

"On the Sponsoring of Prizes"

by Sorcha Careman

One of the most visible activities of the Guild is the playing of prizes. The Guild was developed with the idea to encourage the mentoring of students as they progress up the levels through teaching, support and enthusiasm.

Mentoring is also exhibited in the sponsoring of Prizes. The relationship between the sponsor/mentor/teacher and the player/candidate/student can range from very informal to formal. This will depend on the relationship developed between the two. The Charter states that a Journeyman can sponsor prizes for Freescholar, a Provost for Freescholar and Journeyman and a Guildmaster/Courtier for all levels. This is just one aspect of the mentor relationship as it relates to Prizes. Another is seen in the assisting and support during the prize of those Provost, Guildmasters and Courtiers of the levels above the prize being played.

So you feel you're ready to play your prize or help someone else out with their prize. How does one go about sponsoring a prize? I've put together a kind of checklist here that has been used in some areas. This can be used as a tool for those who'd like an idea of where to start.

1) Initial discussion

There needs to be a discussion between the player (candidate) and the sponsor. Does the player feel ready to play that level? Does the sponsor feel that they are ready to play that level? Be honest with yourselves. This should be a positive endeavor. Will this be a demonstration of the skills for that level, a test of skill and knowledge, an example of endurance or some other demonstration/test? Decide what works best for your relationship, where it is you want to go with the guild and how you want to get there. The bylaws/guidelines will give some reference but remember they are only guidelines and not a checklist or the "bible" of the process.

2) Scheduling

- A) Decide on a couple of events that might work for your scheduling. Keep in mind that some can be played at practices but we should be encouraging that they be played at events which helps with the visibility of the guild. Is it going to be at a shire, canton, barony, principality or kingdom event? I'm sure I've missed some levels but this gives you the idea.
- b) Decide who will contact the autocrat of the proposed event. I've usually seen the sponsor do this. Check to see if there will be time in the schedule for the playing of a prize and the recognition. You may need to check a couple of events to get this on the calendar. Be patient.
- c) Check in with the branch marshal and/or the RMIC (rapier marshal in charge) so they will know that there will be another rapier activity at that event
- d) Do you want a herald for the prize? Check with the branch herald to see if they are interested and/or work with another herald. This is an opportunity to make the prize special and full of the pomp and circumstance it deserves.

3) Advertising

So now you have an event to play the prize at. The next step is to ensure there will be folks there to help play the prize. There are various ways to advertise a prize.

- A) Write the invitation/announcement. (There are examples of this and a congratulations announcement placed in the file area.) Who is sponsoring, who is playing, for what level, with what weapons forms, when and where is it being played. I try to put this announcement out about a month prior to the event. More than that and folks might

not remember, less than that and some folks won't be able to make the plans to travel to the event to support the prize.

- b) Put an invitation out on the lists. Remember to include those at the local, principality, kingdom levels if appropriate and the various appropriate fencing lists.
- c) Put an invitation in the hardcopy newsletters.
- d) Send a separate invitation to the royalty as appropriate. We are a kingdom guild and as such it is a great opportunity to invite the royal representative to witness the playing of the prize.
- e) If there is time in advance, see if the autocrat can put a line in the event copy mentioning there will be a prize played.
- f) Announce the prize at the event prior at times when folks are gathered such as at between bouts in a tourney, at feast or at court.
- g) Put a reminder notice at the constabulary the day of the event.
- h) Have it announced in opening court the day of the event.
- i) Have pages or heralds cry the camp shortly before the prize is to be played.

This may seem like overkill and not all these suggestions would be used for every event, but the idea is to get the invitation out there so people know about it. Make it sound fun, exciting and that all are encouraged to witness and/or participate.

4) Day of the Prize, prior to playing

- a) When you get to site connect up with the RMIC for the event, the herald if you are using one, check out the tourney field and remember to make sure there is plenty of water or a water bearer available for the prize.
- b) Make any announcements prior to the prize.

5) Playing of the Prize

- a) Introduce the player and what is being accomplished this day.
- b) Go over the conditions of the prize i.e. weapons forms, styles etc.
- c) I usually open the prize for participants at the level being sought and above to play initially with the candidate. Then as time permits, it is opened up to those other members of the guild who want to participate and can even be opened to non-guild members. This is an opportunity to show the fun and neat stuff we do and to encourage others to come and play with us.

Keep in mind there maybe other rapier activities at the event. We don't want to monopolize the time or the tourney field. Work together.

6) After the Prize

This is when the sponsor and those who assisted in the playing of the prize from that level and above gather to discuss the candidate's result of playing the prize. Once determined then let the candidate know the results. Contact the royal representative and arrange for time for the recognition.

7) The Recognition

This can be done on the field, at court, at feast, etc. Remember this is another chance to show the pomp and circumstance and an opportunity to make the presentation special for the candidate. Work with the Herald and determine if the whole guild will be brought up or just the sponsor and the candidate. If there is a token/baldric/scroll to be handed over let them know and decide whether it will be given by the hands of the royalty or the sponsor. Take the time to say something about the candidate and their accomplishments. This is their time to shine and as a result the guild will shine also.

8) After the event

Please be sure to post again to the lists so we can all know that the player successfully played their prize and is now known as _____. That way we can all get to congratulate them.

This has been meant as a short guide for sponsoring a prize within the West Kingdom Guild of Fence. If you have additional suggestions, thoughts or ideas please share them. Following are some neat ideas that have been done in some areas:

- 1) The player of the prize presents a small token to each participant who helps with the playing of the prize (tassels, ribbons, bells, leather tokens)
- 2) Tabards made with the guild badge that can be worn by water bearers, pages or a herald helping out.
- 3) Pennons to fly on the edges of the tourney field with the guild badge and the device of the player.
- 4) Flagging for the tourney field with the guild badge.
- 5) The presentation of tokens and/of baldrics with the history of who had worn them previously.

Examples of Announcements

Example 1 Announcement of Prize to be held

Let it be known to all who profess arms that we, The West Kingdom Royal Guild of Fence and her Ancient Guild Master Sorcha Careman, do give leave and license to our Free Scholar, Viola Carara, to play her Journeyman's prize against all Journeyman, Provosts and Guild Masters in their subtle and diverse mysteries at Sword with Buckler, Cape, Dagger, Brace of Swords and all other standard combinations of forms as pleases the attending guild members.

We hereby invite those interested to witness and support Free Scholar Viola as she presents herself at the Eskalyan Yule being held on Saturday, December 6th (Anchorage, Alaska), to perform and do her uttermost for the achievement and bearing away of the prize.

Long Live the King and Queen of the West!

Example 2 Announcement of Prize to be held

BE IT KNOWN to all that profess arms that we, The West Kingdom Royal Guild of Fence and his Ancient Guildmaster Doug Coronado and Racgozany, Lord Guild Master of Fence, do give leave and licence to our Journeyman, Lord Yosef Ze'ev ben Ami, to play his Provost's Prize against all Provosts in their subtle mysterie at these weapons,

viz: rapier and buckler, rapier and cloak, and rapier and dagger.

These are to give notice that our said Journeyman will be present the 21st day of June to perform and do his uttermost for the achievement and bearing away of the prize.

Long Live the King and Queen of the West!

Example 3 Announcement of Congratulations of a Successful Prize

BE IT KNOWN to all within the Royal Guild of Fence that FreeScholar Viola Carara has successfully played her Prize for Journeyman at Eskalya's Viewing of the Cherry Blossoms this past Saturday the 10th of April. Her recognition and new status were presented in the court of Their Highnesses, Cyrus and Amber, Prince and Princess of Oertha, that same evening. Congratulations to Journeyman Viola may your feet find a clear path along the rest of your journey.

Sorcha Careman
Ancient Guildmaster of Fence
Royal Guild of Fence, KOW