

# **The Gentle Art Of Wevenstock**

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Wevenstock, a game of horse, stick and kopf (head sized ball) played by the Rosrijders, has its origins in antiquity. Used to train young warhorses and to keep their riders in training, it still displays touches of the Rosrijder attitude to enemies of old.

The game has its origins in the method by which the ancestors of the Rosrijders expressed their contempt for the Aerdi tax collectors. A head would be taken, and then a mad ride past an Aerdi garrison would end with the head being flung over the walls. On these rides, as little killing as possible was done, but as much mayhem and havoc as could be achieved was carried out.

It is played on a roughly square piece of ground, traditionally a bow shot by a bow shot, and given the distances achievable by a proficient user of a composite longbow fired from horseback, it is an extremely large area. The rules themselves are simple.

Two teams of twenty riders attempt to move a kopf down the field and fling it into the opposition goal. The goals are set fifty yards in from the end of the field, and take the form of a conical yurt with its door open. To do this, the riders are equipped with a loosely woven rawhide net, its mouth held open by a ring of wattle attached to the end of a blunt lance.

The players wear light leather armor, helmets and bucklers. It is allowable to attempt to sweep an opponent from the saddle with the lance, but not to thrust or charge with it. Nor is it allowable to strike directly at a horse (they're too valuable), although shouldering an opponent's horse aside with your own is perfectly fine.

The game is started with the ball placed in roughly the middle of the field, and the two teams line up alongside each other on the sideline. At the signal to start, there is a general charge for the ball, which is scooped up by the first rider to reach it in his or her net. It is then passed to a teammate by flinging it, generally using a two handed technique that requires standing in the stirrups, but occasionally, a very good or very strong proponent may do this one handed. The ball then progresses down the field towards the team's goal. At least four passes are required from the time a team acquires the ball before a shot on goal is allowed. Games are usually played the first to three, but occasionally, the target may be set higher.

The constant cut and thrust of the game is an excellent training tool, both for warhorse and riders, as it accustoms the horses to the push and shove and noise of battle, and the riders to working together. The gods help a ball carrier who gets isolated from his team mates, for he will most certainly find himself in the dirt very quickly, for while he may fend off or dodge one or two sweeps, it is a rare player who can survive three or four.

As previously stated, the ball is head shaped, and indeed, in the past it was played with a real enemy's head (hence the Rosrijder comment, "You broke it, you get a new one"). These days it is made of a rawhide bag stuffed with rags and has a face painted on it; commonly named. A sure sign that you have attracted the opprobrium of the Rosrijders is to achieve the honour of having

the ball named after you. In recent years, a favourite name on the ball has been that of the Voormann Karenin and before that almost exclusively that of his predecessor, Franz. Other favourite names are Iuz and occasionally Iggwilv. Interestingly, during the run up to the election of 593 CY, the name Karl seemed to be popping up, particularly amongst the southern stadt games.

Springtime, after the Feronwold has dried out from the snow melt, is the time of most games, culminating in the great tournament at the Feestelijk Voorjaar (Festival of the Spring), held at HeldplaatZ. Every stadt strives to get at least one team entered, with the big stadts, such as HeldplaatZ, Havikdal, WyndplaatZ and Kleinstadt often having as many as twenty teams competing at the festival. However, the Rosrijders continue to play throughout summer and autumn for the fun and training. As an interesting side effect, when the clan goes to war, the teams ride together and fight together as very cohesive and well co-coordinated units.