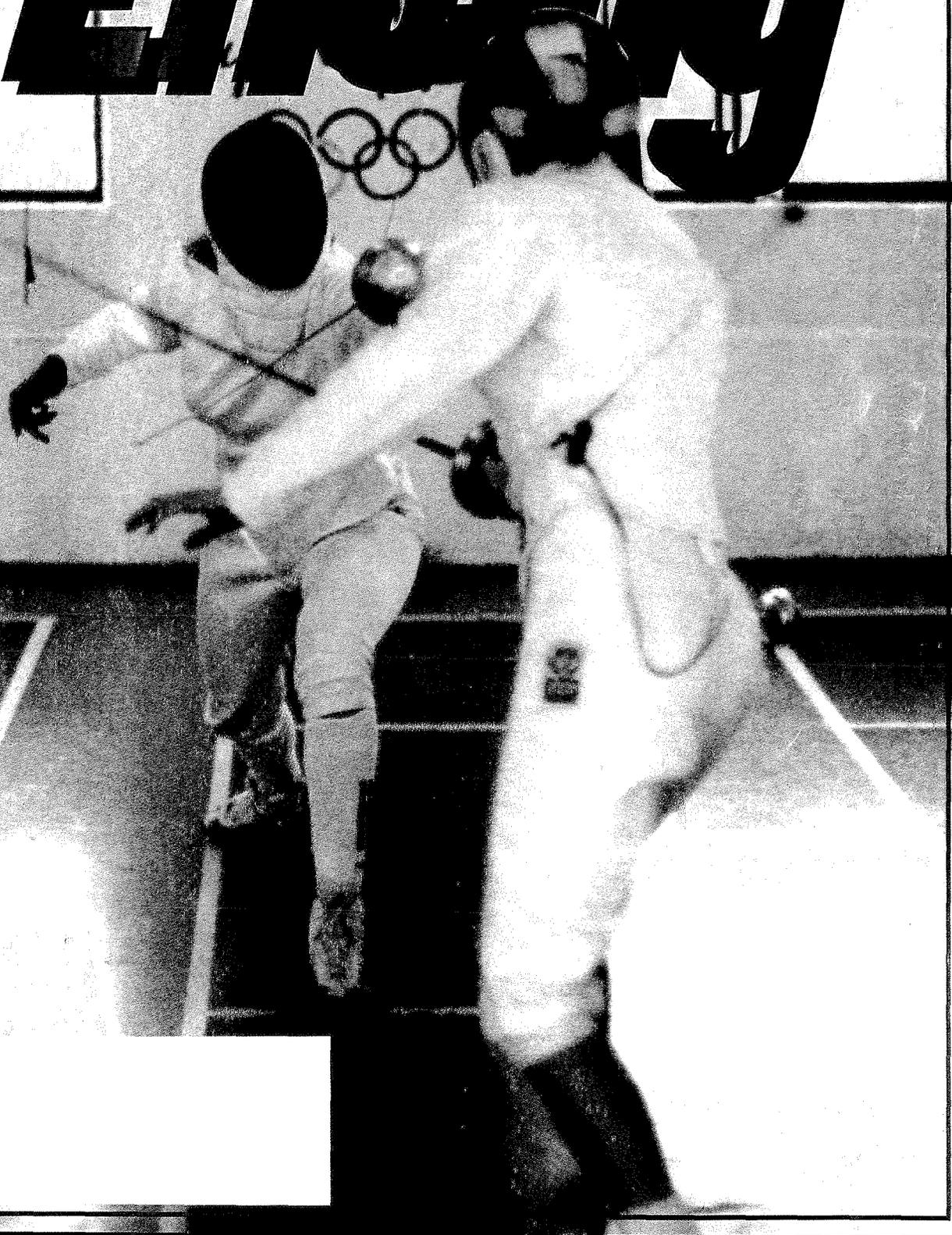


American Fencing



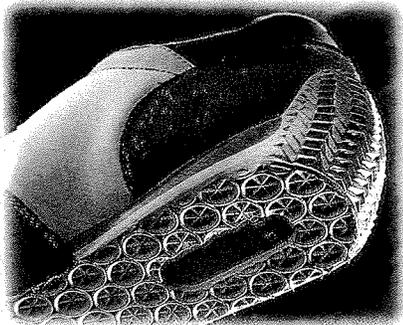
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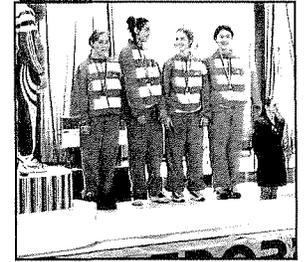
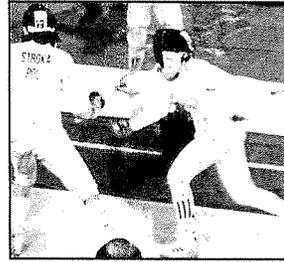
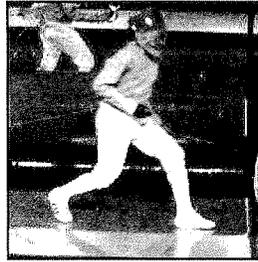
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 New surgery offers a great opportunity for even seriously nearsighted fencers.

ON THE COVER: Photographer Lisa Slater caught Arlene Stevens at the Rochester Fencing Center with the logo for the Sydney 2000 Olympic Games as a motivating backdrop.

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Congratulations! The USFA Leads the World Toward 2000

As we approach the new millennium we can anticipate radical changes in the international competition offering

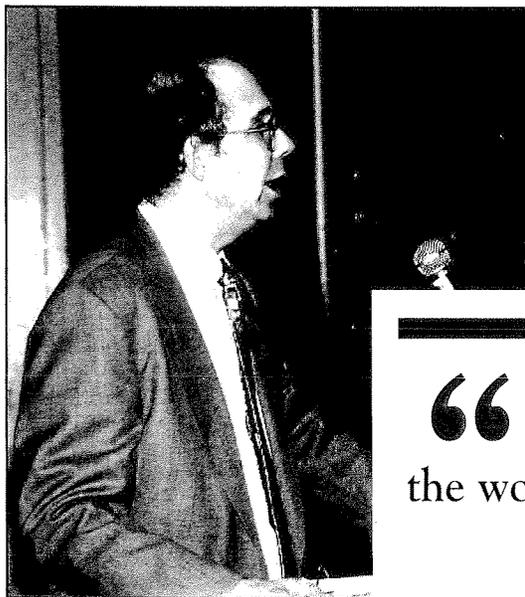
BY DONALD W. ALPERSTEIN, USFA PRESIDENT

A few weeks ago, at the finals of the New York World Cup Sabre, I witnessed a wonderful thing. The finals were great, and although our young sabremen didn't make it to the end of the tableau, they acquitted themselves quite well. But watching those European medal contenders isn't what got me charged up. I was far more excited being present at the first ever, anywhere, Women's Sabre finals at an FIE World Cup.

True, the women's competition did not attract a wide ranging international field, although a smattering of foreigners made the trip. And true, as well, the top finishers didn't earn World Cup points.

But when Juli Smith and Kelly Williams took the strip before a crowd of fencing enthusiasts from around the world, and fenced a gold medal bout presided over by a top FIE referee and tuxedoed directoire technique, I saw a great opportunity for American Fencing.

We stand on the verge of full World Championship and Olympic status for Women's Sabre. The USFA has pushed and prodded the international community to adopt, recognize and accept the weapon for what it is, a unique addition to the diverse and wonderful world



Donald Alperstein at the February 98 USFA Board of Directors Meeting

of fencing. We have not worked alone in this effort, but we have been at the vanguard. And now Women's Sabre has arrived.

Division I Status for Women's Sabre

Not only has the USFA Board of Directors elevated Women's Sabre to Division I National Championship status and the FIE added it as a demonstration event to this year's World Championships, but next year, in 1999, Women's Sabre becomes a World Cup event. Two Junior World Cups are already on the FIE's preliminary calendar, as are six senior competitions, including one in the United States, prospectively to be held in conjunction with the existing New York men's event. At its Congress in October this year, the FIE will decide whether the female sabretuets will for the first time fight for individual and team World Championship Gold in Seoul, Korea in 1999. While the momentum for that approval is not inexorable, it has a great deal of support, including from the United States Fencing Association.

The Olympics follow in 2000, and regrettably women sabre fencers will not share the light of that hallowed flame. On the other hand, that year the women will have another spotlight to themselves, for Sabre Dames will be the only senior World Championship event in 2000, sharing the stage with veterans events. If there is interest enough among American fencers, the USFA is considering a bid to host that singular event. Olympic status cannot be far behind, and the smart money — not to mention USFA support — is behind participation in the 2004 Athens games.

A Call to Arms

Through years of hard work by many — and the steadfast determination the women who fence sabre in this country — the United States has a grand opportunity to burst on the international scene as a world power. Taking and keeping the initiative will demand

“ The arrival of a new weapon on the world scene presents rare opportunities for fencers around the world; the arrival of Women's Sabre offers special possibilities for the United States. ”

coordinated effort and commitment, not only by those who fence the weapon, but by the divisions, clubs, coaches and the USFA itself. The divisions and clubs must provide competitive and training opportunities to female sabre fencers. Coaches must look for talent and nurture its progress. We need our best sabre coaches to see the



possibilities for creating champions, and must convince them to devote their time, energy and talent to the training of women. Referees should enthusiastically seek assignment to women's sabre bouts, and should invest their officiating with the best they have, because in so doing they play an indispensable part in preparing our

women to meet the world.

The USFA will have to channel financial support to the weapon so that a well managed national coaching program can coordinate our women's sabre programs. Too, we must facilitate the acquisition of invaluable international experience by helping to shoulder the awesome financial burdens of

world cup travel.

Above all, we must encourage our women and girls to pick up and wield sabres so that, under the eyes of watchful coaches, they can decide if this is where their talent leads them and their future resides.

A new weapon on the scene presents rare opportunities for fencers around the world; the arrival of Women's Sabre offers special

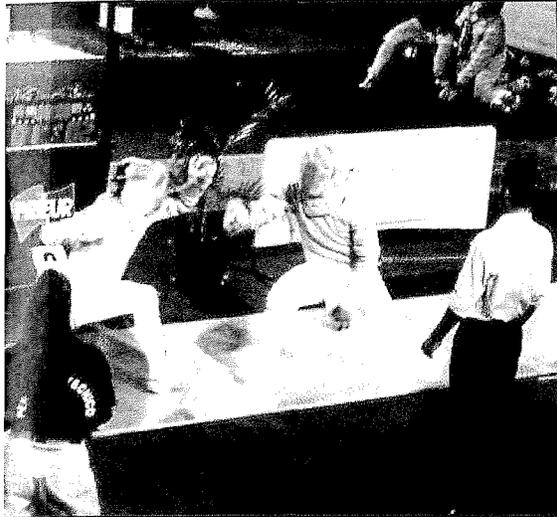
possibilities for the US. We have the advantage. As the door opens, let us work together to seize the occasion and make it ours!

Veteran Fencers Take Center Stage

While Women's Sabre bursts on the scene, a less ballyhoed development also deserves note. This year, in La Chaux-de-Fonds, Switzerland, veterans will compete in Men's Epee and Women's Foil. In 1999, for the first time, we expect that veteran fencers will compete in two age groups and in all weapons at the Seoul, Korea World Championships. Only final approval at October's FIE Congress stands in the way. While it would be an overstatement for the United States to take complete credit for the expanding opportunities given our veterans, we have supported international veteran competition for the past several years.

We can certainly be proud of the strides veterans have taken in this country, and of the USFA's positive response to the appeals of older fencers who seek increased opportunities to meet their peers from around the country. In each of the past several seasons the occasions for veteran fencing have increased. Veterans now have their own events at North America Cup tournaments and in National Championship competitions. Having myself competed in last year's Summer National Veterans epee, I can attest to the enthusiasm, dedication and skill of these fencers. I can also verify that they had a rollicking good time, and if fencing isn't fun, why bother?

What do female sabretuers and veteran fencers have in common? Both have better chances than ever before to practice their art and their entertainment. My point is this: The USFA has done a superb job of creating opportunities for people to engage in our sport at all levels. It is a laudable pursuit, and a mission we should never neglect.



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Finances Limit a Fencer's Future

TO THE EDITOR

In your Winter 98 issue of American Fencing, Mr. Rosenberg (Lifestyles of the Rich and Fencing) quoted a number of figures all of which seem to be very conservative. In a two fencer family, our problem is we pay double, consequently we pick and choose our competitions. The sole basis of our choices usually get down to what we can afford (without getting divorced) and are we getting our money's worth. Both my son and I qualified for the Summer Nationals Divisions II and III. My son also qualified for the Junior Olympics. We had to make a choice. He could go to the JOs or we could go to the Nationals. We chose the Nationals. The Sectionals were on the horizon. Spend \$400 to go to the Sectionals, or save it for the Nationals? Nationals. Living in Pennsylvania going to the Nationals means driving to New York City for the flight (four hours), flying to Austin, Texas, hotel for five days, rental car, food, entertainment, entry fees and the customary bribes I mean gifts for my lovely bride when we return. Ballpark figures around \$2000. This does not include training, lessons, club fees, traveling to club and local competitions, qualifiers and equipment. Whew! I'm tired already. Now I don't want to complain but ... the nearest club to train for fencing is an hour drive away, the qualifier is a three-hour drive one way. A trip to an average local division competition is costing almost \$100. No NACs for this dynamic duo. The point is there are a lot of very good fencers out in the wilderness and I agree with Mr. R [Rosenberg], the USFA must use its clout to get sponsors for these young fencers. I believe fencing also needs a scouting system similar to baseball or football, to find potentially good fencers, not just the ones who can afford to go to all the major national competitions. Joe Namath never would have made it to the Jets without a scout. Beaver Fall, Pa., are you kidding me?

Maybe it's time the US fencing world change the approach to finding our potential medalist to a system that concentrates on lower state and regional events that build to a national level with qualifiers at each level. If this sounds familiar check out your local little league or gymnastics program. By reinforcing the qualifying path from the bottom, the most experienced and best trained make it to the top. For fencing to survive we must build the lower levels to meet the national level.

More regional competitions are needed, part of the system is already in place. In approximately forty of the fifty states there are Olympic style state games and many having fencing as an event. If the USFA was to award national points for state games, I believe it would go a long way to help the sport:

1. States that do not have state games may start one.
2. Many fencers who normally do not compete in national events, may decide to compete in a state event if they don't have to travel umpteen million miles.
3. Local news stories could help promote fencing.
4. Local fencers from small clubs would get the necessary experience to compete at the national level.

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Why Can't I Win My DE Bouts?

How seeding can shift the odds in your favor.

BY GREG JONES

When I had only been fencing about a year, I started to become a regular competitor. I went to all the tournaments I could find. I did OK (not great) at the novice and E-and-under tournaments, but it seemed I couldn't win a direct elimination bout at any major local tournament. I always seemed to get somebody for my first DE whom I couldn't beat.

As I've gained more competition experience (as well as fencing experience and skill, enabling me to place higher in tournaments), I've begun to realize some of the reasons for why this happened. This article addresses one of those reasons, namely the seeding into the direct elimination. It's directed mainly at intermediate fencers and beginning serious competitors, who have the ability to place in the middle of the field with the right approach.

Tournament Purpose and Format

The ultimate goal of any tournament event is to rank all the participants in order of how good they are. If all the participants

could be ranked discretely into best, second best, third best, and so on, then a successful tournament format would always place the participants in the final results in that order.

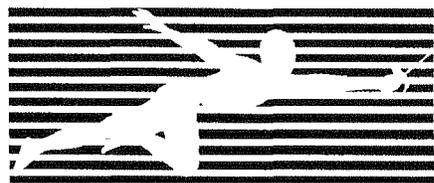
So, one easy answer to why a beginner can't seem to win his first DE bout is to look honestly at his ability on the tournament day (i.e., take into account whether he's having a good day or not) relative to the rest of the field. If more than half of the fencers in the tournament are fencing better than fencer X that day, then fencer X should finish in the bottom half of the tournament. All the fencers whose ability on that day is below the median (assuming no byes in this case) should lose their first DE bout.

The DE Table Structure

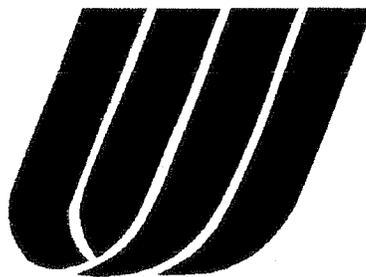
At first glance, the pairing of numbers in a direct elimination table may seem random. In fact, it's structured very carefully.

Assuming no repechage, every direct elimination bout eliminates one fencer from the competition. Each round of direct elimination eliminates half the participants (less in the first round if there were any byes). Those eliminated fencers earn places in the bottom half of the size of that round. For example, in a DE of 32, those who lose their first round bout place 17-32. Those who lose their second bout place 9-16, and so forth. Ranking of fencers within those ranges is based on their initial seeds into the table. For example, in a DE of 32, the only difference between the 17th and 32nd finishers is how they did in the pools - 17th place goes to the highest seed who lost in that round, while 32nd goes to the lowest.

Clearly the best and second best fencers should be kept apart as long as possible, ideally until the final bout (round of 2). If they met in the round of 32, for example, then one of them would have to be



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eliminated and would place 17th, while other fencers who are not as good would place higher. Similarly, the top four fencers should be kept from fencing each other until the round of four, to ensure that they're not forced out too early, and so on.

To accomplish this, in each round the top seed fences the last seed, the second fences the second from last, and so on. And from this, we can determine that the initial seeding into the table is very important in determining whom you will fence. This is the real purpose of the round(s) of pools before the DE - to get an accurate seeding so that the top fencers will be kept apart as long as possible and will hopefully survive to the late rounds.

Initial Seed Determines Opponents

Consider a fencer whose ability is exactly at the median of the field of the event - half the fencers in the tournament are better than he is, the other half aren't. If ratings are distributed evenly through the field, perhaps he's a C. Assume the field is 32 fencers, so there will be 5 rounds of DE bouts.

Suppose this fencer performs very poorly in the pool and ends up seeded last - 32nd. His first DE bout will be against the top seed. Even if our fencer was just slacking in the pool and can really fence at an ability level of about the median of the field, the top seed is likely to be a much better fencer - say an A. Our fencer's prospects are somewhat bleak.

Suppose our fencer performs at his expected level in the pool and ends up seeded in the middle - say 16th. His first DE bout will be against the 17th seed, who had a similar performance in his pool and consequently is probably of similar ability. This bout is a toss-up - either might win, but neither is likely to get stomped. However,

whoever wins this bout will face the top seed in the second round. If our fencer can defeat his first opponent (who is of similar ability), he will most likely get eliminated by his second opponent and finish 16th.

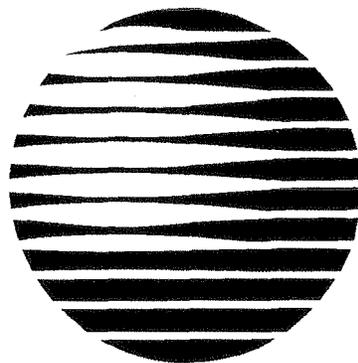
Suppose our fencer performs well in the pool and ends up seeded fairly high - say 5th. His first DE bout will be against the 28th seed, who is probably far below his ability level and should be easy to beat. His next bout will be against the 12th seed (or the fencer who upset the 12th seed). Since our fencer's ability level is about equal to the 16th seed, the 12th is not likely to be a vastly better fencer. Our hero may be able to beat this opponent on a good day, and presumably he's having a good day if he did that well in the pool. Only in the third round will he meet someone such as the 4th seed, who is probably much better. Still, in this case he would finish around 5th.

Get the Best Seed You Can

What conclusion to draw from all this? Although (or perhaps because) DE bouts can be more difficult to win than pool bouts, you should do everything possible to make it as easy as possible. One way to do this is to get the highest seed you can. The higher your seed, the lower the seeds of the opponents you will face. This means that with a much higher seed, you have a good chance of surviving one or two rounds longer before you end up against someone whom you have little chance of beating.

In the pool, everything contributes to your seed. Victories are of course the most important thing. The first criterion for ranking fencers based on pool performance is the ratio of victories to bouts fenced. If you win all your pool bouts, you will seed among the top fencers in the tournament; your worst possible seed is equal to the

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number of pools. Conversely, by losing all your pool bouts, you guarantee a seed near the bottom of the field.

However, even each touch can have some effect on your seed, because it's likely that you will be ranked against other fencers in the tournament who have the same ratio of victories to bouts fenced. The next criterion is the "indicator" - hits scored minus hits received. Every touch that you can score on an opponent (even an opponent who eventually beats you) and every touch that you can prevent an opponent scoring on you (even an opponent whom you beat) will improve your indicator. This is especially important if not all of the fencers will be promoted from this round of pools. I have made it to the second round of a tournament based solely on indicators, making the cut by only a couple of touches.

So, in general you should try to get every victory and even every touch that you can. Never assume that an opponent is unbeatable. Particularly in the first round of pools, some of the top fencers may not be fencing their best, either because they don't feel the need to warm up as much as the devoted intermediate or because they're saving their energy for the finals; or, you just might have a quirk which they can't seem to deal with in the space of five touches.

It's equally important to fight for every touch against beginners. If I'm fencing in a tournament that I want to do well in, and I have a pool bout against a 10-year-old who's been fencing for a month, I will beat him 5-0 if I can. I probably will not fence any more aggressively than necessary to accomplish this (i.e., I probably won't fleche on every touch and leave adidas treadmarks up the front of his jacket) but I will not let my own seed suffer out of sympathy for an opponent, lest my final placement suffer gravely.

I was presented with a good example of this theory at the 1997 Leon Auriol Open in Seattle. The names of the protagonists have been eliminated for genericity, but they know who they are!

In the men's epee event, there were 33 fencers. I, a C97, did fairly well in my pool, and I ended up seeded about 5th. My first DE was against a relative beginner, whom I beat fairly easily. My second DE was against an experienced but not very mobile fencer, who is comparable to my own level - I can beat him if I'm having a good day, but he can beat me if he's having a good day. As it happened, I was having a good day that day and he wasn't, so I won that one. My third round bout was against one of the several A's in the field, and he trounced me. I finished 6th.

One fencer against whom I fence often, comparable to my level or a little better (also C97 at the time), complained to me afterward about his relatively poor performance - placing 15th. It turned out he was eliminated in the second round of the DE by his coach (a very experienced B fencer). I asked him what had happened in his pool. He said that in one bout against a junior fencer of significantly lesser ability (but definitely no doormat!), he decided to play around and try to get toe touches. He tried them about three times and got hit each time. Because he gave up those touches and was perhaps a bit overconfident, he lost that bout.

He committed a minor sin by giving away touches for no real reason. He committed a major sin by losing a bout that he should have won. The result was a lousy seed, and in the second round he encountered a fencer whom he had little chance of beating and got eliminated. Because I managed to do fairly well in my pool, I made it to the third round before encountering somebody I couldn't beat, so I placed much higher.

Exceptions and Caveats

This is not a complete assessment of the problem, only a reduction of one specific aspect of it. Several factors can throw things awry.

- A higher seed does not necessarily always beat a lower seed. If that were guaranteed, there would be no point in running the DE table at all. Nevertheless, it's fair to say that your chances of beating the lowest seed in the tournament are probably a whole lot better than your chances of beating the top seed, and the longer you can avoid fencing the top few seeds, the better.

- DE bouts are more difficult to win than pool bouts. Because they last longer, they require greater mental and physical endurance. Also, they tend to require a larger repertoire of techniques and tactics. A trick that nets five touches on the average opponent can win a pool bout, but only gets you one-third of the way through a DE bout. If that's the only trick in your book, you just might lose 15-5.

- Assume each fencer is a fencing machine who can perform exactly at a particular skill level indefinitely. Of course, fencers have endurance limits, mental patterns, and so on. If winning all your pool bouts completely exhausts you, that top seed may not do you much good - you might be too tired to win more than one or two DE bouts. Or, perhaps you don't stay warmed up and focused if your first DE bout is too easy. In that case, being the top seed might be counterproductive.

- It's not necessarily a mortal sin to sacrifice a touch if you have a good reason and you are capable of dealing with the consequences. For example, if you can sacrifice a touch in a pool bout to gain valuable reconnaissance information which will enable you to win the bout, that may be a valid strategy for you. However, if you can gain the same information without sacrificing a touch, that's better.

- In a DE, the final score doesn't matter, all that matters is who wins. If you win 15-14, you still face the same opponent in the next round if you had won 15-0. Still, giving away touches in a DE bout can be a bad idea. A run of three or four touches where you're just playing around might be enough to weaken your concentration and give your opponent a morale boost, and turn the tide.

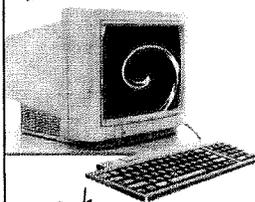
Always fence with intent to win the tournament. Afterwards over dinner, you can discuss your final placing with your coach and decide whether it was a good result or not.

Barring any strategy to the contrary, always fence for every bout and every touch. Never throw away touches for no reason, and never ever throw away victories for no reason. It's better to lose 5-4 than 5-0. It's better to win 5-0 than 5-4.

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Setting Your Sights On Fencing Success

Goals are to an athlete what a map is to an explorer.

BY JOHN HEIL & EDMUND O'CONNOR

If one is to climb a mountain, or to scale the lofty heights of athletic success, it is essential to choose a route carefully, proceed with forethought and precision, and be prepared to negotiate steep, challenging terrain. The modern explorer will use a map and compass to guide the journey, but will also seek out the best that the science of navigation has to offer. The athlete, in turn, should look to the science of goal setting as a way to chart a course for success.

Most goal setting begins with a dream goal: to medal in a national competition, to gain an international ranking, to make the USA Olympic team. That hard work is required is well understood. Research on expert performers gives the rule of thumb of "ten years or ten thousand hours" to achieve elite or expert status. Less well understood is the importance of precise, detailed, realistic planning. The elements of successful goal setting are as follows:

Goal Setting

1. Link performance goals to outcome goals
2. Set challenging, but realistic, goals
3. Describe goals in language that is positive and specific
4. Progress through collaboration to personalization
5. Integrate short term, intermediate, and long term goals
6. Use regular feedback to adjust goals
7. Practice self-acceptance

Link Performance Goals to Outcome Goals

Outcome goals focus on results, such as the score of a bout, final placing in a tournament, or national ranking. In a head to head competitive sport like fencing, outcomes depend on the fencers effort and skill, and the performance of the other competitor. As such outcomes are ultimately not within the fencers control. Someone could fence the best bout of their career and still lose - if the other fencer is better on that day. Perhaps more to the point, wanting to win (no matter how great the desire) is not enough. One must know what to do in order to succeed. This is the role of performance goals. Physical conditioning, mental preparation, technical skills, and tactical sense are the foundation of fencing excellence. The development of these abilities through training is within the fencer's control, as is fencing within one's own game plan during competition. Goal setting is about systematically building such skills through regular practice and applying these in competition.

Set Challenging, but Realistic, Goals

The most common goal setting error is striving for results that are beyond the fencer's ability. This is based on the misguided idea that if you set your goals high enough - even if you fall short you will still

do well. For most of the athletes, most of the time this is a psychological trap. When athletes fail to meet goals day after day, they become discouraged. Setting unrealistically high expectations may cause the athlete to press too hard, to make errors in judgement, and even abandon methods that are the foundation of future success. When goals are set unrealistically high, it is impossible to develop a sensible training program. This combination of discouragement and lack of direction will cause many to give up the sport. In contrast, a realistic goal plan bolsters the fencer's motivation by creating a sense of progress and by paving a pathway to success.

Take for example, a fencer who has significant early success - most likely through a combination of athleticism, an aggressive style, and some luck. Success energizes the fencer who focuses on results (outcomes) versus skill building (process). These fencers usually end up hitting a dead-end in skill development as they increasingly rely on their inherent athleticism and intensity at the expenses of the systematic, painstaking everyday training upon which fencing success will depend. The energy of success gives way to feelings of frustration and helplessness. The fencer needs to be grounded by sensible goals for training and competition. However, many will fail to overcome their discouragement and leave the sport, even though they possess the basic physical attributes to eventually excel.

Sport psychologists O'Block and Evans have developed a simple method for setting realistic competition goals, called Interval Goal Setting (IGS). IGS utilizes a formula to compute a range of indicators of goal achievement:

- Step 1:** Find A, where A is the average over the last five performances.
Example: Fencer's last 5 NAC event finishes: 42, 22, 25, 37, 57
 $A = 36.6 = 37$
- Step 2:** Find PR, where PR (Personal Record) is the best finish within the last five performances.
Example: PR = 22
- Step 3:** Find D, where D is the interval difference between the average and the best finish. $D = A - PR$.
Example: $D = 37 - 22$
 $D = 15$
- Step 4:** Find UB, where UB is the upper interval boundary. $UB = PR - D$.
Example: $UB = 22 - 15$
 $UB = 7$

If the fencer's performance falls within the interval, it is considered a success. As this example illustrates, a goal of "finishing 45th" is not challenging enough whereas a goal of "a top three finish" may be unrealistic at this time. This fencer should be very pleased with his or her performance if it falls between their average (37th) and personal record (22nd). An aggressive goal would fall between the personal record (22nd) and the upper boundary (7th), with finishes closer to the UB occurring under ideal circumstances in which the athlete performs flawlessly.

Describe Goals in Language That Is Positive and Specific

The language of goal setting is quite important. By following certain guidelines in the goal setting process, the clarity and precision of goals is enhanced. As a general rule, objectives should be

stated in positive (versus negative) language. For example, "to not be intimidated by a higher ranked opponent" is a worthy ambition. But the way this statement is written, the athlete receives no information about how to accomplish this. On many occasions negative (what "not to do") goals backfire. What happens if someone asks you not to think of a pink elephant? Usually the first thing is to think of a pink elephant - and then you need to remove it from your mind. If this question were never presented, the thought would most likely never have occurred. What about the statement, "don't choke!?" To the extent it plays into the athlete's fears "choking" becomes more likely. More to the point, in a critical situation an athlete needs to know what to do - and to feel a sense of confidence that it can be done. Negative language at its worst undermines confidence and calls wrong actions to mind. At its best, it fails to provide proper direction. The use of negative language is probably the most common coaching error.

Stating goals in positive language can be very difficult and demand quite a bit of thought. Usually, there are significant gains by simply going through the process. Let's consider alternatives to the statement "Don't choke." The statement "You can do it" is positive and potentially confidence building - but provides no information about what to do. "Don't fleche" or "No leg touches" provides specific information, but falls short of advising the athlete what action might be best. Where the fencer is clear on what strategies to use in a given situation against a particular opponent - this may be enough information. Under pressure some athletes, in particular, have a difficult time with "Don't . . ." instructions and inadvertently focuses on the wrong action to their detriment. Alternatives like "Wait for a counter attack" or "Look for an opening in six" are generally more effective because they help focus the athlete on what to do.

The more specific the language, the more clear the goal becomes, as in the critical competitive situations described above. Let's consider a training goal next. "I will train harder" is a positive goal, but not specific enough. The question "How can the athlete train harder?" needs to be fleshed out - to move from being an idea to a plan. Perhaps the athlete needs more training sessions per week. Or, perhaps the frequency of training is adequate but the intensity is too

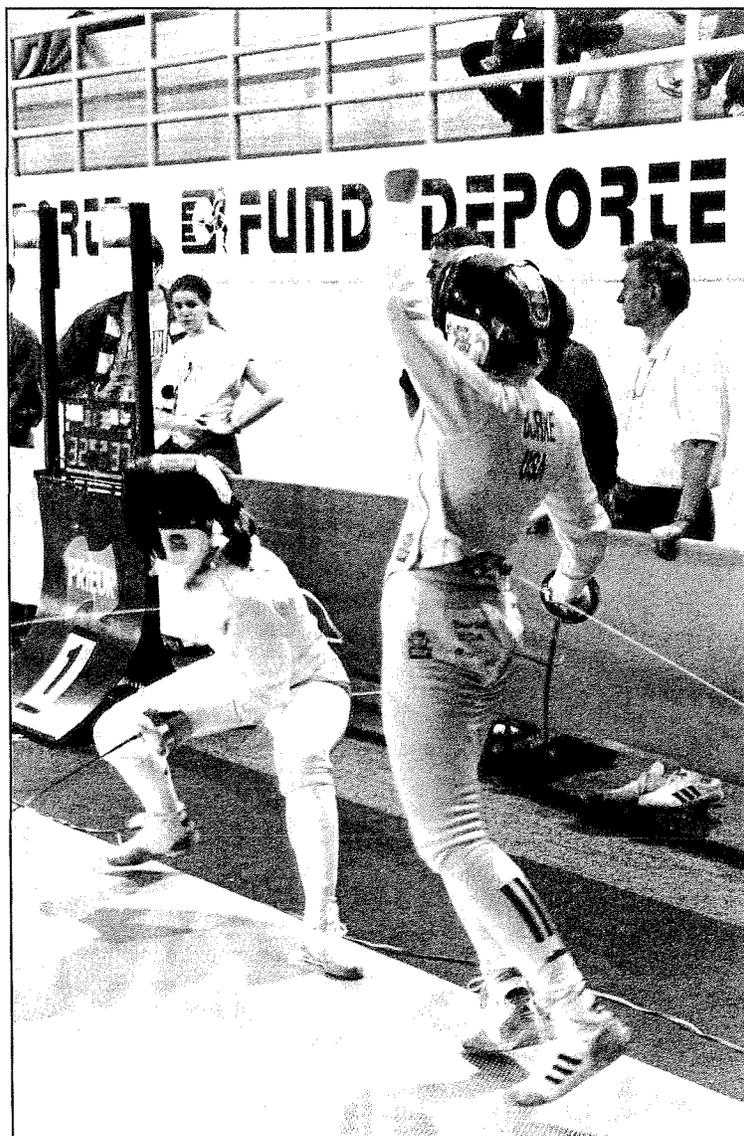
low - inhibiting the fencers ability to transfer skills from practice to competition. The fencer may decide that more lessons are needed, or that the intensity of footwork training needs to be increased. It is usually fairly straightforward to create specific training goals for physical activities - such as footwork training 4 times per week for 20 minutes (5 minute warming pace; 10 minutes of aerobic intensity; 5 minutes explosive actions for speed with brief rest intervals). However, with careful planning precise goals can be identified for a wide

range of activities including mental skills training.

For example, you and your coach identify "refocusing after giving up a critical touch" as an aspect of your mental game that needs improvement. Athletes have a tendency to lose focus of the task at hand by focusing on their mistake rather than their immediate performance. They often put themselves down (e.g., "That was a stupid move.") and are discouraged (e.g., "I can't win."). This type of self-talk decreases confidence, effort, and performance. A worthwhile goal to "develop and use a positive affirmation after a touch" will keep you focused on the critical elements of the match, provide encouragement, and give you specific instructions on how to proceed. Examples may include: "Relax and focus," "Let it go," or "I can do this." These phrases, like your goals, work best if they are positive and specific.

Refocusing is a skill like many of the physical skills required in fencing and needs to be practiced. You can begin this process through mental rehearsal away from practice in a quiet place conducive to mental training. Then you can

incorporate this mental skill gradually into practice, and then competition. For example, using imagery, you can picture the bout and losing a critical touch. Imagine yourself getting upset - including the physical sensations and thoughts that run through your mind - then stop yourself! (see AMERICAN FENCING, Spring 1996, "Mental Training to Deal with Distractions" for more information). Mentally rehearse recognizing these physical and cognitive signs and using your positive affirmation to refocus on the task at hand, performing well. You may also use your positive phrases following mistakes made during practice sessions. For example, if you are doing poorly and make an error in practice, take a breath, relax, and tell yourself, "It's okay - Focus on my opponent - Be aggressive." Set



specific mental training goals by setting aside specific times to practice. You may want to mentally rehearse this scene for 5 minutes before practice, and use these positive affirmations during the last 30 minutes of your workout three days a week. Once you are comfortable with this in training you can use it during competition. Find times that are comfortable for you and use the goal setting guidelines described here to help determine the length and nature of your mental practice.

Progress Through Collaboration To Personalization

The path to athletic success is long and challenging. Each cross-road encountered merits careful evaluation before a direction is chosen. The coach is your guide, helping you remain focused on your distant objective as you negotiate the difficult twists and turns of your daily journey. While true in all sports, this is especially so in fencing because of the close, personal contact between coach and athlete in lessons, and because of the reliance on the coach for tactical advice. For these reasons, goal setting must be a collaborative effort between coach and athlete. But goals must be personalized so that in the smallest way, they are a natural extension of the athlete's abilities and temperament. Ultimately, the athlete needs a sense of ownership for the goals set. Consider again the goal of training harder. This brings the athlete face to face with the daily grind of training upon which all athletic success is built. No matter how sensible the goals and no matter how well planned out, if the athlete has not embraced these goals as his or her own, they will sooner or later be left by the wayside.

Integrate Short Term, Intermediate And Long Term Goals

All journeys are driven by the lure of the final destination, the dream goal or mission. But for most of the journey, the goal is far off in the distance. In order to make the journey, the athlete must know "what to do today" to progress toward the dream goal (i.e., have clear and specific short term goals). Otherwise, the athlete is destined to wander off course. In order to direct and energize the athlete, short term, intermediate, and long term goals must be integrated so that the way toward the final destination is clear, so that today's goals feel connected to the distant goal. All sports' journeys proceed in stages, with the athlete coming periodically to key points of reckoning. It is from these vantage points that progress to the destination can be assessed, and goals evaluated and revised. Virtually all sports move on a yearly cycle, with training programs and competitive schedules set, completed, and reset. The yearly cycle with its related activities is the basis of long term goal setting. In the Olympic family of sports the quadrennium further sets the energy and rhythm of training and competition. Yearly goals will be influenced by the proximity of the Olympic year and by the athlete's level of progress. There is also a critical need to fill the gap between the long term (yearly, quadrennial goals) and the short term (daily, weekly) goals. Intermediate goals are like milestones on the journey. They help the athlete stay on course and help gauge progress.

Use Regular Feedback to Adjust Goals

The navigator is a vigilant observer of the surroundings and makes careful record of progress as the journey proceeds. To the athlete this translates into knowing your goals inside and out. Keeping a careful record of goals set and completed (e.g., a training log) is an excellent

way to monitor your progress. Are your goals so easy, that you are not sufficiently challenged - and moving too slowly? Are your goals too difficult, leaving you feeling discouraged and frustrated? Frequent evaluation will keep you from veering off course, help you make adjustments as needed, and increase your confidence as you succeed. As a rule of thumb, most days you should be reaching most of your goals. The athlete sees goals from the inside, looking out at the challenges of the competitive landscape. The coach sees the same competitive landscape from the outside, looking in at the unique needs and abilities of the athlete. From this combination of perspectives comes the clearest measure of progress, and the best vantage point to chart the course of the continuing journey. Coach evaluation and self-evaluation together enable the athlete to work smarter, the athlete knowing what feels right from the inside, and the coach bringing insights from having journeyed as an explorer of human potential.

For example, in their careers many athletes will face a competitive plateau. They will be training hard but not getting better results. The seasoned coach understands that it can be a long, slow process for the athlete to assimilate the new skills they need to take their game to a higher level. The athletes who fall victim to a shortsighted focus on immediate competitive results at the expense of long term skill building can begin to doubt their ability and lose enthusiasm. In contrast, the coach, seeing the steady gains in training, can look past the short term results and over the horizon to a time when the athlete is ready to continue the climb upward. As the coach feeds this message back, the athlete can find sustenance to continue the journey. A successful goal setting program balances commitment (staying the course through troubled times) and flexibility (willingness to make adjustments to deal with obstacles). Regular dialogue between coach and athlete about goals set, goals met, and goals to come is the key to maintaining this balance.

Practice Self-Acceptance

Not every climber will make it to the top of the world's highest peak, but all who climb can experience the exhilaration of the journey and find fulfillment in scaling personal peaks. The key elements of athletic success have been widely studied and incessantly debated with no clear consensus. What is abundantly apparent is that there is no enduring success without the ability to accept the personal ups and downs that are an inevitable part of the sports experience. So an implicit goal in sport is learning to live well with winning and losing. Turning losing into learning and maintaining perspective in victory enables the athlete to sustain focus on the larger goals. Self-acceptance - the honest acknowledgment of personal strengths and weaknesses, stresses and efforts - is critical to this. This is in turn linked to setting goals that are realistic and personalized. Without sensible goals even the most talented athletes will fall short of their potential. With well-set goals, everyone can be a winner through the satisfaction of personal achievements and for the richness of their competitive experience.

Before you go for the gold, you must first go for the goal. Goal setting is the foundation of personal achievement in sport and all of life's important experiences. The athlete who learns the art of navigation from the journey through sport is better prepared for the journey through life.

For more information, you may contact John Heil, D.A. at Lewis-Gale Clinic, Valley View Medical Center, 4910 Valley View Blvd., NW, Roanoke, VA 24012; Phone: (540) 265-1605; E-Mail: jheil@rev.net.

Division Gothic

Divisions drained of life exist in the darkest corners of the Association

BY EDWIN (BUZZ) HURST

FADE IN ...
The scene: a dark, oak-paneled library in Colorado Springs. A new USFA staff member is talking to an old veteran, wise in the ways of the Association. The fluttering light of the dying fire tints their port glasses blood-red, while the tips of their cigars seem as two burning wolf-eyes in the darkling chamber

Staff Member: "I can't understand it, Doctor. I've been looking into the records of the Transylvania Division rather thoroughly, and we seem to have no financial reports, no reports of competitions, no team entries at Sectional or National tournaments. Yet, our archives show it contains 25 current USFA members and we hold funds in escrow for them. What could be happening out there?"

Doctor: "My boy, I had hoped to keep you from this knowlege, but you have uncovered one of the ancient mysteries of the old AFLA: divisions that are neither really alive nor dead, but somehow exist. Divisions that we call...The Undead!"

A look of horror contorts the young man's face. Off camera, a bat squeaks.

FADE OUT ...

Yes, my friends, there are such things! Divisions that appear drained of life, yet somehow continue to exist! We at the national level are gradually amalgamating these creatures into adjacent active divisions, but there are a few out there that have as yet escaped us. However, my purpose here is not to produce a USFA Necronomicon, but to give you a few suggestions as to how you can keep your small division from this loathsome fate.

Divisions small in numbers can actually be quite dynamic, but that state is the result of their having dynamic people involved in their affairs. The lurking danger, of course, is that this cadre of hard-chargers gradually shrinks as its members move out of the area or stop fencing (or in the case of enthusiastic parents, when their children

stop fencing). When this happens, and there is no existing mechanism for bringing new people into local fencing, the division gradually drops through its event horizon. It doesn't have enough people who will pitch in to help do the administration or run the

tournaments, and the ones who are willing finally burn out. The competitions get progressively worse, and even the fencers who never pitch in stop showing up, even to fence. The result? Another of the Undead.

There are two obvious ways for a division to avoid this destiny: (1) prevent the inhabitants from leaving by sealing off the frontiers or (2) developing ways to pump new blood (if you'll pardon the expression) into your group. Assuming that

most of you would choose option (2), let's examine it.

Basically, folks, you need somebody who can teach beginners how to fence, and who will teach regularly and dependably. It is no easy thing to take someone from scratch and

turn them into an adequate swordsman, and too many divisions are saddled with amateur coaches who do not know enough to realize what they do not know. Worse, as the glow of playing coach wears off, they begin to miss appointments and classes and the students get discouraged and bail out. It takes roughly six months of steady, fundamentally sound work to get novices to the point where they can run on their own batteries, and there aren't too many fencers who are doing something else for a living who are willing or able to make that kind of teaching commitment. If, however, you are one who is, then get thee to the USFA Coaches College and learn how to do the job right. If you're a division that has several such enthusiasts, then arrange for a weekend Coaches College clinic, or better, a series of clinics. The USFA has a program that will send you a live fencing coach - a Fencing Master even, with real, verifiable credentials (no, really!). He'll present a field-tested program that will give major help to those who are sincerely trying to learn the craft. I have more to say about the state of coaching in typical divisions, but I'll save that for another time.

As you're getting on top of the coaching conundrum, you can also act for your long-term benefit by arranging for a refereeing clinic offered by the Fencing Officials Commission. It is very difficult for developing fencers to get better, or good ones to improve even more, if local referees can't tell a good action from a bad one, and frustrated

continued on page 14



“It’s an ancient mystery of the old AFLA: divisions that are neither really alive nor dead, but somehow exist, divisions that we call...‘The Undead!’”



**Thank
You
Kodak**



Another Skirmish in the Battle of the Bent-Arm Balestra

A scientist asks why we continue to deny the fundamental laws of physics.

BY SANDY ELLIS, C.F.P.E.

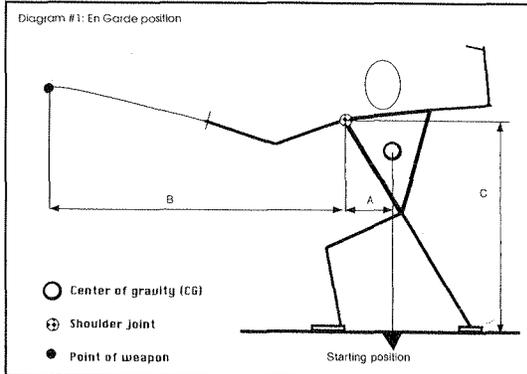
As the recent recipient of an issue of *AMERICAN FENCING*, Vol.47,#1, I must confess that I was somewhat startled to see the photograph on the front cover — a flying balestra with a bent arm!

It has been about 50 years since I last fenced competitively and engaged in heated discussions of fencing technique even more competitively. Is the sport still insisting on denying the fundamental laws of physics?

Why do I say this? If I may, I will try to explain while opening old wounds. It may be necessary to refer to some enclosed diagrams, so please be patient.

According to *L'Histoire d'Escrime* published in 1737, the balestra was first attributed to Igor Vlad-Balestra, a distant relative of the notorious Vlad Dracula. Igor was generally considered to be one of the finest swordsmen of his time, circa 1380 A.D. These dates must be borne in mind for it was the case that noblemen fought and dueled in armor at that time. Such armor, lacking modern metallurgical advances, could weigh up to 125 lbs. in modern units of measure.

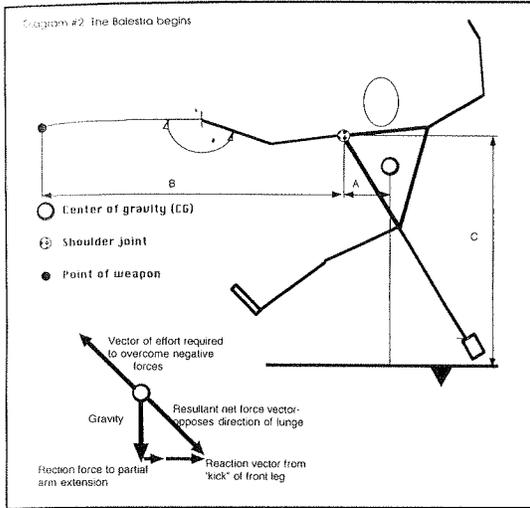
To be effective, the consummate fencers of the day followed the technique pioneered by Igor. To reach the opponent and deliver a *coup de grace*, he launched himself skyward with some forward vector in order to reach his opponent. This took considerable leg power and some attendant assistance from a violent upward thrust of the arms. It was effective and it is generally conceded that



he was never defeated in combat. This did not obtain in practice when the fencers did not wear armor, but, hero worship being what it is, his frequent losses in the salles of the day were overlooked.

In the salle he mimicked his tactics of the battlefield. To attack his opponent he launched himself nearly vertically, reached violently with his forward foot and yelled a lot.

Why the discrepancy between the salle and the mortal field? The answer lies in the kinematics of the lunge. With the readers indulgence, the following will make reference to the arcane work of Sir



Isaac Newton, 1642-1727 who, by fencing measures, is a little known philosopher and mathematician. He postulated some minor rules of the universe such as, "Every action has an equal and opposite reaction." What is the connection between these two historic figures and modern fencing? Based on the cover photo and some teaching that I have

witnessed, Newton never gained the favor of the fencing world that Igor still has.

Let us examine the lunge from two viewpoints: firstly the movement that honors Igor, the balestra and, secondly, a modern lunge that is used by a very small minority of fencers.

Diagram #1 shows the basic en garde position assumed by most fencers. It can be only an approximation since the proportions of each fencer varies. (By inference and anthropomorphic measurements of the few remaining pieces of Igor's medieval armor, he was short-legged and relatively long in the torso.)

Note the sum of $A + B$, which is the effective distance and the vertical height C which is the ineffective distance. One of the reasons fencing has persisted is that stature has absolutely no bearing, thus, C is ineffective and may be ignored.

Diagram #2 purports to show the launching of the balestra. Note that there has been some forward movement from the 'starting position,' the ineffective distance C has increased which poses no threat to the opponent, and that there has been a slight decrease in the sum of $A + B$ which is the only thing the opponent fears. Often this maneuver is accompanied by a loud "Eh la!" which serves to startle the opponent into an immediate reaction. Many coaches have their students practice the action of kicking the lower leg violently outward which cause it to slam down on the strip making another loud sound, signifying nothing. It does cause premature collapse of the metatarsal arch, known to podiatrists as 'Balestratic Arch.'

The decrease in the sum of $A + B$ is due to the tendency to keep the "point in line" which causes the angularity at the wrist and serves to shorten the effective distance. All of this was warranted

when Igor had to launch himself and his armor into space in an attempt to move. Even with today's lame, the weight of a contemporary competitive fencing outfit is negligible.

In Diagram #3 we see the start of the modern lunge:

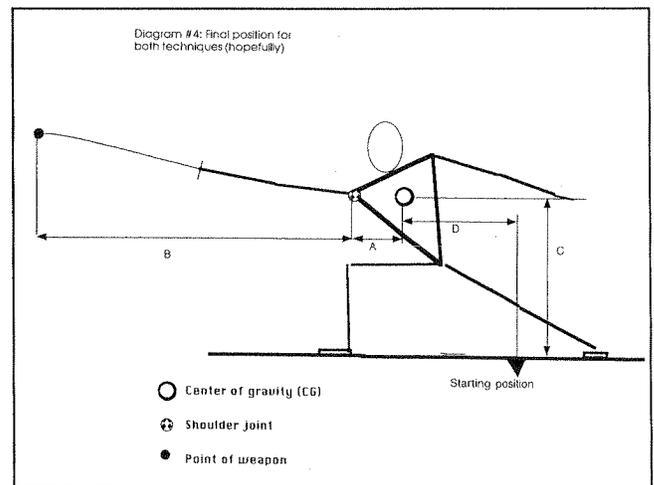
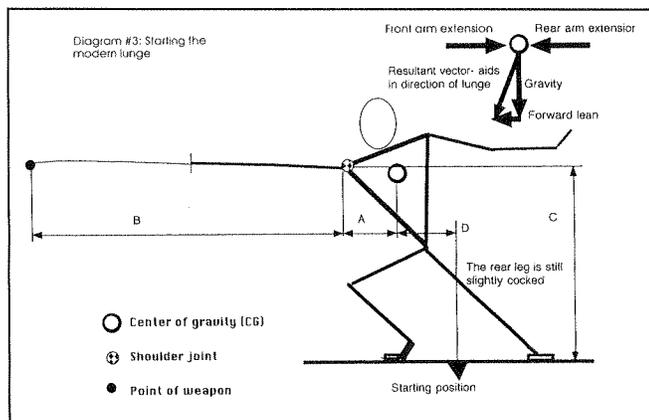
1. Note that the fencer has leaned toward the target without moving his/her feet. This introduces a new variable; D is the forward displacement of the Center of Gravity from the Starting Point.

2. The arm is fully extended which increases the B dimension. The A dimension, which is the distance from CG to shoulder is slightly lengthened due to the tilt of the torso. Height C has decreased due to tilt of torso and forward lean, the parallelogram geometry of which automatically lowers the Center of Gravity. The sum total of $A + B + D$ has extended the weapon towards the target quite a bit. When initiated smoothly and in a coordinated manner, this transition into a final lunge position is smooth, rapid and gives the opponent little or no warning. For some schools of fencing this lack of warning, combined with the speed, is considered unsportsmanlike even though it does garner touches.

3. Note the raised heel in this stage (stage must be used since there is no noticeable break in the movement from the en garde position to the final position shown in Diagram #4). This is probably the most

difficult physical technique to acquire it is called walking and is even practiced by non-fencers. Try it yourself; With your back fixed to a wall you can easily achieve a balestra kick of the leg that would normally be your forward leg and your CG remains static, however, you cannot walk. To walk, you must permit the CG to shift away from the static wall and so it is with the modern lunge.² It is curious that the mechanism for advancing the weapon efficiently toward the target is based on something as elemental as walking. The habits of normal living are regimented out of the new fencer by so-called traditional coaches who are highly skilled in the use of correct terms, if not physics, for fencing movements.³

Diagram #4 is the same, we hope, for both actions, although it must be admitted that, from watching both types of lunges, the balestra encourages a foreshortened and more erect final position than that of the modern lunge. This is consistent with the



fundamental difference between the medieval origins of the balestra and the renaissance origin of the modern lunge. The former had to
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In the Trenches

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fencers tend to cross the borders and fence elsewhere. The logistics for a Referee's Clinic are roughly the same as those for the Coaches Clinics, and you can get more information on both by contacting the national office.

Finally, if you're in one of the fortunate divisions that has a scholastic program, exert every effort to liaise with the leader of that program and with its students. Be willing to visit their practices and fence with them. Don't just invite them to tournaments, but offer to go and get them. Put tournaments on the schedule that will be attractive to them, fit in with their time constraints, and will comport with their skill level. If the program has a competitive season, then how about this for an idea: get a group together and go cheer for the home team when they have a meet! You can't help but make the fencers feel good, and who better than you to explain what's going on to their thoroughly bewildered parents?

A word of caution, though. Don't expect any of this to get you more than handful of fresh faces in any given season. Three-fourths of the folks in local fencing classes will satisfy their curiosity in a few months and move on, most of the high school fencers will go away to college, and local college fencers will display a distressing tendency to graduate and get jobs in other parts of the country. Moreover, many fence purely as an extracurricular experience and won't continue once out of school. Don't get discouraged, though, for if you think about it, an influx of even three or four new, enthusiastic fencers into a small division every season will make a significant impact.

Or, you can just watch your division continue in its graveyard spiral until the USFA comes along to pound a stake in its heart.

Off camera, a wolf howls.

-FADE TO BLACK-

My Turn

continued from page 11

contend with armor and armor crunching weapons while the latter had no armor, or virtually no armor, and light, piercing weapons.

None of the foregoing is intended as a reflection on what one observes in contemporary competition. The electrification of fencing has brought back some of the 'medieval needs,' as was so eloquently stated in the defense of women's rights by Mr. Paul Soter in the previously referenced Summer 97 issue. It may well be that the grace, artistry, strategy and elegance of classic fencing must be supplanted by the corps a corps, fleche and serious jabbing of infighting⁴ that is, apparently, required to turn on the light first.

The force diagrams shown (free body vector diagrams), where appropriate, indicate the Newtonian "equal and opposite" reactions induced by the various movements. They are, of necessity, abbreviated. An arrow pointing away from the target indicates a hindrance, just as one pointing towards the target indicates assistance. The resultant vector is the combination of two (or more) forces.

The correctness of such vector analysis cannot be verified with most traditional fencing coaches, but can be with any normal high school student.



**U.S. Fencing
Thanks
McDonald's
For Its
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As the Worlds Turn

World Qualifiers, World Championships and World Masters Games

BY ROBERT BLOCK

The little ditty to the left could well be the tournament director's lament, particularly if one contemplates the state of women's foil in the veteran category. Only eight competitors entered the veteran women's combined foil event at the Summer Nationals in Santa Clara last year. That was an omen of what was to come at NAC-H in Fort Lauderdale this spring: only five women registered for veteran foil. And NAC-H was an important competition since it meant qualifying points towards a place in the first ever veteran women's foil world championship event at La Chaux de Fonds, Switzerland in October, 1998... Does this low level of interest offer some insight into the state of veteran fencing in general, or is it just an anomaly?

Perhaps it's wrong to single out foil since the women's open event at NAC-H drew a healthy 80 competitors. In defense of the veteran women, the FIE included foil as the last event to be added to the program at La Chaux de Fonds and, since the USFA wanted to give woman foilists the same qualifying path that had already been set for men epeeists to the World Championships, it was a late addition to NAC-H. The FIE's decisions to include only two veteran events at the Worlds this year and the timing of those decisions are a reflection of the growing pains that come with the evolution of veteran fencing.

We need to bear in mind that veteran events were included for the first time in the World Fencing Championships just last year at Capetown. The FIE sanctioned a championship event in men's epee on a trial basis for three age group categories: 40-49, 50-59, and 60+. Apparently, the jury on veteran fencing is still out. At La Chaux de Fonds women's foil will get a hearing along with men's epee, which doubles the number of veteran events. That's the good news. On the downside, the FIE has constricted the age categories, the 40-49 age category has been eliminated and veteran fencing will begin at 50 years of age. Every country will be allowed to enter three competitors

in each age group.

But the word filtering back from the FIE is that the intent for the 1999 World Championship in Seoul is to hold veteran championship events in five weapons. This "intent" may become reality after the FIE meets in June, 1998, with the Seoul organizing committee to firm up program arrangements for the 1999 World Championship. If it happens, it's wonderful news for most veterans. But it appears that veteran women saber fencers will not have a hope of being included in this scenario until women's saber is established in the Olympics and the World Championships as a sanctioned event for women.

The qualifying picture for veteran men's epee is considerably more crowded. Twenty men competed in the combined veteran epee event at NAC-H and twelve of them earned qualifying points towards the World Championships.

And so, ladies and gentlemen, the race is on and the full slate of qualifiers will not be determined until the Summer Nationals deep in the heart of Texas.

Where have all the foilists gone? I would argue that this is definitely a legitimate question for veteran women fencers. Part of the answer is that some of them have probably abandoned the event for what is perceived as, shall we say, the fresher challenges of epee and saber. Hopefully, as the veteran fencing category continues to evolve (and becomes a permanent fixture in all weapons at the World Championships) women competitors will rediscover foil and the new opportunities that are unfolding for them as veterans.

Since a lot of space in this column has been devoted to juggling numbers, let's keep those digits in the air a bit longer and see if we can wring any more meaning out of them. Continuing with recent statistics for veteran women; 18 competed in epee

at Santa Clara and 7 at NAC-H, while 22 women competed in saber at Santa Clara and 11 at NAC-H. I'm not much of a number-cruncher, but it seems to me that these figures clearly indicate saber is the most popular event for veteran women followed closely by epee, with foil a weak third. Are you listening FIE?

The numbers at the same competitions for veteran men stack up quite differently. Foil beats epee as the most popular event for veteran men by a close count. At Santa Clara, 45 men competed in foil while 19 entered the event at NAC-H. Epee drew 37 entries at Santa Clara and 20 at NAC-H. Third and last, but by a relatively close margin, saber drew 30 male entries at Santa Clara and 15 at NAC-H.

OK, I'll admit that my survey is seriously flawed because it's based on only two tournaments and we all know it's easy to lie with statistics. I also forgot to mention that the Summer Nationals in

continued on following page

Santa Clara attracted a record veteran turnout and that NAC-H in Fort Lauderdale was the first circuit event to include veteran competition. The statistical results are undoubtedly skewed, yet I still think these numbers are a good indication of the current American trends in veteran fencing.

The important point to bear in mind is that veteran fencing is experiencing some minor aches and pains that come with growth, both nationally and at the world level. The FIE's ongoing experiment with events and age categories at the World Championships is a prime example. Nationally, our veteran program appears to be making steady progress in all of the weapons except women's foil, where promoting the existence of new competitive opportunities may be the stimulus needed to revitalize the event.

To ensure that our overall growth continues, American veteran fencers need to show all the support we can by turning out in healthy numbers for our age-group and combined events. Remember that we have two significant tests coming up this summer: the 1998 Summer Nationals in Austin, Texas, and the World Masters Games in Portland, Oregon.

The World Masters Games are an Olympic-style sportfest that will take place from August 9-22 for the first time ever in the USA. The Games were last held in 1994 in Brisbane, Australia, where 24,000 athletes from 71 countries participated. Fencing is one of the 25 sports that will be contested at Portland and the competition will be in individual events that are open to all veterans without any qualifying requirements. Individual competitions will be held in all weapons for both men and women (Are you listening FIE?) in the 40-49, 50-59 and 60+ age groups. The USA is the host fencing country for the World Masters Games and it is imperative that we give our full support to this, the world's premier veteran fencing competition.

Phil Reilly, fencing coordinator for the Games, is arranging for an opening ceremony to be held on Monday evening, August 16, at the

fencing venue. Individual competition will begin the following morning and run through August 20. Phil also reports that considerable interest has been expressed by American and German veterans for staging an international team match at the venue on Friday, August 21, and that teams from Great Britain, Austria, Belarus, and perhaps other countries, may participate as well.

The World Masters Games promise to be a tremendous competitive and social experience for veteran fencers, as those who have participated in previous international veteran events can well attest. Don't let the Games pass you by; they could be a once in a lifetime opportunity. Even though the "official" deadline for entry in the Games ended before this issue of AMERICAN FENCING mailed, I would strongly recommend that you contact the organizers at 1-800-984-2637 if you're not already registered and find out if there still might be a place for you in the tournament.

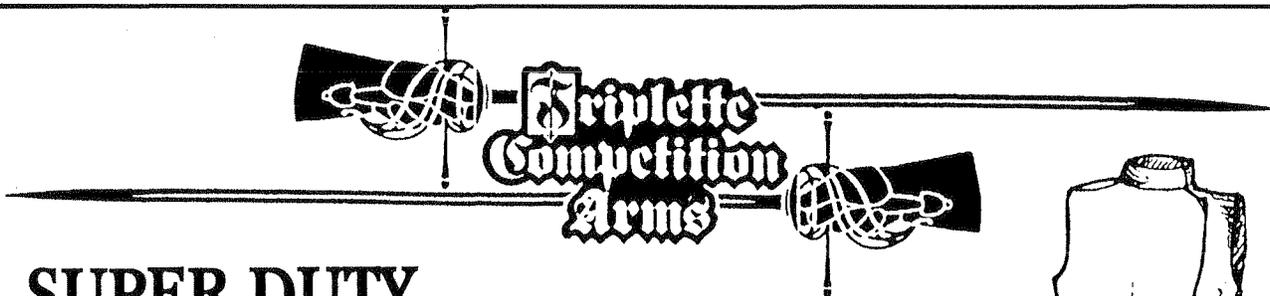
Remember, you never really know where a last minute initiative may lead until you go for it. Much of the world is turning toward Portland in August to pursue medals of a more precious sort; I hope to see you there and in Austin enjoying the pleasures of veteran fencing.

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Ever Lost a Touch When a Spectator Tripped on the Strip's Power Cord?

Cables and cords require careful attention before the competition begins.

BY JOE BYRNES

Picking up from my last outing: when considering the safety of the installation of cables, or cords, or wires, at a fencing competition, there is more to be observed than the way they lie on the floor. When checking on power cables, begin with how they are attached to the wall outlets. This is a matter that often doesn't get the attention it deserves, although that is where it all starts, at least in the hall where you are working. Check: how easily can a plug be knocked out of the wall outlet? How well does it fit in the outlet? Has it been taped into place, or protected in some fashion from being dislodged? Only then does the question of how well it adheres to the floor and how neatly it is aligned come into consideration.

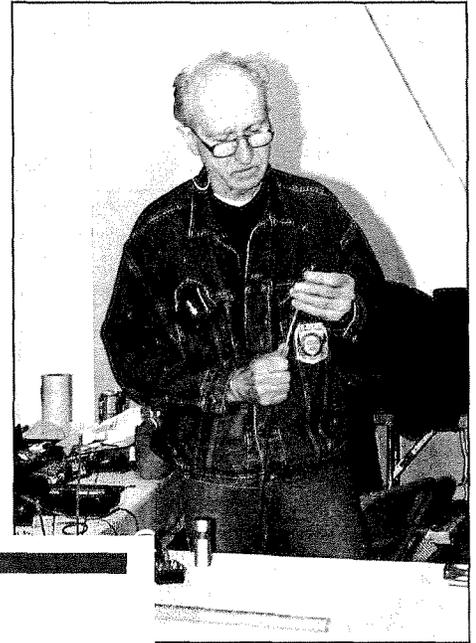
Once the cable reaches its destination, how has it been handled? Does it rise at an oblique angle to the table, begging to be tripped over? This question also applies to the floor cords from the reels. At one of those competitions I mentioned last time, I saw a whole machine taken down to the floor by someone tripping over a floor cord that angled up to the table, with no anchoring of any kind. Fortunately, the machine survived with no apparent damage; at least it was still working after the accident. One can only hope that something did not get started on the way to trouble inside.

The point is that the floor cords and the power cable on that strip were not attached even temporarily to the table legs, much less being carefully tied to them; they weren't even merely looped around them, which is about the minimum you should do. They just came up at a long sweeping slope, for all the world like mooring cables on somebody's boat down at the marina. Maybe nautically OK, but not for a fencing competition.

A frequent complaint — or excuse, in such a case as this one — from those who set out the gear, is that the floor cords aren't long enough to let them be properly tied off. I will admit that there has never been an FIE, or anybody's, specification as to how long a floor cord is supposed to be. That has allowed some suppliers to be a bit on the cheap side in furnishing the wire. However, if you will consider what that cord has to do, i.e., get the connection from the reel to the machine, it is obvious that the machine is the fixed element in the

equation. Floor cords, like the power cable, should be tied off or taped to the table legs, to prevent disastrous let's-see-if-we-can-knock-the-machine-down games. The other end of the floor cord merely has to reach the reel. And remember, please, or realize for the first time, that the reel need not be located all the way past the end of a full-length strip, as is so often seen. I wonder where people get that idea. If you stop to think about it, the reel need only be at the rear end-line, or just beyond it, these days, since nobody can go beyond that point without being touched by the ground rules. You will normally find that just about any floor cord will be long enough to accomplish that.

The floor cords, like the power cables, should be lightly held in place, on the floor, by tape. Put an "X" of tape at a few loca-



**You've seen the culprit:
floor cables in a long sweeping slope to
the scoring box, like mooring cables on
a boat down at the marina.**

tions along the run: that will usually serve. One advantage of this type of taping is that it is less likely than full-length tape to wind up wrapped permanently around the cord or cable, thus creating one of those ugly messes that we too of-

ten, alas, see when the gear is assembled for the next use.

The last of the regular wires to be found around a strip—and this one is properly a mere wire, and not a cable or cord, is the grounding wire. These can be very light wire: 18-gauge is about as heavy as they need be, and they can be much more slender. What they need is a banana plug correctly attached at one end, and some kind of small clip, alligator or crocodile, at the other. Stranded wire is always preferable to solid wire for such functions, if only because, in case of the loss of a clip, the strands can be separated, and the end tamped down on the metal strip under tape: this is a quick fix, though preferably merely temporary, for a grounding clip loss. Ground wires, like the heavier cables and cords, need to be protected from being dislodged, especially since they will normally be coming down off the table right where people, like the referee, will approach regularly. Incidentally, these days, most machines are best grounded right at the machine, rather than down at the end of the strip through a reel, even though the reel probably has a socket to take a grounding wire. Grounding through reels has occasionally created some anomalous situations, with certain machines, but all machines are designed to allow strips to be grounded directly to them.

Fencing on Film

“The Mark of Zorro” offers a contemporary cinematic first: bankable stars, great action and fencing scenes crafted by a master.

BY EILEEN DESCALLAR

Arthur draws Excalibur from a stone and a kingdom is claimed. A blade whistles as it cuts through the air and forms a “Z” on a wood panel. The air hums with the energy emitted from green and red light sabers. These are the images that have drawn many of

us to pick up our first fencing weapon. As fencers we may complain that there is a wide discrepancy between what we see on the screen and what we learn in the salle, but compare the number of fencers who were inspired by “Excalibur,” “The Mark of Zorro,” the “Star Wars” films, or “The Princess Bride” to the number of fencers initially inspired by Olympic coverage. We can’t deny the positive impact the film industry has had in building interest for our sport. And there are those in the film industry who keep both the sport and romanticism of fencing in mind.

Mark Ivie is among them. Ivie went from being a Southern California Division USFA rated fencer to a box office sword double and on to become the assistant to one of the film industry’s top Sword Masters. Ivie has been working for the past nine years as an assistant Sword Master and sword stunt double under well known sword choreographer Robert “Bob” Anderson. Anderson is a former Olympian who has also coached six Olympic fencing teams for Great Britain. His work can be seen in such films

as “The Master of Ballantrae” (on which he worked with Errol Flynn), “The Empire Strikes Back,” “Return of the Jedi” and “The Princess Bride,” I interviewed Ivie, who has now been working with Anderson since 1989, about the world of sword choreography, working with Anderson, and Ivie’s experience on “The Mask of Zorro.”

Q: How did you start fencing?

My interest started when I was 13 or 14, when I started reading books like “The Three Musketeers” and “Prisoner of Zenda” or stories about Camelot, Merlin, King Arthur. It really brought a sense of chivalry, romanticism, that attracted me. So when I was in college and looked through the class list and saw fencing, I was excited. I took the class — twice — once in sabre, once in foil and I enjoyed it. A lot.

Q: How did you make the transition to choreography and stunt work?

Through Buzz Hurst, my fencing coach at the time, I heard about a film that [then Paramount Pictures] was doing called “By the Sword.” They were originally going to be filming and casting in New York but for some reason decided to film here instead. The auditions were by invitation, only the top fencers were invited and I didn’t think I was on the list because I’d only been fencing for two years. My teammate Grant Roberts went down and I went to watch. The audition was held and everyone was told they would be contacted if they were needed. A lot of my friends were called and were going to be extras.

I found out later that my name was on the list and no one bothered to tell me. It worked out for the best, though, because a couple of weeks later Buzz found out that some of the fencers, the doubles, were not going to be able to make the time commitment. He sensed that I might make a good double for Eric Roberts [“By the Sword” lead actor] and set up a contact without telling me it was an audition to be a double. I went to the audition and when I walked in, Bob [Anderson] was there and his reaction was, “Oh my God, who is this guy?” Then he was walking around me saying things like, “Perfect bone structure, perfect hair!”

[Laughs] So I was wondering who he was, what he



wanted with me.

They didn't really say, "We want you to double Eric." Bob was very cautious about promising things. He said, "Well, we think we'd like to use you, at least as an extra — background — you know, train you and see how you do." They eventually did a screen test with Eric and me in wardrobe and makeup. The resemblance was striking.

Q: Is it common for fencers to cross over to acting?

It is uncommon because fencers aren't

out really well so he was very pleased to use me again.

I think we work well together, we have a connection. People often comment, and think, that we're father and son because we have similar facial characteristics and mannerisms.

Q: Anderson's sport and cinematic credentials are impressive. How did you feel about working with the Master?

I was in awe and feeling very privileged being able to know him, to work with

Some choreographers don't work that way. Bob makes his fencing very real. You aim at the body, the torso, where with a lot of other fencing choreographers you see it up in the air, they clack the swords in the middle then they go lower. But this is nothing like that, this is as if you were fencing for real, and hence you have to really stress the safety.

Q: Are there any sport fencing actions that translate directly to the screen?

There are additional body movements but it's mostly fencing. Bob was the British Na-



normally actors or extras and when you think about it most of these films are period pieces: a lot of times it's with big battle scenes. It's not modern fencing. Films that use modern fencing don't have a lot of fencing in it. Several TV shows have had fencing, such as "Star Trek." Even "Dead Poet's Society" had a little fencing scene but just with the two main actors. They generally don't show a lot [of fencers].

Q: So AMERICAN FENCING reader should stick to fencing?

They certainly have the basic skills for being able to carry it over to theatrical fencing. They just have to have the belief and desire to go for it and it's not an easy thing to break into. I just got very lucky.

Q: How did your career evolve in work as Anderson's assistant?

When I first met him, he'd gone through the whole thing about the bone structure and he finally said, "Oh yes, can you fence? Let's see how you do." He taught me a couple of routines that I was able to do and remember quickly. He said, "Not bad." I guess he was impressed a little with the fact that I learned them so quickly. We started to train at Westside [Westside Fencing Center, Culver City, CA] and I was learning the moves from both sides. So I eventually knew 30 routines backwards and forwards and could keep them straight in my head. It just worked

him.

And every time he'd call [about a job] I'd be amazed he would call. I've taken care of his mail and he'd get offers from people willing to work with him for free. People who've studied fencing, theatrical combat, and make it their life and he chose me.

Q: Have you ever faced off against Anderson in a modern fencing bout?

No. [Laughs] He doesn't fence anymore, he teaches; as he says he's "put in his time."

Q: Has your sport background helped in your film work?

Modern fencing basics helped a lot but [film fencing] is different in that all of your moves in fencing obviously are meant to not show your opponent what you're doing. You do it with the least amount of movement. Although you still want that same kind of feeling of expertise and finesse, you need to make the movements bigger so the camera and the audience recognize them. Things are exaggerated but they still need to be done with the same sort of style as a fencer would, to be real.



tional fencing Olympic coach and so he approaches it in terms [of] total fencing style ... "sixte, quarte" ... whatever it is. He uses all the terms. He teaches how to move your feet. It is a lesson. It's a quick study in fencing.

Q: Do you ever worry about your safety since you're working without a mask?

Sometimes, but it is something you train [the actors to be aware of the danger]. Before even putting a blade in their hand, there's [an emphasis on] safety and you constantly work with them. So they are able to temper the blows a bit.

It becomes reflex after a while. When you are first training the actor, or actress, or the stunt men, they don't know when to stop or pull a punch. So you have to work with them constantly. If they're hitting too hard it means they're trying to hit you instead of the blade. You can make it look very real by hitting the blade without trying to hit the person. It is a constant thing to have to work on but once you get it to that point [Ivie moves his hand in a flowing gesture imitating blade action] if the parry is not there you can stop in time.

The actors in "Zorro" were awesome in their ability to stop, to hold back.

Q: How did you train the cast for "The Mark of Zorro"?

You really have to focus in and be very efficient in your training. It's very much accelerated. Depending upon who you're training and how much time you have, you work with them as best they can learn. You have very little of their time because they might get to location a month before filming, but they also have to work with wardrobe, they have to rehearse their lines, work with the director, and all the other press time they have to spend.

The stunt men trained almost every day, for 4-5 hours each day. We would get each of the actors for about one and a half to two hours a day, from three to six days a week. We would then overlap some of the training time to get the actors together to work out their routine with each other once they had most of it down on their own. The cast of "Zorro" was very eager and inspired and did a tremendous job. All of their hard work shows on the screen.

Q: Did anyone have any prior fencing or theatrical fencing experience?

Matt Letscher [Captain Harrison Love in "The Mask of Zorro"] had a little bit of fencing and karate. Antonio [Banderas] had two months of training in Spain so he was amazing. With the training, Bob's routines, and his abilities and enthusiasm, he was very

good, excellent.

Bob's been quoted as having said, "Not since Errol Flynn have I worked with anyone as natural with the sword as Antonio."

Q: Do you think the film's swordplay will appeal to fencers?

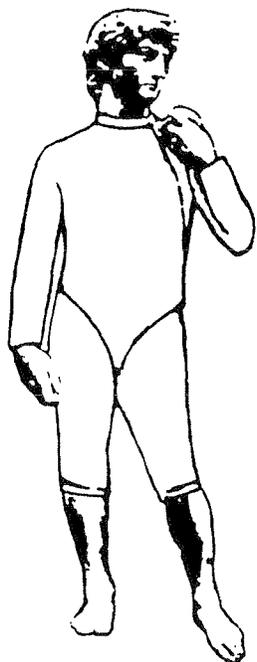
The choreography is real in terms of its intent and intensity, yet, in some ways it's not real, because you wouldn't be fighting a duel for five minutes because, first of all your arm would drop off, especially with the swords they used. That's artistic license for entertainment value.

I think fencers will be able to look at this and appreciate it because I think it is really well done in terms of skill. It has an incredible intensity, a lot of the scenes are even better than "Princess Bride."

"The Mask of Zorro" opens July 17th, 1998 starring Antonio Banderas and Anthony Hopkins. Mark Ivie doubles for Anthony Hopkins as the older Zorro. Ivie's projects have included "By the Sword," "Best of the Best II," Disney's "The Three Musketeers" and "First Knight." He recently finished work with Bob Anderson on Disney's remake of the "Parent Trap" taking over as Sword Master when Anderson had to leave the production early. Ivie can also be seen starring as himself at his local USFA tournaments.

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CHIEF OF MISSION'S REPORT

1998

Junior & Cadet World Championships

BY GEORGE KOLOMBATOVICH

The 1998 Junior and Cadet World Championships were held in Valencia, Venezuela, from April 7-13. This USA team was substantially different from previous teams; this team had no "tourists" who were going on an excursion; this team went to complete a job and they did all they could to finish that job in a professional manner. Every member of the USFA should take great pride in the accomplishments of our fencers at these championships. The USFA programs that are assisting our fencers are really producing results.

Just before the trip we learned that woman foilist Iris Zimmermann, last year's Cadet World Champion and Silver Medalist in the Junior World Championships, would be unable to fence due to a knee injury that required surgery. We were all so pleased that Iris decided to go with us anyway. In what was sure to have been an emotional roller coaster for her, Iris was a continuously uplifting spirit for the entire team. (Iris is recovering, and she will be back!)

Here is our journal:
FRIDAY, APRIL 3: Manager Nancy Anderson arrived in Valencia. Her arrival a day before the rest of us allowed her to arrange everything for the rest of us. The normal problems a group of our size has about the hotel, transportation, venue, training times (Nancy was able to arrange an extra training time each day), et cetera, were solved before we arrived.

SATURDAY, APRIL 4: Three different groups, a total of twenty-nine people, were to arrive in Caracas within a few minutes of each other; with one flight being canceled, it didn't happen. Contingency plans were put into effect and after a very long trip we



arrived, very tired, at our hotel at 5:00 a.m. A formerly worried and now just tired Manager told us of the double training and it was quickly decided that the morning session would not be at all wise. The equipment of Tuesday's competitors was given to our armorers, Dan DeChaine and Matthew Porter, who worked on it until Sunday night. The fencers, in a most somnambulant state, were very cooperative — an excellent indication of the wonderful attitude that was shown so frequently

throughout the trip.

SUNDAY, APRIL 5: A meeting was held at noon
continued on following page

Photos: Above, the team gathers for a group shot. Left, Andrea Ament in the Cadet Women's Foil. All photos in this section taken by George Masin.



Above: Kelsey fends off an attack in Junior Men's Epee. Right, the Women's Epee Team receives their bronze medal. Lower right, Jessie Burke drives the team to victory. Opposite page.

Top Center, the Women's Epee Team on the award stand. Top right, Errin Smart in Junior Women's Foil. Middle, Scott Rostal goes for the toe. Lower, Trainer Peter Harmer.

for all those that had already arrived. What each person was there to do and the importance of each person doing everything possible to help others while training and competing was discussed. DeChaine explained the requirements of a full FIE equipment inspection. Our trainer Peter Harmer explained the great importance of drinking plenty of water, as the venue was not air-conditioned. John Heil, our sport's psychologist, spoke about how he was willing to help.

MONDAY, APRIL 6: The rest of our delegation arrived at 2:30 a.m. and were met by Nancy and me. All checked in quickly and were soon off to bed. Training, later that day, took place at the venue. Thanks to the hospitality of the hotel, some training was held in a catering room off the lobby.

Fencing at the venue was in one of four buildings, part of our host country's National Training Center, their OTC. During the actual tournament, it was not uncommon to have team members competing in three different buildings at the same time.

All buildings had the same type of "air conditioning." Two opposite



ends of each building had walls that had open brick work on the top half so that air could come through, if there were to be a breeze. During the day, it was well over 90 degrees with 100% humidity in each room. "Hot and humid" does not begin to describe the conditions we all had to endure. The USA athletes,

coaches, and the rest of the cadre accepted that which we could not change with great poise — and we all drank gallons and gallons of water.

This was the day of the meeting of the Chiefs of Mission. This is where I learned, amongst numerous details about the tournament, that nine of the ten individual championships would be held at different times than originally scheduled.

At 2:00 p.m. the second USA team meeting was held for those who arrived in the second wave. The same information was presented as in the first meeting and all cadre were given copies of the new schedule. Following the meeting, most of the team went to train at the venue.

TUESDAY, APRIL 7 — CADET WOMEN'S EPEE

AND CADET MEN'S SABRE:

Two of our Women's Epee Fencers made the finals. Andrea Ament placed sixth and Kate Rudkin, who lost 14-15 to the eventual champion, was seventh. Arlene Stevens was fifteenth. Refereeing for the entire tournament was provided by referees invited by the FIE. Referee assignments were, at least some of the time, done by computer. The one "trend" that was seen in Epee was

more calls for corps + corps, both for using it to avoid the counter-action of the opponent and for jostling. (The USFA referees who were brought to the championships by the FIE, Emik Kaidanov, Marcos Lucchetti, and Greg Massialas, were always supportive — to the extent that their positions allowed.)

In Men's Sabre, both Daniel Pratt and James Wallen lost in the table of thirty-two, both by scores of 14-15. Daniel ended up twenty-seventh and James, thirty-first. Ivan Lee made it to the Final Four. It was especially nice to see one of our fencers in the final four. Since the Final Fours were held in the evening,





it was a few degrees less hot, but hot nevertheless. Special congratulations to Ivan Lee for his Bronze Medal. He showed tremendous maturity on the strip for one who has only fenced for a few years. He lost to the eventual winner 12-15. Also special congratulations to the rest of the team; everyone was there to cheer for Ivan, and the spirit shown was outstanding. Refereeing in sabre showed a significant tendency to call the attack into preparation. If both fencers made an advance lunge and one made no immediate start to the extension of the arm, it was called against that fencer. Timing was very tight.

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 8 — CADET MEN'S EPEE AND CADET WOMEN'S FOIL: In the Epee, Soren Thompson placed thirty-fourth. It was unfortunate that Seth Kelsey and Jan Viviani had to meet in the table of 32. As always, these situations are the double-edged sword: we are guaranteed to advance someone to the next round while we are guaranteed to lose someone. Jan placed thirty-second. Soren lost in the table of 16 to the eventual Silver Medalist and finished in tenth place.

In women's foil, Melanie Takagi placed thirty-third. As with this day's Epee, two of ours again met in the table of 32. Andrea Ament and Katie Cavan drew each other. Andrea came out ahead as Katie placed eighteenth. Andrea lost in the 16 to finish fifteenth.

One aspect of refereeing for foil that is continuing to change is the use of far more cards for corps + corps and reversing the shoulder; the referees are applying the rules in these regards.

THURSDAY, APRIL 9 — JUNIOR WOMEN'S EPEE AND CADET MEN'S FOIL: Jessica Burke made it to the round of 16 when she lost to one of the Koreans, an eventual Bronze Medalist; she placed fifteenth. (Korea, once again, has some very strong fencers and their team ended up being seeded first in the team competition.) Kate Rudkin finished forty-second and Arlene Stevens was thirty-fifth.

Joe Fisher advanced into the 32 where he lost a close one to finish twenty-second. Steven Gerberman lost his first DE bout to place forty-second. Roland Breden's indicators were just short of qualifying into the DE

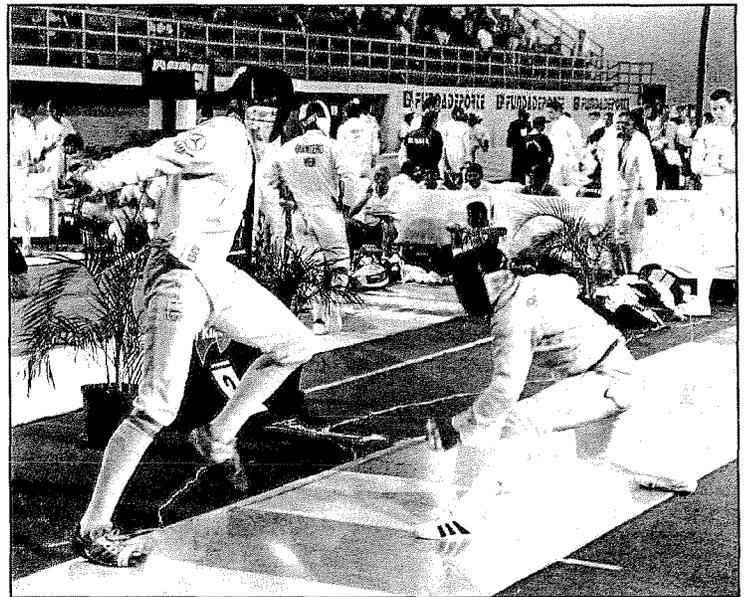
table; he placed fiftieth.

This was also the day of the FIE Calendar Meeting.

Some important things came up specifically regarding Women's Sabre. This coming season, there will be both Junior and Senior World Cups for Women's Sabre. One of them will be held at the same time as the Csaba Elthes Men's Sabre World Cup in New York City in March of 1999. In 2000, the championships after the next one, Women's Sabre will be part of the Junior/Cadet World Championships.

FRIDAY, APRIL 10 — JUNIOR MEN'S EPEE AND JUNIOR MEN'S SABRE:

Rashaan Greenhouse received a Yellow Card at the start of his DE bout in the table of 64 for a weapon that would not support the 750-gram weight. This turned



out to be a most important card; with the score at 14-14, both fencers fleched, and both hit with their points and their knees. Though neither fencer fell and both simply rubbed their knee, the referee, most incorrectly, gave both a card, Yellow to Greenhouse's opponent and Red to Greenhouse. He placed forty-eighth.

The sabre fencers were Patrick Durkan, Aki Spencer-El, and Keeth Smart. Smart was exceptionally strong in the pool to earn first seed. In his bout in the table of 16, he defeated a Hungarian who was a Bronze Medalist last year. This fencer complained about a number of calls and at the end of the bout kicked his mask earning him a Black Card. (This is included in my report only because he would not have been thrown out a few years ago for such an offense.) Keeth



lost in the final to the eventual Silver Medalist and placed fifth. Aki did well until the finals. In his bout to get into the final four, the referee made three bad calls near the end, all against Spencer-El. (This referee was subsequently observed being erratic a number of times.) The old concept of assuming you are losing by many touches before the bout even starts still holds true. Pat lost his first bout in the sixty-four to place thirty-ninth. Congratulations to our two finalists, Smart and Spencer-El.

SATURDAY, APRIL 11 — JUNIOR MEN'S FOIL AND JUNIOR WOMEN'S FOIL: Tim Chang made it into the table of 32 when he drew the eventual Silver Medalist. Tim finished in nineteenth place. Jed Dupree lost his one DE bout in the table of



The Wave

64; he finished in fortieth place. Ayo Griffin also lost his first bout in the first table; he placed fifty-third. Andrea Ament (in her third competition in unbelievable heat and humidity), Susan Jennings, and Erinn Smart represented the Women's Team. Andrea and Susan both won in the table of 64 and then lost in the table of 32. They placed, respectively, twenty-ninth and thirtieth. Smart, who received a mild concussion the evening before, was fencing rather well until she ran into card trouble. In her bout in the table of 16, the referee gave three cards for corps a corps and four for bringing the rear shoulder in front of the forward shoulder — two to her opponent and five to Erinn. Erinn ended up losing 14-15 in the additional minute to finish in ninth place.

SUNDAY, APRIL 12 — ALL TEAMS: All team matches were Direct Elimination Competitions. All matches except the Bronze and Gold Medal matches were finished today. Special recognition is given to all team members when they were not fencing; their support and very loud cheering were most

commendable and most encouraging to those competing.

The Men's Epee Team of Greenhouse, Kelsey, Rostal, and Viviani were seeded ninth. In their first match, Germany jumped into an early lead, our team came back but it was a case of "too little, too late." Final score: Germany 45, USA 36.

Men's Foil had Chang, Dupree, Fisher, and Griffin. Seeded twelfth they drew Argentina to get into the table of 16: USA 45, Argentina 15. In the 16, Russia proved too strong: Russia 45, USA 27. The US finished twelfth.

The Women's Foil Team of Ament, Jennings, Smart, and Takagi were seeded seventh and drew Great Britain. A most frustrating match ensued. Great Britain 45, USA 44. This put our team in ninth place.

Men's Sabre was seeded sixth. Our fencers were Durkan, Lee, Smart, and Spencer-El. The first opponent in the table of 16 was Saudi Arabia. USA dominated with a 45-24 win. In the table of 8, France was the opponent. This was a seesaw battle the whole way with the Red, White, and Blue coming out ahead of the Blue, White, and Red; USA 45, France 44. Perennial power Hungary was next, and the winner would be in the Gold Medal Match. We almost did it. Hungary 45, USA 41. We would be in the Bronze Medal Match on Monday and Russia would be our opponent.

Women's Epee consisted of Burke, Cavan, Rudkin, and Stevens. They were seeded eighth and had a bye in the table of 32. In the 16, they drew a very strong Canadian team, but our fencers were the stronger. USA 45, Canada 38. When you are seeded eighth you know one thing for sure — you have to get past the top seed if you want a medal. Korea was our opponent in the table of 8. In a real upset, the USA women pulled it off. USA 45, Korea 39. To get into the Gold Medal Match, we had to face France. It was in our grasp, but we let it slip away. France 45, USA 41. We would have to face Poland on Monday for the Bronze Medal.

That we had two teams in the fight for medals the next day was encouraging. That the Women's Epee Team and the Men's Sabre Team just missed getting into the Gold Medal matches was frustrating, but it was also very encouraging to see that the USA is a real player now.

For this evening, Nancy Anderson had arranged a Team Dinner at a typically Venezuelan restaurant. A most enjoyable time was had by all. It was certain that visions of

medals occupied many of our thoughts.

MONDAY, APRIL 13 — TEAM MATCHES FOR THE MEDALS: Every person in our delegation was present to cheer on the teams. And they did it very well!

Sabre stayed close the entire match. The spirit on both teams was very high. As always in the relay format, it really wasn't over until the last touch. No one ever let down. We were sooo close to defeating Russia. Russia 45, USA 42. Fourth place is a most respectable finish, ahead of many very strong countries.

Women's Epee was close until about the sixth bout when the USA started pulling ahead. Cheers of "Hit the road, Jack ..." and "Warm up the bus!" were frequent and loud. The team got a lead and kept increasing it, and increasing it, and ... USA 45, Poland 32. In the bus back to the hotel, Marx called out to me and asked, "When was the last time a USA Team won a medal at a World Championships?" I responded with: "I'm not sure, but it was certainly before any of our fencers was even born!" Congratulations to our Bronze Medal winners!

The party was right after the team finals and our team had much to celebrate. Unfortunately, there was little time for partying; our bus was to leave at 2:00 a.m. It was a good trip. Yes, it was HOT. Yes, the USA has REAL FENCERS.

Special recognition and thanks goes to our entire cadre. All of the coaches were so helpful to the entire team effort. Our "official coaches" were Simon Gershon, Aladar Kogler, Buckie Leach, Michael Marx, and Vladimir Nazlimov. They were joined by additional coaches, Arkady Burdan, Janos Gasparin, Yuri Gelman, Ed Korfanty, Boris Sokol, and Zoran Tulum. With fencing frequently going on in three different buildings, it was especially nice to have so many talented coaches with us. Manager Nancy Anderson pulled off miracle after miracle to make everything run so smoothly; she made us all look good. Peter Harmer is such a talented trainer and he appeared to be everywhere at once. John Heil's work as the Team Psychologist is so important — and so productive; every top-level fencer should take advantage of his services. We also had three non-coaching volunteers with us. I cannot sufficiently praise George Masin (Perennial Assistant Everything), Matthew Porter (a very talented armorer), and Lonnie Sellers (an exceptional physical therapist) for their excellent work, good humor, and spirit.

John Allaire: the Man Behind the Trophy

The Men's Foil Trophy bears his name but he was never our national foil champion.

BY ANDY SHAW, USFA HISTORIAN

The original US Three Weapon Team trophy was named for US Olympic medalist George Calnan who was killed in the crash of the dirigible, Akron, in 1933. The Metropolitan Division Three Weapon Team Trophy was created in honor of John Allaire and was awarded at a special team competition that the AFLA Secretary's Newsletter of 1937 reported "was contested annually among the amateur fencers whose competitions he [Allaire] arranged and managed and officiated for nearly thirty years."

Some years later when the Met Division eliminated the Three Weapon Team event from its schedule, the Allaire Trophy was switched to an award for the National Men's Foil Champion.

After graduating from school, Allaire became a "runner" on Wall Street, carrying messages between the Stock Exchange and its member companies. He continued his education with night classes

at Cooper Union where he met Annie Todd in his math class. They were married in 1886. Allaire remembered those times: "I went to see Edwin Booth in 'Hamlet,' at the old Winter Garden on Broadway and Bond Street. In the fight Booth was so swift, graceful, deadly and beautiful that I thought I'd like to do that. I was at Cooper Union and we had some fencing there, but the instructor didn't know much. I asked him why he fenced on only one side of the blade. He didn't know. All he knew was *carte*. He had never heard of *tierce*. So I joined the [New York] Turnverein."

At the March 2, 1892 meeting of the newly formed AFLA, just weeks before their first National Championships, William Scott O'Connor (soon to be the AFLA's first foil champion) proposed Allaire for membership. His nomination was seconded by William T. Heintz, the second AFLA Foil Champion. In the 1894 and 1897 National Championships, Allaire finished third in sabre, but Allaire's primary contributions were on the side of the strip.

He was a highly regarded referee for more than 30 years and was National Bout Committee Chairman for 26 years. He was served as Vice President of the AFLA from 1912 to 1929.

In addition to fencing for the Turnverein, Allaire belonged to the Fencers Club, the New York Athletic Club and the Saltus Club. In 1909 Allaire won his only US National gold medal at the National (Epee) Dueling Sword Team Championships winning the J. Sanford Saltus Cup for the New York Turnverein with teammates Paul Benzenberg and George Reimherr.



Shaw thanks great grandson Robert Allaire, Robert's mother Annie Todd Gardner, and granddaughter Mrs. Galen White for assisting in his research.

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Let's Hear It For Regionalization

An Idea Whose Time Has Come

BY ERIC ROSENBERG

The good news is that fencing is growing in the United States. With the influx of qualified coaches and the opening of many new clubs, we are seeing a significant increase in the opportunity for people all over the country to get a taste of (and inevitably get addicted to) fencing. The bad news is that this rapid growth has made it increasingly difficult and more expensive for fencers to identify and participate in competitions suitable to their level of development.

An examination of the North American Cup (NAC) tournament system clearly illustrates this problem. At first glance, the NAC's seem to have a valid *raison d'être* — national tournaments open to all competitors for the purpose of selecting teams, while at the same time presenting an opportunity for fencers from "Anywhere," USA to test their mettle against the best in the country.

Yet in reality, these national competitions fall far short of these goals. First, any fencer, regardless of his or her skill level (perhaps without ever having competed at the divisional level) can enter one of these events. As a result, entries have become bloated with ill-

prepared and overmatched competitors (over 50 % of whom face elimination after 5 or 6 five touch bouts and one direct elimination round), simply because they can afford the proverbial "price of admission." Consequently, the majority of these competitors fall victim to the severe direct elimination formats (ironically necessitated by their very presence) and marginally benefit from the experience. As for the elite fencers, they frequently sail through these events without meeting someone of comparable skill until the finals. For them, NAC's represent a lost opportunity to gain experience and be measured against the majority of their strongest rivals. Increasingly, as more of our best fencers qualify for national teams through World Cup Competition, they eschew the NAC's because of their limited training value and high cost.

As a developmental coach, it has always been one of my goals to design a tournament schedule for my fencers that would allow them to get at least 150 competitive bouts per season against opponents of comparable age and skill level. Internationally, this is generally accepted as a standard goal in a typical training paradigm. The challenge has always been how to create these opportunities for both my nascent and advanced fencers at a reasonable expense of time and money. I am convinced that the answer lies in a progressive system based on regional competition.

Regionalization would involve a multi-phased process that I will briefly outline:

PHASE 1: DEFINING AND CREATING REGIONAL INFRASTRUCTURE

Identify all significant operating fencing centers (i.e.: clubs and schools) throughout the country via demographic analysis of USFA memberships and local/national competition entries. The object of this analysis would be to correlate percentages of various age cate-

continued on page 32



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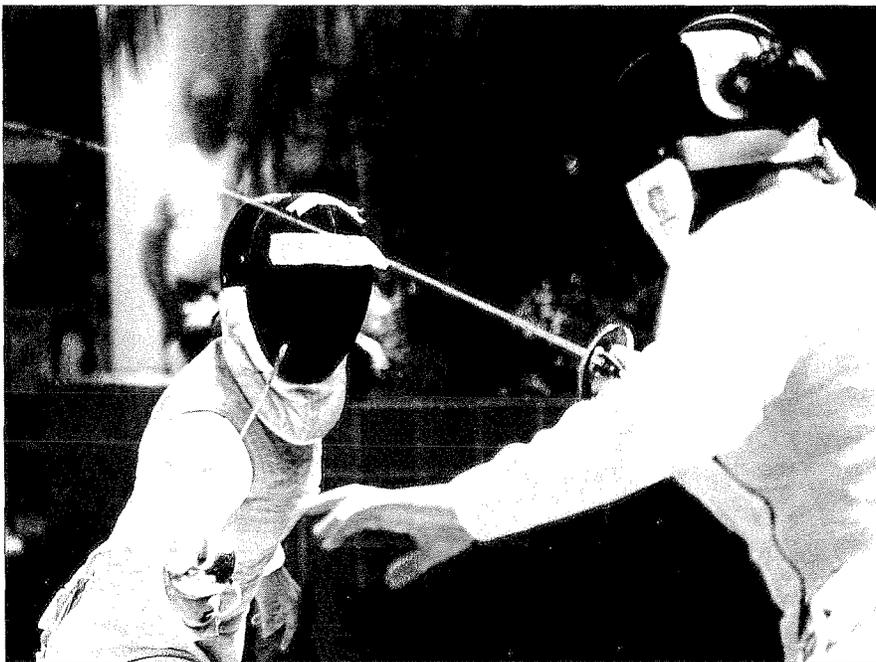
BY DAVID LITTELL

Fencing with glasses is no fun. Fogging, dripping, selecting a mask that fits over them—only to have the mask knock them off anyway, are problems that every bespectacled fencer faces. When I was competing, I wore contact lenses. This worked much better, but the occasional loss of a lens, red eyes, and simply remembering to bring all the appropriate paraphernalia, wasn't much of an improvement. Then there was the time that I got an eye infection from the contacts one week before the world championships and I almost couldn't go.

Today, I am not competing, but I do fence regularly. And since Cliff Bayer came to town, I've worked hard to stay in some kind of shape so that he doesn't completely humiliate me on the strip. As I've gotten older, wearing contacts has become more uncomfortable, so recently I've been stuck fencing with glasses. Glasses don't fit the rest of my hurry-up life style either.

I learned about laser surgery when a friend of mine, Michael Johnson, began to work for TLC 20/20 Laser Services. I learned about the new procedures performed with an excimer laser which reshapes the cornea with a cold laser process without any direct contact with the eye. The TLC 20/20 Centers around the country use an FDA approved Visx Star excimer laser to perform an FDA approved

procedure called PRK. With PRK, the eye is simply opened, and the laser flattens the cornea to eliminate nearsightedness. Astigmatism can be treated, as well.



Upon hearing that the procedure was safe (the laser works a molecule at a time), accurate (95% of those treated end up with eyesight of 20/40 or better), and has a relatively short recovery time, I mustered the courage to at least make an appointment to be evaluated. At my intake, Steven B. Siepser, M.D., the doctor who would perform my surgery, first said that I was a perfect candidate for the procedure. At 43, my nearsightedness was -3 diopters in each eye and stable. Today they can treat eyesight that is much worse, but at my level, the procedure is highly likely to be completely successful. He did remind me that the sur-

gery will not cure presbyopia, a condition that affects many over 40 and that requires additional correction for reading (most nearsighted people end up wearing bifocals). Assuming that I get this condition in a few years, I would still need reading glasses.

He also said that he wanted to use a newer procedure on me called LASIK. Instead of working on the surface of the cornea, with LASIK, a thin flap is cut with a motor-powered blade called a micro keratome. Then the excimer laser reshapes the cornea (just like with PRK) and then the flap is folded back into place. He said that he finds this procedure superior to PRK primarily because of the speedier recovery time. Most people find that by the next day, they have little or no discomfort, since the outer protective layer has not been disturbed and does not have to grow back. Even though the doctor's

confidence was intoxicating, I still wasn't too sure about LASIK. The laser was scary enough, but cutting a flap? That was quite a different story. Dr. Siepser assured me that this was the procedure that I would want to have. He said the primary additional risk to LASIK, although quite small, was that the flap could be imperfect. If this occurred, the flap would simply be returned to its original position and he would try again in three months.

He seemed so confident, but I wasn't so sure. I said, "You know your talking about my eyes, window on the world,

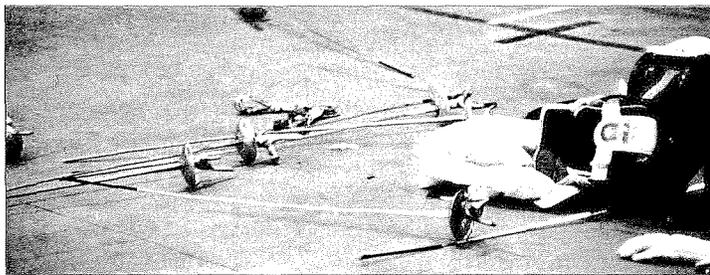
an integral part of my ability to work, fence, etc. What your saying is that your going to flap and zap my precious little eyeballs. My mind may be saying yes, but my body is saying don't even think about it!" Well after about 10 more minutes of questions and answers I felt better. I made the appointment to have it done, but I wasn't deciding for sure until I called several patients to whom they referred me. I also felt a little better when he said that it was quite natural to be nervous, and it wouldn't be normal not to be concerned.

Before having the procedure I did talk to

continued on following page

a patient who had had Lasik surgery. She was a doctor, who had extreme nearsightedness. She was absolutely thrilled with her results. Her post-operative eyesight was better than it had been even with correction. She also said that looking through microscopes and other instruments had become much easier. She said having the doctor work on her eyes when she was conscious was difficult, but by the next day she was fine.

Confident that the risks were minimal, and feeling obligated to keep the appointment, I took my reluctant body for the surgery. I took a friend to drive me home, and planned to take the next day off for physical and emotional recovery. When asked by the staff how I was feeling, I had a one word response, "Terrified!" It helped that the intake process was informative,



I learned exactly what would happen and what I needed to do for aftercare, which primarily involved three different eye drops, four times a day for a week. She also said that for three days after the surgery, I needed to be sure not to rub my eyes or to engage in any activities where the odds of getting hit in the eye were good. The next step was to retake a map of my cornea, to ensure that nothing had changed since my previous visit. The laser is programmed based on this corneal map. Then the doctor double checked my eyes, put in numbing eyedrops so that I wouldn't feel any pain, and said let's go. The last few minutes were difficult, and I said good bye to my eyeballs in their present form.

I can't say that I enjoyed the procedure. It was fast, and there wasn't any pain. But I found it difficult to stay in the chair, while my right eye was opened and the cutting instrument applied pressure to my eye. My vision went dark, and then I could see again as the flap went back. The doctor steadily reported what was happening and kept telling me how great I was doing. The flap was good, and the laser did it's work. I had to look at a light to keep my eye steady. The only reason I knew that the laser was working was that it made a loud clacking sound. Then Dr. Siepser put the flap back, and spent two minutes, patting it to be sure that it adhered properly. Now on the next eye. Here, the doctor said that my eye was moving and I needed to relax. Well, I had been breathing my brains out, and had run out of ideas of how to relax. In fact, running out the room was starting to cross my mind. His assistant Lynn DeCanzio asked if it would help if she held my hand, and in my most macho voice I said, "Yes, I would like that." Believe me it helped! We went through the same procedure on the left eye and then it was over. What a relief. The whole procedure took less than 30 minutes.

Dr. Siepser said, "What time is it?" Lo and behold I could read the clock! The assistant snapped a Polaroid of me and the doctor, they presented me with a videotape of the procedure, and I made my next day follow-up appointment. My eyes burned and light was uncomfortable. Everyone double checked how I was doing, and said congratulations. They sent me home with sunglasses, a nifty fanny pack with all the eye drops that I would need in the next week and detailed after-care instructions. They also sent me home with a tee shirt that said "I've been zapped." Even though the experience was

difficult, I felt that I had shared it with a very competent and caring staff.

When I got home, I was extremely uncomfortable for about three hours. After that it was gone, completely gone. I went for a walk in the early evening and by the next morning I woke up thoroughly amazed. I went into the woods just to look at the birds through my new eyes. That day I had my first follow-up, and Dr. Siepser said that he could hardly see the flap. My vision that day was 20/15, significantly better than it had been with glasses. For the next week, each day my vision differed slightly. Long range stayed excellent, but for mid-range vision, it took a moment to get focused. Reading sometimes seemed blurred. However, from the first day forward, I was fully capable of performing daily functions without correction. After a week the inconsistencies went away and my vision — long-, mid-, and short-range — became clear. At this point I was 20/15 in one eye and 20/25 in the other. Since that time my vision has been stable and wonderful. I'm thrilled to be playing tennis and fencing with my new eyes.

David Littell, J.D. trained as an employee benefits attorney, is currently an Associate Professor at The American College in Bryn Mawr, PA where he is responsible for writing books and other course materials. He was also a member of the 1988 U.S. Olympic Fencing Team. He leads an active life fencing, coaching fencing, playing tennis, and generally running around.

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A Five Lesson Program for Sabre

This series, which began in the last issue, continues.

BY LASZLO SZEPESI

LESSON 2 — 15 TO 30 MINUTES

GOAL: Head- and side-cuts from long distance, while keeping the distance.

1. Head cut from short distance (en garde) and with lunge.
2. Thrust with lunge [deceive with thrust]
3. Hand cuts and side cuts with lunge
4. Side cut with advance lunge
5. Head cut with advance lunge.
6. Long distance: The student starts an attack with double advance and stops. After a short pause, the master, stepping back. [Repeat 8 to 10 times]
7. As in the previous exercise but with side cut; the student starts the attack with a double advance and stops. After a short pause, the master steps back while moving his hand to quinte (fifth) position. The student responds with a side cut with advance lunge.
8. Facilitative exercises for keeping the distance:

- a) The student thrusts with, increases (prolongs) the distance, lowering his hand from an extended tierce (third) position, to seconde position. The student responds with a head cut with advance lunge. [lunge, relaxes, and keeping the arm extended (maintaining the line) recovers to the en garde position in response to the master's advance. The student maintains the distance (using the blade line as a perceptual aid) while the master advances and retreats. It is easier to keep distance when moving backward. Therefore, it is advisable that after the master's first advance (which is followed by the student's recovery to the en garde position) to start an attack with two or three advances, so that the student practices two or three retreats. After 2-3 changes of direction or several fast advances from the master, the student should be permitted to relax, and subsequently, the exercises should begin again with the straight thrust with lunge. The most difficult part of the exercises is to keep distance while moving forward. The student has better "feeling" for the advance by first making a retreat. Hence, the master should first make an advance followed by retreats (accordingly, the student starts with a retreat and two advances) Later, this may become the basis for Preparatory Footwork.
- b) The master is in the blade line position, with his point quite near to the student's body. The master begins to move. If the distance incorrectly maintained, then the student will be touched by the master's point.
- c) From lunge distance, the master engages the student's blade in tierce (third) position, moving continuously forward and backward.

continued on following page

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- d) From lunge distance, the master is in the tierce en garde position and moves the student backwards and forwards. The student softly engages the master's blade in tierce and begins continuously beating the master's blade while keeping the distance. When retreating slowly, the student beats the blade quickly and frequently, and when moving backward quickly, the beats should be executed slowly and less frequently. Once the coordination of these movements is correct, when the master stops moving, the student executes a head (or side) cut with lunge.
- e) The same as the previous exercise, but with quarte (four) beats. It is advisable to execute these facilitative exercises slowly, restarting the sequence several times.
9. Lunge Distance: The master engages the student's blade in tierce. When the master terminates the blade contact by moving his hand down to seconde position, the student executes a head cut with lunge.
 10. The same exercise, but the master, at the same time as releasing the engagement, makes a retreat. The student responds by making a head cut with an advance lunge.
 11. The 9th and 10th exercises are practiced alternately. [When the engagement is released, the student attacks with head cut and lunge; when the engagement is released simultaneously with a step back, the student makes head cut with advance lunge]
 12. Lunge distance: The master engages the student's blade in tierce, moving backward and forward, then stopping. After a short pause, the master terminates the engagement (moving to seconde) and the student responds with a head cut with lunge. If the master (after the short pause) releases the engagement simultaneously with a step back, the student makes the head cut with advance lunge. The short pause is very important; it draws the student's attention to any errors made in keeping the distance. In addition, the student's concentration and focus will be sharper. As a result, the attack will be faster and more accurate.
 13. This exercise is identical with the previous one, but the master does not pause before terminating the engagement.
 14. From lunge distance with tierce engagement, the master moves the student forward and backward, then suddenly terminates contact (moving to seconde position). The student, without delay, executes a head cut with advance lunge. After the cut, the master immediately makes the tierce engagement and with advances, forcing the student to keep the distance (the student, recovering from the lunge, tries to maintain lunge distance). After some advances and retreats, either the master stops and steps back, or without stopping unexpectedly terminates the engagement. The student's response in both cases is head cut with advance lunge.
 15. Exercises 9-14, but with side cut.
 16. For cool down, 4-5 straight thrusts, then deceive with thrusts and lunge.

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World Youth Games

The U.S. Fencing Association will be sending a full delegation to the first World Youth Games to be held in Moscow, Russia, July 11-19. The team will depart for Moscow after processing in Chicago on July 8 and then return to the U.S. on July 20. The final staff selections were made by the International Committee June 6. Members of the delegation are:

Team Manager: Robert Largman

Team Captain: Emmanuil Kaidanov

Coach: Arkady Burday, Nellya Fencers, Atlanta, GA; Nat Goodhart, Rochester Fencing Centre, Rochester, NY; William Reith, Cleveland State Univ. & Alcazar Fencers Club, Cleveland, Ohio

Boy's Epee: Joshua Des Roches, Derek Snyder, Benjamin Solomon

Boy's Foil: Chris Des Roches, Steven Gerberman, Derek Menaldino
 Sabre: Colin Parker, Jason Rogers, Darrin Whitmer
 Girl's Epee: Andrea Ament, Meredith Chin, Eleanor Leighton
 Girl's Foil: Andrea Ament, Kathryn Cavan, Melanie Takagi

Carla Mae Richards Honored

At the February meeting of the USFA's Board of Directors, Director of Technical Programs Carla Mae Richards was presented with a plaque, signed by each of the Association presidents under whom she has served, honoring her 15 years of service to the Association and concurrently the 15th anniversary of the establishment of the National Office in Colorado Springs. Vice President

continued on following page

IN MEMORIAM

Helena M. Dow 1917 - 1998

Helena Mroczkowska Dow, four-time national foil champion and a U.S. Olympian, died on April 22. She was 80.

Helena Dow was a member of a remarkable Olympic family. She fenced in the 1948 Olympics in London; her late husband, Warren Dow, fenced foil in the 1936 Olympics in Berlin and was captain of the 1948 U.S. Olympic fencing team; and their son, Robert Dow, fenced sabre in the 1972 Olympics in Munich. Theirs is the only mother-father-son trio in any sport in U.S. Olympic history.

Dow began her fencing at Hofstra University and was the IWFA foil champion in 1939 and runner-up the following year. She led Hofstra to the 1939 IWFA team title.

She won the first of her four AFLA titles during her senior year in 1940. After joining the New York Fencers Club, she repeated as national champion in 1943, 1947, and 1948, and was a medalist on four other occasions. Her 1947 victory was the most memorable; for it was over Helene Mayer, who had been the 1928 Olympic champion for Germany and had previously won nine AFLA national championships. This was Mayer's only defeat for a U.S. title.

Dow also won the Metropolitan foil championship six times during the '40's, an era when this event was second in strength only to the national championship. The medals for the Metropolitan championship are now presented in her name. She was a member of four national championship foil teams for the Fencers Club.

Dow retired from competition following the 1948 Olympics, but returned to salle fencing in the 1960's at the Fencers Club. She was coach of Fairleigh Dickinson University's Rutherford campus from 1967-69. She was elected to the fencing section of the Helms Hall of Fame in 1980.

Dow used the Italian foil and her fencing was marked both by the precision of her footwork and her own personal stamina, which she retained throughout her life. She was capable of taking a lesson of an hour's duration devoted exclusively to footwork. Her coaches included her husband Warren, Aldo Nadi, and Rene Pinchart.

Her other interests included aviation (she obtained a pilot's license in the 1940's) and deep-sea fishing became a passion in the 1960's and '70's. She traveled extensively, particularly through South America.

Her outstanding trait was personal generosity. Before moving to New York City in 1984, her Westwood, NJ home overflowed most weekends for three decades with a particularly wide circle of friends which crossed three generations of American fencing. These included her husband's old teammates, friends and rivals from the



1920's and '30's; her own from the 1940's and '50's; and those of her son's from the 1960's on.

Some guests stayed for longer spells, for the "welcome" mat at the Dow's was an oversized one. When a former West Point fencer (Warren Dow had helped to re-establish its varsity) was posted to an outlying area, Helena hosted his wife for an extended stay. A visiting Olympian learned to drive in Helena's backyard. Eventually, she converted her garage to an apartment to accommodate a fencing master who was between salles. A collegiate fencer with nowhere to turn was similarly aided.

She is survived by her son Robert, his wife Christina Seix Dow, and granddaughter Lindsay.

BY JEFFREY R. TISHMAN

Ralph Zimmerman read from letters written by Carla in 1983 which spoke to the challenge and excitement of opening fencing's first real headquarters.

The United States Olympic Committee had recently established its national headquarters on land donated by the Federal Government. The USOC invited National Governing Bodies from all Olympic sports to relocate to this new Olympic Training Center in order to reduce their overhead and consolidate the amateur athletic movement in the United States.

The intervening years have witnessed staff and membership growth as well as the introduction of a host of national and international programs that have resulted in establishing American athletes as important players on the world's fencing strips.

Regionalization

continued from page 26

ries and nationally ranked fencers in each weapon with geography. This would allow us to create a fairly accurate map which would pin point the geographic epicenters of fencing throughout the country. We could then organize these loci into balanced regions based on proximity. These regions would replace the current sections (which are largely outmoded political subdivisions) for the purpose of future qualification to national events. Regional coordinators should then be appointed whose mission would include: securing the cooperation of the various centers to effectively marshal all human and material resources; acting as a liaison and spearheading large tournament organization; evaluating the effectiveness of tournament organization; and keeping track of results.

PHASE 2: CREATING REGIONAL TOURNAMENTS

A series of four large competitions would be held concurrently in each region at the beginning of the season. The regional coordinator would solicit clubs, schools, or divisions capable and willing to host events, whose responsibilities would include: entry processing; providing referees, armourers, and support personnel; site and equipment procurement. In exchange, the host would keep 100% of the entry fees received from the event. Competitions would be distributed throughout the region in a fair and equitable manner, and formats which maximize the number of competitive bouts (space/time and entry size considered) would be adopted.

During the Phase 2 period, results would be compiled and analyzed so that a functional point system could be developed that would be used for qualification to national events.

PHASE 3: REGIONAL QUALIFICATION TO NATIONAL LEVEL EVENTS

The top 48 to 56 fencers (as determined by the regional point system) qualify for three national events. (A small additional number would qualify automatically, based on the previous season's national ranking) These downsized competitions would be located based on the following criteria: percentage of top ranked fencers in each region; percentage of fencers qualified by each region; venues which create minimum travel expenses for the maximum number of people. (Hosting and operating smaller competitions would be economically feasible anywhere in the country) Additionally, competition formats could be adopted to maximize the number of competitive bouts per event.

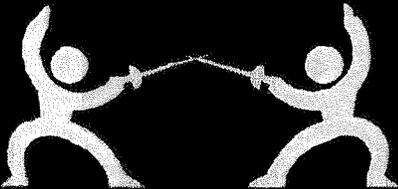
This system, from beginning to end, could be put in place in three years. Identifying regions, appointing coordinators, and laying the

groundwork for competitions would take approximately six months. (Many large regionally based competitions already exist which could and would be incorporated into the plan) Phase 2 - staging the regional competitions - would take approximately two years. Coherent integration of all the regions, identifying competent regional coordinators and accumulating sufficient baseline data for establishing the point system will be variable in terms of an absolute time frame. Regional qualification to national events should not take more than six months. After the regional events are up and running with reasonable track records and the point system has been adopted, the subsequent assignment of downsized national events is a simple task.

Regionalization has many far reaching implications for fencing in the U.S. It would inevitably reveal a new generation of competent, young administrators and volunteers who could breathe new life into the aging oligarchy of U.S.F.A. officialdom. It would decentralize decision making authority, financially empower the regions, and stimulate the growth of the sport across the country. It would reduce the funding requirements of the Fencing Officials Commission by creating the training grounds for competent referees in each region of the country. Concurrently, it would reduce the costs of running national level events (and the Tournament Committee budget as well). Most importantly, it will allow fencers of every skill level to participate in large competitions at the lowest possible cost and least amount of travel.

Postscript: At one of the last USFA Board of Directors meeting, with very little fanfare and attention, this proposal was voted on and approved (officially making it the only political victory I have ever achieved in the USFA). To date, in spite of my inquiries and entreaties, no action has been taken towards its actual implementation.

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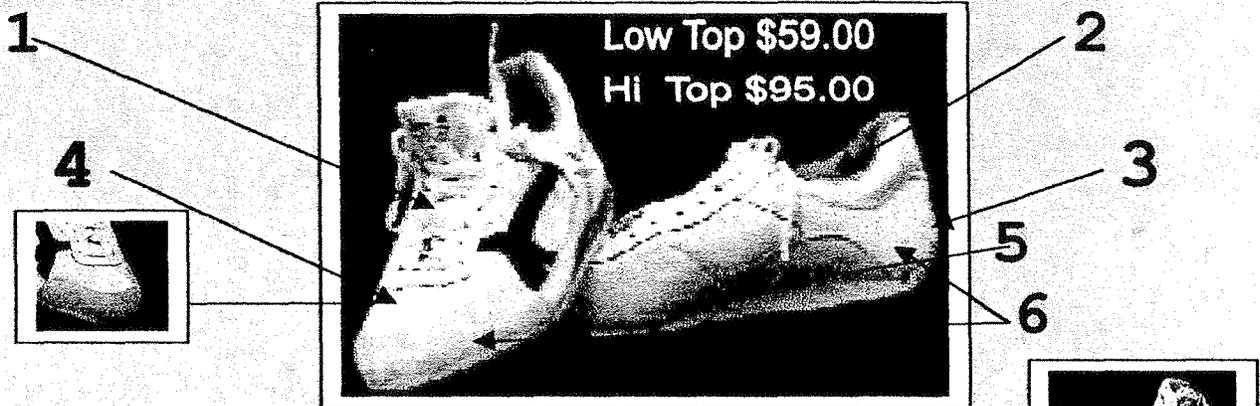
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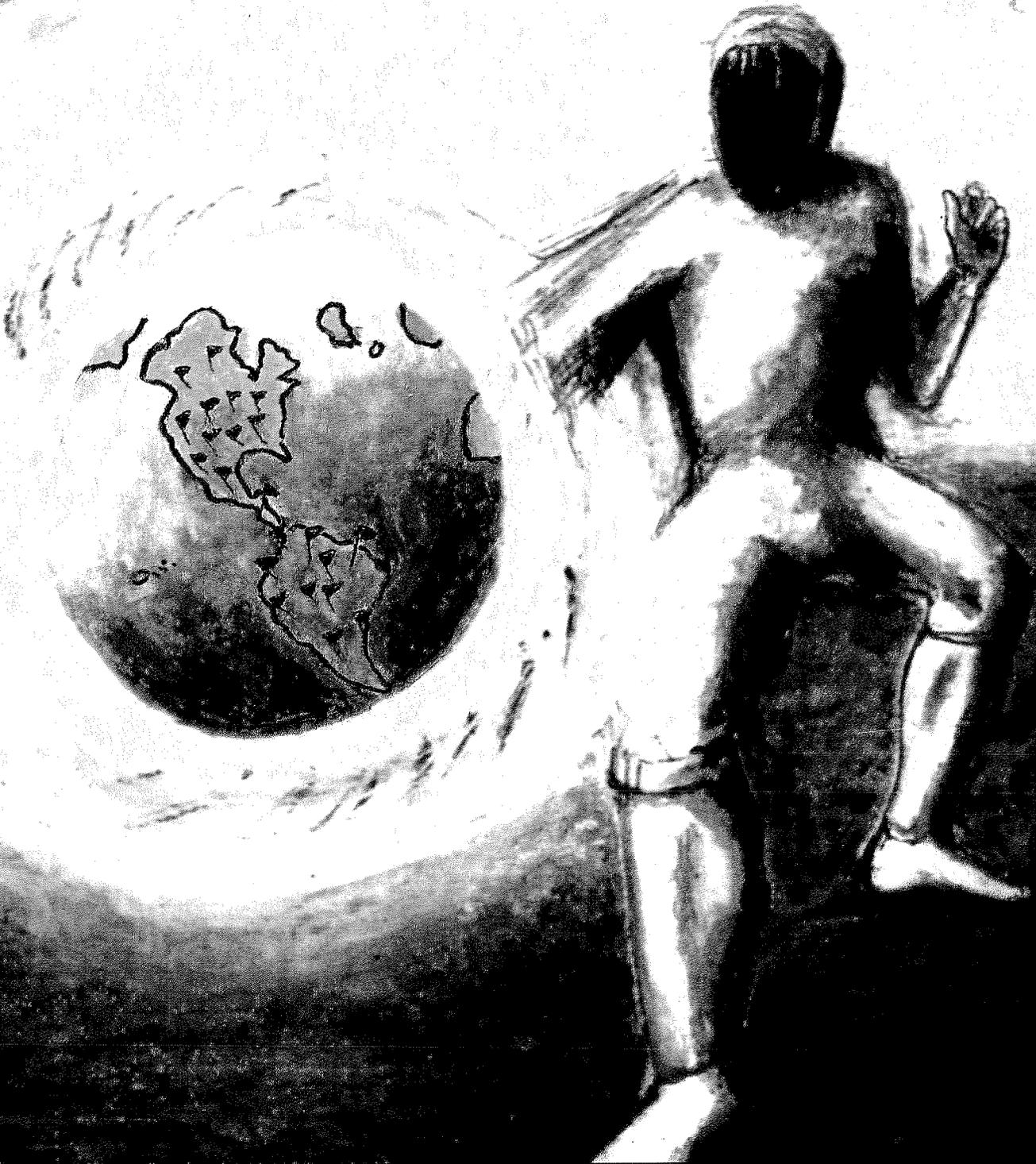
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