

SHOTOKAN KARATE FEDERATION OF MICHIGAN

Flag Sparring Rules

Overview

Flag sparring is a form of non-contact sparring. To flag spar, competitors are fitted with two “flags”, fragments of belt or other material, which hang at each competitor’s side from their karate belts. Competitors score by removing flags from their opponent, and win by removing all of their opponent’s flags.

Scoring

A competitor scores by successfully removing an opponent’s flag. A flag is considered removed if it is completely separated from an opponent’s body or, in the opinion of the Referee, would have been separated except for the opponent’s use of a **prohibited defense**. A flag is only successfully removed if it is removed without the use of a **prohibited attack**.

In the event an opponent’s flag is removed by the use of a prohibited attack, the opponent shall have the flag replaced.

In the event an opponent’s flag is moved but not removed, the flag shall not be repositioned or replaced. If a flag is moved after the match has stopped, the Referee may reposition the flag back to where it was positioned before the flag was moved.

If both competitors remove their opponent’s last flag simultaneously, the Referee shall return the flags to the competitors and resume the match as if no scoring techniques had occurred.

In general, if more than one flag is removed “at the same time”, the Referee should score only the first flag removed and replace the remaining flag(s). If it is not possible to determine the first flag removed, multiple flags may be scored.

Prohibited Attacks

- Removing a flag after the match has stopped.
- Removing a flag while a body part other than the foot is in contact with the ground.
- Removing a flag by or during the commission of a penalty.
- Removing a flag in a way which, in the opinion of the Referee, is dangerous or likely to cause injury to one or both competitors.

Prohibited Defenses

- Holding one’s own flag.

Beginning and Ending the Match

A match begins by having competitors face each other, standing completely behind the designated starting lines. Opponents shall bow to each other prior to starting the match to demonstrate respect. The Referee shall then signal the competitors to start.

A match ends when:

- One competitor has removed all of an opponent's flags.
- **Time** expires.
- A competitor is disqualified.

At the end of a match:

- The competitors stand completely behind the designated starting lines.
- The Referee shall indicate the winner.
- The opponents shall bow to each other to demonstrate respect.
- Competitors are also encouraged to shake hands to demonstrate sportsmanship.

The Referee shall stop the match at the end of the match time. The competitor with the highest score shall be declared the winner. If competitors have equal scores, the Referee shall declare a winner based on which competitor, in the Referee's opinion, demonstrated the greatest character, skill, technique, or other appropriate criteria.

Timing

Matches last for one minute thirty seconds. The Timekeeper shall signal clearly when ten seconds remain in the match time. Time is measured in "stop-time"; the timekeeper shall begin recording time as soon as the Referee commands the match to start and shall stop recording time as soon as the Referee commands the match to stop.

Starting and Stopping the Match

The Referee shall command forcefully and signal the competitors to stop in the following situations:

- Whenever a flag is removed.
- Whenever a competitor commits a penalty.
- When time has expired.
- If a competitor's karate belt appears loose or in danger of falling off.

When the match is stopped, competitors should stand completely behind the designated starting lines.

Before starting a match, the Referee should check to ensure that both competitors':

- Karate belts are securely fastened with an appropriate knot.
- Shirt sleeves and pant legs are cut or rolled to avoid causing a hazard.
- Protective gear is worn and fastened properly.
- Both flags are placed appropriately.
- There are no other conditions which may negatively impact the fairness or safety of the match.

Penalties

- Leaving the ring.
- Falling to the ground.
- Pushing an opponent to the ground.
- Slapping at an opponent.
- Grabbing hold of an opponent's body or arms (particularly if not done as part of a [missed] attempt to score).
- Moving, repositioning, or otherwise handling one's own flag after the match has begun.
- Taunting an opponent or otherwise demonstrating poor sportsmanship.
- Behaving in a way which is dangerous or likely to cause injury.

The Referee has discretion to determine when competitors' behaviors become dangerous. Behaviors which may be dangerous include, but are not limited to:

- Competitors standing off from one another and then one or both charging at the other.
- Competitor raising hands and arms to an opponent's head level.
- Competitor leaning forward, particularly if done over an extended period of time / not as part of a specific attempt to score.

Penalties should generally be resolved with the least punitive method possible. Punitive methods should escalate only if necessary. In general, the Referee may choose to escalate punitive methods for repetitive penalties as follows:

- First offense: Verbal warning. The Referee may choose to not stop the match if continuing does not negatively impact fairness.
- Second offense: Stop match and repeat verbal warning.
- Third offense: Stand directly in front of offending competitor and issue another verbal warning.
- Fourth offense: Remove one flag or replace one flag on the offending competitor's opponent. Ending a match by removing a flag for penalty should generally be avoided.
- Fifth offense: Disqualification.