



Tournament Rules

2020+3

Introduction

In line with the philosophy defended by [HEMA practitioners in Québec](#), the following rules had been set up to focus on the technical skills of the combatants in the historical weapon of their choice, while preventing situations leading to injuries. The goal of each combat is to recreate a duel without body armor, where the gesture and the combat management are more important than pure physical power. The Montreal Sword Meisters does not aim to be “realistic” by simulating a real combat implying injuries, maiming and gruesome deaths, but to provide a demonstration of a wide range of martial techniques which may have been used with sharp blades. By doing so, we try to remain in line with fencing guilds of old. In consequence, the combatants are expected to follow elementary rules of courtesy and sportsmanship.

The tournament is open to all participants above [18 years of age](#), fulfilling the gear requirements and in sufficiently good physical and mental health to take part in the competitions. Please check the liability waiver for more information.

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No other distinction of age or gender will be done within each competition category.

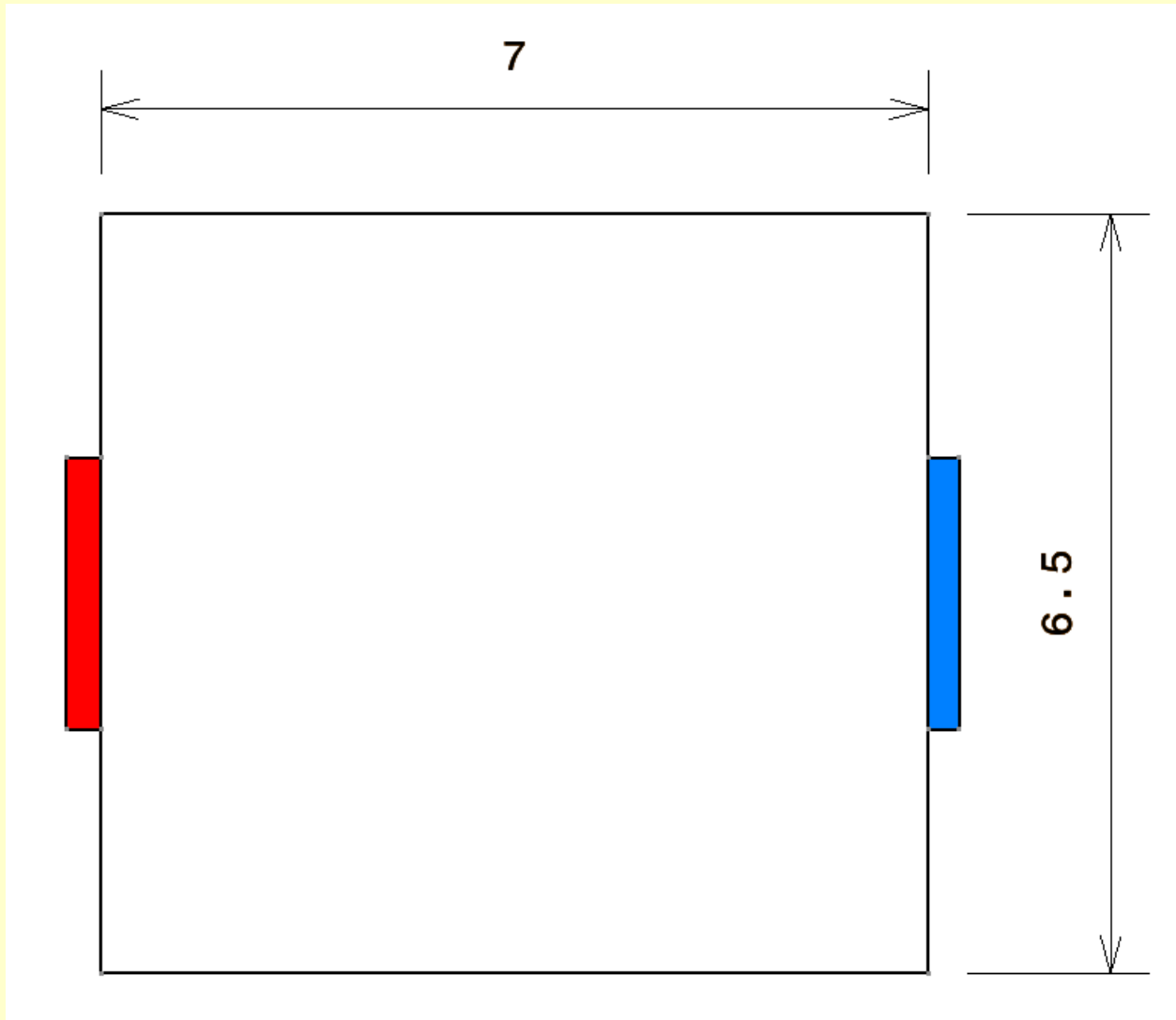
In order to simplify the writing of the present document, masculine is used to describe the rules.

[Major changes from last edition rules are marked in blue.](#)

Arena

The arena is limited to a square of about 7m*6,5m (23ft*21ft). The fighters begin each exchange out of it, with one foot in their respective starting zone.

During the fight, exiting the arena is acknowledged only when **both feet of the fighter are fully out of arena limits**.



Persons in the Arena

During a fight, only the following persons are present within the arena.

1 Central Judge : The central judge is responsible for the management of the fight. He starts and stops the exchanges, and distributes points at the end of each. He is responsible for the respect of the rules, decide of penalties and can decide at any moment to call for a time-out.

2 side judges or more : Side judges focus on points, how and where they are marked. When they see a successful action awarding a certain number of points, they shall immediately inform the central judge by shouting "POINT !" and raise the hand. They shall then communicate what they saw by showing the area being hit or notify the action type. Each side judge check both combatants at the same time. 2 side judges will be present during pool matches, and 4 during play-off phases.

1 or 2 points & time judge(s) : The task of these judges is to start and stop the timer according to the verbal indications of the central judge. They shall also mention when only 30s of effective fight time remains to the combat. They also register the points decided by the central judge. This task can be distributed between two judges, one for marking and one for time.

2 combatants : The role of both combatants is to fight according to the tournament rules. A combatant is allowed to raise the hand to address the central judge for the following reasons:

- Asking for a time-out for a specific reason (wound, short breathing pause after an impact, readjusting the equipment...). Any abuse will be penalized.
- Signify withdrawal
- Grant points to the opponent or refuse a point being awarded to himself

Coaches : each combatant is allowed to have a coach supporting him during the fight. However, talks between them shall not slow down the combat and the coach shall speak only to his combattant among persons in the arena. Any breach from the coach, as, for example, calling-out, trespassing in the arena or having discussions delaying the next exchange will result in the immediate expulsion of the coach and in a penalty for the combatant.

Combat

Fighters are expected to salute at the beginning and the end of each fight.

Exchanges

Each fight is divided in several exchanges during which the combatants fight in the arena. The combatants start each exchange outside of the arena, with one foot in their respective starting zone. The central judge asks to the combatants if they are ready by asking "Prêts ?". If one of the combatants is not, he shall raise the hand.

The exchange begins when the central judge says « combattez ! ».

The exchange is stopped when the central judge says « halte ! », whatever the reason. Combatants shall then immediately stop any action and go back to their respective starting zones.

Scoring

To be validated, a hit shall be clear, without unnecessary force and properly armed (about 45 degrees amplitude for cuts, and about 10 cm with blade flexion for thrusts). Slices are recognized as valid if the slice applies enough pressure to clearly destabilize the opponent, or when they lead to the immobilization of the opponent. In the latter case, they are counted as submissions.

Any area of the blade representing a sharp part can be used to place a valid hit. Hits with the flat are not valid, and, as well as hits with non-sharp edges, shall not be raised by judges and shall not stop the exchange.

Hits with quillons and hilts are forbidden. Pommel strikes are allowed only on the face and top of the mask, and hence forbidden anywhere else on the opponent's body. However, any excess of impact force will be severely penalized. It is strictly forbidden to hit an opponent on the ground or presenting his back. The central judge is allowed to stop the fight for a non-valid hit being considered as dangerous or not to grant points for a normally valid hit which is judged dangerous.

Submissions, grounding and disarmament are also action stopping the exchange and awarding points. However, armlocks, upside-down tackles, any kind of throws (of or at the opponent), strangulation or any other dangerous grapples are strictly forbidden and will be penalized accordingly. In the same way, punches and kicks are forbidden, but it is allowed to push your opponent.

Points are awarded according to the hit location or the type of action with the following scoring scale. All following actions lead to immediate stop of the exchange by the central judge.

- **Head and neck - red -3 points**
- **Body - purple - 2 Points**
- **Limbs (including hands, shoulders and hips) - green - 1 Point**
- **Feet, crotch and back of the head and neck - yellow - Invalid zone. No point.**
The exchange shall not be stopped except if the hit is considered dangerous.
- **Exit from the Arena or submissions without weapon : 1 point**
- **Controlled submissions, immobilization and disarmament with free control of one's own weapon: 4 points**



Double Hits

When both fighters hit in a valid way, simultaneously or within the same fencing time (« Indes » action, or in the same tempo), the exchange is stopped by the central judge who announces a double hit. Afterblows are discarded as they result from an action started in the next tempo or after the central judge ended the exchange. Remember that it is mandatory to stop any action at once when the central judge stops the combat.

When a double hit is declared, each combatant is awarded the points corresponding to his hit. For example, if Joachim hits Hans at the head while the latter hits at the leg, Joachim earns 3 points and Hans 1.

Here are a few example of similar actions leading to afterblows or doubles :

Action 1a: Hans starts a thrust that Joachim tries to deviate, but unsuccessfully. Hans' thrust passes through and touches while Joachim still tries to deviate (tempo 1). Once touched, Joachim releases the contact on Hans's blade and hit him on an opening at the head (tempo 2)

This is an afterblow. Joachim's hit is not counted since it is started sequentially after the first valid hit has concluded.

Action 1d: Hans starts a thrust that Joachim deviates successfully. Hans' thrust misses the target and cannot continue without a change in the attack line (tempo 1). Joachim ripostes with a hit at the head and during this riposte, Hans realign his blade, starts his attack again and lands a hit (tempo 2)

This is a double. The initial attack was stopped. Both scoring actions (Joachim's riposte and Hans's attack resumption) were launched at the same time.

Action 2a: Joachim closes the distance to Hans while arming his hit to come by going into a high guard. During this action, Hans rushes to Joachim and hit him on the forearms (tempo 1). From the high guard, Joachim launches the hit nonetheless and touches Hans (tempo 2)

This is an afterblow from Joachim. Hans took advantage of the arming action.

Action 2d: Joachim closes the distance to Hans while arming his hit to come by going into a high guard (tempo 1). From the high guard, Joachim attacks and hit Hans on the head. During the attack, Hans goes straight to the forearms and hit (tempo 2).

This is a double hit. At the end of tempo 1, none of the scoring action was launched.

A Meister shall know how to secure himself when defending or attacking. A double hit shows a breach in this principle from both combatants. In consequence, if 3 double hits are raised within the same combat, the central judge declares the end of the combat. Scored points are nonetheless registered and the combatant with the most points is declared to be the winner. However, in qualification, both fighters will be penalized of one Meister-Point for their fight.

In the event of combat end due to a 3rd double or a double bringing end scores to equal or go beyond 10, the combatant having just performed the highest scoring action wins. If both combatants are at draw after performing similar actions, the combat is ended as a draw in qualification phase and the exchange is thrown out and started again in the playoff phase.

Example: Joachim leads 9-8 against Hans. At the last exchange, Joachim hits Hans on the ribs while receiving a hit at the head within the same tempo. The score is now 11-11 after the double hit. The limit of 10 being reached, the combat is ended. Since Hans scored more points during the last exchange, Hans is declared as winner.

End of the Combat

The combat ends as soon as one of these conditions is filled:

- **Withdrawal of a combatant:** Depending on the reasons of the withdrawal, the central judge can decide to declare as winner the combatant staying in the arena and keep the score as is.
- **Injury preventing one combatant to continue:** The score remains as is, however the winner of the combat cannot be the combatant inflicting the injury. If that's the case, the combat is declared to be a draw. Additional penalties may be given to the combatant responsible of the injury.
- **Expulsion of a combatant:** The remaining combatant is declared to be the winner. Additional penalties may be given to the excluded combatant.
- **10 points total is scored by one combatant:** the combatant with the 10 points is the winner
- **Effective combat time reaches 1min30s:** The combatant leading the score at this point is declared winner. If both have the same score, the combat is a draw.
- **3 double-hits recorded in the same combat:** The combat ends and the fighter with the highest score after last double-hit accounting is declared the winner. In case of draw, refer to paragraph on doubles.

Exception: During play-offs phases, a combat cannot be a draw. Then, the exchange is nonetheless stopped at 1min30s of effective time or after 3 double-hits, and the combatants are informed of the situation. A new exchange begins, without time limit, in sudden death (the first valid hit wins). At this point, further double hits stop the exchange, but do not conclude the combat. However, the glory of the combatants is tarnished in regards of such practices at such a critical moment.

Qualifications

Each combatant is awarded a certain number of Meister-Points according to the result of the combat:

- Winner : +3 Meister-Points
- Draw at the end of the time : +1 Meister-Point per combatant
- Loser : 0 Meister-Points

Additionally, modifiers are applied to this basic scoring system according to the following criteria:

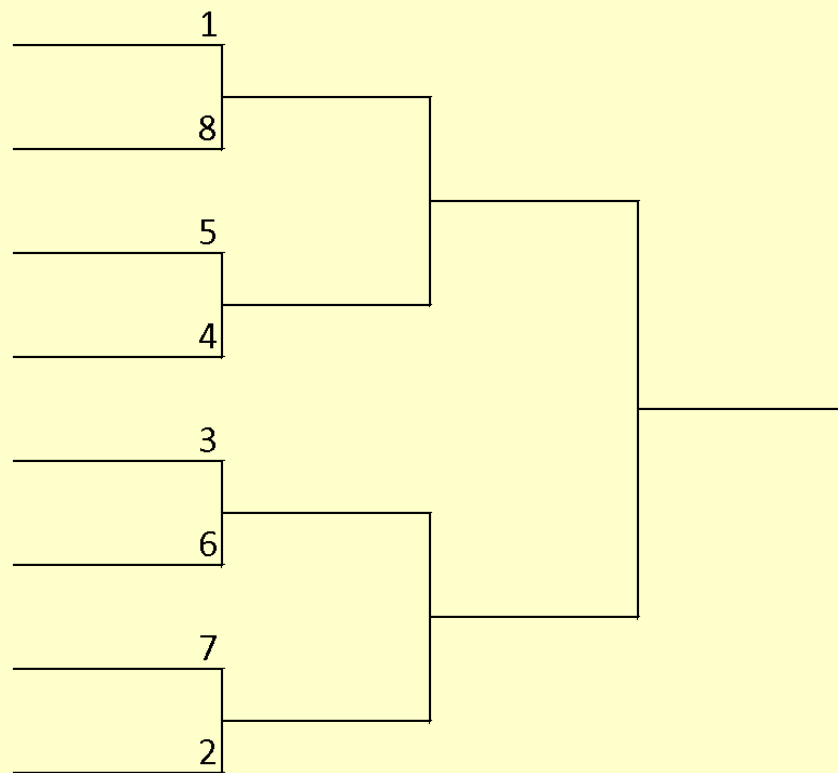
- The combat did not contain any double hit : +1 Meister-Points for both combatants.
- The combat is stopped after 3 double hits : -1 Meister-Points for both combatants.
- Meister-Points can be taken away individually as penalty

At the end of qualification turn, the preliminary ranking is made according to the number of Meister-Points accumulated by each combatant. If two combatants have the same number of Meister-Points, **the one with the smallest quantity of hits received takes the advantage (including hits received during a combat stopped due to double hits). If the situation is not resolved, the highest number of hits given shall give the advantage.** Finally, if none of the above allows ranking these two combatants, a sudden death combat shall be organized.

On condition that participation is suitable within each category, a first qualification turn is done with pools of 5 combatants. A second turn is then organized with the half of the combatants having the most Meister-Points. The total of Meister-Points is then calculated on both turn to select combatants going in play-offs.

Playoffs

Play-offs will be done on a 8 combatants graph and will be completed by a small finale for the 3rd place, and a grand finale deciding of the Meister of the category.



Penalties

Stop the combat or leave the arena without the central judge authorization	Warning. At the second yellow infraction of the same type, 1 point is given to the opponent for all the combats of the tournament sequence. At the 3rd yellow infraction of any kind during the same tournament sequence : red infraction
Interrupt the combat without justification.	
Non-justified claim to the referee or the judge.	
Removing any part of the protection while the combat is on.	
Combatant hits with excess of strength or without control, without injuring the opponent.	
Not immediately-stopping when the judge calls HALTE	
Moving out of the combat zone voluntary, refusing to fight, impeding the fight willingly by presenting non valid targets	
Lack of respect to the staff, public or opponent.	
Throw willingly a piece of equipment or weapon.	2 Combat points are given to the opponent for the on-going combat and all the future ones.
Remove willingly any piece of equipment from the opponent.	
Willingly hits with the cross-guard, hits on the back of the head, back of the torso, or sensible parts.	
Joint submissions or dislocation attempts.	
Pommel hit not applied to the helmet top. Kicks or knee hits (pushing with the foot is allowed, but not kicking).	
Any hit or uncontrolled technique involving an opponent being injured with any degree of severity.	At the second red infraction : black infraction
Hateful or dangerous behavior.	
Clear violent hits without any respect to the opponent.	Expulsion of the tournament
Disrespectful overall behavior, cheating	
Participating under the influence of drugs or alcohol.	

Équipment

Weapons

It is mandatory to have all the weapons tips covered by leather, plastic or equivalent validated during gear check. The weapons shall not present sharp edges or unprotected sharp angles. The length of the blades is limited by the tournament rules. The organization decision prevails over the use of non-flexible blades, or over-sized weapons. **Please communicate with us beforehand if you suspect any of your gear does not meet specifications or if you have any questions.** All weapons and gear must pass the check-out of the organization before the tournament participation.

General specifications:

- No sharp blades, tip must be not pointed AND protected by leather or better measures. Rubber tips alone are not allowed and shall be secured with tape or similar mean.
- The blades must have some degree of flexibility.
- Floppy blades that do not behave as a weapon will not be allowed, for example, the Hanwei practical rapier 43" are generally too floppy on top of being too long, whereas their 37" counterparts are mostly good.
- Triangular blades or feders-style blades (with schilt) are allowed, but the organization has the right to forbid specific ones if they have a non-historical behavior, are too flexible to allow proper control of the blade, from the combatant or his opponent, or have schilt's shape prone to damage equipment.

Steel longsword:

The steel longswords will be brought by the combatants. Feder types are recommended. The weight must not exceed 1.8 kilograms. The blade length limit is 106 cm. (42"). All blades should have a certain degree of flexibility in order to avoid injuries.

Nylon longswords:

They will be provided by the tournament.

Rapiers (Rapier competition only):

The blades should not exceed **100 cm (40 inches) from the cup**. The blade should have good flexibility, but still rigid enough not to fall into the floppy category, to avoid injuries.

Sideswords (rapier and sword & buckler tournaments only)

We understand as a sidesword a weapon with a simple hilt, containing a ring with a straight blade with weight balanced in a way to do cuts more than thrusts. The hand is relatively exposed on the sides, allowing the opponent to cut or thrust his hand.

Sideswords can fit in the Rapier and Sword & Buckler tournaments:

- **Rapier tournament** : These swords are close cousins to rapiers. They are allowed in this tournament, with the same blade length restrictions as rapiers. As well, the committee can consider that a sidesword is too dangerous if exceeds a weight of 1.5 kgs or has a dangerous blade not suitable for a rapier tournament.
- **Sword & Buckler**: In order to have balanced fights, only sideswords with blade length inferior or equal to 37 inches will be allowed, **measured from the rings**.

Arming swords

Arming swords are allowed only for sword & buckler tournament. They shall follow general specifications, and be designed to be used one-handed. Messers and Falchion are by default not accepted because of their really high impact force in cut, **but exceptions can be made if the weapon is found to be light, non-pointy and flexible enough.**

Basket-hilt swords, Sabres, Spadroons:

These weapons are the main focus of the new “sword alone” competition. Their blade length must not exceed 37” (94cm), and otherwise follow general specifications mentioned above. The weight of these three types of weapons should not be below 600g. For sabres and spadroons the upper weight limit is 850g. For basket-hilt swords such as broadswords and backswords, the upper limit is at 1100g as the extra weight is necessarily situated in the hilt rather than the blade.

Bucklers

We understand as a buckler any small shield smaller than 15” across designed to be held with the off-hand. In consequence, small shield strapped to the forearm like the much bigger rotellas or targes are not allowed. The buckler material can be metal, plastic or wood. However, keep in mind that it shall bear the impact of the opponent sword without breaking.

Any pointy shape possibly leading to injuries is strictly forbidden. This includes but is not limited to spikes on the umbo or acute corners on a non-round buckler.

During the fight, it is allowed to push the opponent with the buckler. This will not stop the fight nor ward any point. However, it is strictly forbidden to hit the opponent with the buckler.

Protection

Head and neck:

- Fencing mask CEN2 1600 N FIE standard or higher in fair conditions. Occipital protection is mandatory. Full steel helmets for HEMA use are also allowed. In case of doubt contact the organization.
- Lower mask standard (FIE rated masks CEN1 and equivalent) is tolerated for nylon category. Exceptions can be made upon explicit agreement from MSM organization prior to the event.
- All masks must be in good shape without rust, major bumps or any visible damage. All masks must be approved through gear check.
- Additional neck protection is required for all combatants.

Hands

For steel longsword, pre-approved makers are:

SPES Heavy
Sparring Gloves
ProGauntlet

Absolute Force,
Black Lance
Comfort Fencing
St. Mark

Other gloves may be approved by the organization. Feel free to contact us. We will be happy to evaluate your gear. Steel gauntlets may be allowed, but must be approved by event staff.

If your protection is made of metal or has metal on it, any hit with it will not be tolerated and will have a yellow or red penalty depending on the case. Lacrosse or Red dragon are ONLY approved for the Nylon longsword.

Lighter gloves are accepted for weapons offering good hand protection. (rapiers with swept/ cup/ pappenheimer hilts, sabers, basket-hilts, and so on). Other swords without hand protection (for instance armswords, sideswords...), will follow Nylon longsword restrictions.

Other parts of the body:

- Cup protection is mandatory for men, and highly suggested for women. Chest protection is mandatory for women and highly recommended for men.

- Padded Heavy jackets built for HEMA to [350N standard](#) covering torso and arms are mandatory. All jackets must be closed at the armpits. Contact event staff for any exceptions prior to the event.
- Rigid protections are required for elbows, forearm and knees. When steel is involved, rigid tibia protections are also required.
- Mouth protectors are recommended.
- Shoes must cover the whole feet.
- All skin be covered at the time of the combat, including legs.
- Regarding legs: Almost any HEMA pants in the market are correct for the occasion. Use of at least sportive trousers with some level of thickness is recommended. For security reasons the event staff will not allow the use of shorts, jeans or leggings (the latter could be waived if the user has protections covering on frontal areas: protective skirt, knee cups and shinbone protection).
- No naked skin is allowed. For example, the calf of a combatant wearing short fencing pants and rigid leg protection must be covered. Ask your granny or your gramps to knit you a pair of socks.

Other considerations

The protections and general equipment have to be in good conditions. Holes and disjointed clothes showing a lack of care will be refused.

The same conditions apply to weapons. Several examples of it would be, but are not limited to, rusty swords, excessively bent swords (without straightening possibility), broken quillons, indented edges (this can be solved easily, check youtube tutorials), ...

In exceptional occasions, depending on the availability and circumstances, the event staff would offer some help to restore a piece of equipment or borrow an available and suitable substitute item.

Please, do not hesitate to ask the event staff if by any chance you think you might not match the equipment requirements, we will be able to help you find the appropriate gear or borrow it in order to maximize the chances to see you among us!

Disclaimer

Gear requirements are given explicitly to decrease the risk of injury to which the participants are exposed. Nonetheless, historical fencing is in essence a contact sport, and this risk will never be fully eliminated. In consequence, each registered participant is held responsible of the good condition of his equipment, to be insured in case an injury occurs (sustained or inflicted), but also to have the sufficient skills and physical fitness.

The organization of the Montréal Sword Meisters decline all responsibilities in case of injury to a person on site, but also in case of theft or damaging of the participants equipment or personal belongings.

Please check the liability waiver for more information.

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