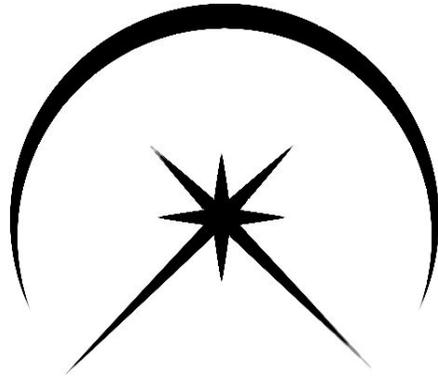


The Saber Legion



Unity Ruleset

Updated March 20th, 2019

Introduction

This document presents the rules that will comprise what will be used for the **TSL Saber Masters Tournament** on **May 4th** and what we are currently naming the **TSL Unity Ruleset**. It is an alternative ruleset and does not replace the general and standard rules that are within the **TSL – Official Events, Contests and Rules** and the rules within the **TSL – Membership and Hold Harmless Agreement**. The **TSL Unity Ruleset** is meant to be used alongside the standard rules in order to create a style and experience of saber fighting that will stand apart from others.

The purpose of these rules are not to create what can be thought of as a realistic depiction of lightsaber combat. It is virtually impossible to accomplish that since the only depiction of lightsaber combat is fictional and more importantly lightsabers are not real. The physics of how a lightsaber might work in real life are open to interpretation and change according to the storyteller. These rules are also not designed to simulate actual combat.

The Saber Legion - Unity Ruleset

A combat simulation is also nearly impossible to simulate in a tournament or martial contest since real life-or-death situations often don't involve any specific rules. What our rules are designed for is to help define and enforce an art or style that we think best represents the lightsaber combat we see portrayed in the movies while not being artificial or pseudo-choreography.

The rules within the **TSL Unity Ruleset** are aimed at fighters *and* the audience. It is designed to allow martial artists to be able to compete without compromising their martial style. This way the event can be viewed as a legitimate mixed martial weapons sport. For the audience, we want to create an event that inspires the same awe they experience when watching their favorite heroes and villains on screen. This new ruleset aims to create the most entertaining, most martial and most fair contest possible so every participant walks away delighted.

Rules

All of the **General Rules** found within **TSL - Official Events, Contests and Rules** and the rules within the **TSL - Membership and Hold Harmless Agreement** are in effect unless otherwise stated. With the **TSL Unity Ruleset**, there are currently several additional rulesets that are also in effect that are new and not currently used in standard TSL events: **Continuous Fighting, Martial Quality Fighting, and Battle Music**.

Continuous Fighting

In other martial sports such as Boxing, and MMA, fighting does not stop when a touch happens. The clock continues to run for the entire round. This is also similar to what is depicted in the movies: epic non-stop action.

1. Running Clock

- a. Once the clock starts, the clock should not stop unless called for by the **Director**.
- b. The **Director** can call for a stop and a reset of the clock at any time (similar to **Total Bout Time** rules).

The Saber Legion - Unity Ruleset

2. Round Duration

Using a standard found in other martial sports like boxing matches, and in some MMA leagues allows for our fighters to be conditioned similarly.

- a. Standard durations for a bout are **90 seconds, three minutes, or five minutes.**
- b. Duration of the bout can be adjusted per event.

3. Round Breaks

- a. A **one minute** fighter break should be given between each round if a bout consists of multiple rounds.
- b. Duration of the break can be adjusted per event.

4. No Stops on a Touch

- a. A Director will *not* call a **Halt** or **Hold** when a fighter lands a touch.

5. Calling Holds, Halts & Resets

- a. A Director can still call a **Hold, Halt, or Reset** at any time and can suspend the clock if necessary.
- b. A **Halt** should be called when any of the following occurs:
 - i. The bout duration has expired.
- c. A **Hold** should be called when any of the following occurs:
 - i. There is a clear safety issue (e.g. equipment failure, excessive force, fighter calibration).
- d. A **Reset** should be called when any of the following occurs:
 - i. Fighters do not disengage in a reasonable amount of time if a **Mandatory Disengagement** is in play.
 - ii. There is a **Ring Out**.

6. Assumed Awareness

Any person who practices an art or sport that can potentially harm another should have some fundamental awareness of their actions or the actions of others that they are engaged with. In order to enforce this idea of awareness, any violations of rules should assume that the person was aware of their strikes

The Saber Legion - Unity Ruleset

or the strikes of their opponents. This assumption has implications on whether a rule violation is considered accidental or intentional.

- a. Fighters are expected and assumed to be aware of any touches on their person or their opponent. This includes glancing blows.
- b. Fighters are *not* expected to keep track of their points or the opponent's points.
- c. Any violations of **Excessive Force**, **Invalid Targets**, or not complying with a **Mandatory Disengagement** will be treated as if the violation was intentional and not accidental.

7. Mandatory Disengagement

Fighters are being asked to self-police following a hit and both perform a disengagement. A fighter who has been hit will need to recognize the hit and not immediately counter-attack. The premise is that the hit should have incapacitated the fighter thereby preventing an immediate counter-attack. Disengaging also helps out the Judges and Audience keep track of the flow of combat and thereby allows for it to be continuous. The **Mandatory Disengagement** is an integral component of **Continuous Fighting** and cannot be emphasized enough.

- a. A **Mandatory Disengagement** will be in effect after a touch lands on a fighter.
- b. A **Mandatory Disengagement** should not be confused with a strategic disengagement that might occur during a bout. Not all disengagements should be enforced the same way.
- c. During a **Mandatory Disengagement** any subsequent touches (valid or invalid) cannot award points unless it is an **Afterblow**.
- d. To successfully complete a **Mandatory Disengagement** the fighters must fulfill one or more of the following criteria:
 - i. Fighters move so they are not in immediate striking distance of each other.
 - ii. Fighters at full extension cannot land a touch on an opponent.
 - iii. Fighter's blades can only cross around the top third of each other's blade when at or near full extension.
- e. Fighters must complete a **Mandatory Disengagement** within a *reasonable* amount of time.
- f. **One to three seconds** can be assumed to be a *reasonable* amount of time before needing to disengage (Director's discretion).
- g. Fighters not completing a **Mandatory Disengagement** can be in **Breach of Conduct** (Director's discretion) and using **Excessive Force**.
- h. A Fighter is in **Breach of Conduct** (Director's discretion) and using **Excessive Force** if pursuing an opponent who is attempting a **Mandatory Disengagement**.

The Saber Legion - Unity Ruleset

- i. Fighters must allow for a reasonable amount of time before re-engaging after a **Mandatory Disengagement** (Director's discretion).
- j. **One second** can be assumed to be a reasonable amount of time before re-engaging.

8. Judging

- a. All Judges need to monitor the **Initial Touch** and the **Afterblow** to determine scoring and ignore any other subsequent touches until after the **Mandatory Disengagement**.
- b. Line Judges on different sides of the ring tally *valid* points for *all fighters* so general discrepancies and similarities can be discerned during the final scoring.
- c. Typical Judge's Batons used to score a bout should not be used to call a touch.
- d. Judges can use whatever means necessary to accurately tally scores (e.g. scratch pads, clickers, etc.) that doesn't conflict with the other rules of silent judging.
- e. Line Judges are not required to keep a tally of all the strikes but just what the current score is per combatant.
- f. Scores cannot be broadcasted publically and not shared amongst Judges during the bout.

9. Limitless Award Total

- a. The number of awarded points a fighter can receive is limitless throughout the bout.
- b. In other formats, a bout might be over once a fighter reaches a certain number of awarded points. However, that rule does not apply to the **Continuous Fighting** ruleset.

10. Winning Scenario

- a. Once the bout duration is over, the Line and Table Judges should confer together to determine the winner.
- b. Each Judge should have individually and silently kept track of the awarded scores of both fighters.
- c. The Judges should determine who is the winner by averaging out the awarded scores and calculate who has the highest score.
- d. If there is a **Tie** then a **Sudden Death** round is called.

The Saber Legion - Unity Ruleset

11. Announcing Winners

Similar to boxing and MMA rules, the **Director** can simply announce who won the round and not announce the point total. This relieves some of the nitpicking that can occur about scored points, any embarrassment if a fighter had a significant lead advantage, and fighters can still be happy with a loss if they felt that their form was good. Participants should be focusing on the *overall* impression of who won since the points are not being announced. The same impression should be felt between all fighters if they are practicing **Assumed Awareness**; they should have an idea on who had the advantage and landed the most valid touches.

- a. Fighters must remain in the Ring until after the announcement of the winner.
- b. The **Director**, after the final score tabulation, will come into the ring and announce who the winning fighter is.
- c. *Optionally*, the **Director** can announce the final score alongside announcing the winner.
- d. Fighters are expected to show the proper etiquette and decorum in accepting victory and defeat, and abide by the **TSL Code of Conduct**.

Martial Quality Fighting

Martial Quality Fighting rules are meant to determine a valid touch not only by whether it lands on a valid target with a valid type of touch (thrust or cut) but also by the quality of the touch. The goal of the **Martial Quality Fighting** rules is to enforce good martial habits in a bout. This allows martial artists to not need to compromise their art when competing in our sport because it compliments martial ideals. These rules will also allow novice fighters to learn good martial habits that can crossover to other martial sports. This is important since fighters can only get better through practice and instruction. A novice fighter training in other martial arts will only make their saber fighting better. Remarkably, Martial Quality Fighting rules make the bouts more entertaining and fair because it's martial focus is easier to judge and the combat becomes reminiscent of the movies.

The general rule around qualifying a valid touch is that it should be able to incapacitate the target if the attacker was using a similar edged or blunt weapon. It is not based on what we think a lightsaber might do in real-life. However, there is a similarity in how the galactic space warriors in our favorite movie saga fight: striving to end a conflict in the shortest amount of time and with the least amount of pain inflicted. This can be summed up by the Japanese martial arts philosophy of *Ikken Hissatsu*, "One Hit. One Kill". Any blow that does not have the quality that would immediately incapacitate the target is not seen to be the ideal, should be discouraged and deemed invalid.

The Saber Legion - Unity Ruleset

Interestingly, the types of attacks seen in the movies are not small movements but swings with big arcs that are very similar to real martial techniques. By examining the movies, we can see more similarities to real martial arts with deadly blows and not what we currently see in many sparring matches: quick light touches on superficial targets. Indeed, making the fighting martial in quality will make it similar to the movies and thereby making it more entertaining to the audience and the combatants who wish to act like their favorite saber wielding characters.

Judging with **Martial Quality Fighting** rules should also be easier since martial techniques have very specific mechanics and visual cues that are easy to track compared to the quick motions with **First Light Touch** rules where even a light graze can be a scoring touch. A judge could assume that a graze had occurred just by their perspective. However, with the **Martial Quality Fighting** ruleset and the rules around **Surface Contact** and **Loaded** touches (among others), the hits are a lot more distinct and visible. This create a better sense of fairness amongst competitors and the audience since *everyone* should be able to easily track the fight.

With **Martial Quality Fighting** rules, the audience should be able to determine the winner ahead of time since it is easier to track touches. An audience member who understands and tracks a fight will be more engaged and more entertained.

Judges will silently track points without feeling pressured by other Judge's call. When the Judges compare their point totals, they can more easily determine if the overall bout was in favor of a fighter.

These rules make sure that every fighter feels proud of their bouts even when they lose. This is important because there is only one absolute winner in a tournament.

1. Initial Touch

- a. The **Initial Touch** is the first touch (valid or invalid) that lands on an opponent's body.

2. Afterblows

- a. An opposing fighter is allowed to deliver a touch called an **Afterblow** within **one second** of the delivery of an **Initial Touch**.
- b. The opposing fighter's blade must already be in motion to deliver an **Afterblow** before the **Initial Touch** lands.
- c. If the **Initial Touch** lands and the opposing fighter's blade is not in motion, any **Afterblow** is not valid.
- d. An **Afterblow** must also adhere to the rules of a **Valid Touch** for it to be valid.

The Saber Legion - Unity Ruleset

3. One Award

The One Award rule prevents fighters from exchanging continuous blows once they are in range to rack up a score quickly. Continuous blows is visually confusing, difficult to judge, and rewards physicality over technique. Instead, this rule enforces the ideal that a martial quality engagement consists of a single incapacitating attack and a safe disengagement.

- a. In every engagement, only one award is possible.
- b. The award could be given to either the Fighter who delivered the **Initial Touch**, the **Afterblow**, or neither.
- c. The Fighter awarded is determined using the following criteria:
 - i. If the **Initial Touch** is *valid* and the **Afterblow** is *valid*, no award is given.
 - ii. If the **Initial Touch** is *valid* and the **Afterblow** is *invalid*, the **Initial Touch** is awarded.
 - iii. If the **Initial Touch** is *invalid* and the **Afterblow** is *valid*, the **Afterblow** is awarded.
 - iv. If the **Initial Touch** is *invalid* and the **Afterblow** is *invalid*, no award is given.
- d. After the award is determined, a **Mandatory Disengagement** is in affect and no additional points can be awarded until the **Mandatory Disengagement** is over.
- e. **Optionally**, Table Judges can elaborate on the scoring of an engagement to further help in analyzing the winner of an engagement and the overall bout. An example of how a Table Judge might organize their scoring is as follows:

Engagement	Red	Blue	Award
1	Initial Touch - Valid	Afterblow - Invalid	Red +1
2	Initial Touch - Invalid	-	0
3	Initial Touch - Invalid	Afterblow - Valid	Blue + 1
4	Initial Touch - Valid	Afterblow - Valid	0
5	-	Initial Touch - Valid	Blue +1

4. Simultaneous Hits

Any touches (**Initial Touch** & **Afterblow**) that land within the same moment are categorized as **Simultaneous Hits** and are *always* invalid.

1. Table Judges can mark if an engagement ended with a **Simultaneous Hit** to provide supplementary data on the martial quality of the bout.

The Saber Legion - Unity Ruleset

5. Valid Touches

a. Incapacitating

Though it is not a definitive way to measure quality, a good way to determine if a blow is of martial quality is if it could have incapacitated the fighter if applied with a bladed weapon. This is at the discretion of the judges.

b. Intentional

- i. A strike delivered by a fighter must have intention.
- ii. The target of a strike must be calculated by the attacker ahead of time.
- iii. A fighter must demonstrate control and not fight wildly and without prediction.
- iv. Judges can subjectively decide if a touch does or doesn't exhibit intention and can invalidate a touch.
- v. Here are some guidelines for fighter to demonstrate intention:
 1. Using consistent moves on the same targets.
 2. The angle of the attack doesn't significantly change during the course of the action.
 3. The fighter exhibits good structural mechanics throughout an action.

c. Uninterrupted

If an attack is significantly parried, evaded or deflected it is seen as being interrupted and is now considered to be insufficient **Martial Quality** and cannot score a point. For example:

***Example 1:** Red Fighter thrusts at Blue Fighter. Blue Fighter parries the blow. Red Fighter's blade is still extended after it was parried and a moment later touches Blue Fighter's arm by slightly moving the blade laterally. Red Fighter's contact is considered not of sufficient **Martial Quality** and is an invalid touch.*

***Example 2:** Red Fighter cuts at Blue Fighter. Blue Fighter deflects the blow. Red Fighter twists their blade to make contact with Blue Fighter's leg. Red Fighter's blow is considered not of sufficient **Martial Quality** and invalid due to the deflection and twisting of the blade.*

d. Surface Contact

All strikes to be considered of martial quality need to make the appropriate contact onto the target of the opponent.

The Saber Legion - Unity Ruleset

- i. **No Grazes or Insufficient Surface Contact:** Blows that make little to no blade contact on the opponent are invalid touches.
- ii. **Thrusts:** All thrusts should hit with the tip of the blade and not the sides. When a thrust lands, it should create an appropriate amount of force to potentially displace the target. One general rule is that if the thrust easily remains on the opponent's body after initial impact, then it should be of martial quality.
- iii. **Chop and Hew Cuts:** Any cut should make significant contact on the side of the blade. A chop or hew is meant to go through a target or severely impact the target using percussive force. Upon landing a martial quality chop or hew, the blade should not easily slide off the target (unlike, for example, with a slash) but instead stay on the target. If an obvious attempt at a hew slips off the target then it probably didn't make significant contact and should not be counted. A general rule is that a chop or hew should make contact with at least 3 inches of the blade from the top and optimally hitting the target with the blade's point of percussion: the place on a blade where the most force can be transmitted (roughly the top third of the blade).
- iv. **Draw and Push Cuts:** Unlike Hews and Chops, a Draw, Push, or Slash does not remain on the body but instead the blade makes initial contact and then slides off the body dragging the blade along the target. However, the contact with the blade is still non-superficial. A significant amount of the blade must make contact with the target in the same motion of the cut. With a **Draw cut**, the blade is pulled inward after it lands on the target so the blade drags along the target. With a **Push cut**, the blade is pushed outward so the blade slides along during the push.

e. **Loaded Attack**

Every valid touch will need to be a **Loaded Attack** beforehand to make it of martial quality. This means that from the fighter's position, they must be capable of generating enough force to deliver a blow that would incapacitate a target *before* it lands. This can be determined through a variety of observations. For a touch to be considered a **Loaded Attack**, the touch only needs to satisfy one of the following criteria (though it can fulfill multiple criteria):

- i. **Chambered:** A valid cut and certainly a valid thrust should begin in a chambered position, ie. the elbows should be bent and the arms are not extended. This allows for proper force generation to drive the point of the blade into the target when the arms are extended.
- ii. **Tip Angle:** Visually if it appears that during the delivery of an uninterrupted touch if the angle of the blade (emitter to tip) points behind the attacking fighter at some point, then it can be seen as been sufficiently loaded.

The Saber Legion - Unity Ruleset

- iii. **Arc of Rotation:** If a cut can create a 70 - 90 degree arc before it lands, then it should be traveling with enough force to be of **Martial Quality**. This can happen during the delivery of a *moulinet* (a type of circular rotation of the blade), a sweeping cut that winds around the fighter, a chop cut that is pulled back before it is delivered, or simply a stance or guard position where the blade is significantly angled away from the target (eg. Jodan in Kendo, or Vom Tag in Longsword fencing).

f. Extended Strikes

This refers to the extension of the arms at the time of a touch.

- i. **Chops, Hews, and Thrusts:** Mechanically, if the arm of the attacker are not fully extended by the time a Chop, Hew, or Thrust lands, then it has not delivered all the potential force possible and should *not* be considered martial in quality even if the force generated might be incapacitating. This rule is about enforcing good martial habits when sparring.
- ii. **Draws and Push Cuts:** Unlike Chops, Hews and Thrusts, a Draw or Push cut does not need to have arms at extension at the time of impact. The touch just needs to make significant amount of contact on the blade. However, a touch will be easier to see by Judges and more convincing of martial quality if there is an extension at the end of the draw or push cut. Extension at the end means by the time the touch is finished, the arms have drawn or pushed the blade so far that the arms are now at full extension.

g. Controlled Fighting

- i. **Speed:** Speed of the attacks should be regulated in accordance to what is defined in the **TSL - Membership and Hold Harmless Agreement** for the different levels of sparring. A short explanation is thus:
 - 1. **Partner Exercises:** 10-20% of relative **full speed**
 - 2. **Medium Sparring:** 30-40% of relative **full speed**
 - 3. **Heavy Sparring:** 50-60% of relative **full speed**
 - 4. **Tournament Sparring:** 70-80% of relative **full speed**
- ii. **Force:** When a touch lands, the Fighter should ensure that the touch does not exceed the tolerances of the blade, armor, or opponent causing equipment failure or harm. Force of the attacks should be regulated in accordance to what is defined in the **TSL - Membership and Hold Harmless Agreement** for the different levels of sparring. A short explanation is thus:
 - 1. **Partner Exercises:** 10-20% of relative **full force**
 - 2. **Medium Sparring:** 30-40% of relative **full force**
 - 3. **Heavy Sparring:** 50-60% of relative **full force**

The Saber Legion - Unity Ruleset

4. Tournament Sparring: 50-60% of relative full force

- iii. **Thrusts:** In controlling thrusts, a common practice is to have the hand slide up the handle, or relaxing the wrist after contact to prevent the full force of the blow from being transferred.
- iv. **Cuts:** The full extension of the arms at the moment that a cut lands on a target should allow the fighter to control the impact.
- v. **Strikes on the Back:**
 - 1. Striking the back of an opponent's body should always be done with utmost care
 - 2. Injuries to the vertebrae are incredibly dangerous and life-altering.
 - 3. The back is generally protected by **Tournament Level Sparring Gear**, but that does not give carte blanche to go all out.
 - 4. If a fighter's back is turned towards another fighter, it is expected that any blows to back will be done with lightest application of force.
- h. **Awarded Points**
 - i. A valid touch to a valid target area will score 1 point.
 - ii. There is no additional points awarded or weighted targets at this time.

6. Invalid Touches

a. Revenge Strikes

If a fighter deliberately strikes an opponent after a **Hold** or **Reset** is called, it will be seen as **Intentional Breach of Conduct**.

b. Invalid Target

- i. A touch to an invalid target will result in 0 points and possibly a **Breach of Conduct** (Director's discretion).
- ii. If a fighter intentionally places an invalid target in the path of an opponent's strike in order to invalidate the blow, the defending fighter will be in **Breach of Conduct** and a point(s) awarded to the attacking fighter.

c. Excessive Force

Any touch that is considered to use excessive force (Director's discretion) will be thrown out and a **Breach of Conduct** might be issued.

The Saber Legion - Unity Ruleset

7. Targets

a. **Cut and Thrust Targets**

The targets have changed in accordance to what many in the martial sciences perceive to be a more incapacitating target area for both a quality cut or a thrust.

- i. Upper Chest
- ii. Front and Sides of Head
- iii. Upper Back

b. **Cut Only Targets**

Only cuts can be valid touches when it lands on the following targets since thrusts wouldn't necessarily immediately incapacitate the target if it lands. In the case of the stomach, it is too unsafe to stab at unprotected soft targets:

- i. Arms (Shoulder, Elbows, Bicep, Forearm, Wrist, etc.)
- ii. Thighs and Knees
- iii. Stomach
- iv. Lower Back

c. **Invalid Targets**

No matter whether the attack is a cut or thrust, any strike that lands on the following targets is invalid. Certain targets have been removed for safety or lack of martial significance.

i. **Neck and Throat**

Strikes to the neck can damage the cervical vertebrae leading to grievous injury. Strikes to the throat can also lead to choking, gagging and should be generally avoided.

ii. **Back of the Head**

Many helmets have inadequate back of the head protection and the back of the head is close to the cervical vertebrae and should be avoided.

iii. **Groin**

Soft tissue damage in this region is possible even with a cup or other groin protection in place, therefore the groin should not be considered a target. Movement can cause a groin cup to misalign.

iv. **Below the knee (Shins, Calves, Ankles, Feet, etc.)**

A cut to the calf might not necessarily end a fight if the person could still remain upright. Whereas, a cut to the back of the knee would open an artery that would incapacitate the

The Saber Legion - Unity Ruleset

target in mere seconds. Cutting to the calf has also been a reason fighters lean forward and expose their head to an overhead attack; a bad martial habit.

v. **Hands (Fingers included)**

Fingers have never been depicted as a target in the Star Wars movies but are an obvious target when wielding a hilt that doesn't have a guard. Only the wrist was frequently the target of strikes in the movies. Removing the hand holding a saber by cutting the wrist is a standard trope and a good martial strategy. Removing a finger won't necessarily end a fight. Fingers also have a lot of smaller bones that can be more easily injured compared to other targets.

vi. **Hilt**

The saber hilt has been removed due to concerns of equipment failure and breakages of sometimes very expensive hilts. Hilt targeting is also rarely depicted in the movies.

Battle Music

An optional way to track the duration of a bout is to play music. This is a great way to create even more immersion and aligns with the drama one finds in the movies.

1. Bout Start and Stop

- a. Battle music signifies that the bout is going to begin or has begun.
- b. The bout should end when the battle music ends.

2. Clock Stoppage

- a. If the clock is stopped, the music can be turned off or kept running.
- b. The music can start where it left off, be restarted or new music playing that satisfies the duration left over of the bout.

3. Duration

- a. It must have the same or similar length in duration to the bout.

4. Director's Fiat

- a. The Director maintains control of the beginning and end of the bout.
- b. Fighters must still obey the start commands of the Director.
- c. The Director can state, "*Begin with the Battle Music.*" to instruct the fighters that they can engage in combat when the battle music starts to play.

5. Licensing

- a. An appropriate copyright license is needed so the battle music can be used publicly and on various media platforms (e.g. YouTube and Facebook).

The Saber Legion - Unity Ruleset

6. Volume

- a. Volume should allow for the fighters, event staff and audience to clearly hear the song and any commands given during the bout.

7. Musical Style

- a. Battle music without vocals, singing or talking is preferred since it can interfere with commands being given.
- b. Battle music should be evocative of the work of composer John Williams.

8. Informed Intent

- a. Event staff and fighters must be informed that battle music will be used for a bout.
- b. Battle Music must be made available to Event Staff and Fighters before a bout to determine appropriateness.