New On Guard Line (SABRE)

Official FIE language in Summary of Decisions from Congress: For sabre, the referee places each of the two competitors in such a way that the back foot of each is 2 m from the center line of the piste (that is, in front of the "on guard" lines). Application as follows: the tests have to be done after the Olympic Games and until December 31, 2016 and, according to the ad hoc Commission, the Executive Committee will decide if the rule will be applied for the rest of season 2016-2017. 

**NOTE:** This has been approved for TESTING only and is for SABER only. Foil and epee’s rules regarding the on guard line remain unchanged. The testing will begin at USA Fencing events on Aug. 1 and at all FIE competitions from October – December 2016. After the testing period, the FIE COMEX will make an analysis and decide whether to keep the change. 
- In case the change is maintained, then it will continue immediately (Jan. 2017 through the remainder of the season) with the FIE Congress needing to ratify the rule change in November 2017.
- If the COMEX decides to not continue with the reduced distance, then the old system will be applied from January, 2017.

Should the FIE decide to not continue with the new on guard line at the end of the testing period (December 2016), USA Fencing will return to using the current guard line in conjunction with the FIE.

**UPDATE (as of 9/30/2016)**

Recently, the FIE published the following clarification regarding the rule:

“In order to respect the t. 17.4 “When placed on guard during the bout, the distance between the two competitors must be such that, in the position ‘point in line,’ the points of the two blades cannot make contact.” The distance between the athletes will be set for 3 meters. The pistes will have markings accordingly.”

In accordance with the FIE, markings will be placed on all strips 3 meters apart (1.5 meters on either side of the center line). Per the FIE clarification, fencers will be 3m apart and will not be required to have the back foot in front of the original on guard line.
Shoulder Reversal (FOIL)

A foil fencer who reverses the line of his/her shoulders (bringing the shoulder of the non-weapon arm forward of the weapon arm shoulder) is now subject to a Group 1 penalty (a yellow card). Much like other penalties (such as corps-a-corps to avoid a touch or substitution of non-valid target), any hit scored by the fencer committing the penalty will be annulled.

New Timing (SABRE)

Official FIE language in Summary of Decisions from Congress: After a hit has been registered, a subsequent hit made by the other fencer will only be registered if it occurs within a maximum of 170 milliseconds (± 10 ms tolerance). Application as follows: starting with the season 2016-2017.

Change of Application of the Rules Regarding Epee Wiring

Effective immediately, there is a change in the acceptable way one may wire an epee. In a post to the FOC site in 2013 it was stated that the wires may not pass through the “tunnel” created by the socket and the metal plate because the referee cannot verify if there is a hidden switch. This application of the rules is contrary to the application in the rest of the world. Epee sockets are manufactured globally with the “tunnel” to protect the wires from accidental or "non-accidental" breaks. Allowing epees to be wired with the wires through the “tunnel” is the way the rules are enforced at every international tournament including World Cups, World Championships and at the Olympic Games. Therefore, effective immediately, USA Fencing will change its interpretation of the rule to be in alignment with the rest of the world and permit epees to be wired in either fashion, either outside the tunnel or through the tunnel. See photos at right for illustration.