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FENCING

Spring 2008
Volume 58, Number 1



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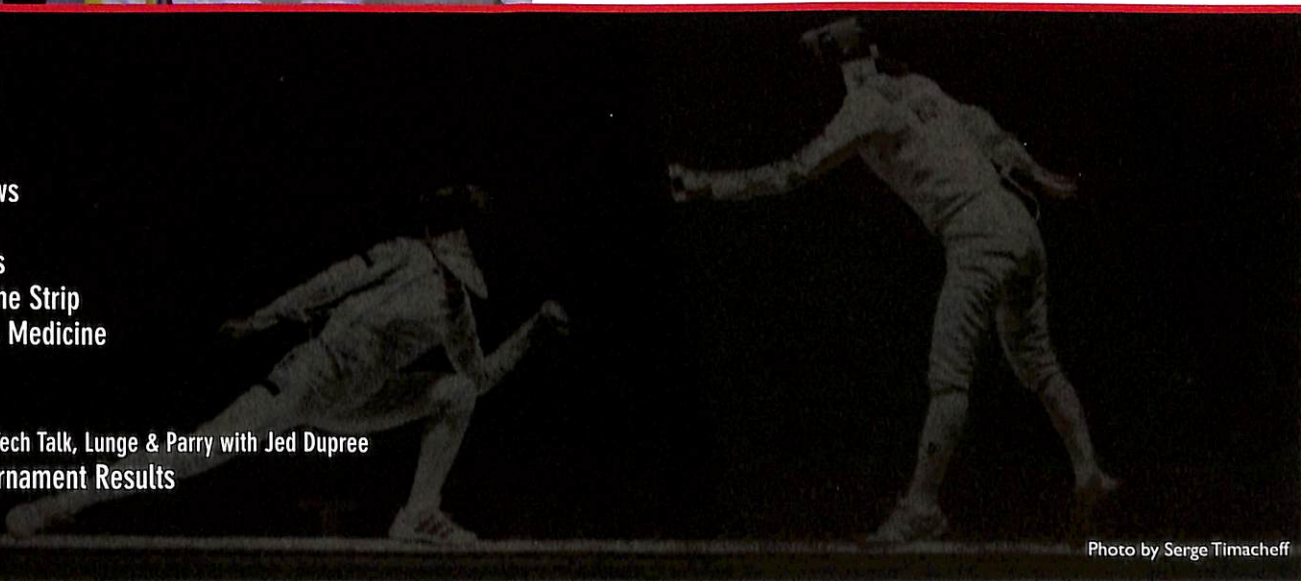


Photo by Serge Timacheff

THE UNITED STATES FENCING ASSOCIATION MEMBER SERVICES DIRECTORY

THE UNITED STATES FENCING ASSOCIATION is the national governing body for the sport of fencing in the United States. The USFA is affiliated with the Federation Internationale d'Escrime, the international federation for fencing. The mission of the United States Fencing Association is to develop fencers to achieve international success and to administer and promote the sport in the United States.

The United States Fencing Association

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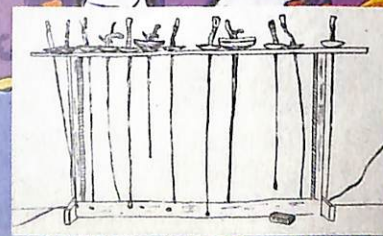
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The new season begins -- the big one. The 2007-2008 Olympic season will conclude with the grand-daddy of them all, the 2008 Olympic Games in Beijing, China.

Already the excitement is building. Athletes are traveling the globe, from World Cup to World Cup, trying to build up their F.I.E. standings, both individual and team. This issue we get a report from the 2007 World Championships, an all-important qualifier event for Beijing. Check out how our team did, and stay tuned here for more reports as we grow closer and closer to the Games.

Juniors, cadets, youngsters just starting out are also into their new season. It's back to four nights per week practices for many schoolkids out there. And it will be a new season for us here at AF, too. We're still fine tuning our new look, our new columns. We were delighted to receive the many offers from writers and illustrators out there, and we're still sifting through lots of new assignments to give out.

But we need to hear more from you! What do you want to see on our pages this fencing season? More technical articles? More celebrity interviews or US team coverage? More articles pondering the nature of hitting each other with sticks? Please send in your feedback, let us know! And good luck in the new season.

Cindy Bent Findlay
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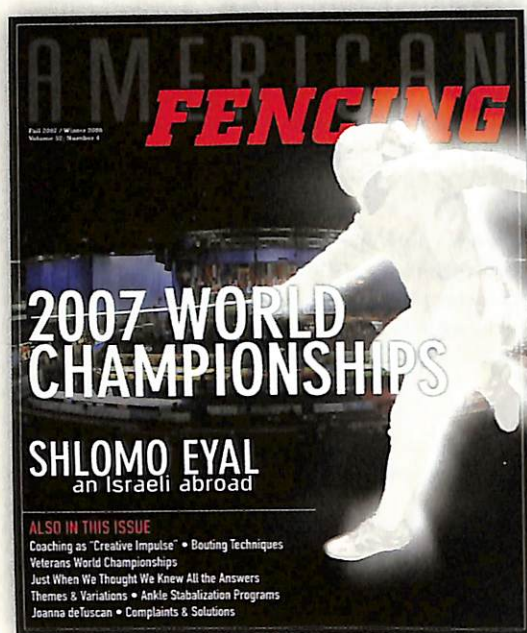
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A Wonderful Problem

I had several conversations with fellow fencers about the size of DIV I NACs recently. I returned from the gargantuan NAC in Richmond to find the current issue of American Fencing waiting for me. There was an article addressing this very problem with what I thought was a not so elegant solution to an excellent problem to have.

We have too many fencers in DIV I. Blame it on the sport expanding. Blame it on rating inflation. Blame it on whatever; it's a wonderful problem.

I have been the bottom or middle of the pack fencing in DIV I on and off for more than ten years. I am loath to return to the days where the top 16 or 32 don't even have to prove themselves on a regular basis. I am sure they are also loath to have to waste their time wading through 5-0 pool bouts and 15-1 DEs before they reach top 32s and any challenging bouts.

It would be a better solution for all involved if DIV were to have a minor schism. Institute DIV I-A NACs open to all A, B, and C fencers. Give points for top 32s. Only allow the top N (say 64) from DIV I-A and those on the DIV I points list to enter DIV I NACs.

It will definitely weed out the fodder from the 280+ entry DIV I NACs. It will also give those in between DIV II and DIV I a new home to compete.

It would give the USFA and tournament organizers a chance to host more large events with all of the revenue and public relations opportunities that come along with it.

I think it would be a better season for the elite to only have to worry about 120 or fewer entries (all with points in one division or another) and for the middle of the pack fencers to have more opportunities for competitive bouts in a new division. It would be a better testament to our growing sport to grow our competitive divisions than to stratify the ones we have in an effort to control growth that is inherently good.

Ken Hagan, Louisville, Ky.

Falling Short

According to your "Mystery Writer," the idea of the NACs is to provide a domestic training ground for the nation's elite fencers, but the ideas s/he offered to improve their format were certainly not in keeping with this view. Accepting entries on a "first-come, first-serve" basis does not ensure the most dedicated or talented fencers are admitted—simply those who are fastest with a pen and a check. Holding regional qualifiers, while a good idea in principle, is simply not feasible in reality. The calendars of the most competitive fencers, especially cadets and juniors who must fence outside their age group to get the points and/or experience they need, are filled with tournaments and camps which take up one, two, or even three weekends a month! Requiring fencers to take yet more time off from work, school, training, and/or recovery to attend small and largely meaningless qualifying competitions would only exhaust them, let alone the resources, referees, and organizers needed to hold the events.

Keep in mind that limiting the size of the NACs would not necessarily improve their efficiency. I agree that some changes could be made to improve the format of our national tournaments. However, the suggestions put forward by the "Mystery Writer" fall short of achieving that goal.

Hannah Safford, San Francisco, Calif.

No Benefits?

The USFA should review the structure of membership for youth in the youngest age categories. Every USFA-sanctioned tournament requires competitors to be members of the USFA, and even when clubs run non-USFA events, membership is required by those clubs for insurance purposes. However, here in the northeast, there are few competition opportunities for kids in the Y14 and younger categories, though progress is being made in the region. Still, parents balk at the cost of membership for children who will only compete once or twice a year. The other benefits of membership don't justify the expense to these parents. If enrollment is not part of a club's fee structure, the parent sees no benefit to USFA membership.

It seems an alternate membership might be possible; perhaps a temporary membership which allows a participant to pay for a single tournament, or a discounted youth membership which limits the youth to divisional tournaments. This latter concept would appeal to parents of youth who wish to compete but do not have the desire or expectation to compete in regional or NAC competitions.

Drew Page, Andover, Mass.

Rewriting the Rules

I have a great idea to stop the interpretation of the rules. How about if we rewrite them to reflect the actual meaning of the rule? What is the point of having a rule book if it is so open to interpretation? And it is not like all the referees have the same interpretation. Here's an easy way of knowing which rule is poorly written and needs to be rewritten: If Jeff Bukantz needs to write a column on American Fencing regarding the new interpretation of the rule.

If a rule needs to be changed, then change it! If rules need to be added or deleted, then by all means, go for it! It is not hard. We have word processors nowadays. And thanks to e-mail, the majority of fencers can be notified of the rule change with the click of a button. Why do I need to also fence the referee when I am having enough of a hard time with my opponent?

Edward Gonsalves, Richland, Wash.

Please note that letters must be limited to 400 words or less or they will not be published. Opinions expressed in Verbatim are not the position of American Fencing or the U.S. Fencing Association. American Fencing reserves the right to edit letters for space and clarity. Please include your name and hometown when submitting letters to editor@americanfencingmagazine.com



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Dan Bak

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2008 NAC Atlanta Junior Sabre Champion
2006 Div IA National Sabre Champion

Luther Clement

2008 Northeast Regional NCAA Sabre Champion

Adrian Bak

2008 Junior World Cadet Team Member
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Lowe Diedo

2008 Junior World Cadet Team Member
2008 Junior Olympic Cadet Bronze Medalist

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CAMP FEE

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Q: How – and why? – does the USFA nominate its officers?

A: Aaron Clements, 2007 Nominating Committee Chair

Every four years, new national officers take the helm of leadership, steering the Association's course through the next Olympic quadrennium. While the officers are elected to serve the membership, there are many members of the Association who don't know how their officers are elected.

The election process begins with the election of the Nominating Committee (the "NC"), an independent committee of thirteen members whose role is to nominate a candidate for each of the six offices (President, three Vice Presidents, Treasurer, and Secretary). Ten members of the NC (one from each Section) are elected indirectly by the membership through the USFA Congress at Summer Nationals in the year before an election. The other three members are elected by the Athlete Advisory Group, per USOC requirements. The NC then selects a chair and operates entirely independently of the current officers, Executive Committee, and Board of Directors, and is required under the Bylaws to present its final report by December 15 of the year before an election.

After the NC submits its report, the list of nominees is published to the membership, usually through this magazine. Individuals who want to contest the election can try to be nominated by petition by collecting signatures as provided in the Bylaws. If a contesting individual gathers enough signatures, ballots are mailed for each voting member to fill out and return. If there are no additional candidates for an office through the petition process, then the election is uncontested and the nominee is elected unanimously.

With that in mind, this year's Nominating Committee has worked hard to select nominees who can work together as an effective team to solve the challenges facing the Association, and looked to the following criteria for guidance:

First, the NC looked primarily to people who showed their interest in serving by approaching the NC. The Association is best served by people with an active desire to serve, instead of relying on people who must be persuaded.

Second, the NC wanted people with fresh perspectives. While recognizing a need for administrative continuity, the Association is undergoing a period of rapid growth and transformation. Changing times require flexibility and new ideas; hence, while all of the nominees have served in lesser roles at the national level, most have no prior service as a national officer.

Third, the NC gave substantial consideration to people with a proven his-

tory of service to the association at the national level, for two major reasons. All of the nominees selected have demonstrated their dedication through a substantial track record of selfless service to the Association in a variety of (usually unseen) roles at the national level. In addition to dedication, effective leadership will also require knowledge of the inner workings of the Association, the roles of the professional staff as well as volunteers, and an ability to recognize those things that need overhaul and, just as importantly, to distinguish what needs work from those things that are working well. This knowledge comes only through experience. Our next administration must take office on August 24, 2008 fully prepared for the hard work of transforming the Association into one capable of serving the needs of our rapidly-growing and diverse membership.

Finally, the NC has worked hard to select a team of individuals with proven ability to work effectively as part of a team. These skills will be critical in the new administration's ability to formulate and effectively implement plans for dealing with the challenges ahead.

In applying these criteria, the NC worked extraordinarily hard to gather accurate information about the state of the Association as well as the sizeable number of excellent, well-qualified candidates. Members of the NC spent untold hours on the phone and through email consulting with a broad cross-section of the fencing community, including coaches, fencers (including elite, grassroots, and veterans), past officers, referees, members of national committees, local officers, and parents, hearing anyone who wanted to give their input. Additionally, the NC made public calls for individuals wanting to serve to come forward. The NC extensively interviewed candidates, either in person at the national tournaments in Tucson, Dallas, and Richmond, or by telephone, with the members of the NC taking substantial time out of their schedules to participate by conference call. Because of the importance in the role of President, and the importance of having a strong team, the NC made the selection for that office first, and then additionally consulted with our nominee for that position prior to selecting the nominees for the other offices.

At the close of this process, the Nominating Committee debated the merits and qualifications of each member of the slate, both individually and with regard to how effective the group would be as a whole, concluding with these nominees: Kalle Weeks, President; Jerry Benson, Ro Sobalvarro, and Mark Stasinos, Vice Presidents; Greg Dilworth, Treasurer; and Brad Baker, Secretary. The members of your Committee believe that, if elected, these dedicated individuals will be poised to successfully take the reins of the Association in August and serve the membership for the next four years.

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July 7-11 Introduction To Fencing Camp
July 21-25 General Fencing Camp
Aug 4-Aug 8 General Fencing Camp

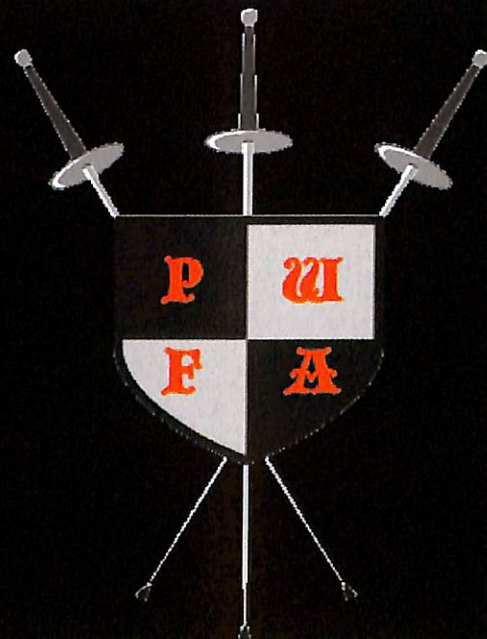
July 14-18 Introduction to Fencing Camp
July 28-Aug 1 General Fencing Camp
Aug 10-Aug 14 Epee and Sabre Camp

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I really like the new X-Change® mask. It is much lighter than any other mask I have tried. I feel that I get much better air circulation inside the mask. With other masks I had a hard time hearing my coach but not with this mask. The thing I like best though is that after a couple of hard practices I can take all the pieces off and throw them in the wash so I can have a clean mask for the next practice. **Seth Kelsey USA Team**

I'm very happy with the X-Change® mask, which is lighter, more comfortable and easier to clean than any other mask I've used. **Soren Thompson USA Team**

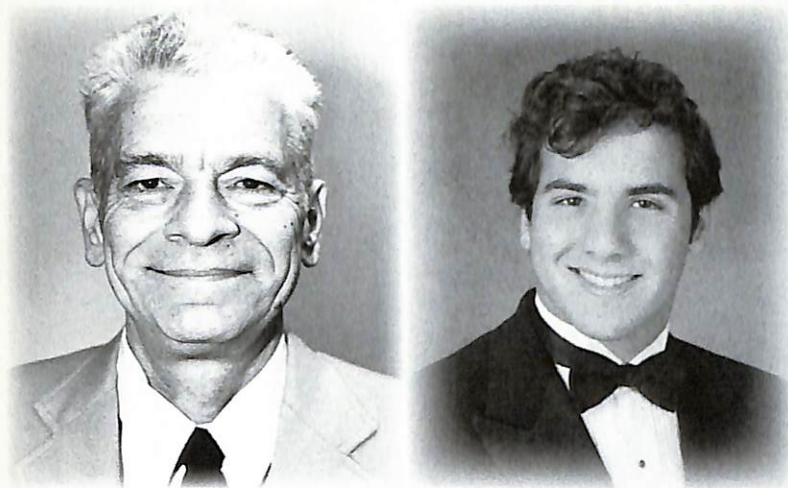
Its lighter, cooler has better visibility and the contour fit makes it very comfortable. I would recommend this to any serious fencer. **Lacy Burt USA Team**

I have used the X-Change® system for over 4 years and would never use anything else. It is simple to replace worn bibs, its easy to clean and the shells last forever. **Becca Ward USA Team**



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Our Hearts Go Out

American Fencing is sad to report the deaths of two members of the William & Mary fencing community, fencing club coach Pete Conomikes and student Ben Gutenberg. Both died as the result of a car accident which occurred on the way to a collegiate competition in November.

Conomikes (86, Williamsburg, Va.) began fencing as a student at Columbia University in 1940. He became an A - rated fencer in his specialty, epee, and at one point, was A - rated on all three weapons. He won a bronze in epee at the 1954 National Championships.

Conomikes fenced for many years with the Washington Fencers Club. He earned the international /USFCA coaching rank of Prevot. Moving to Williamsburg in the late 1960s, in 1972 he took over as head coach at the College of William and Mary. He served the sport, both collegiately and nationally, for many decades.

Conomikes served in the Navy on a destroyer in World War II and after worked for the OSS, which later became the CIA, from which he retired in 1972.

William & Mary Freshman Ben Gutenberg, 18, of Brighton, N.Y., was also killed. He was a graduate of McQuaid Jesuit High School graduate and a Rochester Fencing Center student. Gutenberg also participated in the Model United Nations and the mock trial club.

"Fun-loving and caring are the best ways to describe Ben," said his RFC coach Colin Clinton. "He didn't have a mean bone in his body. He was always trying to make people around him laugh, even if it was at his own expense. He'd tell bad jokes just so people could get a laugh."

William & Mary Freshman Matt Peppe was treated and released from the hospital the day of the accident. Freshman Spencer Butts was seriously injured but has since been released from the hospital.

Wife, Mother, Sister, Grandma, Friend, Teacher & Coach

Another well-known member of the U.S. Fencing community passed away in early December in San Jose, Calif.

Fencing played a vital role in the life of Sherry Posthumus, who spent the bulk of her days touching the lives of others.

"As a wife, mother, daughter, sister, grandma, friend, teacher, and coach she shared her wry wit, her subtle wisdom, and her joy for life," remembers her daughter Jennifer. "A mere list of her accomplishments – ample as that list may be – cannot begin to animate the person that she was and the impact that she had on those around her."

Sherry's spent nearly 25 years in the athletic department at Stanford University. She represented the United States as the manager of three Olympic

Teams ('88, '92, '96) and built a highly competitive collegiate program at Stanford University. She also served for decades as a volunteer for the USFA and the NCAA.

Posthumus was a gourmet cook, a lover of tools, and an energetic fencing proponent and coach. She died at 62 from brain cancer and is survived by her husband Donald, and two daughters and their husbands, Lisa and Danny Milgram and Jennifer Posthumus and Kris Atteberry, and by two grandsons, Nathan and Josh Milgram. She also is survived by her mother Betty Rose, and her sister and brother-in-law, Evie Rose and Jerry Barnhart.



U.S. Athletic Trust Fundraiser

As a member of the US Fencing Team I'm used to answering many questions about my involvement in an unusual and fascinating sport - "How old were you when you started? What's the difference between the weapons? Do you ever actually say touché?" – but one of the most popular and difficult to answer questions is how I am able to afford all of the plane tickets, hotel rooms, meals, taxi fares, lessons, and equipment that I need to successfully train and compete. The simple answer is "with difficulty and a lot of creativity and sacrifice." The USFA and USOC do not provide the funding that I need to compete in world cups and ultimately qualify for the Olympics. Fortunately, a non-profit organization called the US Athletic Trust (USAT) has started to help me and other fencers with some of our expenses.

The USAT was started by 1984 US Olympic shot putter Augie Wolf with the goal of creating an American version of the highly successful German elite athlete direct funding program. He started small and concentrated support on recent college graduates because the years between school and the start of a career are usually the most financially trying for young athletes. In keeping with his founding ideals, the USAT screens potential athletes to find those whose situations combine the most financial need and Olympic potential. The USAT has maintained a low overhead by minimizing operating expenses and recently expanded its roster to 15 athletes in five different sports, three of whom are fencers. Of course, the main limiting factor to adding even more athletes is the amount of available funding to the Trust.

USAT board member and fencing chairman, Matthew Cooleen, is a Wall Street Executive and former junior fencer who never lost his passion for the sport. His energy and vision, combined with the work of a dedicated committee composed of current and former fencers, parents, and people with an interest in sports philanthropy, have catapulted the Trust's fencing program to new heights.

This past April Mr. Cooleen and Michael Aufrichtig co-chaired the first USAT fencing fundraising event, "En Garde! Fencing and Wine Tasting Above



Central Park." The event was a great success with thirteen Olympians and many other fencers and fencing enthusiasts joining together to celebrate the ideals of amateur athletics in the sport of fencing. Most encouraging was the wide base of support, which was perhaps the broadest and largest in the history of US Fencing and featured representatives of many generations of US Teams, all three weapons, and dozens of clubs, universities and high schools. The event program included a wine tasting, fencing demonstrations, silent auction, and celebration of the athletic and service accomplishments of event honorees Sharon Monplaisir, Judge Paul Levy and George Masin.

The April event was a small but significant first step for the USAT towards its long-term goal of becoming a major supporter of elite US fencing. If this goal coincides with your ambitions as an athlete or desire to further the sport of fencing, please visit the USAT website www.usathletictrust.org or contact Mathew Cooleen at matthew@cooleen.com. — Soren Thompson

USA Veterans Team Honors Some Pioneers

On July 7, 2007, 44 USA Veterans World Championships team members and other veterans, including USFA Vice-President Ed Wright and Veterans Committee Chair Paul Levy, held a dinner in Miami to commemorate the International Veterans Team Fencing Championships, held at St. Petersburg Beach, Fla. in November 1995.

The dinner also honored four pioneers of USA veterans' fencing, Mac and Diana Garret, James Campoli and Michel Mamlouk. The honorees received framed certificates (designed by vet's team member Jane Eyre) and were treated to dinner.

The St. Petersburg team tournament is noteworthy because in 1995 no FIE Veterans World Championships existed, and veterans fencing as we know it did not exist in the USA. A USFA Veterans Program Committee was headed by Mac Garret for 11 years, as Mac and Diana worked to gain recognition for veterans by, e.g., organizing a group of veterans that went to Great Britain in 1994 (and subsequently to Germany in 1996) for some friendly matches.

Veterans were allowed to fence at the USFA Nationals in "demonstra-

tion" events, but there was no Veteran's National Championships and no ratings could be earned in veterans events. Veteran's fencing internationally was primarily for "masters."

In fact, the USA made its first important age category result in 1970 when our team (aged in their 30's and 40's) won the World Masters Championships. From about 1970-1980 a privately organized "Senior Olympics" was held in Los Angeles in five age groups (35-39, 40-44, etc.). Also in 1996 a Nike World Masters Championships was held in Portland, Ore. with some notable USA results.

To make the St. Petersburg event happen required efforts from the local organizers (Bruce Darling and Jim Campoli) and international contacts provided by Michel Mamlouk and the Garrets. Mamlouk is a two time USFA President, well known in the FIE, and a professional travel agent. Through his efforts travel was organized for a team from Italy. Teams from Germany, Great Britain, Belgium, and the USA followed. For the first time a USA Veterans Team was selected, based on results at the 1995 Veterans National Tournament (fenced as a 40+ event).

The high level of competition and comradery (both on the strip and afterwards) at this tournament have come to be hallmarks of veteran's competitions.

Veteran age group competition became a National Championships in 1999, also the year that saber was added to the FIE Veterans World Championship). In 2007 the Veterans National Championships attracted over 300 fencers. The double-digit medal winning success of the USA Veterans at world championships (most medals of any country in Australia in 2007) speaks to the strength of our fencers and the growth of the veteran's movement. The same countries that sent teams to St. Petersburg in 1995 continue to lead the way (USA, Germany, Italy, Great Britain) now joined by full teams from France and Japan.

Overall, the veteran's dinner was very well received. Hopefully it will become an annual tradition at the National Championships. — Larry Pinkus

RED CARD:

AF incorrectly captioned a photo in last issue's World Championships coverage, on page 32. The photo should have been captioned, "Tim Morehouse vs. Pozdnia-kov of Russia".

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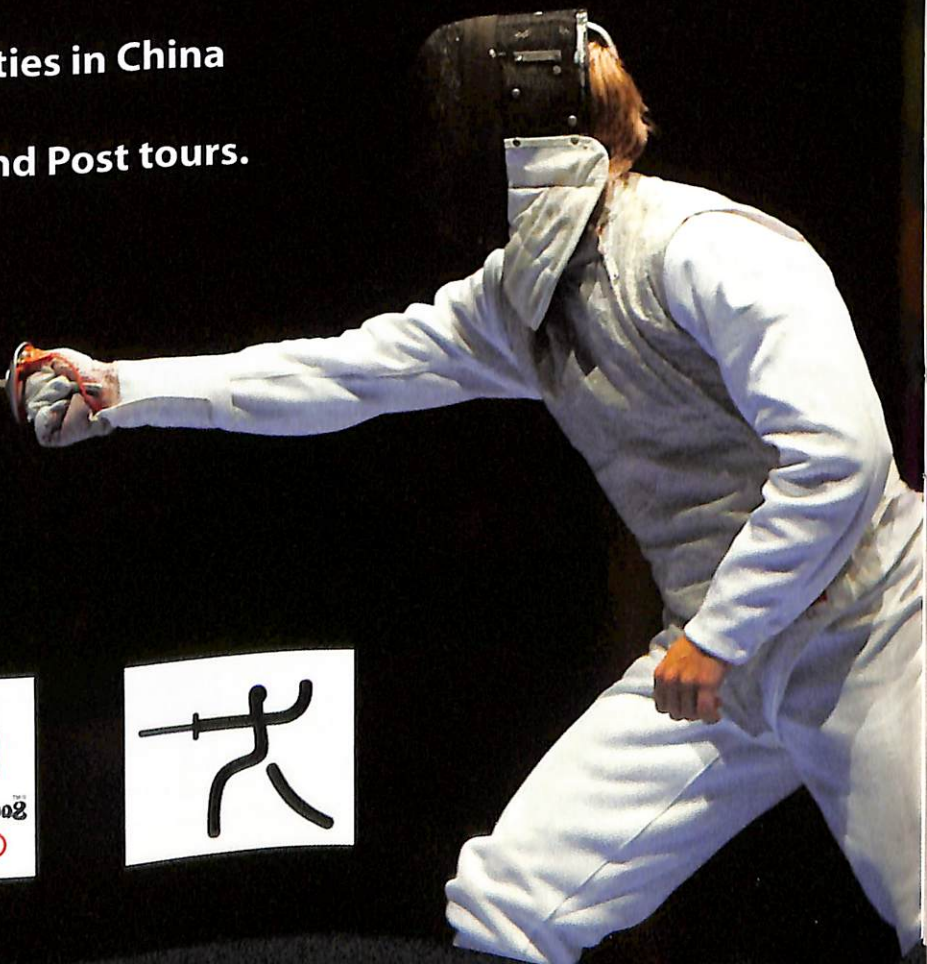
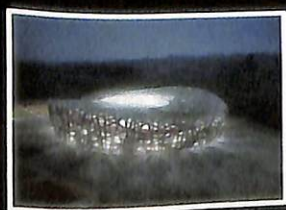
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BY KATHY SCHIFFERLE

An Unusual Path

Olympic fencer, coach, businessman and family man Saul Mendoza traveled an unusual path to become a fencing club owner. In 1989 Saul opened The Fencing Post, a mail-order fencing equipment company, based out of San Jose, Calif. We've all seen The Fencing Post at tournaments, and with the continued growth of the internet, online. I have worked with Saul and his wife, Vickie, who started working at the Fencing Post in 1998 after the birth of their second child, on various section and division projects and have learned to appreciate their integrity and commitment to the sport. That was why I was so pleased when I heard that they were opening a fencing club in the San Diego area.

When I asked Vickie why a club, she said, "We had a vision of what a great club could be, plus we wanted our son Marc, who is eleven, to have the opportunity to train and enjoy fencing in a good environment." To that end, the Mendozas purchased land in Escondido, applied for and received a business district incentive that covered 25 percent of their building permits and then built their dream fencing club from the ground up, opening the doors two years ago.

The building totals 10,000 square feet: 2,000 dedicated to The Fencing Post, 2,000 leased to a personal trainer and 6,000 for the club. What is VERY interesting is that Saul and Vickie allow other local clubs to train in their facilities! No Fear, an epee only club, trains Tuesday, Thursday and Saturdays, Spartak, a saber club, trains

Monday and Wednesday and the Coeur du Lion scholastic league fencer meet Tuesdays. All of these clubs maintain their own identity and club membership separate from San Diego Fencing Center, but have the benefit of six permanent electric strips and plenty of class and training room. Those club's members also help support

Three young members of the SDFC at a regional youth circuit



SDFC with some dues. With all of those sources of income, SDFC is self-sufficient.

San Diego Fencing Center is very centrally located near two highways, which makes it convenient for members from all over San Diego County as well as areas of Southern Riverside County. Saul's goal was to pull in youth, especially those not interested in team sports. "They try

fencing and they love it. It is individual, all about them, and it's all mental. Their parents love it, too."

The Mendozas are focusing on developing youth fencing programs. Their foil and epeeists are mostly cadet age, with saber starting a bit younger. They advertise their fencing programs through the local Parks and Recreation district and the local Community College youth outreach programs. They teach foil and epee, but their most popular outreach program is their 'Foam Saber' class because students purchase a \$13, specially-designed (not Toys "R" Us) foam saber that they get to take home at the end of

class. Students learn footwork, parries and attacks. This class separates the kids that want to fence from the others. San Diego Fencing Center always has one or two classes going that feed into the center's programs.

Classes and membership are priced separately. Membership provides unlimited access to the center during open fencing times. Quarterly membership is \$210 per individual and \$420 per family. All fencers, even those fencing with one of the other clubs, pay this membership fee, or they pay a nightly floor fee of \$15. Beginning youth classes, held twice a week, are \$130 per month for members; once a fencer becomes intermediate that rate increases to \$230 with more frequent practices and private lessons.

The San Diego Fencing Center does not provide equipment for their members. Taking a class, then, means a minimum \$130 investment in a mask, weapon, glove and jacket. "We feel that they take it more seriously, they are responsible for their equipment and they stick with their commitment, and it means I don't have to wash jackets," Vickie said. With more than 50 regular students in less than two years, it seems this approach is working.



LOOKING OUT

BY CINDY BENT FINDLAY

Look out, Beijing, U.S. fencers are dazzling on the international stage this Olympic qualifying season.

With little more than a month to go during the qualification period, the U.S. women's saber team is ranked second in the world, and U.S. fencers crowd the top eight. As of this writing, '06 World Champion Rebecca Ward (18, Portland, Ore.) is outranked only by China's Xue Tan, the 2004 Olympic silver medalist. 2004 Olympic gold medalist Mariel Zagunis (23, Beaverton, Ore.) is ranked third, and '04 bronze medalist Sada Jacobson (25, Dunwoody, Ga.) sits in the fourth spot. Other U.S. fencers climbing fast include Dagamara Wozniak, (19, Avenel, N.J.) at 20th, who earned a silver at the World Cup in Budapest on Feb. 23.

The men's saber team is also lighting up the strip with results. 2004 Olympian Keeth Smart (29, Brooklyn, N.Y.) is now ranked 8th in the world and a silver in his pocket from the Grand Prix in Budapest Feb. 8. Tim Morehouse (29, Bronx, N.Y.) is ranked 12th in the world, Jason Rogers (24, Los Angeles, Calif.) 22nd and Ivan Lee (26, Brooklyn, N.Y.) 24th. The men's saber squad sits now at 10th, two spots ahead of hemispheric rival Canada.

On the women's foil front Emily Cross (21, New York, N.Y.) continues to achieve top-eight finishes and remains firmly in the top ten of the world rankings. Team member Hanna Thompson

(24, Rochester, N.Y.) is also within the top 20, at 18th as of this writing, and 2004 Olympian Erinn Smart (28, Brooklyn, N.Y.) is climbing fast, currently at 24th.

The women's foil team stands in excellent contention to qualify for Beijing. Ranked seventh in the world as of mid-February, they're well ahead of the highest-ranked team in the Western Hemisphere Zone, Venezuela (at 12th).

The U.S. men's epeeists face stiff competition in attempting to qualify their squad. They're ranked 11th as of mid-February, three spots behind Venezuela. Seth Kelsey (26, Colorado Springs, Colo.) remains the highest-ranked U.S. fencer, at 13th. He is also the second-highest ranked fencer in the zone. Venezuelan Silvio Fernandez is ranked second in the world, which should free up a spot for Kelsey if the men's epee squad does not qualify. Cody Mattern (27, Colorado Springs, Colo.) is now ranked 25th.

In the two weapons for which there will be no team event in Beijing, men's foil and women's epee, Courtney Hurley (17, San Antonio, Texas) holds tightly to the second-highest spot in the hemisphere behind Canada's Sherraine Schalm, ranked 7th. U.S. men's foilist Gerek Meinhardt (17, San Francisco, Calif.) is now ranked 16th in the world, a career high. Meinhardt is by five years the youngest fencer in the top 25. He's nine spots ahead of Canada's Joshua McGuire, the second-highest ranked fencer in the hemisphere.

LOOK OUT, BEIJING, U.S. FENCERS ARE DAZZLING ON THE INTERNATIONAL STAGE

Athlete Q&A with Sada Jacobson

Q: Why do the world's best fencers still take lessons? What is there for them to learn that could possibly be new?

A: The fact of the matter is, there is no such thing as "perfect" fencing. The beauty of the sport is that no matter how skilled you become, there is always another level to attain. This may mean something as simple as making your footwork that much smoother, faster, or more agile. Or it could mean working with your coach to develop

even more complex actions and strategy. Even the best fencers in the world have a repertoire of only a few "go to" actions at which they excel and that they use most frequently in a bout. The key to growth as a fencer once the steep learning curve starts to level out is to constantly be honing what you're already good at, even as you add new skills. Consistent footwork and lessons are vital not only because they allow you to maintain your current level of skill, but because they form the foundation you will use to take your fencing to the next level.

Sada Jacobson was the bronze medalist at the 2004 Olympic Games. She is also a two-time Women's Saber Team World Champion (2000, 2005) and was the #1-ranked fencer in the world from 2003-2006. Jacobson is now training for the 2008 Olympic Games.



Alright class, it's now time for the "Officer Dan Safety Lecture"...or "How Officer Dan Keeps from Getting his Pants Sued Off".

As the number of Divisions who schedule all or part of their tournaments at private clubs increases steadily, a certain carelessness has sometimes crept in about safety conditions. This is a dangerous mindset, because if the

Division Executive Committee sanctions a tournament, and an incident occurs at that event that results in a lawsuit, the Division is in the direct line of fire, even though it might not be the first party listed in the papers filed with the court. "Well, so what?" I hear you exclaim. Thanks to the USFA, we're insured up to our nostrils!" Well...yes and no.

I don't want to get too deeply into this, because, as I've written before, I'm not a lawyer. However, I can state that the USFA liability insurance you all have does **not** cover punitive damages. Punitive damages may be awarded by a court if it finds that there was "Gross Negligence" or "Recklessness" on the part of the defendants. If a lawsuit is filed against a club and a Division, our insurer will provide a defense. If the plaintiff wins, our insurer will pay the compensatory damages awarded (those are damages awarded to a plaintiff for actual financial losses incurred because of the accident) up to the limit of the policy. However, if the court determines that the accident resulted, at least in part, from such recklessness on the part of administrative people that somebody should get thumped for it, it can award punitive damages on top of everything else. If that happens, everyone named as a defendant is going to be on the hook for at least a piece of that amount: the insurer isn't going to pay a dime of it.

The question of what constitutes "Recklessness" is a floating one; one, in fact, that has produced vast herds of Personal Injury lawyers undulating majestically up courthouse steps for generations. The best protective measure a Division Executive Committee can employ is to always follow published USFA safety rules & guidelines, the kind that are in the Rule Book and in the USFA Operations Manual. You should have a formal policy of assigning an official Division representative at every sanctioned event, and that official should have the authority to enforce proper safety standards, and, if the bout committee isn't following them, to pull the plug on the tournament, or at least the sanctioning of it.

Above all, use common sense! In many ways, when there is no bad intent involved, Gross Negligence is just another way of saying gross stupidity. Even if you follow the letter of the rules, if you have a situation that common good sense tells you is asking for trouble, and trouble happens, you're in the

chowder. Here's an exaggerated (I hope) example: you sanction a tournament at a club that uses a strip that has exactly one meter of run-off at the end. However, located precisely at the edge of that meter is a floor-length window. On the other side of that window is a 50 foot drop onto a major Interstate. Need I go on? Months or even years after the accident, would you expect any juror with basic common sense to decide that you used yours?

Even though each fencer in the USFA is personally responsible for wearing proper equipment, a bout committee and/or referee still has a duty to prevent him from fencing in **obviously** unsafe gear (what he is or is not wearing under his uniform is a different story). For another over-the-top example, try this: an "A" rated fencer is allowed to fence epee wearing a jacket that has a perceptible hole right in its chest. It is inevitable that "A"'s opponent, who normally could not hit the floor if he wanted to, will suddenly develop the dead eye of a Bavarian jaeger and put his first thrust right through that hole and right through "A". The bout was, of course, conducted directly in front of the bout committee table. Now, it goes without saying that fencer "A" is an imbecile, and a jury will probably recognize that, but that isn't necessarily going to let the ref, the bout committee, and everyone else up the food chain entirely off the financial hook; and fencer "A"'s attorney is going to try hard to keep them all wriggling on it.

To sum this all up, we all know what safe fencing is and what it is not. To push (or let someone else push you) right up to or over the edge of common sense and safe procedures will never be worth the possible consequences, so let's all fly straight and level on this one. The USFA will be happier, you'll be happier, and Officer Dan will be really happy.



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RULES FAQs ... AND FACTS

BY JEFF BUKANTZ

Over the years, some frequently asked questions about certain rules seem to be asked more than others. Why is that?

The main problem is that even some of the most knowledgeable fencers, coaches and referees have misunderstood or misinterpreted the rules. Subsequently, these rules have grown a life of their own. The reality is that practical application has occasionally conflicted with the written rules.

I've tried to identify some of these rules, but would like to hear from the readership about others that seem to cause problems. They will be clarified in a future column or on the FOC website.

In order to provide the best possible answers to these FAQs, I've reached out to some of the experts in our sport:

- Stephen Higginson, current President of the FIE Rules Commission
- Chaba Pallaghy, former President of the FIE Arbitrage Commission
- George Kolombatovich, current President of the FIE Arbitrage Commission
- Bill Oliver, current Chair of the USFA's Fencing Officials Commission

It should be noted that there was not unanimity on each answer. As a means of confidentiality, individual opinions will not be divulged. In fact, one of the four experts chose not to answer at all. I'll chime in with comments, as well.

FAQ #1: Should the referee call "Halt!" in epee when the fencers' bells collide?

This, according to the rules, is not defined as corps-a-corps, despite claims to the contrary. In fact, some international referees have been instructed to call the halt. However, while the garden variety bell collision does not necessitate a halt, the referee should call a halt if one or both of the fencers lose control of their weapons, which often occurs after a train crash of bells during in-fighting.

Jeff's comments: Ultimately, this is a judgment call by the referee, who will get yelled at regardless of how he calls it.

FAQ #2: Is it legal for the bend of the blade in epee and foil to go upward, as well as downward?

The rules only stipulate that the bend must be vertical. While there have been claims that the upward bend is more dangerous, that is not a fact.

Jeff's comments: The referee has the right to deny what appears to be a dangerous kink or bend in the blade. However, the upward bend is legal and the referee should not bend the rules based on personal opinion.

FAQ #3: If a fencer is straddling the end line, and the rear foot (behind the end line) drifts off the lateral plane of

the side of the strip, is the rear foot considered off the strip?

This is one of those FAQs that currently has the wrong answer and must be corrected in the rules ASAP. Currently, the lateral line ends at the end line. That means the rules do not cover this yet!

In other words, try to picture this. A fencer's rear foot is completely off the side of the strip at any time while the fencer remains on the 14 meter strip. The fencer is considered off.

Then, when reaching the end of the strip, somehow the rear foot completely off the plane (where the lateral boundary should continue in reality and concept) is now considered "still on the strip"? Ridiculous but true currently. A fencer with one toe of the front foot ahead of the end line (still on the strip) can drift off the side with the rear foot nearly a meter (the usual width of an en garde stance) at a sharp angle and not be penalized?

Jeff's comments: We know that common sense and the rules don't always mesh. This case epitomizes that. The objective will be to clear up this quirk in the rules by recommending that the lateral line extend past the end line in order to close up this loophole.

FAQ #4: The dreaded triple whammy! In saber, what happens when a fencer who already has a yellow card attacks with a fleche/crossover and both fencers hit valid?

The attacking fencer's attack is annulled and a red card is given for the second offense.

Does the opponent also get credit for the out-of-time counterattack, as well?

The answer, sadly, is, yes! So, the penalized fencer loses the touch and the opponent gets a penalty point, both of which make sense. In fact, this is exactly the same as any other infraction. The fencer committing an infraction may not score a touch. The rules are clear and consistent. The fencer committing an infraction after having been previously carded while scoring that touch will also get a red card. The rules are clear and consistent.

However, in saber and in this instance only, a fencer will also benefit but getting the out-of-time counterattack. This is the only time the rules provide for this.

Jeff's comments: In my opinion, the triple whammy is wrong. It gives one fencer way too much benefit and the other way too much penalty. It renders the fleche/crossover as the most heinous act in the sport. Annulment of the touch scored and a penalty touch is fair. Allowing the out-of-time counterattack is a bit much. Maybe the offending fencer should have to carry the opponent's fencing bag back to the hotel, too?

FAQ #5: Can a referee refuse to test a fencer's weapon because the referee

wasn't paying attention and claimed the fencer may have altered the weapon before presenting it?

Believe it or not, this one pops up regularly. The reality is that the referee has the right to refuse a test if the weapon was not in his control, the fencer potentially altered the tip, or even touched the floor gently to see if the weapon worked.

However, the referee is responsible for paying attention to the touched fencer until the next action commences. Fencers have all sorts of responsibilities and the inherent accountability for erring. Why should a fencer who did nothing wrong be refused a test by a referee who was guilty of laziness or incompetence?

Jeff's comments: Referees should pay attention and afford fencers a test they are entitled to. They may or may not allow the test. However, they must not disallow a test because they weren't paying attention.

FAQ #6: Can a referee allow a touch when the machine did not register a hit?

Other than penalty points, the answer is no! In this case, no matter how certain a referee is that a touch landed valid, the machine rules.

FAQ #7: Can a referee ever disallow a touch without reproducing the alleged malfunction at least once?

On this one, we did not have unanimity. The rules state that the malfunction needs to be duplicated at least once to annul the touch. However, the referee may disallow a touch if he is certain it did not arrive on the valid target.

There are plenty of times when the referee sees the light go on when the point was nowhere near the valid target. In most cases, the malfunction is easily reproduced and the problem identified. However, that is not always the case.

If, in the opinion of the referee, the touch clearly did not arrive on the valid target, the ref can disallow the touch.

Jeff's comment: Ref shouldn't look to overrule the machine, especially if the fault can't be reproduced. But, when 100 percent sure, the touch should be annulled.

FAQ #8: A fencer has a Group 2 red card. On a subsequent action, the fencer commits a Group 1 offense? Does this offense get a yellow or a red card?

Red card.

I'm not out of FAQs, but my editor informs me I'm out of words. Please think of others that need clarification and I'll get back to you with the FACTS.





DUELING IN THE DUST

By Jeffrey C. Larson
Chief Warrant Officer, U.S. Army

For soldiers on deployment, time seems to be suspended. Everyday is a workday and is filled with the monotony of life without the comforts of home we often take for granted. As you can probably imagine, there are few opportunities for recreation. As a soldier completing a 15-month deployment with the 82nd Airborne Division in Afghanistan, I can vouch for this first hand. But while a military base located in a combat zone seems like the least likely place for it, I was able to bring some equipment over and start a fencing club here.

When I deployed in January 2007 I brought with me a handful of foils and masks and the hope I might be able to continue my fencing practice. I received a lot of support from Gerhard Guevarra, the fencing coach of the All-American Fencing Club at Fort Bragg, NC. Gilbert Bailey of fencePBT helped us out a great

deal by generously donating a large amount of fencing equipment. Before I received that gear some people had to use wooden sticks to train with because we didn't have enough foils to go around.

Bagram Airfield, where I am located, is a major base for US forces in Afghanistan not far from Kabul. At any given time there are thousands of people that live and work here including service members from all branches, DoD civilian employees, and a large number of contractors. Over my tour here I had a wide variety of people show up to do some fencing, from front-line combat troops to Croatian contract workers.

A few individuals that came had significant fencing experience. The majority did not. I ended up teaching beginning fencing classes many times over. Between all the combat missions going on and service members coming and going all the

time I could never predict who or how many would show up from week to week.

For the most part I was able to stick to a regular schedule every Tuesday and Thursday night but there were some challenges along the way. Settling on a suitable location to fence in took several weeks. We had to cancel one night when the power went out in the middle of practice. Another night we had to cut practice short due to a memorial service that was conducted to honor some of our fallen comrades.

I was so glad to be able to continue with some fencing training during my deployment. Introducing fencing to people from many backgrounds who had no previous experience in it was also a big highlight for me. It was a great thing to see how fencing could provide a valuable recreational outlet for everyone here so far from home.

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BY JOHN HEIL

More and more athletes at the highest levels, are talking about "having fun out there." This may seem like a no-brainer, particularly to those whose time at play is invariably cut short by the need to work. Who wouldn't enjoy turning play into bucket loads of money? For those who get paid to play, the glory of game day is balanced by a daily grind of training, conditioning, nutrition, and playbooks, tactics, statistics – all in the name of surviving in the game. In other words, for those at the highest level, play is work. "What makes this work fun?" is a simple question, without a simple answer – a paradox pondered by sports pundits and zen masters alike. Elite sport is a demanding performance environment, which rewards winners handsomely while it can punish losers harshly. It is certainly not child's play.

But children at play is the epitome of fun. It is focused, free and spontaneous, exciting, energizing and enjoyable. A paradise of the mind. Without tension, doubt or fear, play defies pain and fatigue. Think of the child at the beach – lips blue and shivering – who begs to stay a little longer in the ocean because it is so much fun.

Doing things really, really well is fun too – and exciting, energizing and enjoyable. That is, mastery is fun. But the pursuit of mastery demands discipline, commitment and critique, creating a work ethic around play. No longer free and spontaneous, fun may be replaced by frustration and fatigue – the athlete even encouraged to play through pain. Think of the child who wants to skip practice – "just today." Paradise is surrendered, set aside to another day.

Doing really, really well in a game is even more fun than doing really, really well in practice. But game day brings its own challenges. There is emotional intensity and pressure to perform, to enjoy the payoff for all that training – "or not." Enter game day jitters – tension, fear, doubt. Feeling uptight and scared with your heart beating out of your chest and, a choking feeling in your throat is not fun. Memories of backyard football, pond hockey and soccer in a hotel hallway are emotionally miles away. Paradise lies out of sight, somewhere over the horizon.

The intensity of game day brings the possibility of even more fun. Figure that: Fun 'plus' intensity 'equals' more intense fun. For this to happen game day jitters must be transformed – from tension, doubt and fear into energy, focus and excitement. This is the role of sport psychology – another layer of discipline and commitment added. More work at play. But from its depths, the mind's eye gains a glimpse over the horizon.

Then the game begins, the clock starts and time flows. If the player can flow with the game, sport can become fun again – leaving the grind of training behind, letting go of tension, doubt and fear. If for just these precious moments, the player can focus fully, sport is again play – focused, free and spontaneous, exciting, energizing and enjoyable. The fun returns. Paradise surrendered becomes paradise rediscovered.

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BY PETER HARMER

Q. Has there been any new information on injury rates in fencing? I heard recently of a number of clubs which have had their leases revoked because their insurance carriers determined that fencing was too dangerous.

A. I mentioned in this column in 2002 that I had been working on new injury data based on USFA competitions. Since that time I have also been contacted by eight different clubs, including after-school programs, Parks & Recreation groups, a Special Olympics club, and regular fencing clubs, from all parts of the country, facing this problem. Prompted by their concerns and the lack of useful information, I have now completed the largest study of injury risk in competitive in the world to date and it is being published by the Clinical Journal of Sports Medicine this year. These data should provide compelling evidence that fencing is far less likely to result in a serious injury than many of the popular sports currently offered in school and after-school programs, such as soccer, basketball and football, which receive liability coverage. In brief, across five seasons of USFA national-level competitions, involving almost 80,000 male and female participants of all ages and skill levels, the rate of time-loss injury was 0.3 per 1,000 athlete-exposures (AE). A time-loss injury is one that was severe enough for the athlete to withdraw from competition. An AE is the opportunity for one athlete to sustain an injury; thus, one bout equals two (2) AE. To put the rate for fencing into perspective, according to the High School Sports-Related Injury Surveillance System for 2005-06, the rate of time-loss injury in soccer was 14 times greater in high-school soccer players compared to a comparable age group/skill level of fencers and 10 times greater in basketball. The sports with the lowest rates, boy's baseball (1.77 per 1,000 AE) and girls' softball (1.78 per 1,000 AE), had almost a 6 times higher rate than fencing. For collegiate-level athletes the difference was even more striking, with the rate in soccer being 50 times greater and 31 times greater in basketball than for comparable age/skill level fencers.

Just as important as the low rate was the finding that the majority of time-loss injuries

were sprains (25.5 percent) and strains (26.1 percent), and approximately 60 percent of all of the fencing time-loss injuries were in the lower extremities. High strains and ankle sprains were the most common injuries, accounting for 27 percent of the total. This profile is similar to any ballistic activity with stop-start, rapid change of direction movements (such as basketball or soccer). Fencing-unique injuries, specifically puncture wounds, accounted for less than 3 percent of reported events, and none of these resulted in permanent damage to the athletes. Although we should always be conscious of the possibility of these significant incidents, and take appropriate preventive measures, including keeping equipment in good order and adhering to the rules, it is important to keep the probability in perspective. There has not been a single reported fatality in the history of US fencing; however, in the past 10 years, 226 US college and high-school football, basketball and soccer players have died participating in their respective sports.

Additional analyses indicated that age did not seem to be a risk factor, with the rates across youth, young adults, and veteran fencers being approximately the same. However, several sex and weapon differences were evident. Women had 35 percent higher risk than men, and saber fencers had a 62 percent higher risk than foil and epee fencers (which were approximately equal). Although the rates for women and saber fencers were still very low compared to other sports, the reason for the differences between men and women, and saber and the other two events, is not clear but is the focus of on-going research.

Information from this study has been presented at several national and international conferences, including the American College of Sports Medicine, the Medical Symposia of the 2005 and 2006 World Championships, and the 1st International Congress of Science and Technology in Fencing, held in Barcelona in February, 2008.

It is hoped that dissemination of this information both through professional sports medicine channels and informally in the fencing community will produce a more accurate understanding of the risks of fencing that will contribute to its continuing growth.

If any clubs are interested in being part of a similar study on injuries in practice, please contact me.



Wheel to Real?

When I mentioned to a couple of my local fencing friends that I was going to take a session on wheelchair coaching at the USFA Coaches College their general reaction, at least implied, was "Okay, fine, but that's not real fencing." This reminded me that the question of what is real fencing is still a matter of passionate debate depending upon one's orientation to the sport. Modern Olympic-style fencing is often derided as unrealistic by so-called "classicists" who abhor what they perceive as deviations away from true fencing tradition. Beginning with the wiring-up of fencers with cords and plugs, issues such as the flick, the question of what constitutes an attack, body contortions and even strip etiquette have all been cited as reasons why the modern electric version of the sport is Not Real Fencing. Then there are the historical re-enactors who seem to feel that classical fencing itself is an equally unrealistic pretender to the throne because among other things it is confined to a linear fencing piste, period costumes are not allowed and you can't stick your opponent with a dagger held à la gauche. All of this would seem to mean that wielding a weapon while sitting in a wheelchair cannot possibly be considered real fencing. With these opposing visions of fencing reality clashing in my head, I showed up late last summer at the Coaches College to get a first-hand experience with wheelchair fencing.

A small group of coaches, a mix of young and old, some with considerable experience and others relatively new to coaching, spent the next week learning the basics of the wheelchair game from our instructors, wheelchair competitor Mario Rodriguez and fencing coach Michael D'Asaro, Jr. First we learned to sit in the wheelchairs correctly centered and use our unarmed hand on the back handrail for support and explosive force. Then they showed us how to establish proper on-guard distance for each weapon by measuring the arm reach of the smaller opponent. After we learned how to adjust the metal floor-frames so that the wheelchairs were anchored in place at the correct distance, it was On-Guard, Ready, Fence!

The first surprise was the tremendous amount of movement involved in wheelchair fencing even though the chairs are fixed in place. On the attack the body must quickly lean partially forward to make an advance and then completely forward for a full lunge to target. Similarly, on defense the fencer leans partially backward to execute a half-retreat and as far back as possible for a full retreat. The Grayblade falls into the "older coach" category and let me tell you, my back and hips really got a workout doing daily drills in the chair both as an instructor and as a student.

The physical workout was even more pronounced, just as in able-bodied fencing, when the competitive element was introduced with round-robin bouts in which quick, full speed actions were the norm.

And the second surprise for me was the realization that blade technique in all the weapons transfers over almost exactly from able-bodied to wheelchair fencing. There are some differences in application of blade technique, of course, since distance is relatively close and there is no low line target below the waist allowed in epee because of the structural obstacles presented by the chair itself. High line blade actions seem to be a lot more important in the wheelchair game due to the difficulty of launching low-line attacks from close distance in a sitting position. Hence, cutovers, flicks, disengagements, counter-disengagements and attacks-on-the-blade from the high line are most effective offensively as are parry-ripostes used with a half or full retreat on defense.

Obviously, from the tactical side there are no runaway-pursue actions in wheelchair like those that have come to dominate foil and saber in modern able-bodied fencing. From both a technical and a tactical standpoint, wheelchair fencing seems to be somewhat of a return to an earlier era in the evolution of the sport when fencing was done in a more stationary style with much more emphasis on classic parries and ripostes done cleanly and in a very precise and fast manner. Body movement is still very important, but bladework is the essential key to any success in wheelchair competition.

I enjoyed my week in the wheelchair coaching session and gained an entirely new outlook on the event as well as a tremendous amount of respect for the athletes who participate in it. My own club, the Denver Fencing Center, is proactively trying to develop a wheelchair fencing program and the coaches have given demonstration lessons on local television and at a rehabilitation center to promote the idea. After having worked with a few wheelchair fencers in this effort, I was also enlightened by another significant fact: wheelchair fencers possess an incredible amount of upper-body strength and coordination, making many of them highly competitive athletically,



probably much more so than the average beginning able-bodied fencer.

The rehabilitation centers are busier than ever today treating a multitude of victims from domestic accidents as well as more than 20,000 military personnel who have sustained serious injury during active duty. There is an immense potential here to enrich both the lives of these injured people and the sport of fencing by promoting wheelchair participation. I also hear rumors that there may soon be USFA fundraising campaigns to provide additional funding for wheelchair as well as veteran fencing. These are the kinds of programs that we should all support in whatever way we can as fencers who care about the future of our sport beyond the youth and able-bodied phases.

As far as the issue of whether or not wheelchair swordplay is real fencing, I think there can be no question that it has just as legitimate a claim to the title as any other form of the sport where the necessary elements are technique-tactics-strategy, practice, dedication, competitiveness and a basic love of fencing. And I would argue that there is overwhelming historical evidence to support this claim. If a sword-bearing warrior was unhorsed in combat or otherwise made immobile after having sustained a disabling wound, didn't most keep on fighting in place with a bladed-weapon as long as they could for the glory of God, King and Country?

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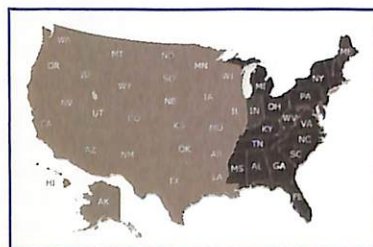


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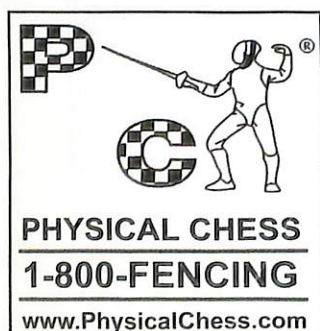
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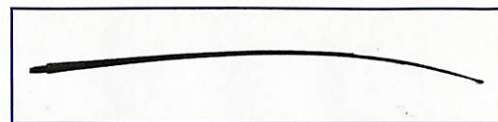


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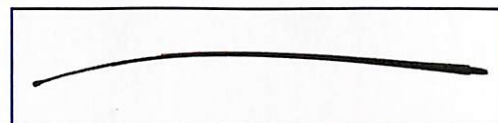
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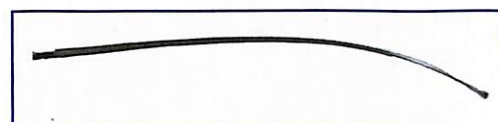
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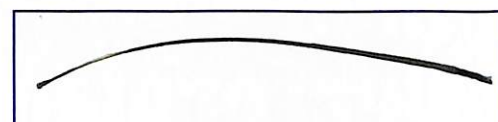
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“Be All that You Can Be” “I Am an Army of One”
“Integrity First” “Accelerate Your Life”

Most Americans recognize these as mottos or campaign slogans of various branches of the U.S. Military. But reflect on these statements of values and priorities, and they could equally apply to your average fencer, as well.

The ties between military life and the sport of fencing go back to the dawn of human society, longer ago than written history can record.

Hand to hand combat between men has almost always included some type of sharp weaponry. Modern swords and sport fighting obviously evolved from this combat in just about every civilization with access to metals around the world.

The salute, the shaking of hands, the rules of gentleman's combat all came to symbolize fencing as an honor-bound mode of human interaction.



Eventually, fencing became a civilian sport but preserved an aura and a system of honor that endures today. But military bodies around the world maintained their ties to this ancient form of combat, including the various branches of the U.S. military.

Fencing until recently has been a varsity sport at all of the military academies. Varsity fencing teams at civilian institutions were often begun in conjunction with Reserve Officers Training Programs (ROTC) programs a century ago. The Air Force Academy in Colorado Springs boasts one of the NCAA's finest programs.

According to the armyfencing.org, the website of the military Fencing Association, West Point still uses the term "Master of the Sword" for its Physical Education instructors.



Many illustrious military figures were fencers. General Patton developed strategies for the epee when he fenced in the pentathlon, a five-discipline sport developed Baron Pierre de Coubertin, the founder of the modern Olympic Games, to showcase the skills of the ideal 19th century soldier.

But aside from the modern pentathlon and varsity and intramural sport at the military academies, sport fencing and the concept of the career soldier have mainly developed through the 20th and now 21st century in parallel rather than hand in hand.

Today, though, a few accomplished individuals have the chance to serve their country in two capacities at the same time – both as a member of U.S. Fencing international teams, and as members of the U.S. Military.

In the high performance athlete programs of two of the four branches of the military, some of the country's finest athletes who are also members of the U.S. military are given the opportunity to train for their sports' ultimate achievement – an Olympic medal – while still maintaining their military status.

The U.S. Army, U.S. Air Force, and the U.S. Marines both have specifically designated programs for which service members can apply once per quadrennial. Qualifying athletes are given assignments which gives them time to fulfill some military duties while training full time – and while being funded by the program.

These programs, known as World Class Athlete programs (the Marines' program is known as the National Caliber Athlete Program), are relatively recent developments, especially in the case of the Air Force, which began its program in 1995.

The Navy also supports athletes, but on a special-assignment, individual basis.

Since 1948, 541 Army soldier-athletes have been selected to either a summer or winter Olympic team, earning 131 Olympic medals

Currently three fencers officially are assigned to World Class Athlete programs in training for Beijing.

Second Lieutenant Seth Kelsey, a veteran of the 2004 U.S. Olympic Men's Epee team, is a member of the Air Force's program for second quadrennial in a row.

must highly ranked nationally in their sport. The armed forces personnel consult closely with each sport's national governing bodies, including the USFA, on athlete selection.

Air Force 2nd Lieutenant Nicole Muscilli



"They have to have a legitimate shot at the Olympics. Exactly where they're ranked kind of depends on the nature of the sport," says Steve Brown, civilian chief of Air Force sports.

Specifically for fencing, Army documentation specifies that athletes must have competed in the Olympics, maintain a top-20 U.S. or top-12 World ranking, or hold 1,200 points on the USFA's rank list to qualify.

Brown says the Air Force's program was created in 1995 when Air Force personnel who were athletes expressed an interest in the Army's program and asked higher-ups for a similar chance to train.

The initial program supported 19 athletes. "We've had as many as 30 in one of our summer programs," says Brown.

In the Air Force, airmen are allowed to train with the program in two-year stints, in the two years leading up to an Olympic Games. They must reapply each quadrennial to re-enter the WCA program.

The Army's program is similar, but runs for up to three years before each Games.

Army Private First Class Cody Mattern, also a 2004 Olympic epee team member, is a new enlistee in the Army's WCA program.

Rashaan Greenhouse is also in the Air Force's WCA program, living and training alternately at Davis Air Force Base in Arizona and in his hometown of New York City.

The World Class Athlete programs do not recruit; members of the military must apply. To qualify for the WCA program, an athlete



Why is it important to the military to allow athletes to train? Brown says it's all about giving service members the chance to represent their country and still serve.

"I think so the Air Force can take care of their own," says Brown. "If we've got someone who has earned recognition, we try to help them along as best we can."

There's a natural tie with many sports, especially fencing, he says.

"Commitment, focus, discipline, they're all natural fits. Leadership is another aspect of the program, like the concept of honor – though you're trying to beat your opponent, you accept decisions of the judges, for example," says Brown.

There is the understanding that service to the Air Force comes first as needed, he says. Though the primary mission is to train, WCA program members must still report often to commanding officers and perform certain base duties when possible.

They still must go through boot camp and are definitely considered regular members of the military.

WCA athletes also help when time permits with recruiting and morale efforts. Kelsey and Mattern went on a trip, for instance, down to Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, for a fencing demonstration for soldiers and families at a Naval Exchange there.

If the athlete's job specialty is in high demand by the Air Force at a certain time, the athlete may have to break off training to go back to regular duties, says Brown.

Photos courtesy MarlowWhite.com

The WCA is not a giant program. According to Air Force spokesman Kenneth Pruitt, the 2008 fiscal year World Class Athlete program budget is \$111,050, supporting 18 athletes.

The program is not taxpayer funded, but comes from a combination of revenues from programs like post exchange store dividends, says Brown.

Athletes must maintain force dress and grooming standards, though they may not report to their unit every day.

Some athletes live at training centers, or like Kelsey, live in own homes, but the service maintains close contact with all, and follows athlete progress closely. If an athlete drops out of higher rankings, they will lose their position in the program.

Brown says that the program also can set a service member's career back slightly.

"If you're out there doing command-type jobs, and I've taken myself from that, when it comes time for review for advancement, that may set you back a little bit, but athletes are well aware of this coming in," he says.

That of course is similar to commitment made by civilian fencers in this country, who put their careers – and financial future -- on hold to train and compete.

The first fencer in the Air Force's program was Lieutenant Nicole Mustilli, a member of the 2000 U.S.

World Championship Women's Saber team, the first U.S. squad ever to win a senior World Championships title.

Some might be deterred by the military's reputation of ruthless discipline, but those were attractions for Mattern. He says the chance to go through basic training and to serve in the Army was intriguing, as was the chance to train with financial support.

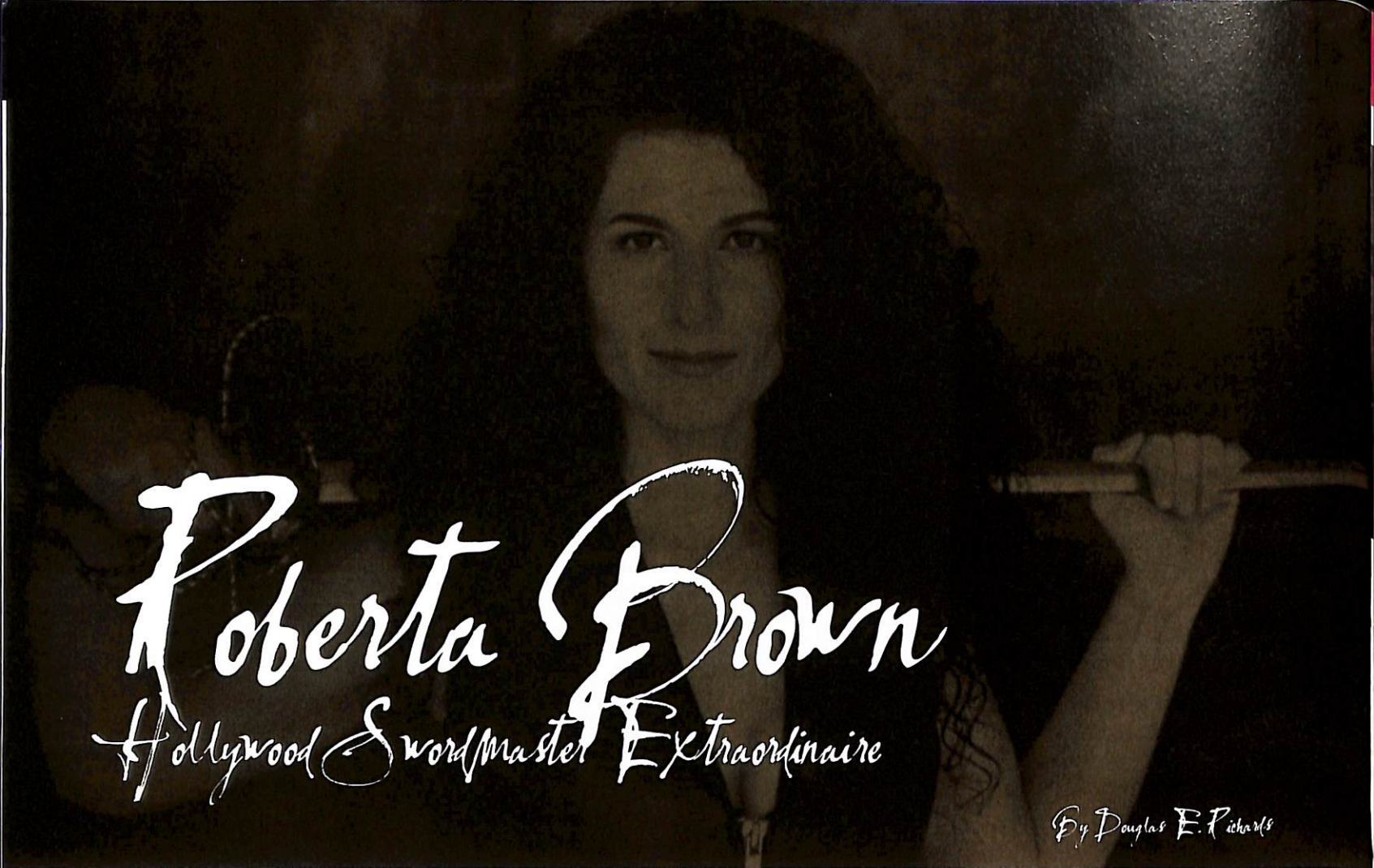
"The opportunity to live at the Training Center seems like a once in a lifetime deal. To go through the Army's boot camp is also kind of a big deal, and now I get to see the inner workings of the government from inside versus hearing about it from the outside," he says.

Mattern says he got an earful about the military from other athletes in the pentathlon and fencing programs, especially Kelsey.

After the 2005 World Championships, in October 2005, Mattern went right to boot camp in Fort Jackson, SC. He applied immediately for the WCA program and was accepted, and now lives in Colorado Springs with Kelsey and trains at the U.S. Olympic Committee's Olympic Training Center, with the U.S. Modern Pentathlon team.

Kelsey says his plan was always to apply for the program after graduating for the Air Force Academy in 2003.

"I decided it was the opportunity of a lifetime. The Academy is a great school, I'd have lots of opportunities
(continued on page 47)



Roberta Brown

Hollywood Swordmaster Extraordinaire

By Douglas E. Richards

"Roberta Brown's fight choreography keeps us on the edge of our seats," writes The Hollywood Reporter. Roberta Brown's fight choreography, "heightens the brutal confrontations," and "is disturbing and convincing," write Variety and BackstageWest. "It is her solid experience, talent, and smarts that allow her to thrive in an otherwise male-dominated field," notes The Fight Master.

But perhaps a profile of Brown in the online magazine Hot Mom's Club says it best. "Who doesn't love a sword-wielding Mom?"

Who, indeed.

But while Brown has only been a mother since the birth of her son, Ian, in 2003, she's been wielding swords for over fifteen years – and teaching some of the biggest stars in Hollywood to do the same.

She has choreographed a three-minute fencing bout on the long-running TV series "ER" between actors Noah Wyle and Goran Visnjic (which can be viewed in its entirety by going to YouTube and typing "secrets and lies fencing" in the search bar). She was swordplay coach and double for multiple women, including guest-star Bo Derek, in the swashbuckling syndicated TV series "Queen of Swords." She has worked on the TV series "The District" and was swordmaster for the first "Charlie's Angels" movie. For "Charlie's Angels," she also doubled for Lucy Liu in the fencing scene shown over the opening credits. And this is but a small sampling of Brown's numerous credits in film, television and the theatre.

Born in Rhode Island, Brown is raven-haired and wonderfully articulate, with a lovely voice one wouldn't imagine coming from a woman who has portrayed so many intimidating, battle-hardened characters over the years. She is a trained musician, dancer, and actor, earning a BA with honors — magna cum laude — in Theatre Arts from Brandeis University and a Master of Fine Arts (equivalent) from the Webber Douglas Academy of Dramatic Art in London.

And while her primary specialty is swordplay, she is expert with the dagger, Chinese fighting fan, and bullwhip as well. For example, for the blockbuster movie "Holes," she trained Patricia Arquette (Kissin' Kate Barlow) to use a bullwhip (although we'll let American Bullwhip Magazine elaborate more on this part of Brown's background).

So how did it all begin? Brown realized that her career choice was embedded in her DNA when she stumbled across several stories she had written as a child. "They were about two knights having a battle. And then at the end the one who wins takes off the helmet and it turns out to be a woman underneath. I don't even remember writing them, but obviously when I was 10 years old I was fantasizing about being the woman in knight's armor."

Brown first studied fencing at Brandeis while majoring in theatre arts, because physical education was then a requirement and she knew that

fencing might come in handy for her theater work.

She never imagined just how handy.

At Webber Douglas, theatrical combat was part of the core curricula, considered a skill that all actors should have. But Brown, already bitten by the fencing bug, took far more than the minimum number of courses required, finally apprenticing under several members of the Society of British Fight Directors, the world's first organization to systematize the teaching of fencing for combat theatrical use. "I loved fencing weapons, drills, and the form and beauty of fencing movements," she said. "But I didn't love actual bouting as much. Theatrical fencing allowed me to apply what I loved about the sport, but instead of competing, I could focus on the story that is told when two people duel. I just discovered that, wow, this is something that I have a knack for and something that I really enjoy."

Ever practical, Brown knew that only a small percentage of people were able to make a living as an actor, and that most needed to have a 'day job.' "And I was not going to let that be waiting tables," she explained feistily. Combat choreography was the perfect answer.

But she soon found that getting acting jobs in Hollywood was even more difficult than she had imagined. "I was so fortunate in my first week in town to get a job at the Westside Fencing Center teaching stage combat classes," she said. "One day I woke up and realized that all these sword



Brown on the Paramount TV Series, *Queen of Swords*



Brown doubling *Queen of Swords* guest star Bo Derek



On the set of *ER* with Noah Wyle and Goran Visnjic



Shooting *Charlie's Angels* with Lucy Liu

jobs — they come looking for me. And here I am wasting my time pounding the pavement trying to find someone to give me a single line in a really bad movie. It wasn't long before my day job completely took over and became my career. I was very lucky to find something I totally love that is still very connected to the acting and theatrical world."

Brown continued to maintain close ties to the fencing community, which is rarely the case with sword choreographers. She taught both stage combat and introductory fencing courses at Westside in Los Angeles for years while learning from world-class fencing coaches there. Currently, she is Director of Theatrical Combat at Beverly Hills Fencers' Club, which maintains an impressive roster of coaches as well. "I've been so lucky to have had the chance to study with some of the greatest fencing coaches and fencing masters in the world," she said.

The "swordmaster" credit is the most prestigious screen credit for sword choreographers, but one Brown was reluctant to pursue early in her career. Although a Hollywood designation, she prized her relationship with the fencing community and feared they would see this title as a misrepresentation, since she is far from being a fencing master. She was finally forced to pursue this credit so she wouldn't appear to be a less accomplished choreographer than those who had.

In an article in *BackstageWest* entitled, "Arms and the Woman," Brown has been quoted as saying that "swordplay appeals to people with active minds," and that "women who take to it are very sharp women." When asked to elaborate on this quote, Brown said, "In my opinion, no other sport requires the brain to be switched on to such a high degree the whole time while the body is still functioning at such an extremely high level. Fencing requires so much thought and concentration you barely notice how much work the body is getting while the mind is focusing on the weapon. The best fencers are the best at playing to intentions. For someone to be able to be operating at such a high physical level and yet playing to the fourth or fifth intention is just mind-blowing to me."

"I am not the greatest bouter in the world. But I love choreographing sport fencing bouts. It's not something that a lot of people do well. Most sport fencing scenes in movies and TV shows look cheesy and that's why there is frequently such a strained relationship between sword choreographers and the fencing world. I have a great passion about doing it well, and I hope that my relationship with the fencing coaches and fencing masters I have worked with has helped me do so."

When *ER* asked her to come in as swordmaster for the episode "Secrets and Lies," she assumed the show wanted her to just bring in

two doubles for the scene. What she didn't know was that the entire reason the scene was being done was because Noah Wyle and Goran Visnjic wanted to do it. And wanted to be seen doing it. Which meant *no* doubles and *no* masks.

"This made it a really interesting challenge," said Brown enthusiastically, going on to mention that this job was to become one of her all-time favorites. "Noah Wyle had fenced in high-school and Goran Visnjic performed theatrical fencing, playing a fantastic Hamlet in Croatia every summer. The actors had talked about getting a swordfight on the show for two years. Noah had just moved up to the number one slot on the call sheet, which in the politics of Hollywood means you get your own golf cart and you get to tell them what you want next season. So Noah's first demand, literally the week he moved up to the number one slot, was okay, where's my swordfight? It was that important to him."

The two actors told Brown they would probably never get another swordfighting scene on *ER* so they wanted it to be *really* cool. And both were extremely committed to the scene, giving Brown over ten hours of rehearsal time. "They were amazing. They would get up at six in the morning and meet me at the studio. I can't think of when I've been more delighted by actors selling my choreography."

(continued on page 48)



BY
OLIVER DIAZ
AND
CHERYL LAIRD

SALLE MAURO'S CAMP VICTORY

THERE WAS A TIME - NOT TOO LONG AGO - WHEN AMERICAN FENCING WAS A SMALL DOT ON THE MAP.

TODAY NO ONE IS SURPRISED TO FIND U.S. FENCERS AMONG THE RANKS OF THE WORLD'S TOP ATHLETES. OUR GROWING COMMUNITY HAS ATTRACTED SOME OF THE MOST ACCOMPLISHED INTERNATIONAL COACHES, IMPROVING OUR SPORT EVEN MORE. MORE IMPORTANTLY, WE ARE BEGINNING TO SEE THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A UNIQUELY AMERICAN COACHING PHILOSOPHY AND TRAINING PROGRAM.

THE REST OF THE WORLD HAS NOTICED. NOW, EVEN FENCERS AND COACHES FROM COUNTRIES THAT HISTORICALLY HAVE DOMINATED THE SPORT ARE TAKING A CLOSER LOOK.

Just as we've gotten used to seeing Americans with medals at international events, now we're seeing internationally acclaimed coaches and fencers at local U.S. camps and clinics, and not just to teach - but to learn.

Fencers train and coaches teach a little differently in the United States. In other countries where fencing is grounded in centuries of tradition, the sport most often is subsidized by the government.

As students in other parts of the world progress, they move up the ranks of training centers, where they compete rigorously with students of the same level. Competition is fierce for coveted team positions. As they improve their own fencing, they learn how to

coach the lower levels. Fencing is not a leisure pursuit - it's a lifetime profession.

In the United States, on the other hand, fencers most often train as a hobby around busy work and school schedules. Even the top fencers must balance training and competition with full-time educational and career plans. And with the country so spread out, traveling can eat up a large chunk of already-limited time set aside for tournaments and training.

Perhaps this is why summer camps have become such a vital part of U.S. training programs. Summer is a break from school and other distractions. It's a time to relax, focus and "cram" training in for Nationals.

CAMP VICTORY

One great example of a U.S. camp that drew international interest last year was Salle Mauro Fencing Academy's Camp Victory in Houston, Texas.

For ten years, owner and head coach Mauro Hamza has organized summer camp as a final preparation for Nationals. His philosophy is to build the strongest camp he can in order to raise the level of all the participants. This past summer, he was able to take it to an even higher level.

Hamza has formed contacts with many coaches in the international community, thanks to traveling extensively with the U.S. junior and cadet men's foil teams and his role as men's foil coach of the 2004 Egyptian Olympic foil team.

Last season, he invited the French junior men's foil team and two coaches to participate in his Texas camp. The French responded by asking to send an additional two fencers, and the stage was set for six of the top 15 junior men's foilists in the world to come train at Salle Mauro, along with coaches Franck Boidin (French junior men's foil coach) and Antoine Marculle (Paris University epee coach).

With the French on board in 2007, almost all of the United States' cadet and junior foil team members showed up to cross swords, many arriving several days early to fence Salle Mauro fencers and get a chance to work with Hamza.

Another prestigious attendee was former Olympian and Cadet and Junior World Champion Iris Zimmerman. "I enjoyed the camp tremendously. Not only was it a great way to expose US fencers to the world of fencing but it was also a fun way to create a cultural exchange. I was very glad to be a part of the French-American exchange," Zimmerman said.

These top U.S. and French fencers were among a total of about 100 fencers who participated in the intense week-long, camp. About two-thirds were foilists, with the remainder split between epee and saber. The levels varied, from unrated novices to the highest-level competitors. Most attendees were under 20, but several older adults spent the week in intense training as well.

The club stayed packed with fencing activity from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. Attendees were divided into two groups, which took turns training and taking breaks in nearby homes and a rented room outfitted with games and snacks. The morning was devoted to warm-up games, conditioning, footwork and blade drills, while the afternoon was reserved for group lessons and serious bouting. Afterwards people gathered at the homes of Salle Mauro parents, without whom the camp wouldn't have been possible.

SALLE MAURO FENCING ACADEMY OF HOUSTON HOSTS SOME OF THE BEST FENCERS AND COACHES IN THE UNITED STATES AND WORLD AT ITS ACCLAIMED SUMMER PROGRAM, CAMP VICTORY. IN 2007, THE FRENCH JUNIOR MEN'S FOIL TEAM AND COACH PARTICIPATED, ALONG WITH MOST OF THE U.S. JUNIOR AND CADET MEN'S FOIL TEAMS. A SIMILARLY HIGH LEVEL OF PARTICIPANTS IS EXPECTED AT THE 2008 CAMP. TO REGISTER, SEE WWW.SALLEMAURO.COM.

Though the camp was expensive, says Hamza, with the help of the parents, it did break even financially.

Throughout the camp, Hamza and his coaches emphasized their club's trademark strategy of fencing with tactical awareness, or, as full-time Salle Mauro assistant-coach Dan Gorman put it, "taking advantage of whatever the opponent gives you, trying to get people to commit to actions so you can capitalize on them."

The Salle Mauro staff was joined by Emilia Ivanova of Heartland Fencing Academy of Kansas City and Hossam Hassan of Gateway Fencing Academy of St. Louis. With the French coaches, this brought the coaching cadre to eight.

The coaches rotated running warm-ups, footwork and drills, which kept the fencers facing fresh challenges and gave the coaches an educational opportunity to see how the

others controlled the group.

Throughout the camp, the French team served as a superior example. They exhibited no ego and willingly gave up their breaks to fence everyone at the camp. For the youth fencers especially, this was a thrill to compete with those who have taken their sport to such a high level.

"I had a wonderful time practicing and working with Salle Mauro's very talented young fencers, as well as getting the chance to meet and practice with Iris Zimmerman and the French National Team," he said, adding that the experience made him feel as if he were "part of the broader fencing community and not a spectator from afar," said Alex Cohen.

CAMP VICTORY IN 2008

With the success of last year, plans for the future continue to grow. The French team and coaches plan to return to the Lone Star State this year – the camp is scheduled for June 23-28 – in what members and coaches hope will be an ongoing tradition. This year's camp also will see the return of Coaches Hassan and Ivanova, plus many of the U.S. foil junior and cadet team members. Salle Mauro organizers are looking at renting even larger rooms for the high number of expected participants.

Not only did the visiting fencers go home tired but happy last year, but Salle Mauro's own fencers came away from the camp fine-tuned for Nationals.

"In order to be prepared for the big event, we needed to have much higher-level fencers to push us to the limit," says Coach Hamza, whose home-grown students – including, most recently, Ben Parkins on the U.S. junior men's foil team – have reached the highest levels of their sport.

Coach Gorman predicts that fencers will find even more inspiring experiences in upcoming camps. "We have to push to make the camp better every year," he says. "The exchange of ideas that come from working with other fencers and other coaches is a true strength for us."

For more information on Camp Victory 2008, visit www.sallemauro.com.



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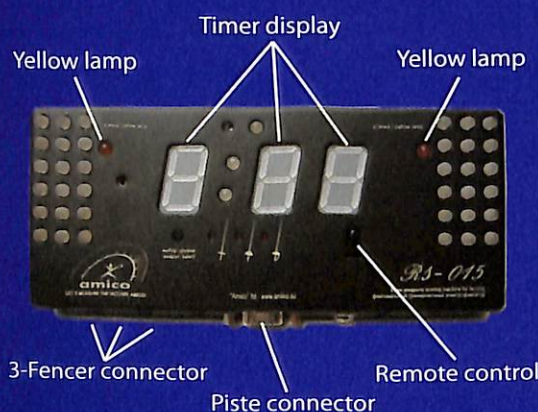


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The Point

PARENT'S CORNER

STRIP SPORTSMANSHIP

By Monica Kao

An important goal in sports is the teaching of young people good sportsmanship. Coaches instruct fencers to respect their opponents, coaches, and referees. Parents can do their part by role modeling good sideline behavior, supporting officials, and understanding the sport. Here's what good sportsmanship on the strip looks like:

The rule: In a bout, before putting on masks, fencers must raise their weapons and salute their opponent, the referee, and anyone watching. When the bout has ended, the fencers go back to the en garde line, salute everyone again and then shake hands. Though this is a fencing regulation, it is also practice for becoming a good loser and winner in life. And by the way, you know how fencing gloves and the hands inside them are smelly? Fencers shake with their ungloved hand.

The people: Fencers should treat officials with respect, though not necessarily be afraid of them. It's okay to ask a referee to explain a call, during, or better yet, after the bout. The question just shouldn't be an argument or an intentional delay.

Fencers show consideration for other fencers. Sometimes a fencer acknowledges that an opponent has scored a touch, usually during bouting without a referee or when the action might

look like a simultaneous touch to a referee. The acknowledgement can be a polite finger pointing, an implied, "That touch was yours."

This may be a tall order for a new fencer who is unsure of touches, but even a novice can practice hooking-up etiquette. When finished bouting on electrical equipment, a fencer should unhook and hold the clip until the next fencer comes up to the strip. The finishing fencer can then help that next competitor get connected. Some clips are tricky, so it helps to have two people hooking and unhooking.

The sport: Olympic sport fencing is an intense competition between athletes, not a traditional duel between gentlemen or ladies. Venus Williams grunts, martial artists yell their *kiai*, Tiger Woods pumps his fist in a "Yes!" gesture...and so do fencers. If you and your fencer have not attended a national tournament or a large regional one, you may not have experienced screaming on the strip. Many fencers, though not all, scream to focus energy, celebrate making a demanding touch, bolster self-confidence, and make their presence known. As long as it is not taunting or disrupting the order of the strip, it is not unsportsmanlike, just an accepted part of the sport.



HINTS FOR HELMET HEADS

For the best spot for taking an action fencing spot, stand at a 45 degree angle from the strip, as close to it as you can get (*without incurring the wrath of the ref or the fencers!*)

THE "ILL-FITTING" LAMÉ

By Ted Li

At least once every major competition, a member of the armory staff is called to a strip to adjudicate whether a particular foil lamé is "legal." The rule book is quite specific about the target area. The lamé must cover the valid target of the fencer (cf.t.47) entirely and without omission when standing upright, when in the on-guard position and when lunging" (m.2.1).

The target at foil excludes the limbs and the head. It is confined to the trunk, the upper limit being the collar up to 6 cm above the prominences of the collar bones; at the sides to the seams of the sleeves, which should cross the head of the humerus; and the lower limit following a horizontal line across the back

joining the tops of the hip bones, thence by straight lines to the junction of the lines of the groin (see Figure 4, above) (t.47.2).

In other words, the foil lamé must cover the fencer's torso from the tips of the shoulders to the tops of the hip bones to the groin. A problem sometimes arises if a fencer is wearing a jacket that is slightly large, as the illusion is created that the fencer's hip bones are lower than where they actually are.

Another problem with "ill-fitting" foil lames is the "bikini cut;" the curved cut from the tips of the hips to the groin strap. Again, the rules are explicit:

... following a horizontal line across the back joining the tops of the hip bones, thence by straight lines to the junction of the lines of the groin (t.47.2)

The conductive jacket **must be so made** that when it is laid flat there is a straight line between the point of junction of the lines of the groin and the two points corresponding to the tops of the hip bones (ilium) (m.28.6)

In other words, no "bikini cut"!

One manufacturer's solution to ill-fitting foil lames was to put an adjustable conductive strap on the back, similar to the strap on the back of a vest. Unfortunately, this creates a safety hazard, as it can catch and hold a blade, especially in the era where touches to the back are quite common. Therefore, no back straps!

With a little bit of knowledge, fencers don't have to worry about "ill-fitting" foil lames. Who said "a little knowledge is a dangerous thing"?

THE POINT

AN HONEST APPRAISAL?

"FUN, I WANT ONE"

— Kathy Schifferle

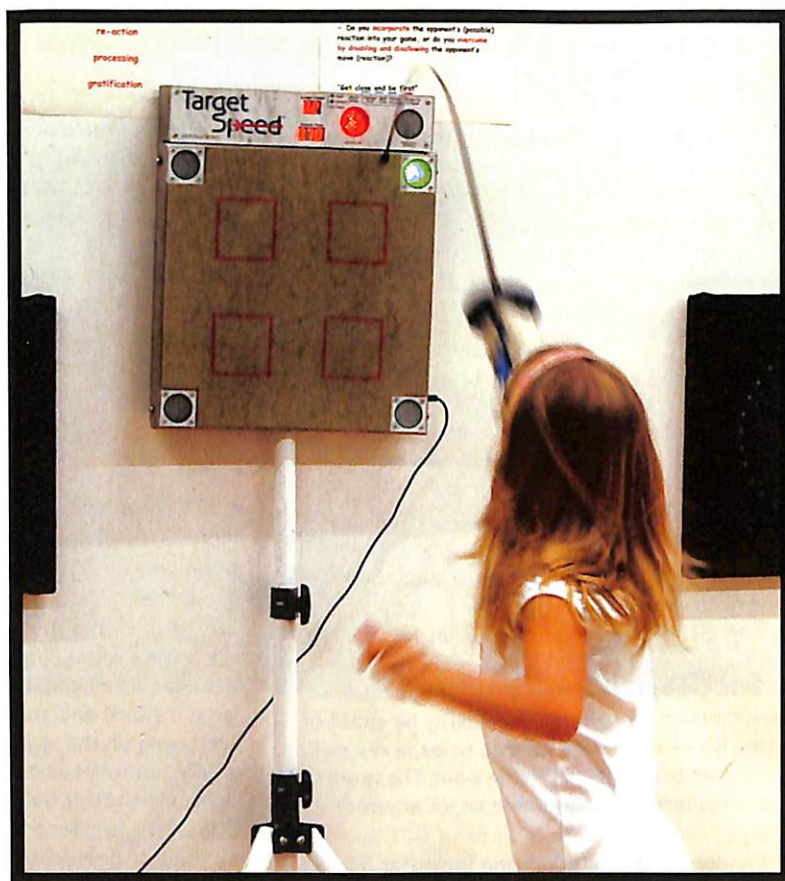
I remember the first time I saw a 4-Zone Target Speed training machine at a North American Cup. I thought how much fun it would be to have it in my garage. Last fall I not only had a chance to review it personally, but to set it up at the Sierra Nevada Open fencing tournament in Chico, Calif. (yes, fencing friends, the finals are held at the brewery!) for all the fencers to try it out.

How it works: Target Speed is a box about 18" x 15" x 2.5", with four zones marked on the face. A light flashes adjacent to a zone and the faster you hit that zone, the better score you earn. Using a microprocessor chip it calculates the time between the light and the hit (attack time). If the hit is within the target square, the red light on top panel indicates the touch. If missed, a white "off target" light comes on. The device keeps track of the number of lunges; the best scored time and the average time as well as the percentage of accuracy. There are various attack modes that can be set, and of course, options for distance come into play as well.

We set it up as a contest at the tournament and only asked that participants provide us with feedback on the device to have a chance to win a prize. Here are some of their comments:

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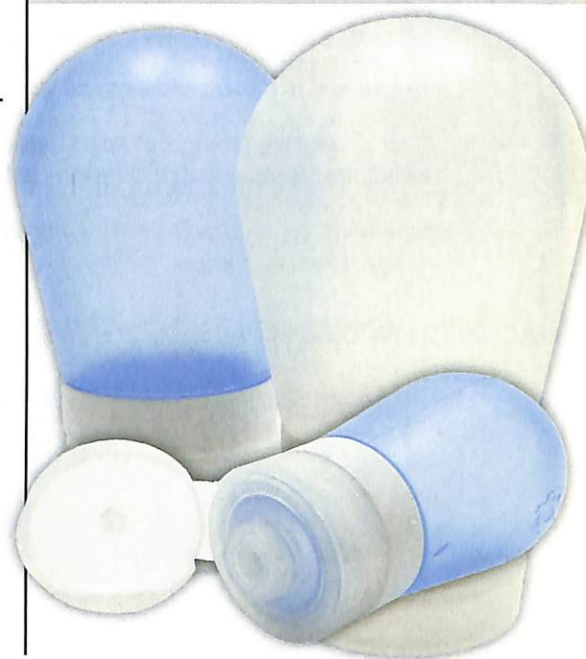
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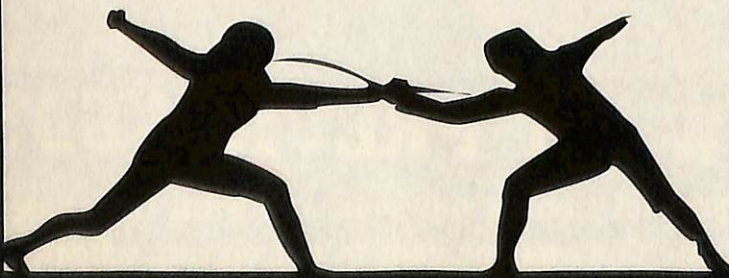
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ALL FOR ONE, ONE FOR ALL by Cindy Bent Findlay

Finding space in which to fence is a problem the vast majority of clubs face at one time or another.

Getting along with other clubs in the area also seems to be a sticking point nationally.

One division in Central Ohio has managed to find a real estate solution for multiple clubs and provide model for fencer relations both at the same time.

Dublin Sport Fencing Center in Dublin, Ohio, is actually the marriage of several fencing clubs into one large center. Each club within the Center maintains its own identity and staff, but they all share the space peacefully and get the benefits of having a dedicated fencing center every night of the week.

The main challenge facing fencing in the Columbus area in the late 1990s, says DSFC co-founder Sam Lillard, was being able to afford and find somewhere to fence.

No club was quite large enough to bear the financial risk of renting a space all on their own. Most clubs were run by part-timers who all had full-time jobs.

Lillard, a member of one of those clubs (Salle Aramis), was also a member of the Columbus Division's board. He suggested that the Division look into founding an entity that all the clubs might share.

With real estate connections made in his law firm, Lillard was able to find dead strip mall space that owners were willing to let on a very affordable basis – under \$700 per month for a 10,000-square-foot former Jazzercise center, provided the club be willing to be flexible.

If the owner found a more lucrative tenant, the new club would have to move – and in fact has had to move three times since their 2003 opening.

However, new space was found very close in another strip mall each time, and the moves have always been highly successful, Lillard says.

Currently, three clubs officially share the space, holding their own sessions on a two-night-per-week basis. Each holds their own beginner sessions, and pays into a common expense pot to meet the rent and equipment needs out of those beginner classes.

Individual club members are asked to pay \$99 per year or nightly floor fees into that pot, as well, and then pay whatever their club requires for their bouting sessions or group or individual lessons.

A smattering of members of random other clubs such as high school or collegiate clubs also show up frequently on the same common payment system basis. The DSFC, an incorporated business, is considered one club for USFA insurance purposes.

Lillard says that while just about everyone in the division pretty much got along swimmingly before this unique hybrid club's formation, working together on DSFC has made the division even more close-knit.

"We have always had a shared understanding that we can have a nice facility totally dedicated for fencing if we subordinate our egos. There was some tension time to time but my role to remind all of the shared benefit of letting everyone do their own thing," says Lillard.

For instance, coaches may not agree with how students in a different club are being taught, but unless advice is sought, none is offered, Lillard says. Students also tend to migrate around to whichever club best suits their personality or competitive goals, and that's perfectly fine, as well.

"It's been nice, we have a bit of competition amongst the groups in the tournaments, there's still that club identity, but in a fun way, not fighting," says Lillard.

Perhaps other clubs across the country can take a page out of Central Ohio's notebook and find a similar space together, and kill two troublesome birds with one single touch.

IN THE SPOTLIGHT



CELINA MERZA

This high school freshman, it seems, was born to fence. Coach Mark Trudnos says "she is 100 percent addicted to the art of fencing." "The minute I put a saber in my hand," she says, "I fell in love." He also reports that she's an "A" student in school.

Her love is paying off. Merza has been fencing for five years and is currently ranked #1 in the U.S. Youth-14 points standing and #2 in the Cadet age group.

Who is your "fencing hero" - Sada Jacobson. She is both mentally and physically strong. I love to watch her fence.

Favorite bout: Junior NAC in Atlanta...the bout going into the top 12. The score was 14-14 with a strong fencer and I did a full attack scoring the last touch. It was the most exciting bout I've ever had.

STATS & FACTS

Event: Saber
Hometown: Wayne, NJ
Birthdate: July 1, 1993 (Haledon, NJ)
High School: Wayne Hills High School, '11
Club: National Fencing Academy
Coached by: Mark Trudnos & Chris Denude

HIGHLIGHTS:

2007 Cadet World Cup, Godollo, Hungary,
Team Silver Medal
Silver, Cadet Saber; 2007 Summer Nationals,
Bronze, Cadet Saber; 2007 Junior Olympics
Bronze, 2007 Junior NAC, Dallas, Texas

CLASSIFIEDS

COMPETITION CLASSIFIEDS

Challenge C.E.P - Marathon foil 2008 in Paris, France for youth fencers will be February 9-10, 2008. All information is on www.escrime-cep.com.

USA Sports would like to contact athletes and their parents who are nationally or world ranked with relatives born in Mexico, up to the fourth generation, to invite them to The National Junior Olympics in Mexico in April 2007. USA Sports will cover expenses including airfare, hotels and meals. contact Arturo Mata, 956-778-2228 cell, 956-969-4716 home, 956-702-8358 fax, 916 East Washington, Weslaco, TX, 78596

The 15th Annual Mr. Ma Cup will be held at Moorestown High School (fully air-conditioned), 350 Bridgeboro Road, Moorestown, NJ, on Saturday, May 31 and Sunday, June 1, 2008. Competitions will be held for all three weapons, men & women, with events in Y-10, Y-12 and Y-14 on Saturday and Open events on Sunday. The tournament is open to all USFA fencers. More than 600 fencers participated in 2007. In each event, trophies will be awarded to the top four finishers and medals to fifth through eighth place. For registration information and additional details about this tournament, please visit www.fasj.com, call (856)424-5070, fax (856)424-5073, email fasj@yahoo.com or pre-registration at www.askfred.net

FASJ 2 Junior Summer Camps, Pre-Summer National Camp, June 20-27, 2008 (8 days) and Pre-Season Camp, August 23-29, 2008 (7 days). Coaches: Andy Ma, Stanislav Gutkovskiy, Brian Kovach, Gilbert Gelin, Witold Rutkowski, Vladimire Gutkovskiy, Jane Eyre, Slava Danylov, Istvan Marton, Milos Vasic and Szaba Gall. Fencing Academy of South Jersey, 2060 Springdale Rd., suite 200, Cherry Hill, New Jersey 08003. Tel: (856)424-5070, Fax: (856)424-5073, Email: fasj@yahoo.com, Website: www.fasj.com

COACH CLASSIFIEDS:

Work Wanted

Former Men's Foil National Champion from Bulgaria seeking full time job in the U.S. More than 15 years coaching experience in all three weapons. For all enquiries, please email dakova@aol.com, 412-600-9410.

Italian Fencing Master, current coach of the University of Verona Fencing Team; graduate of National Academy of Fencing in Naples, seeking teaching position in scholastic or club fencing in the U.S. Contact Carmine Galanto, tel. 045-522084, address Via A. Scarlatti, 1/A, 37131 - Verona, Italy.

Ecole Nationale des Maitres d'Armes, professional fencing teacher at cercle d'escrime de Tours and Laval and experienced international competitor seeks position in U.S. For complete C.V. please contact Jean-Christophe Guibert, telephone 02.99.30.18.49, 06.24.62.49.73, E-mail jchristguibert@yahoo.fr.

Coach Wanted

First posted this issue: **Seeking Coach to start a Fencing Team at one of New Jersey's premier Public Magnet High Schools:** Bergen County Academies, (BCA), in Hackensack, NJ, is looking for a devoted, dedicated individual who loves the sport to begin a high school fencing team from scratch. This is a wonderful opportunity for a college student/athlete or new, or retired coach who wants to work with truly impressive students. BCA students are nationally ranked for their academic achievements and represent one of the most competitive, ambitious group of young people in the state. Though the school does not put athletics first, they support student activities. Over 20 BCA students (a few with extensive Fencing backgrounds in private clubs) have lobbied the school to form this new Team - they are enthusiastic and willing. Pay would be negotiated, but in line with, or lower than, similar high school coaching positions. Do it for the love of the game! ASAP -- Please contact: Grazia Svokos (parent volunteer) at grsvokos@optonline.net.

First Posted Spring '07: **Head Fencing Coach** - The Cape Fear Fencing Association in Wilmington, NC is seeking a head coach/fencing instructor. He/she must be able to work with a democratically elected board, teach beginning and intermediate group classes, and give individual lessons in foil (required), epee (required), and sabre (optional). Payment is negotiable; may include a split of dues from new members, as well as fees from classes, lessons and camps. For more information about the club, please visit www.capefearfencing.com; call or e-mail Laurie Graham at lauriegraham@bellsouth.net or 910-620-1477

First Posted Spring '07: **SEEKING FOIL COACH.** Coaching and personal fencing experience required in foil. Must speak English language, be self-motivated, responsible and enjoy working with fencers of all ages and levels. Send resume to include education, experience as a fencer, coaching experience, achievements and contact information to: The Fencing Academy of South Jersey, P.O. Box 3637, Cherry Hill, NJ 08034 or email fasj1@yahoo.com.

Got a big competition coming up? Looking for a coach? Looking for a job? Send free classified listings to: Cindy Bent Findlay, USFencingMedia@earthlink.net, fax 614.340.7299. Make sure to include contact information; American Fencing will not act as an intermediary for advertisers and does not research backgrounds or legitimacy of either coaching candidates or advertising employers or clubs. Coach Classified Adverts will run for 2 consecutive issues only and then removed UNLESS requested by advertiser. Summer magazine deadlines for all classified ads is July 15, 2007. Summer issue will be published in early August.

Books of Interest

From www.swordplaybooks.com

Epee 2.0

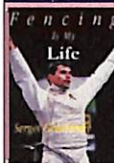


New and Essential
EPEE 2.0: The birth of the new fencing paradigm by Johan Harmenberg. A World and Olympic champion shares his story, methods, & radical theory! See ad in this issue \$27.95

The first ever strength building book by a fencer for Fencers! \$24.95



Strength Training for Fencers by Harry James



A great read--a perfect gift! Sergei Golubitsky, *Fencing is My Life* The struggles, triumphs, tactics, and training methods of the greatest men's foil champion of our times! \$27.95

Get your head together! Aladar Kogler, Ph.D. *One Touch at a Time:* With relaxation...Effortlessly...Now! Psychological Processes in Fencing \$28.95



Understanding Fencing

Essential reading for fencers and their coaches by maker of world champions Professor Zbigniew Czajkowski



Required Reading! Istvan Lukovich, *Fencing British Coaching Scheme Textbook* A comprehensive 3-W introduction by the Hungarian master. \$30.00

Foil Technique & Terminology

Recommended by US Fencing Coaches Association Fencing Terms and Actions Explained Just \$7.95 Quantity discounts available on request

Vass, *Epee Fencing* \$26.95

A Fencing Classic! *Fencing and the Master*, by Laszlo Szabo \$30.00

Advanced Foil Training! Istvan Lukovich, *Electric Foil Fencing* \$24.95

available online from **SwordPlay Books** www.swordplaybooks.com 1.718.761.3305 and your fencing supplier

afterward, Abdel Salem (the AFA coach) is a great coach," he says.

Kelsey's career in the military was as a Varied Services officer, taking care of services like recreation, child development centers, lodging, and the like.

In May, Kelsey was officially laid off from the Air Force when Congress ordered cuts through the lieutenant level. He's now serving in the reserves but about to be re-upped into both the service and the WCA program, where he'll stay through Beijing.

After the Olympics, he says, he'll be back reapplying for the program.

A typical week for both Kelsey and Mattern consists of three days per week cross training and running, four days of footwork and bouting, and several lessons per week. Travel to World Cup and national competitions fits into many weekends.

"I feel the program meshes well with the values of the military," says Kelsey. "They kind of go hand in hand, training and military work."

He says the military has made him more organized and thorough, and also more experienced as a leader.

"I think the command structure showed me kind you may outrank someone, in that you can tell them what to do, but it's not always the best way. You have to be a people person to get the best out of each person," he says.

Mattern agrees with Kelsey on the personal benefits he's seen from the service already.

"If you have to be packed and have literally five minutes to be somewhere, you know can do it because been through it. Nowadays, I know that my living style is simplified, I keep things very organized, I'm more efficient."

Mattern is also taking advantage of many of the benefits available to any military member, such as free enrollment in E Army U, the Army's free online college education program. He takes credit hours remotely via the internet, and is working on an associate's degree, hopefully eventually toward a career in education.

They both know there is a risk that comes with being in the service in a time of war, and are ready for it.

"At any point Cody or I could be told we're going over and fighting, you'd have to be ready for that. Know that going in and if you're fine with that, you'll be OK. I wouldn't be happy, but if that's what my nation needs, then I'm willing to go," says Kelsey.

Kelsey is not sure if wants to stay in the military long term, although he's enthusiastic about participating in the reserves. "If I were to go into coaching it would work well. But few people decide on the military for their whole career. Your life changes a great deal, especially if you get married, and want kids. You've got to look at it a couple years at a time."

In the end, the pride in serving in so many ways makes the journey worthwhile, says Kelsey.

"I think representing the Air Force at the Olympic Games was pretty incredible. Also while I was on active duty, and we sent people over to Iraq during different cycles, when everyone got home safe, I was proud then, too."

NOTICE TO US FENCING MEMBERS

VOTE ON PROPOSED BYLAW AMENDMENTS IN MAY 2008,
THE BYLAW REVIEW COMMITTEE WILL POST PROPOSED BYLAW REVISIONS
AT WWW.USFENCING.ORG. A COPY OF THE TEXT OF THE AMENDMENTS
WILL BE PROVIDED TO ANY MEMBER BY MAIL UPON WRITTEN REQUEST
TO THE USFA NATIONAL OFFICE.

THESE REVISIONS ADDRESS ISSUES OF FORMATING OF THE BYLAWS, REMOVAL
OF OUTDATED ITEMS, COMPLIANCE WITH USOC REQUIREMENTS AND UPDATING
OF THE BYLAWS TO REFLECT ACTIONS OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS.

THERE WILL BE A VOTE TO ACCEPT OR REJECT THESE AMENDMENTS
AT THE MEMBERSHIP MEETING DURING THE SUMMER NATIONAL
CHAMPIONSHIPS. PROXY FORMS WILL BE DISTRIBUTED TO ALL MEMBERS
WHO CHOOSE TO VOTE ON THE PROPOSED AMENDMENTS
WITHOUT ATTENDING THE MEMBERSHIP MEETING



2008 BATTLE IN SEATTLE AT RAIN CITY FENCING CENTER BELLEVUE, WASH., JANUARY 11-13 ATTENDED BY 250 FENCERS FROM AROUND THE COUNTRY

VETERAN MIXED EPEE:

36 COMPETITORS, A B2 EVENT

- 1 Krause, Dan (Rain City Fencing Center)
- 2 Varney, John (Salle Auriol Seattle)
- 3T Brooks, Craig (Salle Auriol Seattle)
- 3T Timacheff, Serge (Washington Fencing Academy)

MIXED EPEE:

84 COMPETITORS, AN A4 EVENT

- 1 Bajgoric, Tigran (Dynamo Fencing)
- 2 Bruno, Carlos (Northwest Fencing Center)
- 3T Habib, Farooq (La Salle)
- 3T Wolfson, Kyle (Northwest Fencing Center)

MIXED FOIL:

80 COMPETITORS, AN A2/B3 EVENT

- 1 Crebs, Nick (Northwest Fencing Center)
- 2 Stackhouse, Andre (Rain City Fencing Center)
- 3T Howell, Ryan (Salle Du Lion)
- 3T Burke, Morgan (La Salle)

MIXED SABER:

46 COMPETITORS, A C2 EVENT

- 1 Ward, Becca (Oregon Fencing Alliance)
- 2 Wiest, Michael (Oregon Fencing Alliance)
- 3T Osier, Lian (Oregon Fencing Alliance)
- 3T Abdel-Kader, Nader (North Vancouver Fencing Club)

WOMEN'S EPEE:

31 COMPETITORS, A B2 EVENT

- 1 Hohensee, Kira (Northwest Fencing Center)
- 2 TuckerWilliams, Ellary (Salle Auriol Seattle)
- 3T Fox, Paige (Northwest Fencing Center)
- 3T Vega, Elizabeth (Salle Auriol Seattle)

WOMEN'S FOIL:

32 COMPETITORS, A B2 EVENT

- 1 Patterson, Devynn (Salle Auriol Seattle)
- 2 Beck, Rachel (Northwest Fencing Center)
- 3T Abbe, Cory (Northwest Fencing Center)
- 3T Chen, Lilia (Salle Du Lion)

WOMEN'S SABER:

18 COMPETITORS, A D1 EVENT

- 1 Maclaren, Heather (Dynamo Fencing)
- 2 Clement, Laura (Salle Auriol Seattle)
- 3T Hee, Kirsten (Oregon Fencing Alliance)
- 3T Bliss, Christie (Dynamo Fencing)

Roberta Brown (cont. from page 34)



Brown chose to have them fence epee because, "The average person doesn't imagine slashing when they imagine sport fencing. And epee tends to be more cinematic than foil because it has a larger target area."

Brown immediately went to the top three epee coaches at the Westside Fencing Center, where she worked at the time, and each of them showed her his all-time favorite epee touch. She was able to work all of them into the scene. She finished up with a touch made famous in an Olympic bout between Heizaburo Okawa and Jean Claude Magnan, in which Okawa strikes at Magnan while Okawa is on his knees, upside down, and backwards. "Heizaburo Okawa used to teach at Westside and we had a poster of that touch on the wall," said Brown. "When I brought in the picture and showed it to Noah and Goran, they got really jazzed about it and they worked hard to achieve that final pose."

Brown explained that swordfighting on film is done at three-quarter speed. This is because, "You can't expect to put something with the speed and complexity of a fencing bout on film and expect anyone who isn't a fencer to have any idea what is happening. You have to slow it down because you're telling a story. We make up for the slower speed by exaggerating the moves. As soon as the moves get bigger it takes longer to do them, which is one of the things that make some fencing coaches look at swordfights on TV and scoff, because it's something you would never do in fencing. It's signaling. It's leaving yourself open. But it's important to do it this way for the non-fencing viewer."

Brown takes the safety of her actors extremely seriously. "My job is to protect them from injury, and to tell the director — at the risk of alienating them so they don't want to use me anymore — 'no, I'm sorry, you cannot put them on the staircase now. If you wanted to put them on the staircase, you needed to tell me that three days ago.'"

When asked about the danger of staging the bout for ER in which the combatants weren't wearing masks, Brown noted that both actors were skilled and never got close to each other. She explained that sound effects and the reactions from actors can fool the brain, making



viewers believe they see contact that isn't really there. Those viewing the scene on YouTube.com will see that Noah Wyle is struck in the face as the bout ends and receives a lengthy red gash down his cheek. "That part was a piece of cake," said Brown. "They were nowhere near each other when Goran did that swipe. It's a lens trick that makes them look closer — as long as we see the blade pass between the lens and Noah's face. Noah had some red makeup on his finger. You see the blade pass between the lens and Noah's face, and instantly Noah's hand comes up to where the strike would have landed. And then he takes his hand away where he just laid the red on his face and looks at his finger with an expression of, oh my God, he just got me. What makes you believe it is Noah's reaction. He and Goran are wonderful actors."

There are about a dozen swordmasters in Hollywood, but Brown is the only woman in the field. "There are definitely gigs that I don't get, because if they're shooting the Alamo they don't think, let's bring in a woman to teach all the guys how to use swords. On the other hand, I get opportunities that men don't get. There are times when it's a gig for a woman. In the movie "Boudica" (a.k.a. "Warrior Queen"), all the major warriors in the film were women. So by hiring me as swordmaster, they could have me pull double duty. I could choreograph the scene and then they could say, 'hey, let's stick a wig on you and you can do it.'"

In addition to her work at Beverly Hills Fencers' Club, Brown is resident Fight Director for the Los Angeles Shakespeare Company. She has been doing more theater lately because of the demands of motherhood.

Brown was especially delighted to be interviewed by *American Fencing*. Why? "I've never done an interview with a fencing publication," she explained. "And as I've said, there isn't always a positive relationship with people who do what I do and the fencing world. Over the course of my career this has been something that has been very important to me, a relationship I have always tried to foster. I welcome having the chance to express just how much respect I have for the sport."

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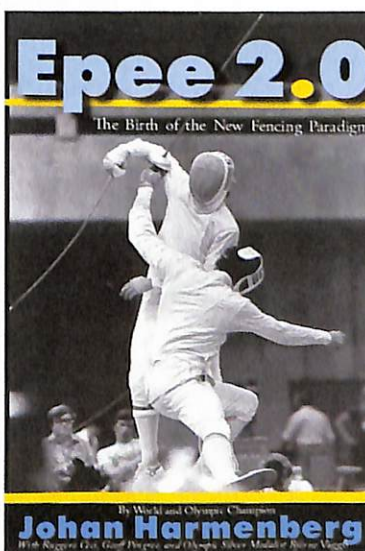
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David Arias: arias@fencingclub.org • 205-515-3902



EPEE 2.0

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 • brought Eastern insights into Western fencing
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I'VE HEARD IT ALL.

The Mystery Writer

What a great time to be involved in fencing! I know there are still things on which we need to work to make it better. Yes, yes, I know all about the FIE and their incessant tinkering with foil. Now they want the bib to be target. What next, I asked? How about a half sleeve covering the weapon arm, because when one closes the line to parry, you are in effect "covering target"? (I am not joking about that. It is like the people who are making the decisions about our sport have never actually fenced; they were just bored, needed something to do, and this was what they found.) I also know all about the attempt to get epee to wear the transparent masks even though they seem not to work as advertised. And then there is saber, with all of the controversy surrounding the validity low-line attack. I have heard the complaints of our tournament officials and their tardy paychecks, of the waits at tournaments, and the backwater locations. I have heard it all. But in spite of all that, it is still a great time to be involved, if for no other reason than because this is the year when our best and brightest strive to make the US Olympic team.

This is no easy task. I know many of you now harbor – or have harbored – dreams of making an Olympic team (as did yours truly), but do you really understand what these people and families are doing? The sacrifices are at a level few of us can understand. They walk on the strip with all the confidence in the world and make the bouts look so easy when they are beating you. But behind that mask is the same person who walked into some gym years ago to just try something different that they always wanted to do. Add to that first trip endless hours of solitary training – the training the rest of us don't see because it was too cold, too hot, too late, or too early to go to practice. They were there. When all of us wanted to go home or cry or drink (or all three) after early losses in tournaments, they stayed and learned. When their friends called them nerds or said this is not a "real" sport, they laughed it off and then went back to the gym to train some more. If you want to speak of sacrifice imagine all the days of travel they have. The destinations sound like a travel agent's dream tour: Paris, Casablanca, Tokyo, Sydney, Venice, Havana, but what you are missing is all of the hours spent getting there. All of the flight delays, security concerns, time away from home, work, or school. And they don't get to see these great destinations anyway; they fly in, get some food, sleep as much as possible, and then wake up in a strange time zone and compete against the best in the world. By Monday morning, they are flying home again, getting back to their life for three days, and then flying out again for the next World Cup. Mix in a significant other, a job, a midterm, a job, or anything else, and you start to get an idea of the level of commitment these young people are making.

Yes, I am not so naïve to believe this is all done for love of country; some of it is very selfish on their part. But think of our typical athletes and our typical lives; unlike the rest of us, there is no everlasting fame at the end of



Photo by Serge Timacheff

this journey, no pot of gold at the end of the rainbow – there is just normal life. Doubt me. Name the other members of the saber team in Los Angeles not named Westbrook. Name the other members of Seoul foil team not named Marx. The fact that there is not even everlasting fame in our own little community for these people means that they are doing all of this for a higher purpose, to be the best they can personally be. In my opinion that deserves a salute.

So the next time you see Soren or Hanna Thompson (no relation), Emma Barrata, Sada Jacobson, John Tiomkin, Seth Kelsey, Erinn or Keeth Smart (very related), Ivan Lee, Iris Zimmermann, Mariel Zagunis, or any of the other numerous athletes I have failed to mention trying to make our Olympic team, look them eye to eye and say good luck and thank you for representing our country the best way you know how.

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