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TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	4	APPENDIX A: SAMPLE KNIGHTS	15
WHAT IS A TOURNAMENT?	4	Novice Knight (or Squire)	16
Styles Of Tournament	5	Average Knight	16
Styles Of Combat	7	Veteran Knight	16
SETTING UP AND RUNNING THE TOURNAMENT		APPENDIX B: TOURNAMENT ARMOR AND WEAPONS	17
Who Is Putting It On?	9	APPENDIX C: GLOSSARY	18
Conducting The Tournament	9	BIBLIOGRAPHY	18
Winning The Tournament	10		
WORKING THE PCS (AND NPCS) INTO THE ACTION	12		
SCENARIOS	14		
None Shall Pass	14		
“The One Who Kills The Ogre Will Be Named Champion!”	14		
“The Pellet With The Poison’s In The Flagon With The Dragon.”	15		



Helms and banners arrayed for review. One helm has been struck to the floor, indicating the knight in question will not be allowed to participate in the tournament.

INTRODUCTION

O for a Muse of fire, that would ascend

The brightest heaven of invention,

A kingdom for a stage, princes to act

And monarchs to behold the swelling scene!

The Life of King Henry the Fifth, William Shakespeare

In the middle ages there was little to no organized sport as we know it. Oh, there were sports and games aplenty, and any time traveler could go back and find the distant (or not so distant) ancestors of such modern games as field hockey, football (i.e. soccer), lawn bowling, and even baseball. But there were no regulated sports with one exception. This was the tournament, a martial sport performed by the nobility, of the nobility, and for the nobility. Tournaments were often planned well in advance (up to a year or more), featured a great deal of pomp and spectacle, and often had carefully spelled out rules for what would be (and would *not* be) allowed. Best of all, a tournament might last for a week or even longer, and would bring a great influx of people and money to whatever town was lucky enough to have one held nearby. Thus, a medieval tourney makes for an excellent *Savage Worlds* scenario, and can feature all the action and adventure a GM and his players may wish for—even if no one is actually fighting in the tournament itself!

This article will take a somewhat simplified look at the origins and history of the medieval tournament, and will give suggestions on how you can run different types of tournaments as part of your *Savage Worlds* campaign. It will also contain several tournament-related scenarios and briefly describe tournament-specific weapons and armor.

TOURNAMENT OR JOUST?

In this article, the term “tourney” or “tournament” will refer to any organized event of hand-to-hand combat, either on horse or on foot, between either a group or a single set of participants. The word “joust” refers to mounted combat with lances between two opponents. For those wishing a more period term to describe such a event, you can use the term *hastiludia* (or *hastiludium*, or “hastilude”), meaning “spear play.”

WHAT IS A TOURNAMENT?

Adhemar: Your armor sir.

William: What about it?

Adhemar: How stylish of you to joust in an antique, you’ll start a new fashion if you win. My grandfather will be able to wear his in public again, and a shield, how quaint. Some of these poor country knights, little better than peasants.

A Knight’s Tale

No one knows exactly when or where the idea of the tournament first came about. In fact, no one is exactly sure of the origins of the word “tournament” in the first place. One 16th century suggestion says it comes from the word “*par tour*,” referring to how knights would make their runs at the quintain (a practice target used to develop mounted combat skills) “by turn.” It also might come from an attempt to describe how mounted knights and men-at-arms would circle around each other before beginning combat. As for the tournaments themselves, it’s highly likely they were an offshoot of various military games practiced by many European cultures as a way of keeping one’s battle skills sharpened. For example, the Romans held what they called *ludus Troiae*, or the “Troy Game,” while various Germanic tribes were known to fight mock battles and the like.

Jousting came about in the 11th century, after the establishment of the mounted cavalry man and the introduction of the massed charge with lances leveled. These tournaments were fairly primitive affairs (at least when compared to the jousts of the late 16th century) and deaths were common, resulting in the Church speaking out against the sport and attempting to ban it (a scene that would be repeated time and time again over the next 600 years).

As time passed, tournaments became more and more involved and considerably more complex in size and style. New types of tournaments were developed, such as the *pas d’armes*, which might incorporate both combat on foot and horse, while the joust became so refined that it eventually evolved into a form of public spectacle rather than any true test of martial skill. The next section of this article will look at some of these tournament forms, and how you can present them in a *Savage Worlds* fantasy campaign.

STYLES OF TOURNAMENT

Once you've decided to incorporate a tournament into your campaign, you'll next need to decide exactly what kind of tournament it will be. This section will describe several variations, along with suggestions on how to set them up. The terms used to describe these different tournaments are for convenience only, and are only loosely based on historical naming conventions.

THE MASS MÊLÉE

The mass mêlée is the earliest and simplest form of tournament. It is held in a large region of open countryside with no real boundaries, although certain areas are usually declared refuges, where knights can rest and rearm as needed. The tournament itself is fought between groups of armored men on horseback using standard weapons of war. There are little to no rules to such a tournament, aside from the idea that a participant is supposed to capture his foe, not kill him.

Running such a tournament is a fairly simple matter. All you need to do is lay out a rough map of several square miles of land, mark any major landmarks, a few refuges, and let everyone have at it. Anyone knocked from his horse or who surrenders is out of the game, and is now a prisoner of whoever has captured him. To make running combats easy, you should have two or three knight templates prepared in advance, with one for a novice, another for an average-grade knight, and another for a veteran. Characters may fight either singly or in groups, and having several knights gang up on a lone participant wasn't unheard of in period (see the *Ganging Up* rule for an idea of how brutal that can be). Combat-wise, participants shouldn't go around using attack options as *Rapid Attack* or *Wild Attack* in order to do more damage to their opponent (which isn't to say such things didn't happen...), and disarming or dismounting your opponent should be the preferred tactic (see *Disarm*, *Mounted Combat*, and *Push* for more information). However, there's nothing stopping the people involved from getting into a full-scale fight, and historical records show some such tournaments devolving into little more than brawls.

THE JOUST

The joust is probably the classic form of tournament, and certainly the form most readers will be familiar with. It can have any number of participants, but only two will be involved at any one time. The joust itself will have two knights in full armor, mounted on horses (which may be armored as well), charge at each other

down the length of a long barrier. The winner is the one who strikes his foe's shield and/or breaks his lance.

However, a joust can be more than two knights charging at each other with lowered lances. A joust could also consist of knights taking turns attempting to strike a quintain, or trying to thread the point of their lance through a hanging ring. In any case, the joust is a fairly well-regulated form of tournament, in which skill is highly prized and the winner is often determined by a scored total.

In most jousts, the objective is to strike your opponent's shield and/or helm with sufficient force to break your own lance (and the closer the lance broke to your grip the better). Simply striking your opponent's shield was worth a set number of points, or "lances", while striking other parts of your foe's body was worth less. Breaking your lance might score double. A miss was just a miss, while striking the horse would cost you points. In a worst case scenario, a knight might crash into the tilt barrier, run his lance into the ground, or manage to unhorse himself.

The size of a jousting field (or "list") is often very great, and one record gives the following dimensions: 370 feet long, 250 feet wide, with a double fence surrounding it. For King Henry VIII's Field of the Cloth of Gold tourney, the field measured 400 by 200 paces, with lists 150 paces long (roughly 2000 feet by 1000 feet, with 750 foot lists).

The Quintain: A quintain is a rotating target set atop a tall pole. The typical arrangement is for a shield-shaped target on one side of the crossbar and a bag of sand on the other. The shield is struck with the lance, spinning the quintain around. Anyone who comes in too slowly (or who hesitates) will be struck by the bag of sand (and possibly unhorsed).

As *Savage Worlds* has no rules for jousting, use the following:

- 1) Any character involved in a joust must use the lowest of their Fighting or Riding Skills.
- 2) Any joust that is one knight versus an unmoving target (such as a hanging ring or the quintain) is handled with a normal Fighting roll. However, hitting the target is considered a *Called Shot*. Thus striking the quintain is at -4 and threading the ring is -6.

THE GRAND MÊLÉE

- 3) When two knights joust the Initiative card determines who attacks first, not whose horse moves first (it is assumed both horses are already in motion). It is recommended the card's suite be ignored and simply use the face value of the card. In addition, if the cards are the same (for example, both knights have drawn a six) or are only a digit apart (for example, one knight has an eight and the other a nine), the attacks are simultaneous. This represents the fact both knights are *trying* to hit each other as well as the difficulty of dodging a dozen feet (or more of lance) coming at you at upwards of 30 mph.
- 4) Roll Fighting as normal. If the list is long enough (and most were), then the knight can add +4 to his damage on a successful Fighting attack. If his opponent is Shaken or suffers a wound, then he must make a Riding roll to remain on his horse. If he fails, he's dismounted and falls to the ground.
- 5) As tourney lances use cornels instead of points, they *don't* do AP 2.
- 6) As the knight is *trying* to hit his opponent's shield, his opponent gets +2 Parry. In addition, if the Parry fails, give the knight +2 Armor (just as if he was hit by a ranged shot).
- 7) As proper tourney lance was *designed* to break, then a raise should indicate the knight's lance has broken. Additional raises result in a more impressive break (which is usually worth more points).

- 8) On a critical failure the attacking knight has not only failed, he's done something terrible. The options include crashing into the barrier, dropping your lance, jamming your lance into the ground, managing to unhorse yourself, hitting your opponent's horse, and so on.

THE PAS D'ARMES

A *pas* is any tourney in which a single defender (or group of defenders) accepts challenges from all comers. A *pas* could range from the very simple (a single knight places himself at a crossroads or at a bridge) to elaborate affairs with complex staging, costumes, props, and stories. The *pas* was very popular from the fifteenth century onward and eventually evolved into a form of tourney called a "triumph," which featured even more fantastic costumes, scripted parts and acting, mechanical devices, and so on.

A common feature of the *pas* was a set of shields, emblazoned with the defender's arms, or with various charges indicating different forms of combat. A herald, or the challenging knight himself, would touch a shield, indicating the form of combat to take place. For example, a shield tree might have four shields hung on it, emblazoned with the following: crossed lances, crossed spears, crossed axes, and crossed swords. Touching a particular shield would indicate what type of combat the challenger desires, at which point the defenders select one of their own to receive the challenge. In some cases, the way the shield is touched may indicate a more exact type of combat. For example, touching the shield with crossed swords with the hilt of the sword might indicate combat a *plaisance*.



(with rebated or blunted weapons), while a touch with the blade would indicate combat *à outrance* (combat with sharpened weapons of war).

When running a *pas d'armes*, you need to have a small location set aside as the list. This can be two areas if you wish, with one for jousts, and another for foot combat. If the *pas* is set at a specific location (like a crossroads), often the defender is there as part of a vow (such as “to remain for 40 days” or “to stay until I have fought one dozen knights”), and may charge anyone he defeats to match his deeds or perform some specific task. You should have character sheets for each defender if it is a small group (say 3-4), or simply use the generic ones described under The Mass Mêlée if there are more than that.

THE GRAND TOURNAMENT

A grand tournament is one combining all the elements of the previously described tourneys. A multi-day affair (and possibly even multi-week!), a grand tournament will feature jousts, foot combat, and mass mêlées on horseback. Such events were often months in planning and were announced weeks ahead of time, with challenges sent out to desired parties via heralds. They featured a great deal of pageantry, and were as much for the spectators as the participants. Such tourneys were often used to mark special occasions, such as weddings or coronations. The tournament book of King René of Anjou (see the Bibliography) describes how to host just such an event.

Running such a tourney as a scenario can (and should) be a multipart adventure. There will be daily contests of military skill, followed by feasts and dancing in the evening. There may be speeches, weddings, knightings, daily prizes awarded, and so on. Fairs and festivals may be held as well, and people from all over will travel long distances to attend. Aside from such basic necessities as a map of the lists and templates for various knights and men-at-arms to be met in combat, you will need to create numerous NPCs for the PCs to meet and interact with (a possibly daunting task). For more information on Grand Tournaments, see the section “Setting Up The Tournament” below.

STYLES OF COMBAT

Now that you’ve selected the type of tournament you’ll be presenting in your game, you need to decide on how combat will be handled. Will it be with bladed weapons or blunted? Will certain weapons be disallowed? Or only specific strikes? Or will it simply be a free-for-all? This section will look at this subject in depth by first defining the two main types of tournament combat: *à plaisance* and *à outrance*.

À PLAISANCE

As the tournament was usually a form of entertainment, the typical form of tournament combat was one in which weapons were blunted (or “rebated”), with edges dulled and points removed. This was known as combat *à plaisance*. Combat *à plaisance* should use *Nonlethal Damage* weapons, such as metal weapons with the edges ground down, or wooden (or whalebone) weapons made specifically for the tournament. This may result in certain weapons or weapon maneuvers being disallowed in a combat *à plaisance*.

À OUDRANCE

This is a tournament combat fought with edged weapons. Combat *à outrance* is very dangerous, and it is quite possible to suffer serious injury (or even death) while participating in it. Thus, it is a rare form of tourney combat, and usually only seen if there is a personal grudge to be settled. Combat *à outrance* uses standard weapons.

BARRIER COMBAT

One form of foot combat was fighting at the barrier. The barrier in question was usually a sturdy rail fence about three feet in height, set across the list field. Participants would fight across the top of the barrier, usually using matched weapons (spears and polearms were popular choices).

A barrier fight can occur between just two people, or a whole group. There are period accounts of barrier combats being held during sieges, with bored knights challenging the defenders to a test of arms at a secured gate or doorway. Illustrations of such a combat show men in full harness, armed with spears, fighting on either side of the barrier, with spear thrusts going both over the fence and *through* the open rails. If running a barrier combat as part of a tourney, the GM should disallow blows to the legs unless the attack is a thrust (and even then you need a long weapon to make the