’s horse,” a wheeled wooden man (squire?) – powered horse. In this case, non-equestrians can play, but it is just for fun, not scored.

Spear or Javelin Throw includes several types of games that involve the use of a spear (sharp or blunted) thrown from horseback towards a target. The spear may be thrown to either the rider’s off or near side. Usually this is ridden in a lane or behind a barrier to prevent the rider from getting too close to the target(s) (and to avoid bounce-backs from hitting horse or rider). Scoring depends on how the course is set up.

Archery can be either mounted or from a chariot. Bows must be inspected by a warranted SCA archery marshal and depending on how the game is designed can be either golf-tube arrows, small game blunts, Markland type, or regulation target arrows. Bow weight (pull poundage) cannot exceed 35 pounds for Markland and regulation arrows or 50 pounds for golf tube arrows or small game blunts. Mounted archery can either be stationary or in-motion. In stationary mounted archery, the horse is held by a designated marshal or advanced groundsman. For in-motion mounted archery, Beginner and Intermediate riders must have a designated marshal or advanced groundsman lead their mounts past the archery target(s) and have their reins within reach. Advanced riders may either have a designated marshal or advanced groundsman lunge the horse past the target or they may perform in the Japanese (Yabusame) style by riding in a lane, dropping reins, shooting, and then picking up the reins before the end of the course. Chariot archery is in-motion, and the horse and driver must be authorized for equestrian driving, but non-equestrian archers shooting from the chariot is permitted. These non-equestrian archers must have signed an equestrian waiver in use to signify that they are aware of the risks involved in equestrian sport

Tankard or Chalice Races: This game is still played in Iceland with beer. The idea is to show the horse and rider’s skill in traveling smoothly and working as a team. In this game the rider carries a full tankard or chalice (of water) over a pre-determined course. The fluid in the vessel is measured before and after the ride. Each rider uses the same vessel and follows the same course. Covering the top of the vessel with ones hand or other means is not allowed. This can be scored either against the clock for speed and accuracy with penalty points applied for each designated increment of water spilled, or it can be scored strictly for accuracy with points for the water that each rider has left in the vessel. This game can also be done as a relay race.

Squire Rescue or Rescue the Maiden or Flag Race: This game is often included in “challenge course” type tournaments. It involves the use of an inanimate object—a “maiden” or “squire” or “flag”—that needs to be rescued from some dire fate and carried from one place to another. The skill involved is to be able to safely ride one’s horse through a course while encumbered with this

extra object and deposit the object correctly at the end of the course. In a “rescue the maiden” scenario this may simply mean handing the unwieldy “maiden” off to the ground crew person at the end of the course, or in the “flag race” scenario this may mean sticking the flag into a bucket of sand or a banner holder unassisted. Scoring can be done as a timed event or for accuracy only.

Take a Message to the Duke Relay: This game is a simple relay format game. A message for each team is divided into pieces and taped onto a standard at a distance from the starting line. Each rider retrieves one piece of the message and rides back to their team at the starting line. When one rider returns the next begins. When all the pieces of the message are collected the team puts the message together and one rider takes the message to the Duke (or other notable designate). The first team to correctly relay the message to the Duke is the winner. This basic relay race concept can be used with a number of different scenarios such as “retrieve the banners” in which the riders carry small flags rather than messages, “Loot the city” in which the riders carry potatoes, gold painted rocks or similar etc. Relays work where there are far more riders than horses available, as horses can be shared by a team and the mounting and dismounting becomes part of the skill necessary to winning the race. Relay races also promote teamwork.

Jousting: Jousting requires multiple special authorizations. The rider must be an advanced rider, have special additional authorization as an accoutered rider (authorized to ride in armor), and then must be authorized specifically to joust. (Generally speaking, an advanced, accoutered rider should be able to demonstrate good control at ring tilting and feel comfortable that his/her horse can deal with the noise of armor, and the noise of a lance hitting a quintain, and the noise of a breaking Styrofoam “lance” before contemplating going for a jousting authorization.) SCA does not do high impact jousting. The “business ends” of SCA lances are Styrofoam. Riders must hold the lance in the right hand (sorry, lefties must hold their lances right handed) and aim across their horse over the horse’s left shoulder. Scoring is usually zero points for a miss, one point for a hit that breaks the lance in two or knocks the Styrofoam end out of its mount, and two points for breaking the lance into more than two pieces. (Even with Styrofoam, this is a huge adrenalin rush.)

Crestfallen Tournaments: This is a form of boffer combat. It is limited to advanced riders and they must be authorized as accoutered riders. The riders must wear some sort of armor (as specified in the rules), and wear either a crest on their helm or some other specified target that can be knocked off with a boffer weapon. The object is to knock the targets off the other riders. It is ridden at a walk and is a test of weapon accuracy while controlling one’s mount, not speed.

Quadrilles: This is not a game, but a team demonstration. A team practices a pattern, and performs usually in some sort of coordinated costumes (both horses and riders). This is sort of like a pavan on horseback.

Quests: These can be all equestrian, or mixed equestrian/non-equestrian teams.

Mock Hunts: Per Society policy, these cannot be after live game.

Trail Rides: The main challenge is to have garb that is up to the challenge of the trail.

Other: Proposals welcome. Some of these, like heavy weapon combat, are currently under consideration by the Society Equestrian Marshal.