

Attending Your First Crown Tournament

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Our reigning monarch (the King) in the SCA are chosen by “right of arms”, which means a grand tourney is held, where all who vie for the right to be king, meet to compete against each other in a standard double elimination tourney. Each competitor must fight for the honor of a chosen consort, who would become the queen, should he be victorious. Both individuals must be paid members of the SCA and be willing to dedicate a significant portion of the following year to the duties of being the Heirs and Crown.

Double elims are the most common type of tourney and are often used in modern sporting competitions, like basketball or volleyball tourneys (think NCAA, but don’t quote me on that one). Basically, double elimination means simply that. Once you’ve lost twice, you’re out of the tourney. In Crown lists, odd numbers of combatants are often handled by “challenge-ins”. This means that the odd man or men out, can challenge a higher ranking individual for their place in the tourney list.

Crown Tourneys are exciting events, full of anticipation of new Heirs and of a most challenging and entertaining tournament. The tourney itself IS the big show, so very few activities are scheduled opposite of the tourney. It is anticipated and expected that everyone attending is there specifically to watch the tourney.

The list field will be surrounded by period pavilions, banners and various decorative elements, with the Crown holding a place of honor on one end. Prior to the tourney, there is a grand procession in which each of the combatants and their consorts are presented to the Crown for their approval and to offer themselves as contenders for the crown. This procession is done by Order of Precedence (the ranking based upon your highest award level received), and each couple is announced by a herald, stating first the combatant’s name, his armorial bearing and who he fights for that day. Contenders to the crown often have a small entourage, which processes with them and displays their readiness and support base to undertake the duties of this most auspicious job.

Once the procession has finished, usually the combatants line up in two rows, with the belted fighters (knights) on one side and the unbelted on the other. Then, beginning with the lowest ranking fighter, the unbelted challenge the belted. This is how they choose the pairings for the first round. It is at this point, that any challenge-ins are done. Once the initial pairings have been completed, the odd man out can then challenge any fighter for their place in his first round bout.

Next, the Rules of the List are read. This is a requirement at every Crown Tourney, even though in order to be an authorized fighter, you must be familiar with the Rules. The reading is a formality, and often it is read through pretty fast.

Then, the Tourney begins! The atmosphere during the first few rounds is relaxed and kind of like a fair. People wander hither and yon, visiting various pavilions and cheerfully watching the tourney. Then, as the tourney nears its close, you will see a change in the atmosphere, as the crowd grows increasingly silent and anticipation builds. The final round often has the crowd come to stand at the edge of the field as the last two contenders battle it out in a Best 2-out-of-3 (or sometimes 3-out-of-5). Last man standing, is the new Prince of Atlantia!

During the final round, the consorts for both fighters are brought to the Queen and stand (or sit) on the edge of the field, with an unobstructed view of their champion. It is a very tense time for them, as they watch their future unfold before them.

After the winner is decided, then the coronet ceremony begins. The combatant and his consort kneel before the King and Queen. The King takes the prince's coronet and places it on his head, proclaiming him Heir to the Throne of Atlantia. Then, the Prince will rise, take the princess' coronet and place it on his consort's head, making her the new Princess. And much cheering and celebration ensues...

Following this ceremony, regular event type activities will resume and things progress as usual, to include an evening court and a feast!

Something to note about the field set-up at Crown Tournaments. There are few places to stand to watch the tourney and even a few where you should never stop and stand, to include in front of the Royal pavilion and the MoL (people running the tournament itself) pavilion. Pavilions are carefully arranged around the field, with combatants usually getting first priority in placement. When a fighter is on the field, the lady he fights for that day is definitely going to want to see his performance, so please be aware of those around you and do not block the vision of others who may have something invested in that particular fight.

Crown Tourney is one of our most festive and ceremonial events. Personally, it's my very favorite and I hope you'll get a chance to be a part of and enjoy its magic soon!