

Fantastic Gear Items (for Rapier fencing) & Where to Find Them

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Introduction

Every week I receive several private messages asking me information about gear to buy for the practice of Destreza Rapier (Verdadera, Common or Nova) or other HEMA disciplines. The info requests come from a wide range of people, majorly starters, but as well I have advanced fencers or even stock suppliers seeking my knowledge. I am not the type of doing reviews and I hate seeing myself in videos. In any case, I think this is the kind of information that needs to be known and displayed; therefore, I created this document with all the pertinent information on HEMA gear focused on rapier. Feel free to pass it to anyone in need.

In this text you will find my recommendation on a slight range of material: sword models, brands/blacksmiths and stock suppliers to equip yourself for rapier fighting. Since I am no famous celebrity, no one is paying me for it, and no brand had granted me any special favour for this text, unfortunately. My opinion pretends to be as objective as possible, evaluating the material according to quality and price. I only can talk about material I used and I feel comfortable to recommend, advice or even warn. If you don't see it in the list, it may mean that either I did not use it, or I don't recommend it.

You will find ratings graded in stars going from 0 ☆☆☆☆☆ to 5 ★★★★★, which is just a marketing tool to make it visual. I added as well some extra information and the links from where the products can be found. Again, that does not mean that there aren't other suppliers or sources available, but these are the ones I know. Enjoy it and take good care of your material, your practice and life depends on it.

Remember that you can find another document with more general guidelines for the practice of Rapier Fencing in the site of [Destreza Nova](#). As well, do not hesitate to [contact me](#) if you require any extra assistance.

Last but not the least: my acknowledgements to Naomi Barnes and Karen A. Gómez, who assisted me in the plastron/breast plates items, the only product in which I do not have an extend experience on and I felt obliged to add it to the text.

MS André Hajjar Sesé

Rapiers

There are many types/models of rapiers depending on the context of historical time and discipline. Nowadays, what we see (especially in competitions) is a trending towards a light model of rapier, 16-17th century style, covered hilt and thin blade. Even some transitional rapiers (smallsword-rapier) from 18th century enter in such group. The word *rapier* encloses such a wide range of models that it is impossible to find consistency. Thus, sticking to certain uniformity in its characteristics, even if boring, can be beneficial for the community, especially if one day we want to have official recognition in the art. That does not mean I encourage all the fencers to have the same swords, far from it... but sometimes having two weapons in a duel with very unlike characteristics can be too confusing to be fun.

For my Destreza Nova project my selected sword is a rapier around 1 kg of weight and a blade around a 1 meter from the cup, in which the point of balance (POB) resides. A POB of 2-2.5 inches from the cup is acceptable, more than 3 makes the sword hard to handle and after 4, your sword becomes a hammer.

The best hilt, as mentioned, is a cup-hilted so it can protect your hand. The cup should be big enough to allow comfortable movement. The inside arms (rings) should allow the passing of two fingers on the front of the ricasso. The grip must be short, as mentioned by the Destreza treatises, not passing the base of the hand or rascette line (check the [Destreza Glossary in the doc](#) for the technical vocabulary). The quillons must be long and straight with a thicker or a ball-tipped extreme, so they can be used to trap the blade of the opponent as well as be safe for the opponents. Sharp or hook-looking quillons must not be allowed.



*An owner of few rapiers
and less civilized swords
while taking care of his
material. Polishing and
oiling them is a common
practice.*

PRACTICAL CUP HILT RAPIER SH2261

(Image from casiberia.com)

Manufacturer: Hanwei (China).**Price** ★★★★★**Quality** ★★★★★☆**PROS:** Cheap, light, flexible enough, top-tipped. It might come with scabbard. Short grip and pommel.

If you don't have a rapier, this might could easily be your first one.

CONS: The most modern blades seem a bit wide and shorter than they used to be. The quillons are fluffy and they will bend easy (but hard to break). The cup-hilt is small, if you have a huge hand, this might not be your sword. Contacting the manufacturer is impossible, so, do not expect any personalization.**Considerations:** Blade can be changed for other other 37" (not the 42"!) Hanwei replacement blades can be found in the market easily.**Links:**

- ‡ [Original](#) link from casiberia.com. US company. Transport and taxes from other countries would increase the price. Therefore check with your national supplier. One of the replacement blades can be found in [here](#) but also in Amazon.
- ‡ For Canadians [Reliks](#) should be your link.

DESTREZA – CUPHILT RAPIER

(Image from Bloss.pl)

Manufacturer: Bloss (Poland).**Price** ★★★★★**Quality** ★★★★★☆**PROS:** Good handle, balance, weight and length. The length of the grip is adequate for Destreza (not too long). The blacksmith can vary many details. The inside of the cup is covered with a velvet layer, a nice sassy touch.**CONS:** The quillons seem too thin, but they do not bend. The cup looks small but it might be a visual effect due to the riveted line.**Links:**

- ‡ [Bloss](#). The manufacturer is Polish, check in your country for a supplier so you can avoid big taxes in borders as well as in shipping.

CUP HILT RAPIER SWORD RADA

(Image from bellatore.red)

Manufacturer: Bellatore (Spain).**Price** ★★★★★☆**Quality** ★★★★★★**PROS:** Good handle, weight and balance. It is robust and has very aesthetical quillons.**CONS:** The cup is attached with screws to the inside rings of the ricasso, which can eventually weaken the structure. It seems to be a problem in the first models and might be solved by now.**Links:**

- ‡ [Bellatore](#). Spanish maker. Sometimes the price includes taxes (as it should be in a perfect world) but beware to ask beforehand.

**RAPIER 1**

(Image from kvetun-armoury.com)

Manufacturer: Kvetun (Russia).**Price** ★★★★★☆**Quality** ★★★★★☆**PROS:** Good price for a safe product. Solid blade that come tipped. There are many options that can be personalized and it is important to use them in order to geet a good product for Destreza.**CONS:** The weight and balance can be off. Be sure to order the lightest sword. Probably the blade will have to be even shortened, so the weight does not go too much beyond 1 kg. The screws on the cup are, as mentioned in other rapiers, not the best option. The quillons are too simple and smooth, making it hard to use them for trapping other blades, as described per Common Destreza techniques.**Links:**

- ‡ [Kvetun](#).



GRAVES SPANISH RAPIER

(Image from zenwarriorarmory.com)

Manufacturer: Zen Warrior Armory (US).**Price** ★★★★★☆**Quality** ★★★★★☆**PROS:** Great balance and weight. Excellent price. It offers some personalization features. Zen Warrior offers the possibility of buying many parts individually.**CONS:** The grip might be too long for Destreza, but can easily be fixed if you are handy. The structure is not very aesthetical. Quillons and knuckle protector are too thin, as it is the tang, an easy point of fracture by fatigue. Musketeer and sidesword blades must be avoided for a good product. The brand is not very approachable, they ignore any contact.**Links:**

- ‡ [Zen Warrior](#). Original US link.
- ‡ [Sport7](#), a French website offers some Zen Warrior pieces. It must be considered if you are in Europe.

**STANDARD CUP HILT “BUILD YOUR OWN RAPIER”**

(Image from castillearmory.com)

Manufacturer: Castille Armory (US).**Price** ☆☆☆☆☆**Quality** ★★★★★☆**PROS:** Great weight, the balance is just perfect, even for such a long blade. Regarding the blade, it seems too thin but is very resistant to fracture, as it is the rest of the structure. Personalization features are a big asset, including hilt and blade.**CONS:** The grip is too long for a comfortable use in cuts, the shape of the quillons are not very useful for some Common Destreza techniques. It is definitely a good rapier but not designed for Destreza. The aesthetic of the blade is non-historical, as it is the cup-hilt: this one has a big window from where the blade emerges.**Links:**

- ‡ [Castilla](#).



COMPLETE ECONOMY RAPIER

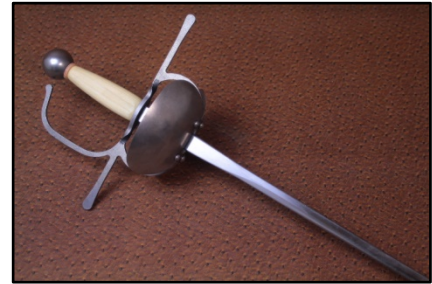
(Image from castillearmory.com)

Manufacturer: Castille Armory (US).**Price** ★★★★★☆**Quality** ★★☆☆☆

PROS: Very similar product to the one before in terms of material. Great weight, the balance is just perfect, even for such a long blade. This one seems too thin but is very resistant to fracture, as it is the rest of the structure. The price makes it a good asset. Also the blade can be personalized, for more or less flexibility.

CONS: Same CONS as the *Standard Cup Hilt*. Aside of it, the model is far from a prototype cup-hilted sword, the model looks closer to a transitional rapier type. The hand is less protected and the quillons are simpler (if that is possible).

‡ [Economy Castille](#).

**SPANISH RAPIER CUP HILT**

(Image from pokerarmory.com)

Manufacturer: Poker Armory (Poland).**Price** ★★★★★☆**Quality** ☆☆☆☆☆

PROS: The sword is a very beautiful specimen, with solid details and accessible price.

CONS: The balance is totally off. It is not recommended for any practitioner unless they change the blade for another one, which that make the only point to recommend it and, therefore, adding it to the list. The POB is around 4.5, well more than 3 inches of POB away from the cup is too much to handle a normal fight. The cuts will strike your opponent like a hammer, so it could be a good item for *Bohurt*, not for HEMA.

Links:

‡ [Poker Armory](#).



CLUB RAPIER NEWBIE

(Image from hf-armory.com)

Manufacturer: HF-Armory (Ukraine).

(Review Coming Soon).



Daggers (off-hand)

A dagger suitable for rapier should have long quillons and a wide blade (also long, but no more than 17.5" from the cross). The width of the blade is made to hide the thumb finger behind, which is usually placed over the cross. The blade can be indented, but if that is the case it should not be used to cut or it can seriously damage the clothes of other fencers. Moreover, the blade should have some degree of flexibility or else it cannot be used in many tournaments, not to mention the level of danger when thrusting other opponents with it.

The point of the blade should be tipped. Mind to check the subject of tip-cover in "Rapier Gear Safety Guidelines" that you can find in the website of [Destreza Nova](#). For the rest of the dagger it is advised to be a "Sail-Dagger" type. Other types of daggers put your hand in danger for no reason other than being from an "older period of time".

Even though I possess many daggers of many manufacturers, I do not want to display information on all of them, since they do not accomplish the requisites to be considered a "recommended" item. Therefore, find in here only the ones I can openly recommend.

SAIL DAGGER

(Image by André H.)

Manufacturer: Marco Danelli (Italy).

Price ★★☆☆☆

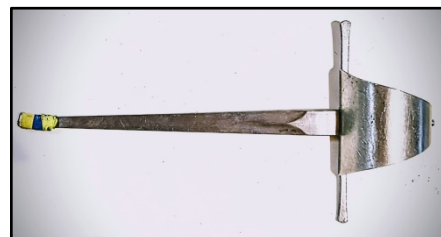
Quality ★★★★★

PRO: His steel has a magic formula that achieves to make very light, durable, adequately flexible and well balance blades. Like any of his products a beautiful option. This dagger is the most basic sail type he can do, (because I wanted a fast and "cheap" one). But Danelli Armouries (DA) would make any blade you would request with any features.

CONS: The price can be a handicap, but it is worthy, there is a lot of care in each part of any of his items. Another inconvenient is the waiting list to get any of his precious metals; it can easily be two years, as per last report. DA can only be contacted by private message and there is no product stock.

Links:

↓ [Danelli Armouries](#).



SAIL DAGGER

(Image from Bellatore.red)

Manufacturer: Bellatore (Spain).

Price ★★★★★☆

Quality ★★★★★☆

PROS: Beautiful, light and with excellent weight.

CONS: It is slightly stiff. But in any case the fencers should always avoid extending the full arm when using the dagger for thrusting actions: it is dangerous and unprofessional.

Links:

‡ [Bellatore Link.](#)



DAGGER 1

(Image from kvetun-armoury.com)

Manufacturer: Kvetun Armoury (Russia).

Price ★★★★★☆

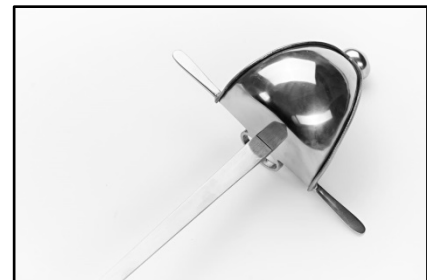
Quality ★★★★★☆

PROS: Beautiful hilt and flexible blade. Possibility of request for spatulated tip (always recommended) or rolled. Nice weight and rim and the sail-hilt, which helps blocking incoming thrusts.

CONS: The quillons would look too simple for my taste, too rounded, with an explosive shape not suitable for trapping other blades with Common Destreza techniques. As well, the blade is very narrow, looking more of that of a sword rather than a dagger. The latter can put the thumb in danger if the blade does not cover the whole width of it.

Links:

‡ [Kvetun.](#)



Jackets

When I first started in 2008 there were little suppliers of fencing jackets, and many naïve fighters thought that could do rapier with a sport-fencing gear, I pity them. Nowadays the situation is different: there is many available models of jackets around.

A jacket may need to protect you from bruises and fractures but also allow you certain mobility. Thus, some jackets that are thought for longsword or *bohurt* do not fit well in the context of rapier. In any case, any thick jacket in the market for HEMA purpose can be suitable for a kind of weapon that does not generally have much power behind it. The “Newton Force Protection”, in some products, makes reference to the “penetration resistance”. In any case, any broken rapier can cross any cloth material (even 1600 N) as if it were butter. Thus, aside of a tip at the point of the blade, one must have a shiny piece of tape in order to ensure that the blade is not broken until the end of the match. One of the most feared accidents is a broken blade, especially in a weapon designed to be used for thrusting actions.

RED DRAGON ARMOURY UNISEX-ADULT HEMA JACKET

(Image from Amazon.ca)

Manufacturer: Red Dragon (Wales?)

Price ★★★★★☆

Quality ★★★★★☆

PROS: The price is awesome. For that value, everyone should have a Red Dragon jacket, even people who do not do any HEMA. It as thick as many models for longsword and has good mobility too. There is a triangle of Velcro at the neck that allows you to insert the bib of your fencing mask inside, avoiding any blade to enter under it. The aesthetics are ok and the zip is thick and big, so it is easy to handle with your gloved hand. Behind the jacket there is a sort of a strap in order to adjust it.

CON: Little personalization, they come as they are. That means that you must have a perfect body and sometimes you cannot even trust the chart.

Consideration: There is out there another jacket called “light Red Dragon”. Honestly, I would not sacrifice a lot of safety for a slightly better mobility.

Links:

- ‡ For Canada you can find it in [Amazon](#). I bought mine in a supplier called [Warriors and Wonders](#), but they do not sell it anymore.
- ‡ For US: [CAS Iberia](#).



AP HEMA JACKET 350 N

(Image from histfenc.com)

Manufacturer: SPES, Historical Fencing Gear (Poland).

Price ★★★★★

Quality ★★★★★

PROS: One of the most used and trusted jackets in the market. It offers excellent protection and good mobility. Their price became more competitive after the years and nowadays it can be found around 200 €. It has some color personalization options. Apparently the new version has been upgraded.

CONS: The zip is too thin and small, after some years it might give you trouble. It has a “blade-catcher”, but it is so short that it does not achieve to catch any blade that goes accidentally under the mask (talking by experience).

Links:

↓ [SPES](#).



SHORT JACKET PADDED

(Image from costumbresmedievales.com)

Manufacturer: Costumbres Medievales (Spain).

Price ★★★★★

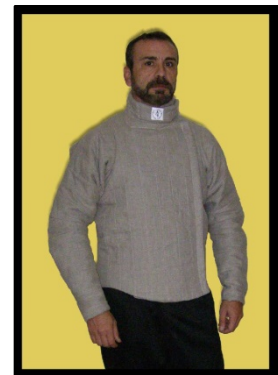
Quality ★★★★★

PROS: Great mobility. It is literally as if you are wearing nothing. The price is excellent, try to find a way to avoid border taxes and low shipping so it keeps being fantastic. Standard sizes, but you can contact the maker for some variation in your order. The owner is very approachable.

CONS: The padding is probably not as powerful as other jackets, but the new versions seem to improve that aspect. Little personalization features aside of the sizes.

Links:

↓ [Costumbres medievales](#).



ARCEM HEMA JACKET 350 N

(Image from blackarmoury.com)

Manufacturer: Arcem (Unknown Origin).**Price** ★★★★★**Quality** ★★★★★

PROS: Probably the most recommended piece of equipment I can give on this subject. The biggest point is that the jacket covers the bib of the mask in a so comfortable way that it allows the movements of the head keeping the neck protected. The rest of the jacket is comfy and offers a solid protection. The arms have extra padding internally. It also comes in many colors and sizes; as well it can be personalized.

CON: The jacket needs two zips to be locked. It is not a great handicap but I felt the need to put something in this section.

Links:

- ‡ [Black Armoury](#). French site. Check in your country for suppliers that would sell such item in order to avoid border taxes and expensive shipping costs.



Fencing Mask

There is nothing more precious than your life and the mask is the item designed for protecting it. This is no joke. We are daily handling tools that were devised for war. Thus, even if I put some info on the price, you should only seek quality.

Generally the material comes from sport fencing and it is only now that some masks start getting created specifically for HEMA. A mask should cover not only the face but the neck also. Therefore, the ideal protection of the bib is 1600 N, having one with less protection than that is underestimating the value of your life. A 350 N mask (minimum in the market) is suitable for beginners (with just drills and soft sparring) in the HEMA class, but never for hard sparring and least of all for competitions. As you can see, there will be no recommendation for masks under 1600 N, since every fencer sooner or later might face a strong hit. Aside of it, it is strongly recommended to seek for masks that incorporate an internal skull structure which is made to protect against concussions, an increasing problem in HEMA.

HEMA WARRIOR REINFORCED MASK 1600N

(Image from pbthistoricalfencing.com)

Manufacturer: PBT Historical Fencing (Hungary).

Price ★☆☆☆☆

Quality ★★★★★

PROS: Strong, durable and reliable. Inside armour that reduces the force of the impact. Large stock, fast shipping. Try to find a dealer in your country.

CONS: For such a price it would be nice to add a back protector. Not having it obliges you to buy an extra piece to cover the back of your neck and head. You failed there PBT.

Links:

‡ [PBT original](#).

‡ [Crossed Swords Fencing Equipment](#) supplies them for Canada.



FIE CONTOUR EPEE MASK

(Image from leonpaulcanada.com)

Manufacturer: Leon Paul (UK)

Price ★★☆☆☆

Quality ★★★★★

PROS: Strong, durable, FIE certification and reliable brand. Any mask that follows the regulation of FIE has similar (if not identical) features

CON: It comes from UK, which makes it expensive per se. Beware that it does not have an internal protection like other masks. That being said, you might find other brands with better price. Use this as a model of what/how expectations can go for sport fencing masks in the market.

Links:

- ‡ For Canadians you have Leon Paul Canada. But beware that there are storage dealers that could offer you the same mask at lesser price, as it happens with fencingcanada.ca the same mask can cost 15 dollars less.
- ‡ For US <https://www.leonpaulusa.com/>



Rear-head protectors / overlays

Combat rage or negligence from both fencers can derive in hits into the back of the head. Therefore, a back protector is mandatory once someone starts doing sparring at certain level of power/speed. Despite the need of it, there is not a big assortment in the market.

VECTIR OCCIPITAL OVERLAY

(Image from histfenc.com)

Manufacturer: SPES (Poland)

Price ★★★★★☆

Quality ★★★★★☆

PROS: Probably a *must-have* item. Adaptable to any mask. Comfortable and resistant.

CONS: The tissue starts disintegrating after 13 years. Wait, is that a CON?

Links:

- ↓ [SPES](#). But check suppliers. For example in Portugal there is [Mestre d'Armas](#), and in Spain you can find it in [Arcensis](#).



SPES UNITY LEATHER MASK OVERLAY PRO

(Image from thehemashop.com)

Manufacturer: SPES (Poland)

Price ★★★★★☆

Quality ★★★★★☆

PROS: Higher protection than the simpler model, leaving no possible gaps behind.

CON: Higher weight. Transpiration gets overly affected. The swords get trapped in the forward border when a thrust goes towards the mask, causing the head of the fencer to be pulled backwards depending on the energy of the thrust received.

Links:

- ↓ Europe: [SPES](#)
- ↓ UK: [thehemashop](#)
- ↓ US: [Purpleheart](#)



SF HEMA BACK OF HEAD PROTECTION

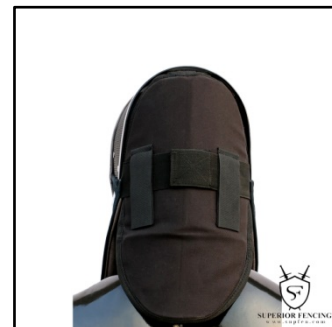
(Image from supfenc.com)

Manufacturer: Superior Fencing (Pakistan)

Price ★★?

Quality ★★?

(Review Coming Soon)



Gorgets / Neck protector

The neck is as deadly target as it can be the head, or even more, therefore it is vital to protect it adequately. There are many gorgets in the market for any sport that can do the job of any HEMA standard protector to a better price. One thing is for sure: the standard gorgets (HEMA or not) do not cover the line under the mandible, which is a very weak point in case of an accidental blade passing under the mask bib in ascending motion. Someone might think that those incidents do not happen, I was the perpetrator of two incidents of such type during my years of (in)experience. Fortunately, no injury was fatal. After the incidents and evaluation of the injuries the message was clear: the best gorget is to not need a gorget. That is: there are many jackets that cover the bib over it, like the Red Dragon or the Black Armoury one (here mentioned). If something crosses a jacket 350 N and a bib of 1600 N it would mean that you are duelling with sharps or pistols.

Many tournaments would oblige you to have a gorget and wearing one is always recommendable. However, a strong impact in the neck can be always painful regardless of the protection you are wearing.

RED DRAGON HEMA GORGET (THROAT PROTECTOR)

(Image from reddragonarmoury.com)

Manufacturer: Red Dragon (Wales?)

Price ★★★★★

Quality ★★★★★☆

PROS: Probably the most used gorget in HEMA. Incredible price and “does the job”. The lack of lateral flaps makes it more comfortable than other martial-art-gorgets-type. There are more in the market with very similar features at a higher price.

CONS: As said, it does not cover the upper part of the neck. Furthermore, the thicker top border might not be enough to catch blades.

Links:

- ↓ Canada: [Hema Gear Canada](#).
- ↓ UK: [Red Dragon Armoury](#).
- ↓ USA: [Kult of Athena](#).



STAINLESS GORGET

(Image from wintertreecrafts.com)

Manufacturer: Winter Tree Crafts (US)

Price ★★☆☆☆

Quality ★★★★★

PROS: Your neck is invulnerable behind such protection. I am sure it can stop bullets (something I did not try yet). It fits well under my HEMA thick jackets or over the light ones. Many people walk in international events wearing this type of gorget with a T-shirt. That is because this gorget gives you a modification of +2 in CHARisma.

CON: It is not easy to attach. There is no blade catcher. It is pricy (more if you are outside of US) but you pay the quality work behind it.

Links:

↓ [Winter Tree Crafts](#)



Gloves

There are many gloves suitable in the market for the practice of rapier fencing, but some of them are useless. A good glove should protect your hands for the own touch and pressure of your sword handle, allow you movement and offer protection against some accidental scratches. Considering the fact that the hand is protected by the cup or swept hilt, the protection required for the use of rapier can be minimum. The most important in this matter is to protect from thrusts coming under the sleeve of the fencer, thus, gloves must had a wide wrist protection to go OVER the sleeve.

For the first-day students they should be warned that any glove is ok and obliged since the hands should never be naked when touching any trainer, sword or martial art weapon. Therefore, at first I say to the students to get gardening or winter gloves. Once the first sparring is ahead the student might need more serious items that can be found in this section.

LIGHT PRACTICAL GLOVES

(Image from thehemashop.com)

Manufacturer: Unknown (brands put their own sticker on it)

Price ★★★★★☆

Quality ★★★★★★

PROS: Best gloves you can find. Durable, light, good smell, washable and allows your hand to have a good grip. They last forever. I had a pair that lasted 7 years, counting six hours per week of fencing (minimum) is a lot of time!

CON: Every time you wash them is as if you have to break them again, because they are rigid. If you have a hit in your hands they would protect little, and less after every year.

Links:

- ‡ For Europe [Faites d'Armes](#) can be a good option, but check to a retailer depending on the country you ar.
- ‡ For UK: [The Hema Shop](#).
- ‡ For US: [Purpleheart Armoury](#).



KEVLAR GLOVES

(Image from woodenswords.com)

Manufacturer: Unknown

Price ★★★★★

Quality ★★★★★

PROS: High protection in key points like phalanges, knuckles and wrist.

CON: Higher weight than others and slight mobility restrictions. Bulkier, some rapiers would not allow an adequate handling.

Links:

- ‡ Canada has a good dealer in [Hema Gear Canada](#).
- ‡ Europeans can find the product in [Faits D'Armes](#).
- ‡ For US: [Purpleheart Armoury](#).



SPES LIGHT DUELLING HEMA GLOVES

(Image from thehemashop.com)

Manufacturer: SPES (Poland)

Price ★★★★★

Quality ★★★★★

PROS: Suitable protection of key part, easy to put, aesthetical and comfy. It reminds to the hand of Dr. George Claw (it is an asset).

CON: The fingers of the glove are for polish people with long fingers, regardless of the size of the hand or glove they are hard to fit. The tissue is made of a particular material that united with the sweat produces and incredible bad smell that will never go away.

Links:

- ‡ [SPES](#)



RED DRAGON HEMA GLOVES

(Image from hemagearcanada.com)

Manufacturer: Red Dragon (Wales)

Price ★★★★★☆

Quality ★☆☆☆☆

PROS: Probably the best affordable-protection in the market for one handed weapons. The overlapping structures in the phalanges avoid many fractures that other gloves don't.

CON: Too bulky for an elegant weapon such a rapier, but excellent for sidesword and other uncivilized swords. They lack protection in the wrist, also, do not cover the entry of thrusts into the jacket. Not recommended for rapier. They are put in this section to make it clear to all the fencers that "those are not rapier gloves".

Links:

- ↓ For Canada: [HGC](#).
- ↓ For Europe: [FdA](#).
- ↓ US: [Purpleheart](#).



SWORDSMAN GLOVES

(Image from reliks.com)

Manufacturer: Red Dragon (Wales)

Price ★★★★★

Quality ★★☆☆☆

PROS: This is the archetype of the minimal protection. Many similar to this type can be found with the same characteristics. It is like wearing no glove, perfect mobility and comfort, as well as being sassy. It covers well over the sleeve, something that gives that extra star.

CON: Yes, "as wearing no glove" means no protection. It can still give blisters and offers no protection against any accidental touch. Not bad as "emergency gloves" to have always in the car in case you forget or lose the "good ones".

- ↓ For Canada: [Reliks](#).
- ↓ Europe: [The Hema Shop](#).
- ↓ US: [CAS Iberia](#).



Groin Protectors

The biggest problem of any groin protector is the following: most of the people are irresponsible and do not wear it. That's it. It is a must wear product that one gets used to have it for many hours. Dress it at home, before even taking your breakfast and wear it at the fencing meeting and at the end of the day you remove it at home and wash it, it is that simple. A good piece of advice is to have long boxers (instead of slips) so the sides of the cup do not scratch the skin. Other than that, almost any groin protector does the job and the one here is just put for reference. Check in your sport-store aside for more products of the type.

RED DRAGON HEMA GROIN PROTECTOR

(Image from reddragonarmoury.com)

Manufacturer: Red Dragon (Wales)

Price ★★★★★

Quality ★★★★★

PROS: Comfortable and made in a black color so you can wear it over your pants, making you think that you look less ridiculous.

CONS: Please, don't wear it over your pants. It is also a bit pricy due to being called a "HEMA product". In any case if you are ordering in a HEMA site other products and you do not have this one, order it!

Links:

- ‡ UK: Red Dragon Armoury.
- ‡ Europe: Irongate Armoury.



Chest-Breast protector Plastrons

Among all the products, plastrons and breast protectors are the only ones in the text in which I cannot describe my personal experience, since I never used any of them. However I consider important to point some information out to new parties and that is why, following the advice of my colleagues Naomi Barnes and Karen A. Gómez, I am able to write some light review on this category.

Firstly, these items encourage debates in many forums for its use and utility. Among the general opinion, there is a certain trend among women in not using any plastron. They seem to not be comfortable: ill-fitted and lack of transpiration. Also, it is said that a thick enough jacket can prevent the need of this item. However, it is also well known that the central part of the breasts can be harmful when receiving strong thrusts.

The only and big assumption among many fencers is the “lack of sense and utility” in double-breasted plastrons. Those pieces of equipment seem designed to look sexier than safer. The “bumps” of such protections can deflect the thrust of an opponent towards the sternum, causing more problems than solutions. Therefore, a recommended plastron would be such that has only 1 “bump” instead of 2. As well, a good enough solution seems to have a well reinforced jacket with a sports bra under it.

Beware that no sex or gender has been mentioned. Such equipment can be indistinctly for anyone who sees the need to use it and, as usual, we always encourage the maximum protection possible in case of doubt.

EXTENDED CHEST PROTECTOR FOR MEN

(Image from pbthistoricalfencing.com)

Manufacturer: PBT (Hungary)

Price ★★★★★☆

Quality ★★★★★★

PROS: Solid and durable, offering extra protection under the sternum.

CONS: It is a piece of plastic with two suspensors. Therefore if you are handy you can provide one yourself for that matter.

Links:

- ↓ EU: [PBT](#).
- ↓ Many other brands might offer the same type of product. Check and verify before spending your money.



Legs

In Verdadera Destreza there are no hits on the legs, but it is not the same for Common Destreza or Destreza Nova. In any case, wearing a protection for hard-core sparring or tournament is almost obliged. Protecting the knee is crucial but one must also take in consideration the shin and the ankle, therefore I only mention in here products that offer the whole protection.

For the rest of the leg I have little recommendations, but one thing is for sure: try to have a jacket slightly long in order to cover your hip belt. A broken ilium crest or a hit in there would hurt a lot.

BAUER VAPOR X PRO LITE HOCKEY SHIN GUARDS JUNIOR

(Image from Canadiantire.ca)

Manufacturer: Bauer (US)

Price ★★★★★

Quality ★★★★★

PROS: The best you can get. They protect over your knee and under your shin over your shoe. They are very light and comfortable to wear. As well, they offer some extra protection in the back of the leg. You might think you don't need it, until your leg starts bleeding from the back in the middle of a tournament (as

it happened to me at Swordfish 2015). Besides, it is an ice-hockey protection, the model is here just as an example, check in your store which one they supply and take in consideration the three things that not all of them have: back, over knee and ankle protection.

CONS: They are bulkier than other protections and might move a bit if they are not well strapped.

Considerations: Beware that there are many types of this protection and not all of them have the extra padding of ankle or over knee. Do your research and check those details.

Links:

- ‡ For Canada: [Canadian Tire](http://Canadiantire.ca) is a good option.
- ‡ US, Russia and Netherlands: [Bauer](http://Bauer.com).



RED DRAGON ARMOURY AR7003 HEMA KNEE & SHIN GUARD

(Image from reddragonarmoury.com)

Manufacturer: Red Dragon (Wales)**Price** ★★★★★**Quality** ★★★★★

PROS: Easy to put and comfortable. Cover knee and shin and make you look like Robocop, an icon for many people of my age.

CONS: They do not cover behind the leg or lateral, one must know that the hit will never come from in front. Also, it does not protect the ankle. I saw people in tournaments with such item and falling into the floor in pain after receiving hits in the mentioned areas. It is not good enough to look heavy armoured, you must BE heavy armoured.

Links:

- ‡ For Canada you have [Amazon](#) but probably can be found in any other supplier.
- ‡ The rest of the world has also different suppliers but usually people go to the [Red Dragon Armoury](#).

**DRAGONFLY HEMA PANTS LEVEL 2**

(Image from histfenc.com)

Manufacturer: SPES (Poland)**Price** ★★★★★**Quality** ★★★★★

PROS: It offers limited padded protection to the upper part of the leg. It is easy to wear and adjust with the suspensors and they make any size you request.

CONS: The protection pads get thin after the years and must be changed, the good point is that you can add any material you want after, including yoga mattress.

Links:

- ‡ [SPES](#) for Europe.
- ‡ For US: [Purpleheart](#).



Bags

Any HEMA fencer needs always to transport two bags minimum: one for the swords and a second one with all the clothes, including jacket and mask. The reason is for not getting the swords rusted and contaminated of the sweat. For the clothes any big sports bag will do, but people always had trouble to find a suitable transporting bag for the swords. I didn't.

Soft or hard does not matter. A soft one fits more sword and is easier to store inside a vehicle. Placing PVC tubes as sheaths around the blades can be a good way to protect them inside soft bags.

GOLF TRAVEL ROLLING COVER BAG DARK-GREY

(Image from decathlon.ca)

Manufacturer: Decathlon (France)

Price ★★★★★

Quality ★★★★★

PROS: The best HEMA bag you can get in the market. My first one of this model lasted me 10 years and I carried many swords with it around many countries. Its height is 126 cm, making it suitable for the longest rapier or even longswords. It has wheels, big zip and reflectant contour as well as good handles to put it in your back if you are strong enough. The inside of the bag has Velcro

straps to attach the material and keep it compacted. Decathlon is a supermarket brand now in many countries and easy to access online or in the store. A must have bag for any fencer; if you don't have it you are not a hemaist.

CONS: It is a soft bag. Therefore put always your sword inside PVC pipes, to avoid bending. Also the inside of the bag is also soft, cover the quillon of your swords with a blanket or a cape (in my case) to avoid perforating the bag eventually.

Links:

- ‡ Canada: [Decathlon](#).
- ‡ Europe: [Spain](#), [France](#), [Germany](#) and so on.



PBT HEMA ROLL BAG AND BACKPACK BLACK/BLACK

(Image from woodenswords.com)

Manufacturer: PBT (Hungary)**Price** ★★★★★**Quality** ★★★★★

PROS: Easy to transport in any way. It has internal straps. Ideal for bringing just a couple of swords to the park without using a big golf bag.

CON: I think it's evident to say it: that is a bass/guitar bag. I got the same type of bag in a pawnshop for 20 bucks and it almost provides the same use (without the wheels). Many other brands offer similar products do your side of the research.

Links:‡ US: [Purpleheart](#).

Miscellaneous

Find in here all the rest of the products that probably do not have a specific category but are very worthy to look at. Many of them are just “example items”, products that can be found around and must be considered important for the practice of Rapier and probably any other less-civilized weapon.

MASTERCRAFT SANDING BLOCK

(Image from canadiantire.ca)

Manufacturer: Mastercraft (US)

Price ★★★★★

Quality ★★★★★

PROS: Helps cleaning the red marks of oxide from your blade and hilt, without scratching the material.

CONS: None. It does not work for removing metal shards.

For that, a hard sharpening stone (or just a stone) must be used.

Links:

- ‡ In Canada a good option is [Canadian Tire](http://CanadianTire.com). However, any “Home-Depot” type shop might have such product.



About the author

André had always a passion for martial arts. Why am I talking in third person?... I did judo as a kid, and later on Kung-Fu Korean style until green belt. However my life did not come really interesting until I entered in a Historical Fencing club called “Associació Esgrima Antiga de Santpedor” in 2008, linked to the “Asociación Española de Esgrima Antigua”, the biggest Historical Fencing Association of the world at that time. There, I learned the Verdadera Destreza Rapier Sword style from Aleix Basullas, a great sage master specialized in the treatise of Lorenz de Rada, probably the most detailed work about Verdadera Destreza. His attention to such detail and obsession in the Art made my passion grow into the community. As well, I had in there a great Master called Sendo Espinalt, he is a free-styler and taught me the will of the warrior that cannot be learnt in any book, he pushed that passion that already was born. In a few years I already started teaching the newcomers. In 2015 I co-founded the club Associació Esgrima Antiga Catalunya Central AEACC with Aleix and Sendo's blessing and my fencing career started having his highlights. I participated in many International tournaments: Swordfish, Halsbschwert, Villeneuve... which put me in the #1 position of HEMA Ratings in my country in Rapier for some time. However I do not consider tournaments to be a good system for measuring someone's knowledge in fencing, very far from it. Alongside of my competitions records I started giving workshops in International events. I traveled and shared my knowledge in places like China, USA, Mexico, Canada... In 2016 I moved to Canada where I switched along different clubs as student and instructor. I am currently teaching Verdadera Destreza at La Compagnie Médiévale, a club in which I collaborated with to create the Montreal Sword Masters, a very ambitious project of tournaments and Workshops in order to bring the most awesome fighters of the world in a single event.

Finally, I “created” the concept of Destreza Nova. It is actually nothing new, but something based in the vision of the old Master Manuel de Brea in his treatise of 1805, in which he added other techniques from different disciplines to the Verdadera Destreza system of fencing.

My goal is to teach and do divulgation of Destreza in a friendly and beautiful manner, away from dogmatic speeches and competitions to who has the longest sword. I am not a celebrity nor I want to be so. My posts get little likes but I have many views and downloads, and that is what it counts for me: helping people regardless if they pay back their appreciation or not.

If you find me and want to cross steel I will surely be glad to pick up the glove.