

Tournament Heraldry 102 by Countess Lyriel de la Foret

Heralding at tournaments can be one of the most rewarding aspects of heraldry. You are not only getting the fighters to the field but acting as a sort of sportscaster for the people gathered to see the fighting and for the list table to help them keep track of the tournament. Here are some tips for dealing with the personnel and getting the fighters to the field on time.

The Mystery of the Cards: The listmistress or her assistant will hand you a set of cards. Don't panic! The cards should be in sets of two and represent the fighters who are to report to the field. The topmost pair should be on the field first, the second set next, and so on. Placing the cards between your fingers in order helps to keep them straight. I am right-handed, and usually place the first set between the thumb and pointer finger of my left hand, the second set between my pointer finger and third finger, and the third set between the third and fourth fingers. (I often also place a fourth set between the fourth finger and my pinkie; this is a personal preference so that I am ready if something unexpected happens). When the fight is over, return the cards to the person at the list table, with the winner on top.

Announcing the fighters: When calling fighters to the field, read the top two cards (you can move them with your right hand when reading them, but put them back between your left thumb and pointer finger). You may announce these gentles as "On the field" or "Would X and Y please report to the list." The next set of combatants are announced as "Arming" (this is like being in the 'on-deck' circle) and the last set are announced as "Preparing to arm." Our fighters have learned to listen for those particular phrases and may get confused if they are not used, so be careful. And don't forget to keep the cards in order!

Doing the "Honors": When the fighters are on the field and ready to begin, you may step forward and "do the honors." This is a sort of formal way of presenting them to the Crown, the populace, and each other. By tradition, this is done at least during the first complete round of any tourney, and often throughout small tourneys, or those that are highly formal, such as Crown Tourney. The exact order and wording are not set in stone, save that one always salutes the Crown first. The usual litany is as follows:

1. My Lord(s)/Lady(ies), do honor to the Crown of the Kingdom of Calontir (wait for them to do so, and do so with them as a sign of respect);
2. Salute the populace gathered here this day (wait);
3. Do honor to that gentle who inspires you on this field (wait);
4. Salute your most noble opponent (wait);
5. Pay heed to the words of your marshal (get out of the way).

You may announce the winner after the bout has ended, and proceed to the next set of pairings.

Notes: You should always speak with the marshal and list table personnel prior to the tournament, or with the herald who preceded you on the field, to find out how best to work with them. For instance, some list tables have a person specifically to deal with giving you the cards and getting them back; some marshals prefer to announce winners themselves, etc. And always make sure the winner is actually determined before announcing it; if the marshals and/or the fighters are discussing it, hold off until you get a clear signal. If more than one field is being used at the same time, DO NOT start announcing until the other herald is finished—this will let both of you be heard instead of neither. Don't be afraid to ask the fighters how to pronounce their name if you are unsure; most of them appreciate your efforts to get it right. It helps to listen to other heralds pronouncing them if you are coming in as a relief herald.

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