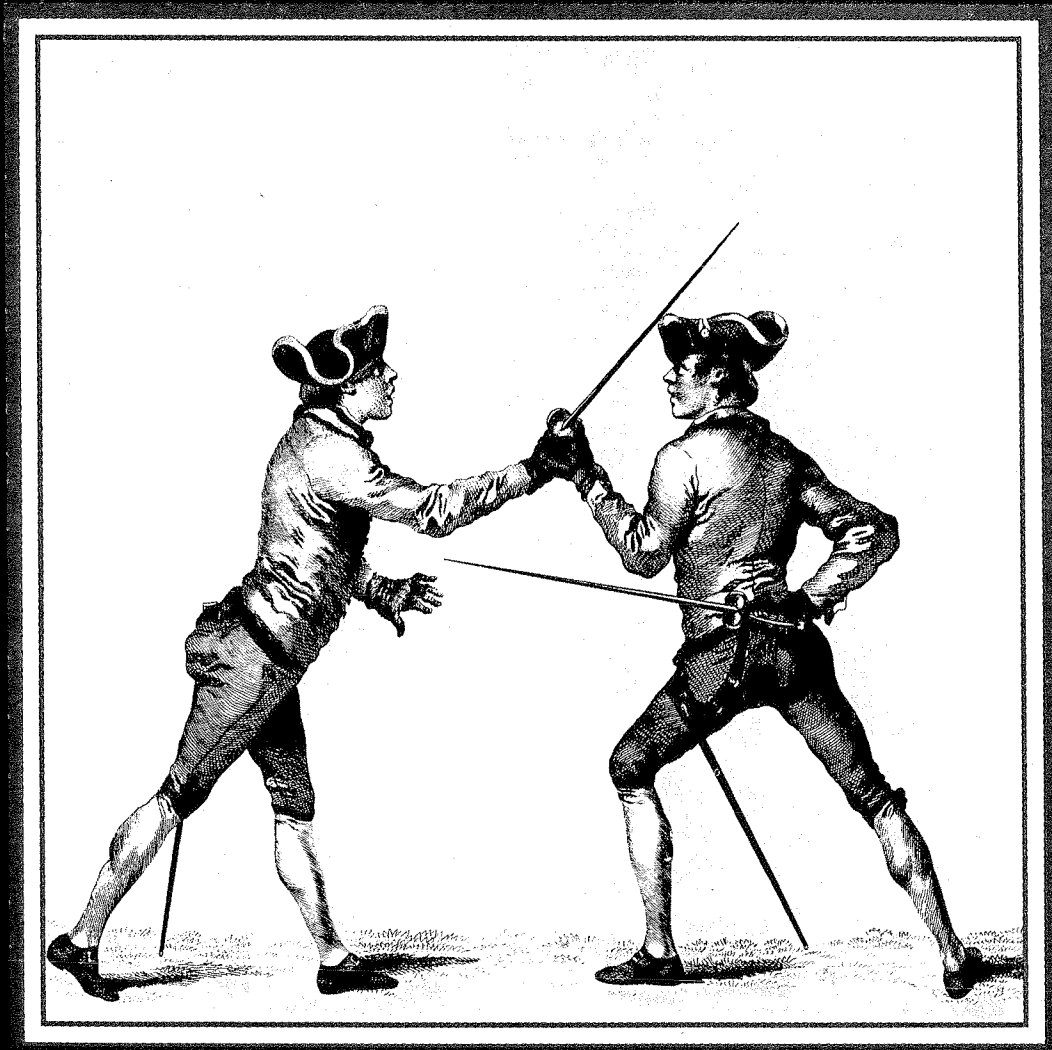


Volume 42, Number 2

# American FENCING



## *In this Issue:*

- Fencing Masters and Mastering Fencing
- Tips for Foilists

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AMERICAN FENCING magazine (ISSN 0002-8436) is published quarterly by the United States Fencing Association, Inc. 1750 East Boulder Street, Colorado Springs, CO 80909. Subscription for non-members of the U.S.F.A. is \$12.00 in the U.S. and \$18.00 elsewhere. Single copies \$3.00. Members of the U.S.F.A. subscribe through their dues. Address all correspondence concerning membership to the U.S.F.A. office in Colorado Springs, CO. Second class postage paid at Colorado Springs, CO and additional mailing offices.

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Editorial and advertising offices: These are currently in flux, as the editor relocated to the Baltimore, MD, area as this issue went to press. For now, address all material and inquiries to **American Fencing**, c/o USFA, 1750 East Boulder Street, Colorado Springs, CO 80909; (719) 578-4511.

Contributors please note: Articles, results of competitions, photos and cartoons are cordially solicited. Manuscripts should be typewritten, double spaced, on one side of the paper only. Photos should preferably be black and white and with a complete caption. Unsolicited manuscripts cannot be returned unless submitted with a stamped, self-addressed envelope. No anonymous articles accepted.

Opinions expressed in signed articles do not necessarily reflect the view of *American Fencing* or the USFA.

**DEADLINES:** Copy and advertising material should be received by Jan. 1, Mar. 1, June 1 and Sept. 1 of each year to be included in the next issue. Issues are intended to be mailed out by the first day of the following month. That's the plan — honest. We will do our best to guarantee the appearance of all dated material prior to accepting it.

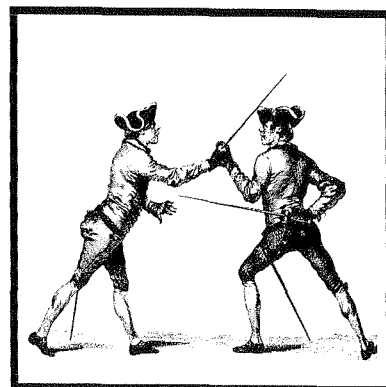
**POSTMASTER:** Send address changes to: American Fencing, U.S.F.A., 1750 East Boulder St., Colorado Springs, CO 80909.

# American FENCING

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**ON OUR COVER**

"Disarming the Opponent," as taught by the great Angelo. We would prefer photos of modern American fencing for our magazine, if we could only get some!

## Editorial

Welcome to the latest issue of *American Fencing*. Once again, your well-meaning editor finds himself obliged to apologize for its tardiness, this time abetted by a cross-country move. We're trying, friends, but as stated previously, you can help.

Contrary to what appears to be a rather widespread belief, this magazine has no "editorial personnel" (to quote one correspondent) other than the editor him (or her, to mollify that same individual) self. Advertisements are handled by our business manager, Laurel Clark Skillman, and all other editorial duties, including writing some things, editing all others, pasteup, proofing, etc., are the duty of the editor. But you can still help, with your articles, letters, results and especially (for now) photos — now I can better appreciate why our previous editor took so many pictures. We need art!

The material we do receive, in my opinion, is often excellent, insightful and thought-provoking. Articles such as Harold Hayes' piece on foil tactics and training; Nick Jamilla's essay on achieving mastery of the art of the fencing; and others which did not fit in this issue are of great interest to me, and hopefully to others as well.

It has long been my belief that while fencers in this country devote — even as "amateurs" — countless hours to lessons, bouting and conditioning, they spend all too little time on intelligent and intellectual reflection and discourse on their sport.

For although fencing is, indeed, a sport, it is also a game, and when played well it is more, rising to the level of an art. And while the athletes may occasionally triumph, and the good players will often play well enough to win, it is the artists who combine all the physical, emotional and intellectual spheres into one cohesive whole who will persist in their success.

When I was a coach, and my fencers were about to step on the piste, I would often say to them, "Don't think about it — just do it." But the only way you can achieve success on the strip without conscious thought is if you have done all of your thinking in advance.

Fencing is too rapid a sport to allow much more than quick tactical changes when in the midst of a bout. As a corollary, however, it is too complex a sport to permit much in the way of success without planning.

"The unexamined life is not worth living," Aristotle is reported to have said. "The unexamined bout is not worth fencing," say I. I hope you will agree, and will find some inspiration for further thought of your own after reading some of the articles in this issue.



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# To The Editor

## Words of Wisdom

Coaches aren't the only ones with good advice, or with pertinent observations. Here are a few which have circulated for some time:

**Attributed to Albie Axelrod:** "When you're down four-zip you got nothing to lose by being creative."

**Attributed to Bill Shipman,** commenting on the directing idiosyncracies of a particular unnamed fencing city and its famous fencing director: "According to AFLA rules, the further you get from (the city) the more time you have to finish your riposte."

**Attributed to Norman Campbell:** "You can always tell who fences what at a fencers' party: the epeeists are all standing around in Brooks Brothers suits talking about how much money they make, the foilists are running around trying to "establish temporary romantic liaisons" (not the phrase he used), and the sabrists are all complaining to one another about the last touch they were cheated out of."

**Rudy Volkmann, Coach  
August Fencers Club**

## A Worthy Cause

I was very pleased to read the notice about *Musketeer* in *American Fencing* magazine. I am the editor of *Musketeer* and I have been very fortunate in having a coach at the Great Lakes Fencing Association, Janusz Steplowski, who is an excellent fencer and coach and also has some very interesting ideas about how the business of fencing ought to be run.

I am only a mediocre fencer myself, but one of the things the coach teaches is that fencing should be an integral part of your life. It's another expression of your personality. So I decided to start a newsletter — *Musketeer* — as something I could do to make a contribution. I was the managing editor of a Chicago-area newspaper for several years and I have a desktop publishing system at home. I want to give *Musketeer* a unique voice and to include information that our readers can't find anywhere else about fencing, training, nutrition, physiology, etc. I'm going to apply the same basic principles of publishing to this business of fencing.

*Musketeer* is not just an act of charity. I expect it to pay for itself and make some money for GLFA and for myself. If it doesn't, it won't be around long. I also expect it to be a help in building my own publishing company. That's why I decided to try to sell advertising space in it. We have a captive market for any athletic club, athletic clothing store, trophy maker or replica sword maker. After we go after those businesses, then we start on others. If I could bring myself to advocate the consumption of alcohol, I would say we should go after the breweries the same way other sports have.

Of course, to do that, we have to build a bigger support base and keep good demographics so advertisers have a reason to advertise with us instead of somewhere else. I plan to be very active about getting *Musketeer* into the hands of people not already involved in fencing. The only way to make fencing grow is to attract *new* people to the sport.

The point is that maybe there are more fencers out there who can combine their profession with their hobby to the benefit of everyone involved. There must be someone out there who does television or knows someone who does television who could invest in an ad for fencing that would bring a healthy return. That's what I'm trying to do. Anyone out there who has a comment or wants to buy an ad or a subscription to *Musketeer* or just wants to send me money can reach me at:

**Allen Zehyer,  
Editor, *Musketeer*  
5632 S. Maryland Ave., Chicago, IL 60637  
(312) 667-1318.**

## Stars on Texas

A truly class champion competed in San Antonio January 4-5 in the person of 1988 Olympic Games epee gold medalist Arnd Schmitt of Germany.

U.S. National Champion Rob Stull arranged to have Schmitt participate in a one-touch as well as a standard fencing competition as part of Schmitt's visit to Houston for New Year's, and the results were rewarding for everyone.

Stull placed second to Schmitt in both events, but it was the personal side of the Olympic medalist that made everyone feel like winners. He conducted a clinic for two hours following the one-touch; commented on a video of the Olympic finals, and answered questions from all levels of fencers. Throughout both competitions, Schmitt gave individual lessons to a number of athletes and was very friendly and outgoing.

Fencers from San Antonio, El Paso, Dallas, Houston, and San Marcos took advantage of an opportunity to not only fence against an Olympic champion (and *everyone* did) but to talk fencing with him.

As a fencer, Arnd Schmitt is every bit the World Cup and Olympic champion you'd expect, and as a person, the sport of fencing couldn't ask for a classier representative. He earned a bunch of new fans in Texas.

**William C. Hanson  
Executive Director,  
USA Modern Pentathlon  
San Antonio, Texas**

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JANUARY 1991

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509	Sabre blade.....	22.95
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702	French foil or epee handle - COLONIAL - aluminum - NON-SLIP surface.....	3.95
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704	Sabre handle - COLONIAL - aluminum - NON-SLIP surface.....	3.95
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#11 & #12 ARE ALL USFA TOURNAMENT QUALIFIED

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34	Woman's (3) weapon jacket - stretch nylon knit - front zip.....	57.95
35	Men's jacket - padded duck - back zip.....	31.95
36	Women's jacket - padded duck - back zip.....	31.95
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SPECIFY RIGHT OR LEFT HAND AND CHEST SIZE FOR ALL JACKETS

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54	Woman's (3) weapon knickers - stretch nylon knit.....	39.95

SPECIFY WAIST SIZE FOR ALL KNICKERS

### PLASTRONS

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1017	Dummy practice point - foil or epee.....	1.50
1018	(2) Prong body cord plug.....	3.95
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# To The Editor (Continued)

## Our Far-Ranging Readers

I have been a member of the USFA for approximately three years. I am a sailor on board the aircraft carrier U.S.S. Midway (CV-41) currently deployed to the Persian Gulf. I wanted to let you know that one of the high points of this cruise (beside getting mail from my wife and family) is receiving *American Fencing*. Since I joined the USFA, I have continually looked forward to your magazine. At one time while I was attending college, I had dreams of trying out for the Olympic team, but duty called and I joined the Navy.

The Midway is forward deployed and her homeport is Yokosuka, Japan. I must say, it is quite hard to keep up with fencing in Japan, but I have been doing my best to spread the word of how wonderful our sport is.

Recently, after my father sent me the latest issue, I was reading the article by Gil Pezza ("Shoot the Foreign Coaches?") and found it very informative. It was nice to hear a viewpoint of the problem (?) with foreign coaches from a foreign coach. Thank you Mr. Pezza.

I hope to one day see a magazine (or an article in *American Fencing*) like the various other magazines on sports, such as *Golf*, *Bowhunter*, etc. that gives constructive strategies or ways of improving your lunge, parries, or footwork. The main reason I say this is that not many of us can find a qualified teacher to help us. As you recall, I live in Japan and have many duties that keep me from my favorite pastime.

I thank you for your time in reading this letter. Until Scaramouche kisses his brother, keep on fencing!

Joseph B. Trimarchi  
DP3 USN

## THE CONCENTRATED ESSENCE OF STRATEGY AND TACTICS

### Positive:

1. Adjust your end to your means.
2. Keep your object always in mind.
3. Choose the line (or course) of least expectation.
4. Exploit the line of least resistance.
5. Take a line of operation which offers alternative objectives.
6. Ensure that both plan and dispositions are flexible — adaptable to circumstances.

### Negative:

7. Do not throw your weight into a stroke whilst your opponent is on guard.
8. Do not renew an attack along the same line (or in the same form) after it has failed.

B.H. Liddell Hart, "Strategy"

## Raised Eyebrows

The duel that Giorgio Santelli fought in 1924 ("Hungarian Duelling in the 20th Century," Vol. 41, No. 4), lasted less than a minute and was halted immediately when his adversary received one wound, a cut across the forehead.

With all due respect to Maestro Csiszar and his recollections, I find myself wondering about a duel that involved "over twenty wounds." What duellist in his right mind would choose to engage in such a bloody and dangerous affair? And what reputable doctor would want any part of it?

Bruce, some proofreading of the magazine is in order. In the article in question, for example, the word Maestro is spelled incorrectly three different ways (mastero, meastro, masetro).

Frank Collins  
Albany, N.Y.

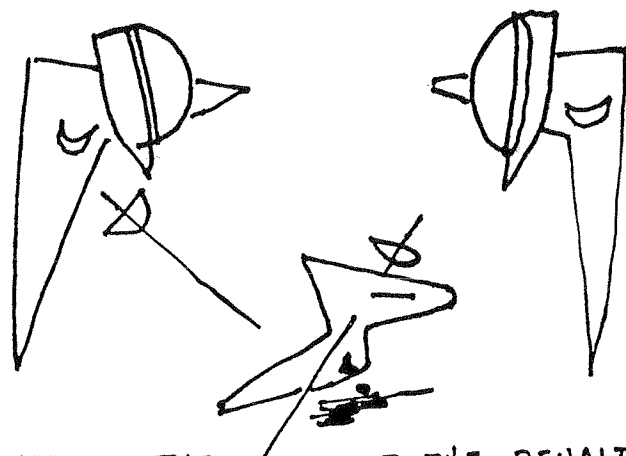
Oops — Ed. (At least we got it right once!)

## An Invitation

For the seventeenth consecutive year, Aaron Bell of the Tanner City Fencer's Club cordially invites all fencers — living in, passing through or vacationing in New England to participate in informal outdoor fencing every Wednesday evening from 7:00 p.m. to 10:30 p.m., during July and August, at his home at 52 Pickwood Road, Marblehead, Mass.

There is an electric strip and a heated swimming pool. Wives, friends and children are welcome. There are free refreshments, courtesy of the Tanner City Fencing Club and no fees or charges of any kind. It is a unique experience enjoyed by all.

Aaron J. Bell  
52 Pickwick Road  
Marblehead, MA 01945



WHAT IS THE COLOR OF THE PENALTY  
CARD FOR KILLING THE DIRECTOR?

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# In The Final Analysis

by Charles A. Selberg

## On Fencing Masters and Teachers

This article started out as a comment on fencing teachers, coaches and fencing masters. It occurred to me that there are fencers who really don't know what a fencing master is. Non-fencers are surprised to learn that there are living anachronisms called fencing masters — people who actually teach sword fighting in this, the last decade of the 20th century. Most of our young fencers have heard that there are such things as fencing masters, but very few know just what the designation means. As a fencing master, and at the risk of sounding totally self-serving, here are my observations relative to the subject.

Fencing masters, as defined professionally, have a lineage which is literally hundreds of years old. In the beginning, they were fight or dueling masters. As swords became extricated from the dueling ground, transforming dueling into the sport of fencing, the dueling master became the fencing master. The fencing world, recognizing a need for trained fencing teachers, created the title of fencing master for those who pass a prescribed course of study, demonstrating relatively comprehensive knowledge about fencing and teaching methodology.

The majority of fencing masters in America have emigrated from Europe. After the First and Second World Wars a good many of them fled to North, South and Central America to escape the trauma of Old World violence. A few of them have done well, but many suffered, finding themselves in new circumstances where there was little or no fencing activity. In any event, they brought, and are still bringing, fencing to Americans.

We as fencers owe a great deal to past masters such as George Santelli, Julio Castello, George Pillar, Aldo Nadi and Hans Halberstadt who, like numerous others, gave their creative energy to the promotion of fencing in the United States. European masters actively teaching today such as Chaba Althes, Aladar Kogler and Yves Auriol still take the lead in the development of top flight American fencers. In recent decades several Americans have gained masters recognition. Among those who immediately come to mind are Ed Richards, twice former United States National Foil Champion and 1970 World Masters Champion, and Michael D'Asaro, former National Sabre Champion and Pan American Sabre Champion. It is clear that United States fencing is attracting high caliber American talent to the ranks of masters. Our American masters have proven every bit as effective as their European mentors.

Even so, most American and European masters do not have, and are not required to have, high level competitive backgrounds. Competitive fencing ability and teaching ability are entirely differing skills. Few people do both effectively. Most masters have been motivated by an intense interest and love of fencing. They find fulfillment through their contribution as coaches and teachers. As in tennis and boxing, one need not have been a champion to train a champion.

Most Fencing masters have a specialty of some kind. This is what distinguishes one style over another. For example, one master may specialize in young fencers who need basic understanding, while another may emphasize a particular weapon. Another may be expert relative to strategic and tactical theory, while another may be best at coaching and conditioning high level competitors.

Eric Funke, my first teacher, was at his best working with large groups. Anyone who studies with him knew the real benefits of line drills and footwork. No one could do it better. On the other hand, George Pillar, perhaps the greatest sabre master of all time, gave his best in the individual lesson. Fencing by its nature is very complex and does not yield to easy answers. As in all creative activities, no one person can justify a claim to knowing it all. As no two fencers fence alike, no two fencing masters teach alike or, for that matter, agree on everything.

It must be understood that the majority of fencing teachers in the United States are not accredited fencing masters. There are many exceptionally gifted fencing teachers and coaches who are the equal of the best of the masters, but do not feel a need to become certified.

Maestro Arthur Lane, who has taught fencing in the San Francisco Bay Area for over fifty years, is one of them. He is regarded by many of us as the "Fencing Master's Fencing Master." Arthur didn't bother with masters certification. He has always been too busy fencing and teaching. Others who easily come to my mind are James Charmiatero of Salem, Oregon and Harold Hayes in the Bay Area. There are many more.

In effect, the fencer who wishes to improve through instruction is certainly not dependent on seeking out a "fencing master." There are hundreds of fine teachers and coaches who can do the job. But, when one does find a Master or Teacher, it is important to find out: What is this individual's specialty? This is most important if one expects to gain the most from instruction. How does one get this information? Just ask.

Finally, we need more trained fencing teachers and coaches in America. If that means becoming an accredited fencing master, all the better, but that difficult step is not mandatory. (However, it doesn't hurt to have a certificate on the wall as an answer to those who give the fish-eye to one's teaching ability.) As American fencing grows we see an increased need for teachers. I urge all fencers who have an inclination to teach to do so. If someday your involvement in teaching leads to an interest in master certification, the National Fencing Coaches Association would like to hear from you. Remember, in the final analysis, the future of American fencing needs you more than you need it. Take care.



A good member is a well-informed member. The first step to becoming involved in fencing is to learn what is planned and what is happening. Just as we need more strong fencers, and more fencers of all kinds in the USFA, we also need more informed members. You have elected directors to represent all of you, seniors, juniors, youth, etc. Have they ever taken the trouble to:

- A) Discuss items on the agenda and get your opinions?
- B) Read to you the minutes of the national meeting they attended?
- C) Have you ever asked them?

My guess, is for the majority of our members, "No on all counts." Despite your giving me a strong majority (almost 2/3 of your votes) which I interpreted as a mandate to reduce unproductive expenditures, the battle continues with some members of your board of directors.

Rumors are circulating that I have cut funds arbitrarily. There have not been any cuts in the funding for Juniors, Cadets or Youth. On the contrary, funds were increased. There have not been any real cuts for seniors either, but rather a reassessment of the criteria to be met for receiving funds.

You know of my objectives. They have not changed. I believe in INVESTING for the future. This means that the incentive for those who strive for excellence will be available; however I am trying to shift the emphasis so that those who produce results will then receive support. That is what some of our elite fencers find difficult to accept. Here are some of the results of our "elite" at "A" events in Europe. You be the judge, is it worth continuing to support free European trips at recent levels to obtain results such as these?

WOMEN'S FOIL:	Italy:	1989: Placements: 33, 64, 81. 1990: Placements: 44, 51, 66, 79, 101.	
	Germany:	1989: No participation. 1990: Placements: 59, 104, 105, 111.	
	Leipzig:	1989: No participation. 1990: Placements: 75, 88.	
	France:	1989: No participation. 1990: Placements: 28, 41, 53.	
	WOMEN'S EPEE:	France:	1989: Placements: 11, 12, 16, 32, 50, 53. 1990: Placements: 49, 89.
		England:	1989: Placements: 62. 1990: Placements: 24, 43, 47, 75.
Poland:		1989: Placements: 8, 22, 31, 40, 79, 80, 96, 110. 1990: Placement: 33.	
Hungary:		1989: Placements: 49, 101.	
Italy:		1989: Placements: 43, 45.	
MEN'S EPEE:	Paris:	1989: Placements: 63, 70, 73, 116. 1990: Placements: 78, 118, 121, 137.	
	Poitiers:	1989: No participation. 1990: Placements: 49, 77, 78, 102, 112.	
	England:	1989: Placements: 43, 80, 88. 1990: Placements: 38, 46, 55, 78.	

MEN'S FOIL:	France:	1989: Placement: 158. 1990: Placements: 148, 165, 172, 179.
	Italy:	1989: Placement: 95. 1990: No participation.
	Germany:	1989: No participation. 1990: Placements: 98, 120, 124, 137, 143, 144.
	Hungary:	1989: Three fencers placed between 97th and 140th.
	SABRE:	W. Germany
Hannover:		1989: Placements: 53, 69, 89. 1990: No participation.
Italy		
Abano		
Terme:		1989: Placements: 18, 55, 67, 74, 76, 87. 1990: Placements: 53, 93, 95, 63, 90, 41, 71, 96.

Above results were obtained from our Colorado Springs office.

It is not my intention to withdraw from international competition or to deny international experience to very promising and dedicated fencers, but why should we repeatedly send over to Europe people who, based on their own performance, have virtually no chance of making the top 24, let alone the finals. I believe that our long term goals will be best served by investing in our youth and only the most deserving seniors, juniors and cadets.

I have asked the Long Range Planning Commission to study and assess the value of our Circuit events. The qualifying system to our National Championships will also be scrutinized to see if we can increase the importance of local and sectional competitions in the process. It is far too far to travel to them. The expense is itself disqualifying for some of our less wealthy fencers, and they are too expensive to run.

Also, it is no secret that the focus on Circuit events has taken away the need for our elite to fence locally, thereby depriving most fencers of the excitement and valuable experience of fencing with the best.

I feel it is time for soul searching. We have wasted time, talent and money on a system that has failed internationally and failed domestically to significantly improve the numbers and quality of American fencers. It is time to open our minds for changes, have very well defined goals and try harder for international results.

By spreading the U.S.O.C. subsidy to the four corners of the world we will never reach our goal. For international results let us concentrate on those elite athletes who are most likely to produce, create fencing centers with permanent staff/coaches, and encourage and compensate coaches and clubs for results.

I am asking everyone to set aside "Numero Uno." Let us work together to build upon current strengths and to create a new level of fencing in the U.S.A.

# Foil Tactics and Tactical Drill

by Harold C. Hayes

Fencing texts often use the terms *strategy* and *tactics* interchangeably, and for many purposes of discussion there is no problem about such usage. Yet, one can get much clarification from distinguishing between strategic and tactical phases of combat and preparing to negotiate both phases by focusing on one or the other in lessons and drills. This article is concerned with the tactical phase of combat and the specifically tactical drill. Sparring partners can use a tactical drill for practice and warm-up.

How do tactics differ from strategy? In military usage, strategy is the art and science of military command exercised to meet the enemy in combat under advantageous conditions. Tactics consist of the disposition and maneuvering of forces in action, in the presence of the enemy. Military historians do not carry this distinction through all descriptions of military conflicts because the actual events can be much more complicated than these definitions. Strategy and tactics often overlap in the field, as do strategic and tactical levels of command.

In fencing we can say, in general, that strategy aims at developing a favorable situation which does not exist yet, out of what does exist; while tactics are immediate responses to the situation that already exists. Strategy and tactics easily overlap because strategy can be culminated only through action, and effective action has to address the immediate, existing situation. Further, the performance of each action changes the situation upon which the strategy was based. Sometimes the change can be anticipated, and sometimes not. Sometimes it will be a minor change which does not appreciably alter the basic character of the situation, and sometimes it will be a radical change which presents an essentially new situation.

Consequently, it is in the nature of strategy that it has to be more or less an outline for action which has a goal, but which must develop toward that goal in a flexible manner. An important strategic skill involves leaving just the right latitude for one's tactical abilities, without inhibiting tactical initiative on the one hand, or getting into phrases that call for tactical performances one cannot produce, on the other. Sometimes an unanticipated radical change of the combat situation may necessitate abandoning a particular strategy altogether. In such cases, tactics may have to take over in place of strategy because the fight may already be under way at that point, and then, lacking the time to develop a more favorable situation, one has to continue with what exists as best one can.

The ability to fence strategically is a very sophisticated one which takes a long time to develop. Thus, the beginner who is not yet strategically sophisticated constantly faces the problem of meeting the existing situations of combat as they arise: he has to rely on tactics. Until one's strategic abilities are developed, one is well served by sound tactics, which can be

developed sooner and more easily than strategic fencing, even during the early period of training when the basics of footwork and blade movement are being acquired. That is where tactical drill is useful.

The purpose of tactical drilling is to train perception as well as performance because perception is the basis for performance. When beginning fencers feel a bewilderment in their first bouts, which they often express simply as not knowing what to do from moment to moment, they are going through a psychological transition that is natural to the new situation. A fundamental biological principle, expressed succinctly by Paul Schilder in his *Medical Psychology*, is that "the prerequisite for action is a circumscribed, clear and definite setting." Conversely, in the absence of such a setting, action is inhibited. For instance, when a power failure puts the lights out at a party, everyone stops moving because the sudden absence of vision has obscured the setting. In a dense fog, traffic slows down. When ominous-looking James Coburn strides into a western bar in those beer commercials on television, everyone stops talking and holds still because the presence of the heavy character has changed the setting and left it undefined until he makes it clear what he is there for.

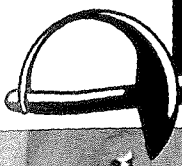
When a beginning fencer who has become oriented to performance in the context of classes and lessons goes into his first bouts where the director's command, "Fence!" puts him into a win-or-lose situation against an uncooperative opponent, the setting is no longer circumscribed, clear and definite, in the sense that his classes and lessons were. Chaotic moments occur (chaos is a natural character of combat), and clarity is lost. Under stress, the opponent performs actions that defy specific definition. The setting for action within the bout is not really circumscribed if the fencer looks beyond his immediate dialogue with his opponent to extraneous criteria for action, such as his conception of the teacher's approval or disapproval, a prior image of success or failure, or a vague imperative like "be aggressive," etc.

The kind of perception that aids both the beginning fencer who is fencing on a tactical level and the veteran fencer whose strategy has brought him into the tactical phase of combat, is abstractive. During the flurry of action, the essential nature of the immediate situation is clarified and defined if one can abstract two specific items of information from the total situation: distance and blade position.

## Distance

Distance is complex. At all times one should be aware of the distance between one's own point and the opponent's target; between the opponent's point and one's own target; and between any part of one's own blade that one may use for an action on the

*Continued on page 13*



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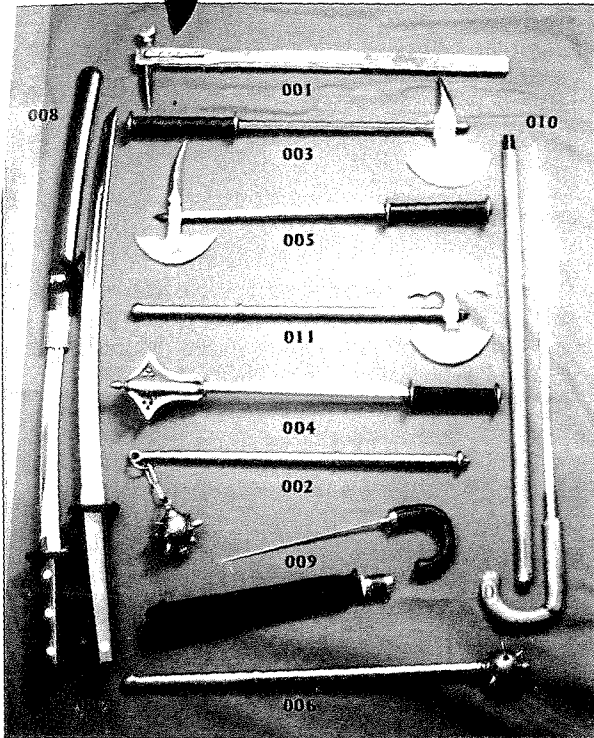
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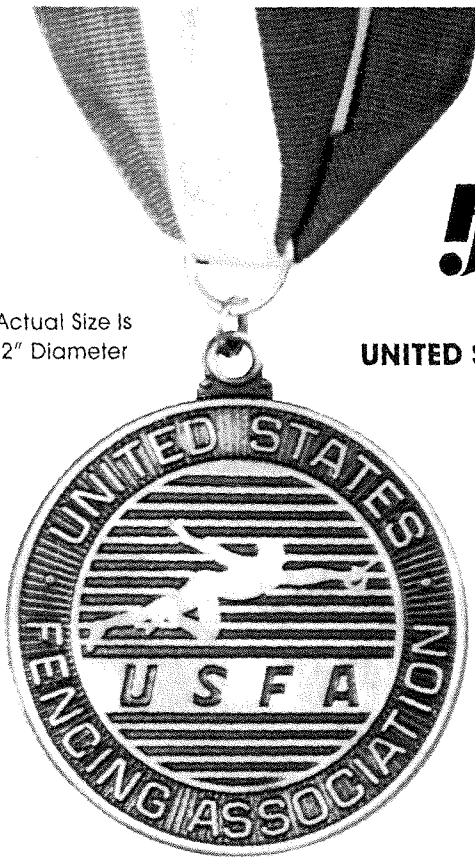
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# News Briefs

## Zimmermann Wins Three Golds

Fifteen-year-old Felicia Zimmermann (Rush, N.Y.) captured three gold medals at the 1991 Junior Olympic Championships held Feb. 15-18 in Little Rock, Ark. Zimmermann successfully defended her titles in Under-17 women's foil and Under-20 women's foil and finished on top in Under-17 women's epee.

For the second year in a row, Zimmermann earned a berth on the Under-20 World Junior Championships and the Under-17 World Cadet Championships women's foil teams. These teams were selected at the Junior Olympics.

The top three Under-20 fencers in each of the five weapons will compete at the World Junior Championships in Istanbul, Turkey, Aug. 28 - Sept. 2.

Almost 800 fencers competed in the 20th annual Junior Olympic Fencing Championships. Of these, 200 competed in "demonstration" youth events of Under-15, Under-13 and Under-11.

**Arkansan Wins:** Arkansas not only hosted its first Junior Olympic Championships, but also won its first gold medal. Lisa Picken of Bentonville, Ark., came from 26th place in the Under-20 women's epee rankings to capture the gold medal in her home state to the cheers of the local supporters.

**Notes:** In Under-20 men's sabre, Stephen Kovacs (Hampton, N.J.) successfully defended his title... Sean McClain (Round Rock, Texas), the defending Under-17 men's epee champion, finished third this year and fourth in Under-20 men's foil... Monique DeBruin (Portland, Ore.) finished first

again this year in Under-15 women's foil as well as winning the Under-15 women's epee... David Madero (El Paso, Texas), was the champion in the first Junior Olympic Under-15 men's epee competition... Iris Zimmerman, sister of Felicia, triumphed in Under-11 women's foil.

## Fencer Receives Grant

The Women's Sports Foundation (WSF) has awarded fencer **Jennifer Gilbert** from San Francisco, Calif., a grant from the WSF Travel & Training Fund. Gilbert is one of 19 individuals and one team who received grants totaling \$10,300. She received a \$500 grant and will apply the money towards the costs of international competition.

Gilbert, 25, is currently ranked 7th nationally. She was selected to the 1988 Women's Epee National Team and competed in the 1989 World University Games. She has twice participated in the U.S. Olympic Festival, winning the team gold medal in 1989.

The Women's Sports Foundation Travel & Training Fund provides direct financial aid to aspiring women athletes for travel, coaching or other expenses. The WSF awards Travel & Training grants three times yearly. The maximum grant awarded to individuals is \$1,500 and to teams, \$3,000. For more information on how to apply for a grant or how to make a donation, contact the Women's Sports Foundation, 342 Madison Ave., Suite 728, New York, NY 10173, (800) 227-3988.

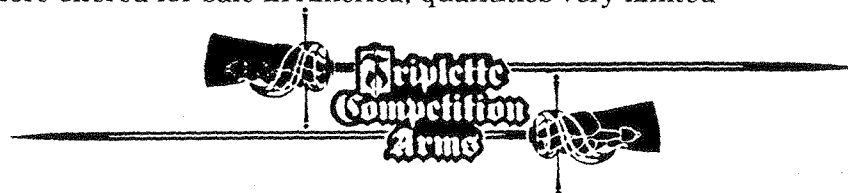
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opponent's blade, and the corresponding part of the opponent's blade to which the action would be addressed, and vice-versa (e.g., engagement strong-to-weak, engagement medium-to-medium, beat medium-to-medium, etc.). Distance is fundamental. *Anything* one does, and anything one's opponent does depends upon being at the right distance for it. The distance has to be perceived, known, and adjusted at every instant, down to the level of centimeters.

### Blade Position

There are three blade positions: (1) invitation, (2) engagement, and (3) in line. No matter what is happening, each blade will be in one of those positions or going from one to another. Of course, there are numerous ways to invite, engage, or put the blade in line; but if one can recognize what the opponent's blade is doing, *essentially*, one's options for tactical response become well defined, in outline. Basically, those options are as follows: In response to an invitation, make a straight thrust or feint direct. In response to an engagement, disengage and threaten. In response to a blade in line, engage, beat, or retreat. Let's examine each of these options.

### Invitation

The term "invitation" denotes only a blade position, not necessarily an intent. Any time the arm is bent (and not in the immediate act of extending toward the target) and there is no blade contact, the blade is in invitation. One line may or may not be closed, while several lines will be open. The opponent's invitation may be an intentional gesture of "come and get me if you can," but it may just as well occur inadvertently, while he is mentally preparing or retrenching, or even when he means to be attacking (e.g., if he fails to extend before or early in his lunge). Provided the distance and the moment are right, an inadvertent invitation can be a good opportunity to score with a straight thrust or to provoke a flinching parry with a direct feint. With closely-monitored distance, one can call the opponent's bluff on a "come and get me" invitation with an attack in second intention or a direct feint with a one-two or double in reserve, ready to deal with the likely event of a compound parry on the feint.

The point is, whether making an offensive action or feinting, go direct. Do not waste time seeking the opponent's blade with an engagement or beat when that blade poses no immediate threat. To do so also presents a danger. If you are in range to score or make a credible feint, your opponent probably is also in range to score with an attack by disengagement in time on your attempted engagement or beat. The wider you have moved your blade in order to reach the other blade, the more vulnerable you will be.

As far as distinguishing between inadvertent and intentional invitations, it is often a good idea to treat them both the same — that is, to deal in terms of the

*"Never spend the time between bouts in idleness, adjusting equipment or talking to friends. Concentrate on the job in hand."*

*--C.L. de Beaumont*

concrete physical reality of the blade position itself, without being encumbered by the mind-game the opponent may be offering. At the moment one begins to wonder what the opponent is planning or thinking, the *tactical* situation is no longer circumscribed, and tactical action may be inhibited. If the opponent's intent is obvious, take it into account; but if it is not *obvious*, do not get side-tracked into pondering it. A sound, well-timed and well-executed tactical response to the concrete physical situation will give the opponent a tough enough nut to crack even if the choice of action is not a complete surprise.

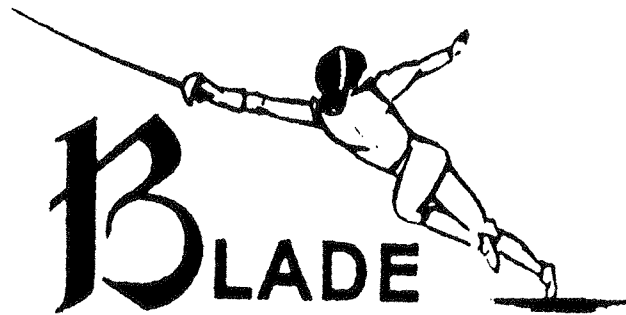
### Engagement

Once the adversary's blade has engaged yours, you have no open line to the target, while the adversary does. You cannot attack, feint, beat, engage, or do much of anything, really, without freeing your blade first. Therefore, it is a good idea to disengage. As soon as you have disengaged, what is the opponent's blade position? Invitation! So you can accomplish two tactical tasks to once, combining your disengagement with the proper tactical response to the newly-created invitation, by making either an attack by disengagement (allowing the engagement before disengaging) or *in time*, i.e., without allowing the adversary's blade to contact you when he attempts the engagement. Actions done in time have great effectiveness because they are accomplished at precisely the moment when the adversary is not prepared to respond to your action because he is busy looking for the results of his own, which of course never occur. Against an experienced fencer, a simple attack by disengagement is often risky because it can be answered easily with a parry and riposte. That is how the one-two and the double got famous. On the adversary's engagement, you can feint by disengagement and disengage in time when he tries to make a lateral parry (one-two); or you can feint by disengagement and deceive his circular parry (double).

Generally, the tactical rule-of-thumb when the opponent engages or attempts to engage your blade is: disengage and threaten with your blade in line. A disengagement that is not accompanied by a threat is not exactly a wasted action, but very close to it because it throws away an opportunity to gain an advantage. Once you have placed your blade in line, threatening, the ball is in the opponent's court, so to speak, and he *has* to deal with it, right now. The threat may be an actual thrust or a feint. If it is a

*Continued on page 15*

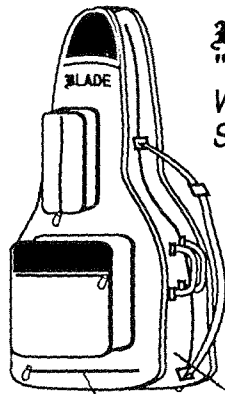
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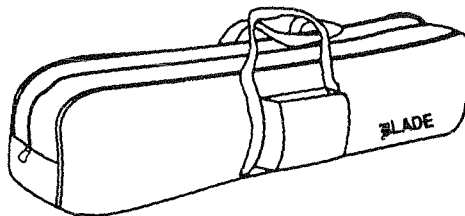
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feint, the effect of it will be enhanced tremendously if it is accompanied by a quick advance. A shift of even a few centimeters can be very disturbing at that moment. Note that a well-executed coupé (cutover) accomplishes the same thing as a disengagement; it is basically a disengagement over the opposing blade, rather than under it.

### Blade in Line

When the opponent puts his blade in line, he has eliminated a major portion of your possible repertoire of immediate actions because you cannot launch an offensive action or make a feint without first removing the opposing steel from that line. If he is at lunging distance or closer, he has a great advantage because unless he telegraphs his lunges or you have an extraordinarily fast reaction time, he can deliver a touch within the time it will take you to respond to his attack with a parry. At that distance you must eliminate his advantage immediately by engaging, beating, or retreating out of range. If you engage, you might as well be prepared for a smart response, such as a one-two or doublé in time, and have not one, but a *series* of engagements and/or parries in reserve to deal with it. That can be difficult, especially if you hold ground and the opponent advances. Yet, it can be done; and if you can *achieve* the engagement with skillful timing and management of distance, that will give you the advantage of owning the line, which turns the table right around and gives you the initiative for offense. A beat-attack (direct or indirect) is an excellent response to a blade in line. It is strong and fast, and has a great potential for surprise when well timed.

All things considered, the *safest* response to a blade in line is to retreat out of lunging distance — provided there is room to retreat. The safest response is not necessarily the best, though. If the opponent pursues, eventually you will have to hold your ground and perform an action on the blade anyhow, which can argue for doing that in the first place. A very prompt action on the blade has a chance of catching the opponent by surprise, especially if he has underestimated your tactical ability or is not equal to it.

### Tactical Drill

Tactical ability can be developed through tactical drill. Working at lunging distance, the maestro or "phantom" (training partner who provides an intelligent blade and target) alternately presents variations of the three blade positions: invitation,

*"A consecutive series of great actions never is the result of chance and luck; it is always the product of planning and genius ... What is luck? The ability to exploit accidents."*  
--Napoleon

engagement, or in line. The fencer (the other training partner) immediately makes the appropriate tactical response to each. When engaging, the phantom should use the strong or medium of his blade, and never the weak. Initially, it works well to limit the responses, e.g.: straight thrust on the invitation, attack by disengagement on the engagement, and engagement on the blade in line. Remember, the primary object of tactical drilling is to train abstract perception; so aiming at creativity an unpredictability of the fencer's responses is not the issue at first. Rather, it is more important for the phantom to be creative and unpredictable about presenting a rich variety of different *kinds* of invitation, engagements, and placements of the blade in line, to challenge perception.

The phantom may establish an arbitrary "neutral" blade position, e.g., on guard in sixth or on guard in center high line (all lines open), so that any change *from* that position is the cue for the fencer's immediate tactical response. Immediacy of response is important. It enforces a quick decision and, therefore, quick assessment of distance and blade position. Once the response has been made, its effectiveness can be assessed.

When the fencer becomes proficient with the drill at stationary lunging distance, the phantom can become mobile so that the fencer must practice getting to the right distance for his tactical action, whatever it may be. If, for example, the phantom advances inviting or engaging, the fencer should not automatically retreat. An invitation or engagement is not a threat and therefore does not *require* a retreat in response. Moreover, the best time to nail the opponent with a thrust or to make a devastating feint is when he is advancing.

A retreat would contradict — not just in principle but in concrete fact — the extension of the arm and blade in the offensive action or feint. Once in a while the phantom should charge forward inviting, to be sure the fencer does not retreat reflexively. Strategically, retreats in response to the opponent's advance with invitation are frequently used to attain or to maintain a preferred distance, or to decline battle when one is not ready; but retreats used in that manner are not part of the basic tactical drill.

A retreat can accompany a disengagement on the opponent's engagement, or a disengagement in time on the opponent's attempted engagement; but only for the purpose of encouraging another engagement, as a set-up for an attack by disengagement or a one-two or a doublé. That is strategic play, though. In the immediate tactical situation, one should hold one's ground to make the disengagement.

An important variation that should be added to the tactical drill is for the phantom to alternate between placing the blade in line and attacking (by

*Continued on page 16*

straight thrust). It is necessary to be able to distinguish between those two actions instantly because the primary tactical response to each is different. An attack, by definition, begins with a blade in line; but a blade in line is not necessarily an attack. Only the attack requires a *defensive* response, which should be, primarily, a retreat followed or accompanied by a parry. A retreat may be either a defensive retreat simultaneously moves the target out of range or nearly out of range, draws out the attack, gains time for choosing and making the parry, and sets the distance for the parry-riposte combination. The retreat alone may be sufficient for defense. Placement of the blade in line without attack (i.e., with no attempt to reach the target) calls for a *preparatory* response, which should be primarily, an action in the blade or, as an alternative, a preparatory retreat.

As training partners become more skillful with the tactical drill, they will naturally want to add more tactical options, within the parameters that have been outlined. This article attempts only to present reliable *general* guidelines for tactics and tactical drill, and nothing more than that. There is no magic key to all possible phrases; and tactics, as I have stated, are only one dimension of the total activity in combat. Compared to the strategic dimension, in which preparation is predominant and the more discursive and creative interpersonal dialogue takes place, tactics are very limited. Indeed, to comprehend the limited character of the tactical situation helps to negotiate it more freely. By systematically developing tactical skill, the fencer can achieve greater spontaneity and effectiveness in those hot and fast phrases that give us some of the most exhilarating moments in the sport.

**MAKE BIG MONEY AND GET FAMOUS REAL QUICK  
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Caught your eye with that one didn't we? Well, you can forget about the money because there isn't any. But there is plenty of opportunity for you to become a contributing editor to *American Fencing*, the only magazine in the sport with a national audience.

If you would like to become a contributing editor to *American Fencing*, here's what we need:

- Reports on major fencing events — such as Circuits, U.S. Nationals, World Championships, etc. — by people who regularly attend, and who can write readable reports and get them in the mail soon after the event.
- Photos, photos, photos — with captions identifying the event and those pictured.
- Analyses of U.S. and other fencers and their performance in competition. It's okay to have an opinion, but we prefer that critiques be restricted to tactics, style and performance — not personality.

You don't have to be an Olympian to write for us, and you don't have to be a Hemingway, either. What we do want to find is a hard core of reliable, readable writers, who can get us news and art when it is still news, not history.

If interested, send us a brief fencing/writing resume of yourself, along with a list of fencing events you regularly attend.

## The Price of Pronation

by Rudy Volkmann

The orthopedic grip has become standard these days; but not everyone uses a pistol grip the same way. A lot of fencers simply “clutch” the grip, completely losing the ability to control the blade with the fingers in the process. It is my observation that the “clutchers” also tend to favor extreme pronation, with the thumb at the “high noon” position; they also seem to favor actual pronation for a number of their moves.

Now, I understand that a number of excellent fencers favor this style; and that it is absolutely not necessary to fence with French “finger-play” technique. But for those fencers who have not yet decided on a particular style or hand position, I offer some observations on what the trade-off is with respect to the hand position.

The supinated hand position was developed so that both horizontal and vertical blade motions can be made in the hand, controlled by the fingers. In supination, beats, disengages, and double's are all made by the hand, leaving the arm free to extend (or retract) independent of the motion of the blade. This allows us to make genuine “one-tempo” beat-attacks.

When we lose our control of this motion, and we start “cheating” by using the wrist too much, the coach starts yelling “Fingers! Fingers! Fingers!”

Now, no one fences in such supination that the thumb (right-handers) is at the 3:00 o'clock position; and even having the thumb at **nearly** the 12:00 position still seems to allow for adequate finger-control of the blade. But at some point, as the hand is rotated even further towards pronation, it becomes no longer possible to both beat and disengage without putting the motion primarily in the wrist, and totally out of the fingers.

Just like “finger-control” fencers who get sloppy and use the wrist when they lose control, “wrist control” fencers end up using the elbow when they get sloppy. Even if they don't actually bend at the elbow, they end up unnecessarily tightening the biceps during their blade actions. The end result is that the same muscles which have to be loose in order to extend are the same ones used to make or support the beat — and the fencer is then physiologically incapable of beating while extending. What remains is what amounts to a “two-tempo” beat-extend motion.

For those who wish to try, it is entirely possible to fence a modified French “finger-play” technique with a pistol-grip. But the fencer has to concentrate on making a hinge between the thumb and the forefinger; and, most importantly, to use the tips of the fingers on the handle instead of clutching it with the whole hand. It is equally important to try to find that point in the rotation of the hand where it is still possible to beat and disengage without using the wrist — and not to exceed that rotation when attempting to execute moves in the French style.



# Technical Talks — “How Does This Think Work?”

by Joe Byrnes

How often have you seen the people assigned to a strip at some competition — it can be anything from a very modest local one to well along into the day at the Nationals — all standing around and staring at the scoring machine, trying various things to get it going? And then after all, sometimes they don't actually get it going correctly?

Of course, if these people were being smart, they would call for help and have the particular configuration explained to them. I have observed that it is usually something of the sort that is creating the problem. Nobody is willing to admit that a mere machine could buffalo him or her, of course, but there they all are — staring at the thing.

Perhaps the good old FIE should try to exercise its authority and lay down the law: that every scoring machine **will** have an on/off switch, and this switch **must** be on the front at, say, the lower left, as viewed by the director; and every machine **will** have a reset button that **must** be in the middle of the top, etc.; then there might be some semblance of uniformity which would make these things easier to cope with. In other words, if these and other shared necessary controls were mandated to be more uniform, we might find less confusion. However, as it is, the FIE is content to let its regulations allow you do almost anything you want in designing a scoring machine, within a few (rather broad) specifications. As I have remarked elsewhere, they wouldn't care if you came up with a Rube Goldberg invention that was powered by squirrels running on treadmills in wire cages, so long as the test results obtained were successful.

Likewise, of course, the manufacturers would object violently, I do not doubt — all that carefully cultivated cachet, the panache of their own marque, the gracefulness of their house style, etc., would be lost. Besides, the FIE, although it does do dumb things regularly, nevertheless knows when to let people be excessively themselves, and thus feel free and unfettered, the better to be zapped by some other regulation.

Thus we have machines with on/off switches on the front: upper or lower, right or left side, as the case may be; you find them on the back, at one end or other other; there are on/off switches combined with function switches: foil/off/epee, for example (a good idea, when clearly marked); there have even been machines with no on/off at all: plug it in or connect the battery and it's ready — and you have to unplug or disconnect it to shut it down. All this is assuming that the apparatus is still in some semblance of its original state, and has not been modified or ad hoc repaired to within an inch of its life.

There there's the location and nature of the weapon-choice procedure: you rotate a dial knob; you push one of two or three buttons; you move a lever or knob right or left, up or down; you press one button only and all the options pass before you, indicated by little lights; you use one set of buttons on the front for foil or epee, and another on the back to activate a retrofitted sabre

capability. Every one of the methods I have mentioned so far can be found on recent or current machines regularly in service in this country. The fun comes when an official or scorekeeper, usually at a big event held far from home turf, encounters one of the other models, one not found often or at all back home. What does this whoozit do? What turns the whole thing on? Where's the re-set? How do I raise/lower/stop the damn buzzer? How can I be sure it's really in foil/epee/sabre?

Americans, being brought up in a world of gadgets and mechanized whatevers, are usually much less fazed by this sort of thing than people from some other parts of the world; still, a fencing scoring machine can catch even some pretty sophisticated types now and again.

Don't think I'm being fanciful: many years ago, in what now seems like the-once-upon-a-time days, there used to be a make of machine that had foil/epee switches that could be, and were supposed to be, individually pushed all the way down in foil or epee; in addition, so it happened, both could be pushed down at once; or both could be left “up,” i.e., both seemingly unengaged. The foil and epee alone worked as you would expect; the both-down configuration gave you nothing (thank goodness), but the both-up setting gave you a kind of foil event that could have been very appropriately described in those days as “no foul” — i.e., you got the valid lights but not the off-targets. Sometimes it took fencers (and officials!) a long time to discover that. It exercised my wicked techie sense of humor to no end, especially after they got themselves into it after having been warned.

Since it can be helpful to know just what a particular piece of equipment does, and in general how it does it — especially when there are slight differences from how other, often very similar-appearing devices accomplish the same functions — it is always a good move to ask the technicians on duty for a discreet demonstration of the features of any machine that you haven't encountered before.

All that may seem obvious, and I hope it is. There are some other things that directors, in particular, can see to when starting a pool on a strip that is new to them that day. The tendency is to assume that everything will be working over here just the way the stuff did back there on the strip you just came from. In general, there probably won't be any big differences. However, it isn't a bad idea to make a few small observations while the fencers are checking the grounding of their guards, etc. Usually, what they will do is check the valid touches, in addition to the condition of their ground, if they remember. Epee fencers will be sure to check the ground, and carefully, but foilists sometimes omit that little nicety. They should perform it, however; this is a test that all fencers should carry out themselves. Another little check that the director would be wise, I think, to have done by the first pair to show up on foil is a full sequence check of the foil touch possibilities: off-target

*Continued on page 18*

# Circuit Events: Good or Bad?

by William Reith

The North American Senior Circuits were well-founded many years ago, as a means of increasing the competitiveness of our top fencers and showcasing fencing to various regions of the U.S. to promote fencing. In the last two years, the number of NAC events has been reduced from four to three, because it has become too much of a burden to the fencers and organizers, and schedules to have so many in one year.

What I now perceive as the only success of the NAC is to allow a small number of fencers, particularly in foil and sabre, to maintain their position on U.S. teams without a large amount of regular training at the local level. There is a sharp demarcation at the top of the ladder between the strongest fencers and the rest of the field. They are able to maintain this position without being pushed to a new level of competitiveness, because there is in fact little pushing from below.

A look at the results of the NAC finals over the years clearly shows who stands out along with the Canadians, who consistently place their fencers in the finals and bring their new junior fencers to this level also. They do it with 10 percent of our fencing populace and do it consistently. We have provided the Canadians, and now the Mexicans, with a great circuit event for which they expect no outlay for the organization and expense of running large tournaments.

As the NAC events and national championships are the only means of obtaining points at the national level, we have succeeded in destroying the many strong regional competitions around the country. Only in the last couple of years have they started to make a comeback. I find that this is due to the desire of aspiring fencers to compete at a level commensurate with their abilities and finances. Heaven only knows the top U.S. fencers do not come to these events; some hardly come to their clubs to train on a regular basis. I know the epee fencers do because the nature of the weapon does not allow for the clear demarcation of top levels, and they must work hard to stay on top.

## Technical Talks *Continued from page 17*

followed by valid, not just valid alone, on both sides. Then valid followed immediately by an attempt at off-target: naturally no off-target should show; wouldn't it be helpful to know that the machine was at fault that way before you started the pool? Admittedly it's a pretty unlikely possibility, but that test need be done only once at the beginning of the pool, and should set minds at rest, and relieve you of possible silly complaints later. It's also worth remarking, that the machinery should get a closer inspection early in the day, when first being switched on, than later, after it has presumably been behaving for some time.

With these ideas in mind, I would propose to make all competitions in the U.S. point events, based on the quality and quantity of fencers participating in each event. A formula can be worked out to rate competitions and the USFA office would do the accounting to tabulate the results and publish them.

This scheme would generate an entirely new interest and participation in local and regional fencing. It would become increasingly easier to obtain local and national sponsorship for these competitions and for the fencers who participate in them.

An example:

In the chess community, each competition is rated by its prize fund — that's right, MONEY. The money given at each competition, i.e., the total dollar amount, determines the number of Grand Prix points awarded and distributed to the top players at the end of each year. These points are sponsored by Novag Industries, a chess computer company, which awards up to \$32,000 annually to the top 25 Grand Prix point holders. A monthly update of current standings is published in *Chess* magazine, and gives each member his personal rating; a numerical rating based on performance against other players and their rating difference. A distribution formula is used to compute the changes of player ratings due to wins and losses, even draws.

The point is, it would be simple to find a national sponsor if their name and product were being advertised each time Grand Prix points were mentioned or reported in the newspapers. The top-rated chess players are hopscotching all over the U.S. to garner points at quality chess tournaments every weekend, earning prize money and gaining Grand Prix points at the end of the year.

We have been reinventing the parry-riposte for so long now in this country it is no wonder that we have no prominence or international results. We have no program which is capable of working to develop the physical numbers of fencers, and the intensity of competitiveness to stand en garde with the Europeans and other fencing communities with significant programs such as Canada or Cuba.

Until such time as the USFA and/or other organizations see fit to address this problem with workable, long term programs, we will continue to find fencing in the United States quite simply, lacking.



While reading a recent issue of *American Fencing*, I chanced upon Mr. Selberg's article regarding the present state of American fencing. Mr. Selberg begins his article by addressing an interesting dilemma; the continuous ambiguity over what is the best method of training a fencer. This is an issue which I, as a competitive fencer, continue to struggle with. However, following that point, I began to find fault with Mr. Selberg's thesis. While I am sure Mr. Selberg is extremely knowledgeable about the sport, I question the points he brought up.

Competitive fencing, as I'm sure most people would agree, is not, as of yet, a popular American sport. Year after year, the international fencing scene is dominated by nations such as France, Germany, Italy, and the Eastern European countries. To many of the fencers from these countries, fencing is a profession, providing them with a job, a house, a car, and a substantial income. I have met numerous European fencers, and their approach to their fencing is as follows: the harder they work at it, the greater their rewards.

Unfortunately, this is not quite true in the United States, where fencing is truly an amateur sport. A competitive-level fencer is driven by nothing but his or her love for the sport and a desire to succeed. The competitive fencer must balance training with school or work, both of which are full time occupations. Fencing clubs are scarce and often overcrowded, while the distribution of our top fencers in certain weapons throughout the country makes high-level sparring extremely difficult. It is a basic point that a competitive fencer must practice with people *at least* at his or her own level (preferably higher) in order to significantly improve. A weaker opponent does not successfully challenge a better fencer's game, and thus does not force one to refine one's technique and strategy.

Yet despite even these immense obstacles, we continue to make improvements in American results. I flatly reject Mr. Selberg's assertion that, "We have seen virtually no competitive talent created in the last ten years, in spite of increased funding." Within the last three years, we have had two finalists at the World Championships, and our results at the past Junior World Championships (always a good indicator of our up and coming talent) showed convincingly that our junior fencers can compete at even the highest level.

As a frequent international competitor, I am convinced that one important step in improving our international results lies in greater exposure to international competition. Fencing is both a physical and a *mental* sport, and victory can only be achieved when one is clear-headed, relaxed, and has some understanding of the opponent he is facing. All this is impossible without experience. One of the primary reasons that the results of our junior fencers are

improving is because USFA funding has allowed us to participate in a larger number of international competitions. At these competitions one finds major differences from American fencing in terms of officiating, styles and techniques, level of aggressiveness, complexity of strategy, and numerous other factors. These differences, like any new experience, take some getting used to. And this can only be achieved through more experience. Reducing funding to our elite athletes would thus be a disastrous, perhaps fatal, step in the development of our competitive fencing.

Mr. Selberg's primary concern seems to be the development of a broader base of fencing in the United States, and this is undoubtedly an admirable goal. After all, with more new talent to choose from, the level of our fencing will definitely be greatly increased.

However, this does not mean that the USFA should abandon its elite athletes. On the contrary, the processes by which new talent is recruited, and higher-level fencers are able to gain experience and support must go hand in hand. I have no insight into what Mr. Selberg means when he states: "If we as fencers are actually interested in winning international events, then we must place our primary energy into support of the local or divisional levels of fencing. In other words, we must recognize the primary importance of fencing for fun and recreation."

While this may help to increase awareness and funding for fencing within the United States, it is not the recreational fencer that will win an Olympic medal.

Mr. Selberg seems to hold a disparaging view towards the U.S. Circuit events, because they "...have robbed the divisional levels of fencing of importance." However, what he does not realize is that aside from providing the elite American fencers with a chance to compete against one another, the Circuit events stand as a goal for the serious divisional fencer to strive for. With the distribution of the three Circuits throughout the country, nearly everyone has one somewhere within their general area. Furthermore, offering funding to the top finishers at these tournaments provides a major incentive for those serious competitive fencers to increase their training efforts, in an attempt to enter into the elite ranks.

We must recognize that fencing is first and foremost a competitive sport. While the growth and expansion of introductory-level fencing is important, the USFA must be primarily dedicated to the continuing achievement of its competitive athletes. Success in international competition is the name of the game, and the USFA and its members must work together in an effort to realize this goal.

# Fencing Bulletin Board

## Falcons Fencing Camp

Head men's and women's United State Air Force Academy varsity fencing coach Shawn Bertel and his varsity staff will instruct this camp. Bertel is a member of the NCAA Fencing Committee and is certified by the United States Fencing Coaches Association. The camp will include instruction in all weapons including women's epee. Individual and group instruction will be available in all weapons at all levels.

Each camper will receive at least one private lesson each day. NCAA and USFA rules, tactics and collegiate team fencing will be emphasized. Team matches will be fenced every day with electrical scoring equipment. Videotaping will be available with instructor's comments and analysis. Fencers are required to supply all personal fencing equipment to include mask, weapon, glove and fencing jacket.

**Dates:** 9-14 June, 1991.

**Total:** 40 (Coed)

**Age limits:** 12-17 years old

**Fees:** Boarders: \$277

For additional information, contact Capt. Shawn Bertel, head fencing coach, U.S. Air Force Academy, Colorado Springs, CO 80840; (800) 666-USAF or (719) 472-1895.

## CORRECTION

In the article on the First Semi-Annual Great Lakes Section Director's Seminar which appeared in our last issue, a line of text was inadvertently omitted. After the words "Fencing Actions" in the fourth line of the second paragraph, the words "fencing movements. The seminar lasted about eight hours and ended with" should be inserted.

Please make this correction to your copy. Thank you, and our apologies to Bruce Gillman and the participants who might have wondered why they should be neglected.

## Yes, But We're Still the Best Quarterly...

Fencers who get impatient waiting to read about their favorite sport should consider a subscription to *En Garde!*, a sprightly newsletter published by Dr. Aladar Kogler, U.S. Olympic team coach and U.S. national team psychologist.

Appearing 8 times annually, the publication is now in its fifth year. Subscriptions are \$24 annually. To subscribe or for additional information, contact: Dr. Aladar Kogler, Columbia University, Dodge Fitness Center, W. 116th St. at Broadway, New York, NY 10027.

*'...all they that shall take the sword  
shall perish with the sword.'*

*-- Matthew, XXVI, 52*

## UNO Fencing Club

A few months ago the UNO Fencing Club made an appeal for help in acquiring some equipment for a fencing club trying to get off the ground at the University of Nebraska in Omaha. Due to the response received, a functioning club of 25 members has found life.

Now the UNO Fencing Club would like to hear from fencing clubs on campuses around the country. Big or small, NCAA or not, USFA or not, East Coast, West Coast, north or south, it doesn't matter. If you are a member of a college-based fencing club please contact them. They would like to set up a competitive schedule with other college clubs for the 1991/1992 season starting next fall.

Call or write:

Lee Millward  
15018 Charles St., Omaha, NE 68154  
(402) 496-9746

## A Worthy Cause

Interested fencers can now help sponsor the future of American fencing through the Peter Westbrook Foundation.

The Peter Westbrook Foundation is a non-profit organization that uses the sport of fencing as a vehicle for working with children ages 7-15 from disadvantaged communities. The 10-week fencing program seeks to open up avenues for a higher level of personal development and give boys and girls an alternative to the traditional extracurricular experiences.

The program is coached by Peter Westbrook, 1984 Olympic Bronze Medalist and 12-time National Sabre Champion; and Michael Lofton, 4-time NCAA Sabre Champion, 1984 and 1988 Olympic team member; and Donald Anthony, 1989 World Championship team member.

Currently, the foundation is seeking sponsors to meet the growing needs of its operating budget.

On February 23, 1991 the Peter Westbrook Foundation officially started its fencing program with 6 children. By March 16 the enrollment had increased to 43 participants and enrollment for next year's program is expected to reach 100.

A contribution of \$25, \$50 or \$100 dollars or whatever you can afford will help finance the costs of America's future champions.



Please send your tax-deductible contributions to the Peter Westbrook Foundation, c/o USFA, 1750 East Boulder Street, Colorado Springs, CO 80909.

For more information about the program call (212) 459-4538.

# Fencing Bulletin Board

## Around the Divisions

Since the appearance of our appeal that we be put on the mailing lists of division newsletters around the country, the response has been, uh — well, anyway, I just wanted to say that of the half-dozen or so divisions which heeded our plea, the Hawaii Division offers one of the classiest, best-looking newsletters I have ever seen. Interesting and well-written articles and letters and a very professional appearance highlight this publication.

If your division would like to receive (trumpet fanfare, please) national recognition, or at least get some publicity in advance or after the fact for its most important events, please follow the progressive path of the Hawaii Division and others and add us to your mailing list — you're on ours already.

## More Proof that Fencing Makes You Famous:

*"I did my first professional acting after college, in the play "Born Yesterday," and there's no question that my fencing training helped get me the job and to move onstage with confidence. The training has helped me through all the years, and I'm glad I had it."*

—Loni Anderson, Famous Actress,  
writing for *Inside Sports*, Feb. 1991

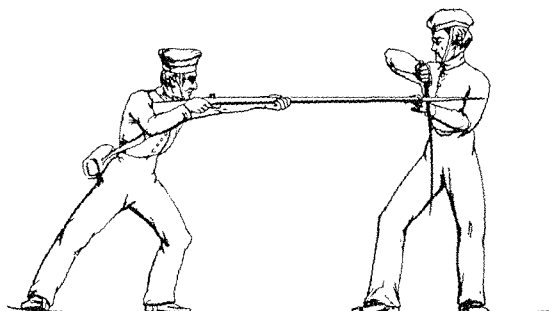
## Dr. Bela Rerrich, Swedish National Coach:

*"One should rejoice in his victories and mourn his defeats with as much physical/emotional output that it makes to blink an eye. The only important thing is winning the next bout."*

*"One is old enough to begin fencing with electric weapons when he has obtained enough skill to make them."*

*"Set two alarm clocks the night before a competition. If one fails the other will wake you up."*

L. Cotton  
Jerusalem, Israel



*The importance of distance. The man on the left has a rifle that is effective at 700 yards — what would his coach think if he could see the guy now?*

**Get a Grip on Slick Strips with the Blade Challenger**

If your shoes aren't giving you good traction when you fence, you're not fencing your best, and that could be costing you touches. Don't let your shoes be the reason. The **Challenger** fencing shoe from **Blade** was designed for use on wooden gym floors. A sole created especially for fencing combines an extra-deep "suction cup" pattern with high-friction rubber to give maximum traction on wooden surfaces. Other high-performance features include a built-in plastic heel cup and a lateral stabilizer for more support in the lunge and fleche. At **\$59**, the **Challenger** is the best fencing value around. **Order your pair today**

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# In Mastering Fencing

by Nick Jamilla

A fencing instructor once said to me: "You know, son. There are two ways of learning how to fence. The first is through the rough and tough tumble of a real swordfight. And the other is by learning from someone who already knows how to fence. Since no one fights with swords these days, I guess you're gonna have to put up with me." You cannot argue with logic like that, but his quip underscores the unique master-student relationship that dominates fencing instruction all over the world.

Most of us look at fencing as an economic transaction in which a service is rendered in exchange for monetary compensation. But unlike a physical transaction, the education of the fencer involves more than a simple barter, it involves the transformation of the student under the guidance of an experienced master. This master-student relationship is a spiritual one based on trust, but its effectiveness stems not out of democratic ideas, but out of a paternal or maternal hierarchy which makes particular demands on both the student and his or her teacher.

The fencing instructor must, of course, have a competent knowledge of the art; he must know terminology and history of fencing, and have some actual experience of it whether in competition, through a formal apprenticeship, or in diligent bouting. The fencing master must also have the dedication to transmit that knowledge in a sincere and trusting manner. He has a duty to teach his students how to think, to act, and to make decisions. And similarly, he has a duty to judge his students "not merely against each other, but [also] against the stand of the discipline, against the performance of the best." It is an awesome responsibility — one so undervalued in today's society — but, by the same token, the student is equally obligated, if not more, to take his teacher's instruction and internalize it in the whole of his mind, spirit, and body.

A former professor, Fr. James Schall, once offered, in an excellent essay, four "things" a student owes his teacher — things equally applicable to the fencer towards his instructor. The first was trust; trust not only by demonstrating goodwill towards what the instructor had to teach, but even more important, a trust in one's self. Secondly, the student owes his docility — "his capacity of being taught." Thirdly, the effort to study the subject. And lastly, and most importantly, the effort to think about the subject, around it, and throughout it.

Fr. Schall's words of wisdom are, in most respects, an implicit part of the educational process, but it is not uncommon to find that few people have ever been formally taught exactly how it is that one is supposed to learn. Upon reflection about what it means to be educated, to be an educator or the "educatee," it is not difficult to fall back to the classical writings of Plato about his own master, Socrates.

Socrates, himself, never wrote any books, but his

legacy has been one that has been handed down over two millennia, and it still remains, by many standards of education, the only true method of learning. I am, of course, talking about the Socratic method whereby the teacher educates by questioning the student to discover knowledge for him or herself. Fencing, too, is such a dialectic. The fencing master prompts the student to repeat certain actions, but he also prompts the student to discover the most proper and appropriate response to the teacher's probes.

Often students concentrate on the technical aspects; the beat attack, one-two, *prise de fer*, or the *derobement*, instead of looking at larger principles of movement that are basic to all styles of fencing. The fencing match, first of all, is a meeting between two individuals, the swords being superfluous except as a medium through which the two individuals will confront each other. To the inexperienced fencer, the bout is merely the stringing of one technique after another, but to the seasoned veteran, it is as much a contest of wills as it is a physical combat.

How often have you seen novice fencers concentrating on the intricacies of technical movements? "Can you show me this move or that attack?" "Are my feet in the correct position?" or "What is the correct interpretation of the rules?" The experienced instructor sighs at their simplicity and unassumingly answers: "It depends." "It depends on what?" the student retorts. "That's what you're supposed to figure out. Now, shut up!" And the lesson continues, admittedly, a little strained.

It is curious that so many people can get hung up on trivialities. That is not to say that their questions are not unimportant, but the novice fencer's sole focus ought not be intent on the minutiae of large techniques that will eventually evolve later in their development. Rather, they ought to concentrate on the fundamental principles of the fencing art which serves as a basis of more complicated techniques and tactics.

Much of fencing is refinement, a subtle tinkering, but if the important foundation of an elementary base of fencing skills is not developed early, then the student will undoubtedly face more difficult challenges later when he or she begins to fence better and more experienced fencers around the country and the world.

One of the cardinal concepts of fencing so seldom emphasized in fencing instruction is that of the *sentiment de fer*. The word "*sentiment*" is derived from the Latin word "to feel." And in English, "*sentiment*" is an archaic term used during the Enlightenment in reference to that which dealt with a person's emotions. Its usage still occurs today in the modern prose of contemporary philosophical texts.

"*Fer*" is the French word for steel, (Lat. *ferrum*) or more specifically, the "steel" of the sword's blade. Brought together *sentiment de fer* refers to the

*Continued on page 23*

arms, and his entire body, the movements of his sword and how it is affected by the opponent's weapon. It means a fencer, to put it in more popular terms, must "be one with his sword."

It may sound like a trite California cliché, but so many beginning students fail to ever discover the dynamic between a fencer and his weapon. The fencer never has the luxury of asking his opponent what attack he or she will make, and yet, during the deliberate and measured practice sessions with an instructor, so many students fail to discern the intentions of their teacher.

The teaching of fencing, then, is a speechless questions and answer session in which the instructor creates a situation and presents it to his student to solve. But when students of fencing fail to solve these tests, they often come away from a lesson confused or let down. Their instructor seemed disingenuous and the student questions the utility of an instructor's teaching. A large dose of skepticism follows and the student's efforts seem wasted.

Descartes, who felt visual observation of the world was often misleading, thought skepticism the key to examining the universe. But more often than not, skepticism has the harmful effect of undermining the level of trust a student and master must have for each other. That is not to say that the student ought blindly follow a teacher's instruction, but the eager student must recognize his place in comparison to the intentions and experience of his teacher.

The renowned Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes aptly warned that "When the ignorant are taught to doubt they do not know what they safely may believe." It goes back to the first tenet of Fr. Schall's "golden rules" — have faith in one's teacher and one's self.

Beginning fencers are often frustrated by how little progress they make when they start, but unlike like most sports with which Americans are familiar, fencing is an entirely different way of moving and coordinating one's mind and body. Its difficulty is, in many ways, a measure of the utility swordsmanship has in a contemporary society.

Swordsmanship, or modern fencing, is often likened to the mastery of a language. How many people can comfortably say that they have mastered a foreign language? How many can say that they could give a grammatically correct lecture in that language? How many can even say they have mastered the English language? If you have, then you can appreciate the difficulty of learning to move your body in unaccustomed ways. And if you have not, how is it that you can project the same expectations on fencing? Both fencing and language take years of practice to achieve even minor fluency, and mastery of each is never a guaranteed thing.

"Mastering a language and mastering fencing are quite different things," some might say, but there is much to be said of the comparison. Fencing, in its

own way, is, in fact, a silent language in which the already discussed *sentiment de fer* must be learned by the mind and body just as the word, sentence, and paragraph in a foreign language must be learned. And like a language, there is an intuitive component to fencing, something expected or predictable.

Many people like to think of fencing as a purely intellectual endeavor built upon a physiological network of brain activity and muscular coordination. And there is an element of this present, but more often than not, the brain, during a bout, acts upon a penury of information. That is, the brain must make an instinctive response to perceived threats from an opponent, seeing through mere feints or artifice while concentrating on analyzing immediate tactical threats and examining his opponents overall strategy in the match. It smacks of the miraculous, but the same occurs in language where a person forms sentences unconsciously and speaks them simply, with an idea or thought to guide them.

There is much the student of fencing must learn, but in view of what has already been said, it is hard not to come to the conclusion that we are all students of a sort no matter what level of skill we possess. A teacher, as Mortimer Adler expresses it, is but a student with a longer history of learning. Our teachers present the right questions in order to draw out of us that which, in some fashion, we already know, and on the other side of the coin, we, as students, must learn to embrace our mentor's questions not with even a small degree of suspicion, but with an eye towards embracing it and discovering a resolution.

The master-student system is an ethical one based on so much on contracts or conventions, but on a sincere attempt to educate or be educated through the offering up of one's own intellect and heart to the other. Fencing is not simply a graduation of technical perfections limited to the years of competitive fencing, but rather, it is a lifelong process whose relevance is as easily applicable to everything else a fencer tries to achieve in life.

John Dewey, the eminent philosopher, once cautioned us that "All ends and values that are cut off from the ongoing process become arrests, fixations. They strive to fixate what has been gained instead of using it to open the road and point the way to new and better experiences." Similarly, fencers must look at their own progress not so much as the achievement of an end, but as a prelude to something much grander. If at least this much can be achieved, then I can guarantee that you are already on the road towards mastery of the art of fencing. Fencing is always in great need of great teachers, but it is in even greater need of great learners.

# A Proposal for Fencing Team Leagues

by John M. Dillard

Some very good things are being done by the United States Fencing Association that should have positive results in the development of fencing in the United States. Examples include the National Coaches College and the on-site workshops to teach fencing instructors both sound fencing technique and instructing methodology. These efforts upgrade the quality of fencing instruction in the country and, through the instructors, the quality of fencing itself.

Two areas that should receive additional attention are, how to attract more people into the sport, and how to retain them as fencers once they are involved.

In looking at these areas from a marketing perspective, certain basic ideas need to be considered to see if we can improve the marketing of our sport in some way. These are:

1. The market for our sport is actually composed of many segments rather than a single monolithic market (population).
  2. What we should market are fencing programs designed for each market or interest group.
  3. Analysis of the essential nature of our national program can help identify market segments for which our current fencing program has insufficient appeal.
  4. Upon identification of a potential market segment, it should be possible to design a program that will appeal to that segment.
  5. Programs specifically designed to appeal to an identified market segment have a greater chance of attracting people into the sport and retaining them.
  6. Implementation will have to be done by fencers who are really interested in making the new program a success and who give it high priority.
- Now let's put this particular approach to work.

## The Essential Nature of our National Program

The essential nature of our national program is that it is heavily skewed toward the provision of tournaments for individual fencers at the divisional, sectional, and national levels. Inherent to the program at all levels is a system of ranking of individual fencers based on their performance in the individual events and culminating in the qualification and selection of fencers to represent the United States based on their achievement in the individual events.

The program has a strong psychological appeal for those who intend or dream of representing the United States in international competition, those who desire to try to be a divisional, sectional, or national champion and those who simply want to rank in each event as high as possible. This program has a market and currently is the only show in town.

## Identification of a Potential Market Segment

It also seems logical that there is another potential market out there: i.e., people who like or derive

personal satisfaction from team competition but not from the individual events. For these individuals, personal achievement (in the sense of competitive ranking against other individuals) is less important as a basis for deriving personal satisfaction in the sport than belonging to a group (team), participating in and contributing to the fortunes of the team, and the enjoyment of the interaction among team members.

Every year many collegiate fencers leave school after fencing in college and become either immediate or eventual dropouts from fencing. A different, additional program might well attract and retain many of them. Other groups within the population that might be attracted to a new program include many fencers (of all ages) outside the collegiate programs who do not find the personal satisfaction they desired in the individual competitions.

## Design of a Program

Some program of team match competitions that would be in addition to the current national program is needed.

The new program could consist of creating local leagues for team match fencing. Organizational guidelines could be as follows:

1. Teams should consist of three fencers plus two alternates if available. All team members must be current members of the USFA. One member of the team should be the team captain and be responsible for scheduling.
2. Leagues may be set up for any combination of weapons and fencers at local option. For example one locality might set up a league for women's epee and a league for men's foil. A different locality might set up a league for mixed foil (men and women on the same team).
3. There should be a minimum of four teams signed up for a league. The maximum number of teams in a league would be determined locally.
4. One or more league seasons, each of which has a starting and ending date could be established locally each year. Depending on the size of the league each could be from several weeks to several months long.
5. Each team in the league should fence every other team in the same league twice within the designated league season.
6. Scheduling of the team matches could be left up to every team in order to provide maximum flexibility. If this proves unsatisfactory, a calendar could be set up by a control committee. (Initial experience actually running leagues indicate a central calendar set up by a league coordinator is a virtual prerequisite for people to commit to participation in a league).
7. Team matches should be set up so that the total time of the event will be relatively short. It takes one hour to run a team match of three against

*Continued on page 25*



- three for a total of nine bouts.
8. Have no awards for specific team matches. Finish the league season, base the awards on the cumulative results for the season, and present them at a social occasion such as dinner. Give no awards for individual achievement, only for a team's achievement.
  9. Entry fees will be needed since there are going to be awards and other expenses.
  10. Each league should have a designated coordinator who is authorized by the local division to organize the league's schedule, receive the fees, purchase awards, receive and record results, obtain officials, etc. The coordinator should serve as chairperson of a league committee to coordinate the operation of the league and should appoint two fencers to serve on the committee. None of the three should be from the same team. The league committee should make all decisions regarding the operation of the league including settling any disputes or appeal of a decision by a bout committee.
  11. No composite teams are allowed. Each team member must be a member of the club which the team represents and may not switch teams during a league's designated season.
  12. A club may field as many teams in a league as it wants unless there is a locally determined maximum.
  13. Anyone who can get four or more teams to sign up for a league could petition the divisional executive committee to be designated as the league coordinator and should be so designated. The petition should state the starting and ending date of the league's season, the type of teams that will compete in the league, and any limitations such as age or maximum number of teams from a club.
  14. Other than authorizing each league the local division would have no responsibility for the operation of the leagues. In authorizing a league the division delegates the operational responsibility to the League Coordinator who must organize the events, secure officials, announce the schedule, register the teams, collect entry fees, purchase awards, etc.
  15. At the time the league is authorized, the local division should specify what will be done with the league revenues that are in excess of expenses. At local option these could be turned into the local division treasurer by the League Coordinator at the end of the league season along with a report detailing revenues, expenses, and results of the league. Alternately, the division could authorize a club to retain the excess revenue as a reward for hosting a league.
  16. Current USFA rules of fencing, safety, and equipment should be followed in the leagues.

The League Coordinator should appoint a Bout Committee for each league event.

From the guidelines above it should be apparent that this could be a national program substantially different from, but supplementing our current national program. This program would need the official backing and sanction of the USFA but would be implemented only as a program of local leagues. There would not be divisional, sectional or national league championships.

### Implementation of the New Program

Individuals who are the current tournament winners and current divisional leaders may very well have the current program as their number one priority and so leadership and participation in a new program may have to come from other fencers. Encourage those who are interested to plan and implement the program.

The program should supplement and complement the current program rather than attempt in any way to replace it. Team match events should be scheduled so that they do not conflict with the usual divisional schedule of events.

Getting a new program started is not always easy. You may need to promote the basic concept in your area before there will be enough interested people to sign up teams and form a league. One of the best ways to promote the concept is simply to get two other clubmates to join you as a temporary team and invite three others to do the same.

Have a number of team matches over a period of time within your own club. Invite some other club to field a team or two and come over for a match. Do this with no entry fee and no awards. Just fence.

These informal club matches can lay the groundwork for the desire to get more organized, actually form a league and petition the division to authorize it. Authorization of a league with its designated season, schedule, weapon, entry fees, eligibility (age, skill, etc.), league committee, and awards will clearly distinguish it from casual club tournaments.

Interest, support and direction in the development of such a program by our national Board of Directors and the Officers would have considerable effect in bringing the concept forward and promoting it. Readers are encouraged to respond to this proposal. You may send your responses to: John M. Dillard, 1014 W. 70th Terrace, Kansas City, MO 64113.



# "My Coach Said"

## Mike Czarnik, Discovery Center Club

When I first started fencing I was only taught by my first instructor the parries 4, 6, 7 and 8. I was disappointed and I asked why he didn't work with me on parries 1, 2, 3 and 5. He said, "You don't need them; you need proper distance, small movements and a lot of fencing."

Now, after three years fencing and knowing all the parries, I realized it's how well a person fences with what he knows which wins tournaments, not how much he knows.

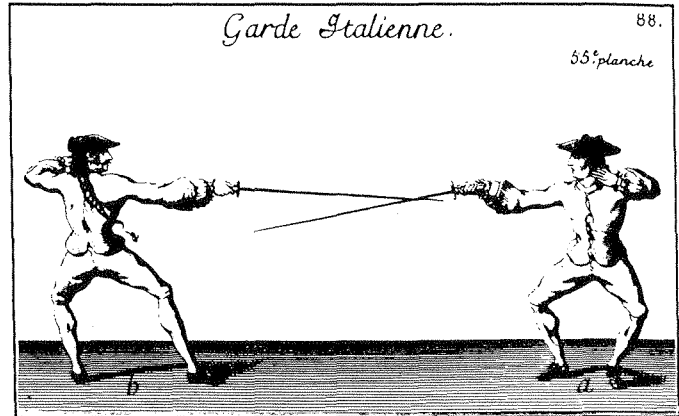
Bill Wrabel  
Chicago, Ill.

## Geza Martiny, Georgia College Fencing Club

Geza Martiny gave me two pieces of sound advice: He said to me "Frank," with his heavy Hungarian accent, "treat each point as if the score were zero to zero. The worst thing a fencer can do is get overconfident if he is winning by three or four touches, or get despondent if he is losing by that many."

He also told me that, "A tense sword arm is a slow sword arm, so relax, and loosen that grip so that your knuckles aren't turning white."

Frank Casey  
USAF  
Warner Robins, GA



## L'ATRE DI SCHERMA (The Art of Fencing)

Silent,  
Thinking,  
lightning speed.  
Peripheral awareness in one glance.  
There are many  
idiosyncrasies  
involved  
in the Fencer's stance.

In touch  
with all around you  
and everything inside,  
moving with as little body movement;  
as heartbeat rises  
and subsides.

Simulated,  
Mortal combat  
(to some each touch means death)  
using legs, arms,  
brain and senses  
(blood flows with every breath).

Sweat pours forth  
(others glow) cleansing the body through;  
Making it ready for the next day's dawn  
and anything you need  
to do.

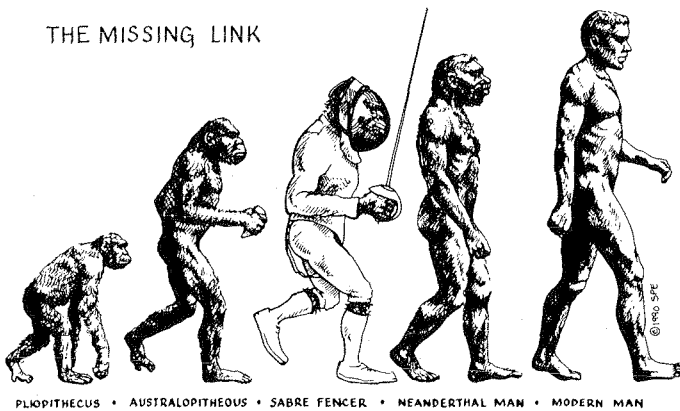
Total control of your faculties,  
relaxation,  
and peace of mind.  
A game of chess  
(manifesting mind and body)  
that helps the soul unwind.

Now,  
place yourself beneath the mask;  
transcend to another place.  
As you switch to  
Automatic pilot;  
your sword moves  
at inhuman pace.

O' noble Battles of the Spirit  
(dressed in fencer's whites),  
With  
Sword and mask  
you salute your opponent;  
Prior to and after  
Every  
Fight...

--Stuart P. Kaufman

## THE MISSING LINK



Sword Play Enterprises, an Oakland, California, fencing school and club, also sells T-shirts, sweats, and other designer fencing duds for the fashion-conscious, under the imprimatur of SPEDesigns. A full range of accessories (including the T-shirt carrying the above logo) is available, including jewelry, water bottles, towels, posters, stationary and postcards; all with a fencing motif.

The company says it is always looking for new ideas and suggestions, and offers contributors a free copy of the item they suggest. A portion of all profits goes to support junior and youth fencing programs. For additional information, contact Sword Play Enterprises, 835 Arnold Drive, #2, Martinez, CA 94533; (415) 229-1663.

# Some Observations On The Rear Arm

by Charles Simonian

Having read a great many fencing books and watched countless competitions, I cannot help but note that there is a gap between theory and practice. Even my beginning fencing class students who have seen experienced fencers in bouts often raise the question as to why those fencers do not stand, move, or lunge the way that I teach those skills in class. My response usually tries to point out that individual styles vary widely in most sports and that fencing is no exception. But I must admit that my answers really do not satisfy me because I would like to teach positions and movements which are functional and effective, rather than just traditional and aesthetic.

When was the last time that you saw a competitive fencer holding his or her rear arm in what I'll call the classic position? The classic position of the rear arm is the one you see depicted in the fencing books dating from over a hundred years ago, that is, the elbow and wrist are flexed, the elbow is at shoulder height and held well back, and the forearm is vertical.

Do individual fencers depart from the positions which they learned as beginners because they have discovered more effective and comfortable positions? It would be difficult to speculate as to the many possible reasons. I would like to limit my comments in this article to the proper positions and use of the rear arm. If the competitors are correct that the rear arm should be held anywhere and everywhere except in the classic position, then why should teachers of beginners insist on the placement of the arm? If it is not to be placed there, then where should it be placed and why? Or is the decision to be left to each student?

Most students in physical education fencing classes will never compete and the class will be their first and last experience with the sport. I believe that students need and want a role model to imitate, and, with twenty to thirty students in a class, the teacher can work most efficiently in a climate of moderate conformity to some standard. Grading would be difficult if students were allowed to adopt any position they found to be comfortable and effective. With more advance students such variations will come about naturally but within some limits.

There is no hard data that maintaining the classic position of the rear arm will help to win a bout. I suppose one could even offer as proof that the classic position is useless by noting that not one champion in any number of years has ever held his or her rear arm in that position. But nowhere have I read a suggested alternative position.

Let's analyze some possible benefits of the classic position. For one thing, it does keep the arm out of the way where the fencer won't use it to cover target, parry an attack, or handle the reel cord. With the arm in the classic position, the body is effaced and the sword arm is brought directly in front of the target where it might obstruct an attack. With the rear arm

properly held, the shoulders tend to be level which should enhance both balance and mobility. There is reason to believe that correct use of the rear arm is an aid in the lunge and in recovery.

I suspect but cannot prove that many of the positions and movements of competitive fencers have come about through bad habits and laziness. It is, after all, more comfortable to let the rear arm dangle than to hold it at shoulder height. But, unless someone can point out to me any disadvantages to holding the rear arm in the classic position, I will continue to teach it to my beginners even if I cannot prove its benefits.

*"In case the challenged be disarmed and refuses to ask pardon or atone, he must not be killed as formerly; but the challenger may lay his sword on the aggressor's shoulder, then break the aggressor's sword, and say, 'I spare your life!' The challenged can never revive the quarrel, the challenger may."*

*--John Lyde Wilson*

*Rule for the Government of Principals and Seconds in Duelling (1858)*

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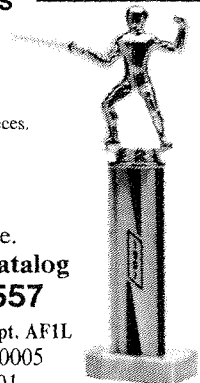
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# Results

## 1991 USFA WORLD CUP SABRE TOURNAMENT

Worldgate Athletic Center,  
Herndon, Va.

March 16-17, 1991

1. Felix Becker - Germany
2. Jorg Kempenich - Germany
3. Giovanni Scalzo - Italy
4. Jacek Huchwajda - Germany
5. Samir Ibraguimov - Soviet Union
6. Imre Bujdosó - Hungary
7. Bence Szabo - Hungary
8. Franck Ducheix - France

## TOP U.S. FINISHERS

12. Michael Lofton - Brooklyn, NY
34. Herby Raynaud - Rosedale, NY
37. Steve Mormando - Jersey City, NJ
47. Peter Westbrook - New York, NY
48. Robert Cottingham - East Orange, NJ
53. Paul Friedberg, New York, NY
55. David Mandell - New York, NY
64. Bruce Capin - Elkins Park, PA
67. John Friedberg - New York, NY
69. George Gonzales-Rivas - Old Greenwich, CT

## SALLE ARAMIS/COLUMBUS OPEN

Westgate Recreation Center  
Columbus, Ohio

Jan. 15, 1991

### Mixed Foil - 36 Entries

1. Adam Zyzekowski - Unatt./SW Ohio
2. Michael Shearer - Salle Aramis/Columbus
3. Erick Mueller - Salle Simonian/Columbus
4. Jim Wolan - Ohio State/Columbus
5. Steve Young - Indianapolis FC/S.Indiana
6. Lloyd Howell - Cincinnati FC/SW Ohio
7. Jerry Adkins - Indianapolis FC/S.Indiana
8. Tim Vogel - Xavier/SW Ohio

## 1991 JUNIOR OLYMPIC CHAMPIONSHIPS

Little Rock, Ark.

Feb. 15-18, 1991

### Under-20 Women's Foil - 90 Entries

1. Felicia Zimmermann - Rush, NY
2. Olga Chernyak - San Francisco, CA
3. Lana Kang - Little Falls, NJ
4. Tara Singer - Tucson, AZ
5. Claudette DeBruin - Portland, OR
6. Jennifer Posthumus - San Jose, CA
7. Julianna Sikes - Dixon, CA
8. Regina Moroney - Oakland, NJ

### Under-20 Men's Foil - 149 Entries

1. James Borin - Morristown - NJ
2. Andy Gearhart - Brockport, NY
3. Ben Atkins - New York, NY
4. Sean McClain - Round Rock, TX
5. Leroy Thompson - Orange, NJ
6. Frank Carlson - Natick, MA
7. Nathan Ritter - Detroit, MI
8. Geoff Donaker - Berkeley, CA



Action at the Junior Olympic Championships in Hagerstown, Md. Photo by Michael George Dupslaff.

## MACFA CHAMPIONSHIP TOURNAMENT 1991

Johns Hopkins University  
Baltimore, MD

### TEAM CHAMPIONSHIPS

1. John Hopkins
2. William & Mary
3. Haverford
4. NYS - Purchase
5. Army (USMA)
6. Baruch
7. Lafayette
8. Virginia Tech
9. Vassar
10. Rutgers (Newark)
11. NJ Tech
12. Drew

### INDIVIDUAL FINALS FOIL

1. Hayashi, VC
2. Millhiser, JHU
3. Boggs, VPI
4. Train, JHU
5. Jeffries, RNU
6. Rosin, JHU

### EPEE

1. Coleman, JHU
2. Albury, SIT
3. Bergstrom, SIT
4. Durand
5. Brown, WM
6. Weiss, WM

### SABRE

1. Persell, HC
2. Caraballo, BC
3. McLay, JHU
4. Hau, BC
5. Langer, HC
6. Ong, JHU

## Lofton Shines at World Cup Sabre

We are happy to report the 12th-place finish of sabreur Michael Lofton at the World Cup Saber event held in Herndon, Va., March 16-17, 1991. Other American entrants among the top 50 fencers included Herby Raynaud (34th), Steve Mormando (37th), Peter Westbrook (47th) and Robert Cottingham (48th).

The tournament was won by Felix Becker of Germany, who defeated teammate Jorg Kempenich 6-4, 5-6, 6-3. Kempenich had also taken the silver medal last year, when Becker finished in third place.

A total of 104 entrants from among the world's best men's sabre fencers competed in the event, which is the only world-class fencing tournament held in the U.S. annually.

## An Apology (of Sorts)

If you're wondering what happened to the results from North American Circuit #2, so are we. To date they have not been received by the editor.

# Results

## Under-20 Women's Epee - 50 Entries

1. Lisa Picken - Bentonville, AK
2. Jennifer Prifrel - St. Paul, MN
3. Bettina Burleigh - Rochester, NY
4. Shannon Forster - Kalamazoo, MI
5. Katie Smith - Boulder, CO
6. Stephanie Wien - Pittsford, NY
7. Morgan Hoch - Northbrook, IL
8. Mayling Birney - Short Hills, NJ

## Under-20 Men's Epee - 107 Entries

1. Chris Swope - Minneapolis, MN
2. Jubba Beshin - Newark, NJ
3. Ben Atkins - New York, NY
4. Garret Povar - St. Paul, MN
5. David Goodnuff - St. Paul, MN
6. Michael Lindsey - Fairbanks, AK
7. Erik Gaston - Wyckoff, NJ
8. James Biribauer - Hampton, NJ

## Under-20 Men's Sabre - 69 Entries

1. Stephen Kovacs - Hampton, NJ
2. Tomasz Strzalkowski - Richmond, VA
3. Dominik Kulakowski - State College, PA
4. Anthony Crupi - Wyckoff, NJ
5. Robert Wroth - Tewksbury Township, NJ
6. Gregory Rupp - Hunterdon County, NJ
7. George Kalmar - New Orleans, LA
8. Ian Keller - Franklin Lakes, NY

## Under-17 Women's Foil - 64 entries

1. Felicia Zimmermann - Rush, NY
2. Kristen Grisham - Boulder, CO
3. Carin Wolf - Buffalo Grove, IL

## Under-17 Men's Foil - 125 Entries

1. Justo Rosario - Newark, NJ
2. Brian Moroney - Oakland, NJ
3. Sean McClain - Round Rock, TX

## Under-17 Women's Epee - 43 Entries

1. Felicia Zimmermann - Rush, NY
2. Monique DeBruin - Portland, OR
3. Bettina Burleigh - Rochester, NY

## Under-17 Men's Epee - 86 Entries

1. Jawdat Bitar - West Milford, NJ
2. Ian Wyglendowski - Lebanon Township, NJ
3. Clayton Walton - South Orange, NJ

## Under-17 Men's Sabre - 48 Entries

1. Matthew Walsh - Brooklyn, NY
2. George Kalmar - New Orleans, LA
3. Ian Keller - Franklin Lakes, NY

## Under-15 Women's Foil - 37 Entries

1. Monique DeBruin - Portland, OR
2. Jennifer Dyer - Aurora, CO
3. Sara Walsh - South Bend, IN

## Under-15 Men's Foil - 93 Entries

1. Graham Kelley, New Orleans, LA
2. Seth Talbott - Bellvue, WA
3. Colin Clinton - Rochester, NY

## Under-15 Women's Epee - 22 Entries

1. Monique DeBruin - Portland, OR
2. Merideth Rising - Denver, CO
3. Clare Dygert - East Rochester, NY

## Under-15 Men's Epee - 36 Entries

1. David Madero - El Paso, TX
2. Andrew Cherry, Vancouver, WA
3. Frederick French - Roswell, NM

## Under-13 Women's Foil - 22 Entries

1. Araceli Haldeman - San Antonio, TX
2. Susan Jennings - Rochester, NY
3. Abby Sims - Houston, TX

## Under-13 Men's Foil - 68 Entries

1. Alexander Wood - Rochester, NY
2. Timothy Chang - Lexington, MA
3. Eric Tribbett - Denver, CO

## Under-11 Women's Foil - 12 Entries

1. Iris Zimmermann - Rush, NY
2. Melinda Rostal - Maplewood, MN
3. Kristen Dorf - St. Paul, MN

## Under-11 Men's Foil - 27 Entries

1. Kriag Peterson - Rochester, NY
2. Greer Rabiaga - Portland, OR
3. Guy Walker - Detroit, MI

## DONALD APPLING FOIL OPEN Honolulu, Hawaii February 10, 1991

1. Colin Chock - Salle Auriol
2. Robert Rushforth - Unattached
3. Janice Kato - Unattached

## GASPARILLA OPEN Tampa, Florida February 2-3, 1991

### Men's Foil

1. Todd Merrill
2. John Pizzuto
3. Steve Leung

### Women's Foil

1. Terry Abrahams
2. Marion Deeny
3. Anita Howson

### Saber (Mixed)

1. Nestor Grajales
2. Kirk Rowley
3. Bill Becker

### Epee (Mixed)

1. Greg Von Seggern
2. Mark Kelly
3. Mark Forrest
9. Irene Urban

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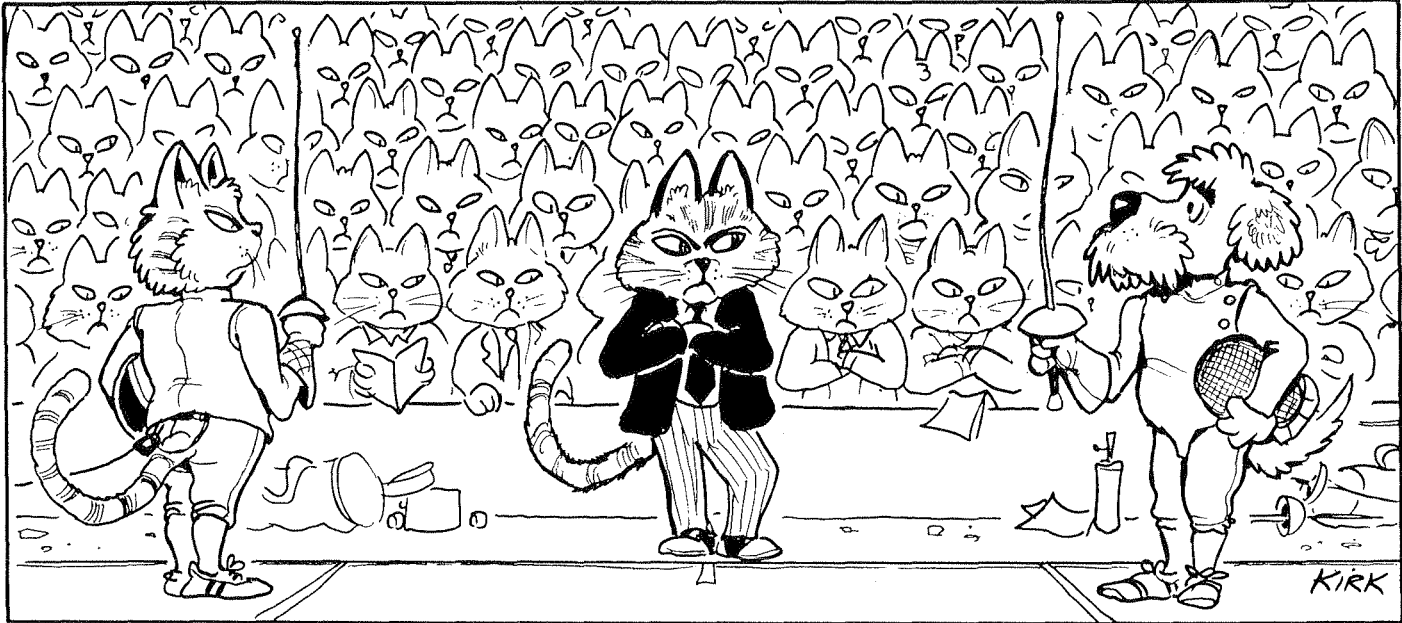
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Somehow, without knowing why, Rover sensed that this director would be biased...

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\*EXPLAIN STATUS ON SEPARATE LETTER WITH APPLICATION

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Sponsor  \$500.00  \$1250.00  
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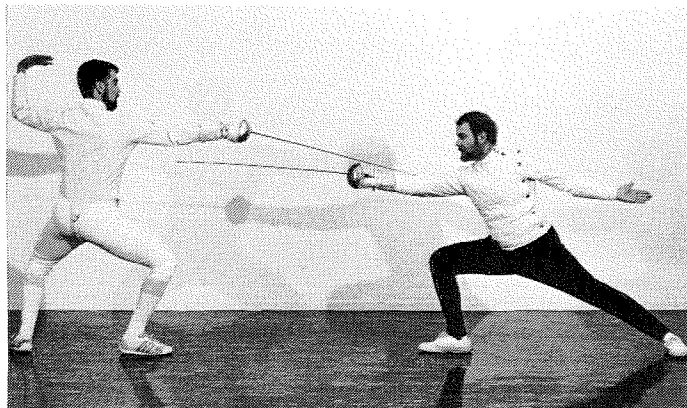
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