



OFFICIAL 2025 RULEBOOK

presented by
Akaal Sahai Okanagan Gatka Society

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TOURNAMENT FORMAT

The 2025 Akaal Gatka Cup (AGC) will take place on **September 27th and 28th 2025**. The tournament will include qualifying group stage matches in a double elimination structure followed by a single elimination knockout round.

DIVISIONS

There will be the following divisions in the 2025 tournament:

Fighting:

- Primary Singhs 8-10
- Primary Kaurs 8-10
- Junior Singhs 11-13
- Junior Kaurs 11-13
- Intermediate Singhs 14-16
- Intermediate Kaurs 14-16

Competitors will participate in the division dictated by their age on December 31st, 2025.

QUALIFYING ROUND

Each division will be split into groups of 3 or 4. In this round, each player will play two members of the group once.

Group Stage

AGC will operate in a Double Elimination structure for Junior and Intermediate divisions. This means that for the Qualifying Round, each Division will be further divided into randomly assigned groups. These players will compete amongst themselves to determine which fighters will advance to the single-elimination Playoffs. Each player will be guaranteed 2 matches.

The Primary division will fight in a single elimination format and will not be guaranteed two matches.

An example of the double elimination bracket is below:

MATCH 1

FIGHTER A vs. FIGHTER B

MATCH 2

FIGHTER C vs. FIGHTER D

MATCH 3

WINNER MATCH 1 vs. WINNER MATCH 2

MATCH 4

LOSER MATCH 1 vs. LOSER MATCH 2

The winner of MATCH 3 will advance to the Playoffs, and the loser of MATCH 4 will be eliminated from further competition. The last spot is claimed in:

MATCH 5

LOSER MATCH 3 vs. WINNER MATCH 4

The winner of MATCH 5 will claim the second spot in the Playoffs out of their group.

Single Elimination Playoffs

The players who advance from the Qualifying Rounds will compete in a Single-elimination playoff bracket for the AGC Champion title. If during the Qualifying Round or Playoffs, a player is not present at the time of their match, they will be disqualified immediately.

COMPETITION PREPARATION**PLAYING CIRCLE (AKHARA)**

The Akhara in which players will compete will have a diameter of 28 feet. Players will only be called out of bounds if one foot fully clears and lands outside of the playing circle (ie, a referee can see “daylight” between the Akhara line and the player’s foot. An out of bounds call will result in the player being issued a foul. If both feet are outside of the akhara, the player will be disqualified.

The Akhara will have a marking as a designated starting position for each player, from where they will begin the match, and where they will be placed after a hold.

ATTIRE

Players must wear their team uniform. Where this is not possible, players must wear Sikh attire (Kurta Pajama, Ladies suit etc) but should try to avoid all white uniforms.

T-shirts, sweatpants, athletic wear, and western attire are not permitted. Hoodies, vests, etc. are permitted on top of traditional clothing or Khalsa Bana.

Each player will be required to tie a kamarkassa and dastaar. Players are expected to bring their own dastaar. Players are free to tie their own kamarkassa of their choosing or comfort, but another kamarkasa will be tied on top of a red or blue pinnie. This kamarkasa will be provided to you. All players are required to tie a dastaar to compete. Additional Head Guards will be

provided and will be mandatory for all divisions. Metal Face guards will be available but are optional.

Appropriate footwear must be worn. This is limited to athletic shoes. A competitor must not wear sandals, flip-flops, slides, crocs, casual, or dress shoes, as it is a safety hazard. In the event that a player is not wearing appropriate footwear at the time of the match beginning, they will be disqualified.

Playing barefoot will not be permitted.

WEAPONS (SHASTARS)

Players will compete with a gatka soti and fari provided by AGC.

Sotis and Faris will have either a blue or red padding, and players will be assigned blue or red for scorekeeping purposes. There will be a selection of sotis, both blue and red, to choose from provided by the tournament based on the player's comfort, but they will all be built to the same specifications.

Players must use a soti according to their assigned color. Players are not to use any personal shaster.

For Primary players there will be only Sotis, this division will not be using faris.

OFFICIATING

REFEREES

A match will be officiated by three referees. One head referee and two assistant referees. The head referee will be responsible for calling all points and infractions which they observe, as well as using their discretion for when gameplay needs to be stopped for clarity and fair judgment.

The assistant referees will primarily assist in monitoring points, out of bounds, and charayi violations. They will also assist in enforcing all other rules and regulations.

While the assistant referees may offer their strongest opinions, the final call is always given to the head referee.

Any of the referees may request a stoppage.

All referees must unanimously agree in order to issue a misconduct disqualification.

SCOREKEEPERS

There will be four scorekeepers per match, two will be assigned for each player. One scorekeeper will exclusively watch the match and dictate a single player's point aloud to their partner scorekeeper, who will exclusively document the points.

TIMEKEEPER

There will be one official timekeeper per match who will start and stop the game clock according to the sound of the Referees' stoppages.

OVERTIME

In the result of a tie, players will play overtime periods of 30 seconds. The winner of an overtime period will be awarded the victory. Fouls carry over for both players into overtime without any change. If the score is tied after an overtime period, another overtime period will be played. If there is still no winner, the winner will be decided by sudden death, the first to land a vaar without being struck back in the ensuing charayi.

Semi-finals, and Finals matches will have a continuous overtime with no sudden death. As many 30 second periods as are necessary will continue to be played until a winner is determined.

STRIKES (VAARS)

LEGAL VAARS AND POINTS

A landed vaar will score 1, 2, or 3 points for the striking player. Points will only be awarded for clear and legal vaars.

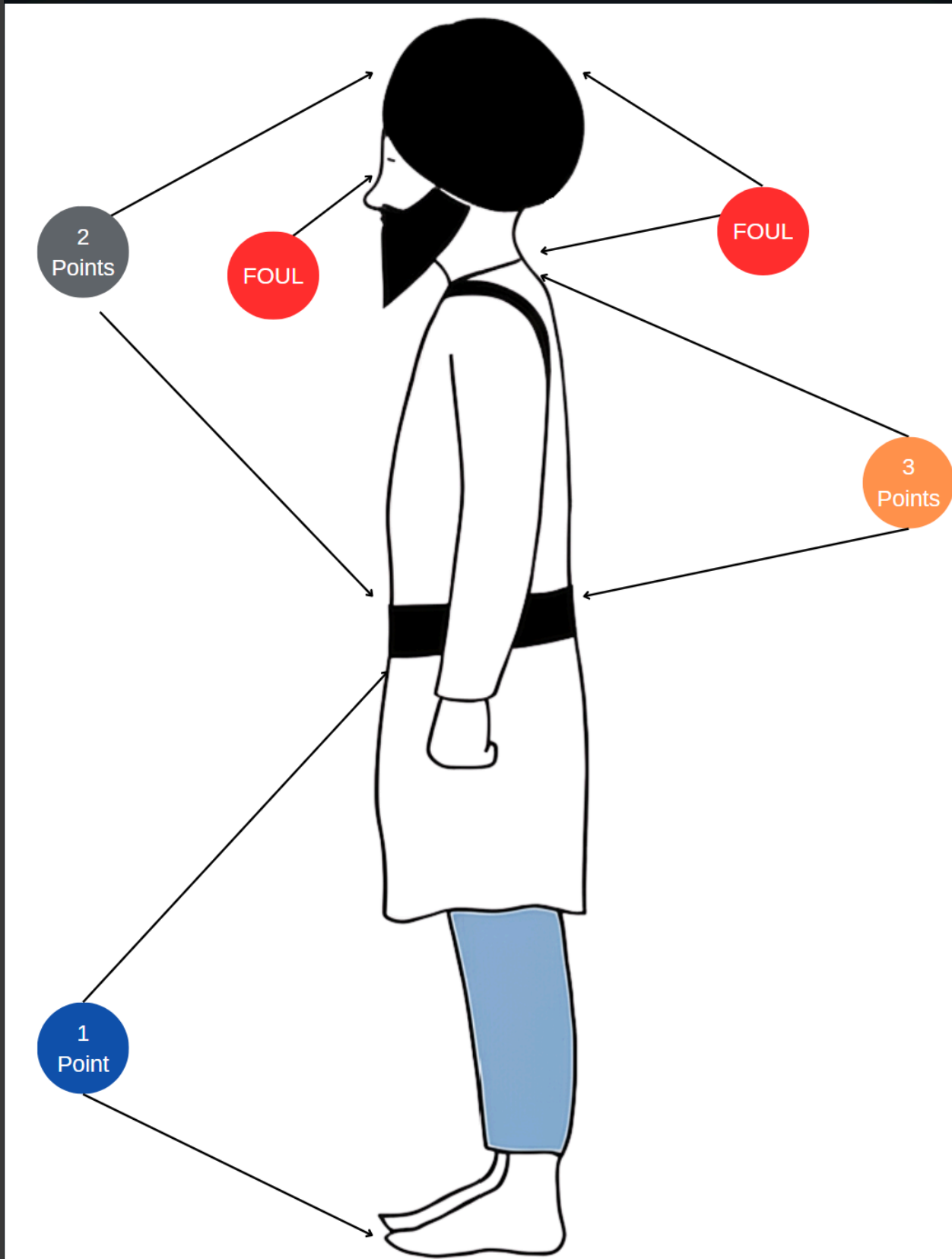
Vaars landed below the waist (peti) are worth 1 point. The peti is counted at the start of the bottom of the assigned kamarkassa.

Vaars at or above the peti are worth 2 points. This includes strikes to the head.

Vaars landed on the back are worth 3 points, the vaar must clearly strike the back. Wrapping around will not be awarded 3 points.

Cheer (slice) vaars are permitted so long as they aren't deemed bharma or as long as they don't strike the groin area.

Kanpati vaar are permitted and are awarded 2 points. Any vaar striking the face will be deemed a foul.



NON-PERMISSIBLE VAARS

Non-Permissible Vaars are divided into two categories, Unawarded Vaars, which carry no penalty or game stoppage but will not be awarded points. Illegal Vaars will not be awarded points and will be awarded fouls.

UNAWARDED VAARS

Vaars which carry no penalty but are not awarded points:

- Vaars which first make significant contact with the opponent's soti or fari before striking the opponent, determined at the discretion of the Officials.
- Vaars in which the player uses the bottom of the soti (including hilt) to strike the opponent. Only the top $\frac{3}{4}$ of the soti may be used to strike the opponent.
- Incidental and simultaneous (sanjha) vaars which happen through no fault of any player
- Strikes which hit the face, neck, ear, or groin due the defensive player's movements or re-directions, not based upon the direction of the strike
- Vaars that are exchanged in rapid succession, and/or from too close of a distance, according to the discretion of the Referee, especially after a landed strike.
- Using the inside of the soti to attack, only the outside ("sharp side" of the soti) will be permitted.
- Vaars clearly striking only their opponents bana will not be awarded.

Repeated unawarded vaars may be awarded as fouls.

ILLEGAL VAARS

Vaars which will typically be awarded a foul:

- Recklessly heavy strikes (bharma vaar) based upon referee discretion
- Strikes targeted at the face or groin
- Stabbing (hool) vaars
- Consecutive vaars without allowing the opponent space to respond or "double" vaars*
- Marora Vaar (Gurj Vaar)
- Any vaars made with the intention of injuring the player
- Vaars that strike the back of the head or neck

* Fakes and jukes (palta) with the soti are permitted so long as the attacking player's soti does not strike the defending player, or the defending player's soti. If, during a palta, any action as described above occurs, any vaar released immediately after that (whether it lands or does not) will be deemed a double vaar.

A palta which comes close to the opposing player without making contact will not be deemed a double vaar so long as the referee does not deem that the player had an intention to strike on the initial direction of the vaar.

A referee may give warnings or fouls for players doing excessive or unnatural paltey according to their discretion. A player should avoid doing more than two paltey per released vaar and play as clean of a game as possible.

If a player is doing excessive paltey during their charayi which leads to the 2 second charayi being exhausted, the other player is allowed to attack from either a standing position or by initiating a charayi.

A pause during a soti movement or charayi before attacking is permitted so long as it takes place very briefly in the natural rhythm of the attackers movement. This is judged according to referee discretion.

Players may not pause (no soti or feet movement) during their charayi to “fish” or “search” for a vaar, but rather only may do so strategically to gain an opening by disrupting the defender’s rhythm. A pause which is too long will be considered a loss of charayi. Fouls may be issued for repeated lengthy pauses during attacks.

If the player is found to be fishing for an opening, the opposing player may attack as the charayi will be deemed to have been exhausted

ATTACK (CHARAYI)

Through a system of exchanging attacks (charayi) game stoppages will be kept minimal. Just because a point is scored, this does not mean that gameplay will stop. Referees will award scored points while the gameplay continues. Gameplay will only be stopped if:

- there is an infraction
- A discrepancy amongst the referees
- or at the discretion of the head referee if vaars, or strikes, can no longer be kept track of.

Players should, to the best of their abilities, try to maintain the same angle with the referee from which they began the match, to allow for a clear allowing of points. ie, if you begin the match on the right side of the referee, try your best to play on that side of the referee. However, crossing the referee and free movement is permitted, but doing so may result in more stoppages in gameplay for the sake of the referee’s viewing angle to make the best call. Being conscientious of your positioning will allow for a more free flowing match.

Below is a description of how charayis are exchanged in this gameplay format.

CLAIMING CHARAYI AND CHARAYI LENGTH

A charayi is claimed by the first player to initiate their approach within an approximately one step striking distance of their opponent. From this moment a player has a maximum of two

seconds to release a vaar. During this charayi, the opposing player may not release a vaar of their own.

A charayi must be claimed with a visible intent to strike. Walking up or casual approaches without moving in a pentra will not be considered a claimed charayi. A foul or warning can be issued for repeating these types of charayis.

A charayi which comes within approximately one soti-length of the opponent will be considered an over-charayi. Vaars landed during over-charayis will not be awarded points and referees may issue fouls for repeated over-charayis.

RE-CLAIMING A MISSED (KHAALI) CHARAYI

If an attacking player exhausts their two second charayi before releasing a vaar, they must retreat, in order to regain their charayi. They may not release a vaar from a standing position or while approaching if their two second charayi has been completely exhausted. Doing so will result in a foul.

RESPONDING AFTER A CHARAYI

RESPONDING AFTER A BLOCK

If a vaar is successfully blocked, then the opponent who blocked the vaar may respond from a standing position or through a charayi.

RESPONDING AFTER A STRIKE

If an attacking player is successful in landing a vaar, the opposing player may return a vaar of their own, however they cannot release their vaar from the stationary position of where they were attacked. The opposing player must perform a movement of at least an adha pair. After at least an adha-pair movement, they are permitted to retaliate.

Players must show a true intention to defend in order to respond after being struck, failing to do so will result in a foul

RESPONDING AFTER A KHAALI VAAR/CHARAYI

If a vaar is missed, or khaali, or a charayi is exhausted, the opponent may attack from a stationary or standing position.

QUALIFYING HALF-STEP (ADHA PAIR) MOVEMENTS

The following movements meet the requirement of the adha-pair minimum movement:

- Jumping straight up into the air.

- Moving one foot into a new position while the other is stationary.
- Swapping the position of both feet in one motion.

An adha pair will only be considered if there is a visible change in body position. Simply picking up and putting down a foot will not be considered to qualify as a minimum movement. This will be assessed based on referee discretion.

An adha pair movement must be completed before a vaar can be launched in response. If the movement is not completed (ie, the foot has not been placed back on the ground), it will not be considered an appropriate charayi. For jumps straight into the air, the adha pair movement will be considered complete once the attacker has reached the peak of their jump. If a player jumps straight in the air as their responding charayi after being struck, it must be a true jump which requires effort and not a hop. This will be judged by referee discretion.

ASSIGNED CHARAYI

In the most rare and necessary of circumstances, the referee may start to give assigned charayi to players after the stoppage. This will likely only happen in the case of two players who are immediately trying to claim charayi simultaneously when gameplay begins after a stoppage resulting in repeated sanjha vaars. First the Referee will issue a warning. After this, if the players continue to aggressively claim charayi resulting in sanjha vaars, the referee may call upon the use of Assigned Charayi.

DEFENSE

VISIBLE DEFENSIVE EFFORT

If a player claims a charayi and their opponent does not attempt a block before retaliating, they will be issued a foul, and if they had landed a vaar in the ensuing strike, those points will not be awarded. A block must be attempted before retaliating according to the discretion of the officials.

REASONABLE RESPONSE SPACE

After striking on a charayi, a player must leave a reasonable distance for the opposing player to respond. Advancing your defense into your opponent, or falling into or planting yourself immediately in front of your opponent may result in a foul.

FOULS

ASSOCIATED PENALTIES

Players will be allowed up to three fouls per game. As shown below:

- 1st Foul - Warning - No points deducted
- 2nd Foul - Penalty - One Point Deducted

3rd Foul - Penalty - Two Points Deducted

4th Foul - Penalty - Disqualified

OTHER FOULS

Several fouls have been detailed over the course of this rulebook. In addition to those fouls, please see the details below for a full description of the different types of additional fouls.

A foul will be awarded if:

- A player slips, trips, or falls, without interference by the opponent, during the course of gameplay
- A player drops their fari or soti at any point during the match
- A player's fari or soti touches the ground (tip of soti is permitted)
- Any part of the player's attire at any point during the match falls without opponent interference such as, **this may also be given as a warning at referee discretion:**
 - Kammarkassa unties
 - Dastaar unravels
 - Any worn shastar falls out onto the ground
- A player presents themselves in the Akhara at the time of their match with any kind of incorrect attire
- A player does anything deemed outside the spirit of fair play for the combat sport of Gatka by the Officials (see below for more details)
- If a player/coach/member affiliated with akhara of either player intervenes during match play.
- **A Match Delay foul for any actions which cause repetitive holds or delays to the match.**

AUTOMATIC DISQUALIFICATION & SERIOUS INFRACTIONS

If both feet leave the akhara the player will be disqualified.

SPIRIT OF FAIR PLAY

Players behaving outside of the spirit of fair play will be issued a non-foul warning, and then a foul for each following occurrence at the discretion of the head referee. Examples of such behavior may include but are not limited to:

- Complaining or contesting a referee decision
- Repeatedly making a technical mistake after being warned by the referee
- Inappropriate language or taunting
- Skipping standard decorum for Gatka (ex. Not partaking in Fatehnama)

- Intentionally or repeatedly disrespecting Khalsa Bana, Shastars, or Khalsa principles

An automatic disqualification will be issued to any player at any time for any egregious infraction, so long as it is a unanimous decision by all referees.

MATCH NO-SHOW

Players will be notified at least 2 matches before their next upcoming match. This is the time that a competitor has to prepare themselves, secure their attire, and present themselves before the appropriate representative at the assigned location near the playing Akhara. If by the time a player's match is to begin they are not present, they will be immediately disqualified without question.

In the event that an emergency situation arises and that is what kept the player from participating, then if the player is able to compete they must report to the appropriate organizers to state their case and seek to be reinstated into the tournament.

REFEREE DISCRETION & WARNINGS

A distinct quality is the emphasis on natural, intuitive, and clean Gatka gameplay. To enforce this, the Referee team has the power to give warnings and fouls for behaviour they deem to be outside of the character of Gatka, even if it is not outlined in the above rules. This is to ensure that the players and audience both get an experience of Gatka which honours its roots and traditions, despite being held in a competitive format.

If the Referee determines that a mistake was not made with intention, and is not so clear that they feel the need to penalize the player with a foul, they may issue a warning to the player according to their discretion. However, if assistant referees disagree with the awarding of a warning to a player, they may contest and discuss with the head referee to upgrade any warning into a foul.

PLAYER TIME-OUTS

A player may take one time-out in a match to discuss with the referee. Any time-outs after that requested by the player will only be given according to referee discretion, with the additional consultation of the First Aid Attendant when necessary. Time-outs may be used to adjust attire, for medical reasons, or to discuss a pattern of missed calls or behaviour which the player wants to draw the referee's attention to.

If a player needs to tie their shoe, adjust their attire, get a drink of water with the permission of the attending First Aid volunteer, etc., they can do so during a hold in order to avoid being penalized or compromising their own safety. However, if a referee deems that this is being done to avoid using a time-out so the player can rest, then the player will be given a Delay of Game Penalty. Each Delay of Game Penalty will result in the offending player being deducted one point from their total score.

A timeout is called for by disengaging from combat, coming out of pentra stance and tapping your soti on your fari above your head.

PLAYER CHALLENGES

All match outcomes will be considered final over the duration of the tournament. There will be no match reviews or challenges once a match has been completed.

In the group stage of the tournament, players will not have an opportunity to request a review or challenge any calls made in the match. All referee decisions will be considered final.

In the Championship Playoffs, players will be given 1 challenge per match in the playoffs for the duration of the entire playoffs. Players will be able to challenge any one call of their choice during the hold following the play when the call was made. This can be for a called point, missed point, called foul, or missed foul.

All Referees and a sevadaar will review the footage on the spot to decide whether to uphold or overturn the call.

In the result of a successful challenge, an additional 30 seconds will be added to the match and incorrectly issued fouls or points will be overturned. The player who made the challenge will retain the right to challenge again

In the result of an unsuccessful challenge, the player loses their challenge for that match.

Review will be done using only official footage. Side angles recorded from the stands will not be permitted for review.

Please note that these rules are adapted from the Damdama Gatka Championship regulations, with certain modifications implemented for Akaal Gatka Cup. Akaal Gatka Cup is in no way affiliated with the Damdama Gatka Championship.
