AMERICAN FENCING

WINTER 2008
Volume 58, Number 4



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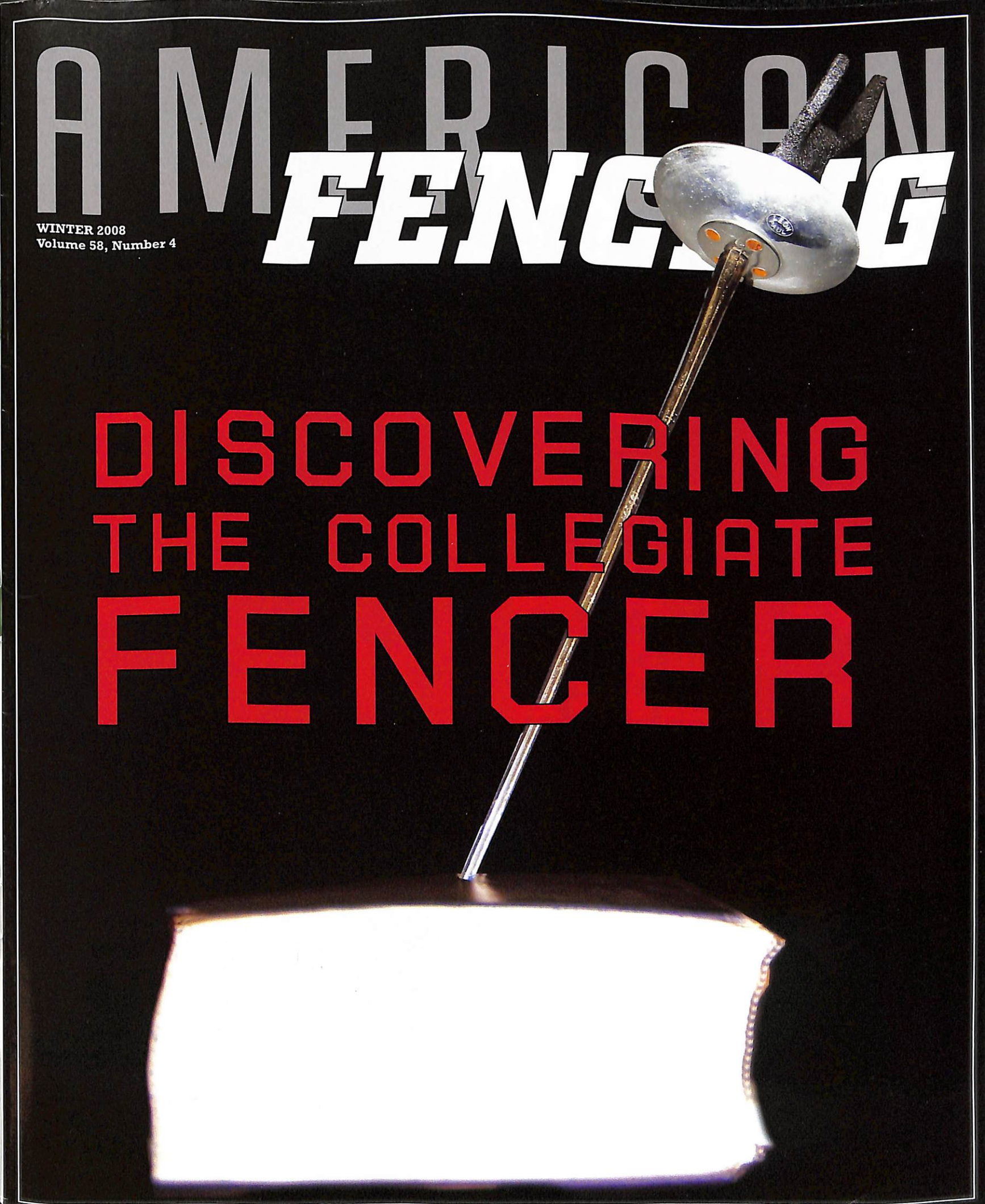
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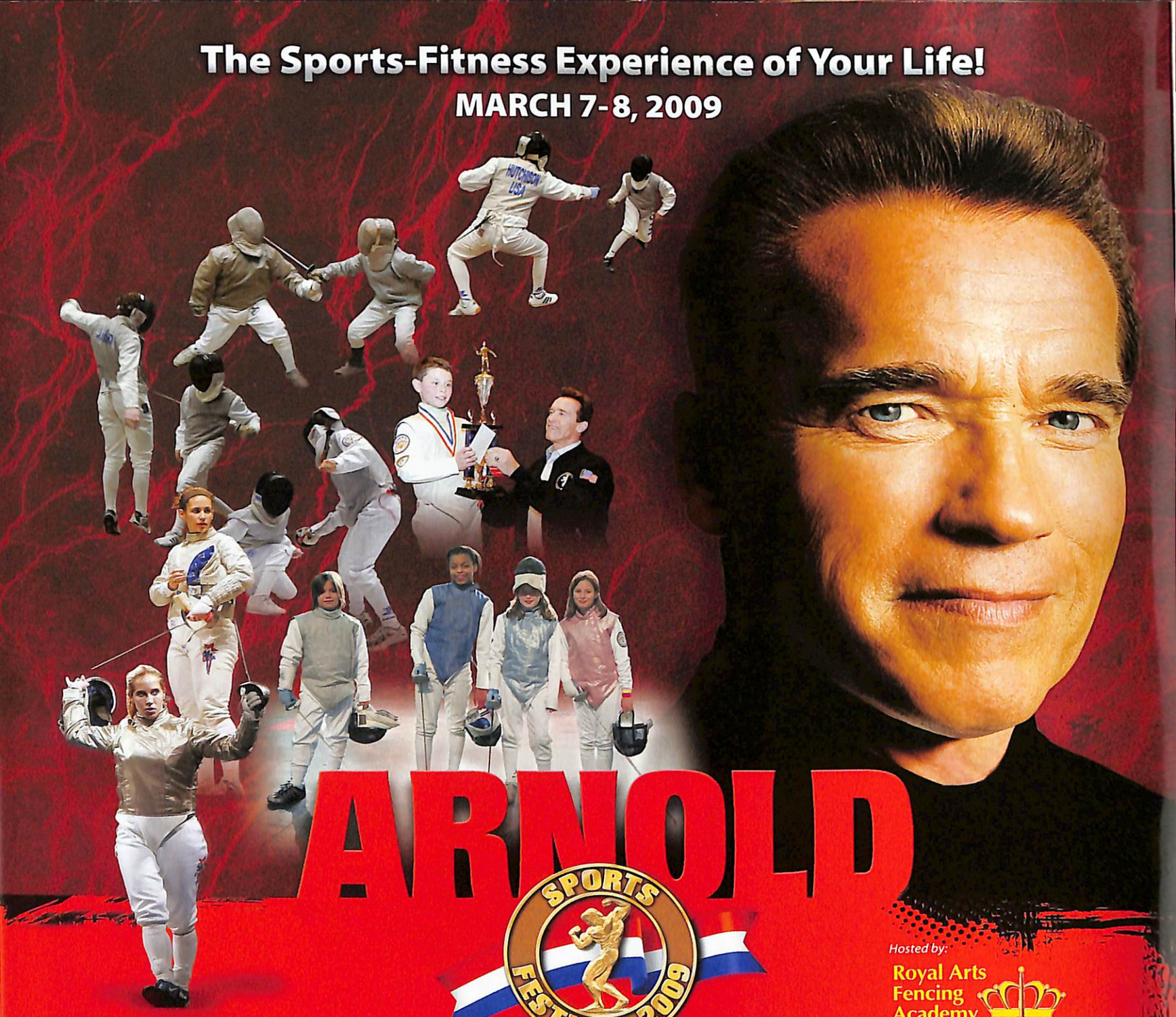
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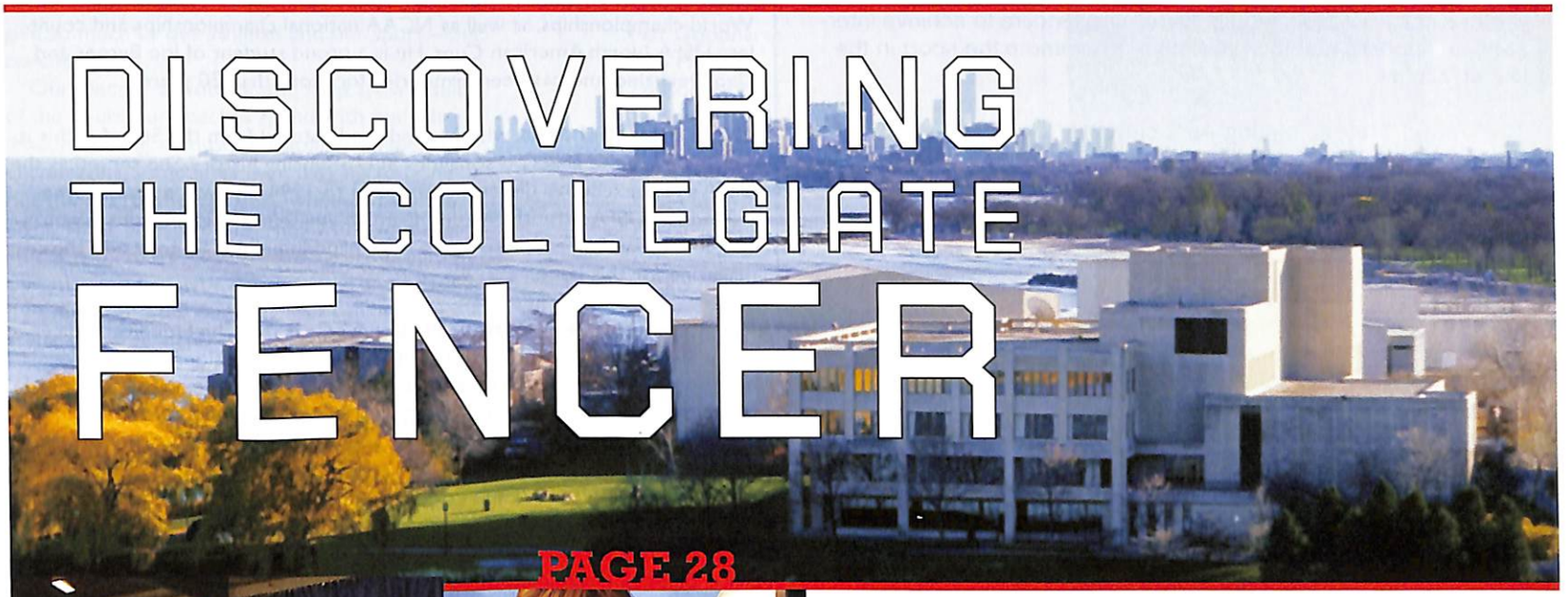
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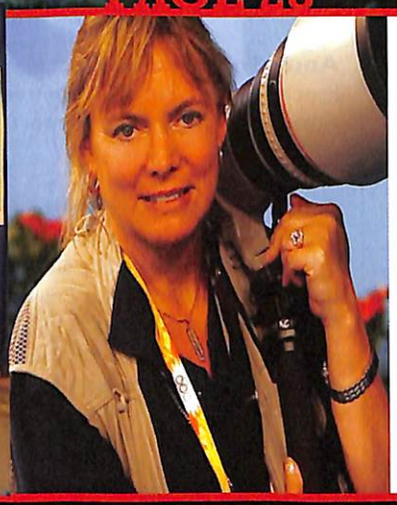
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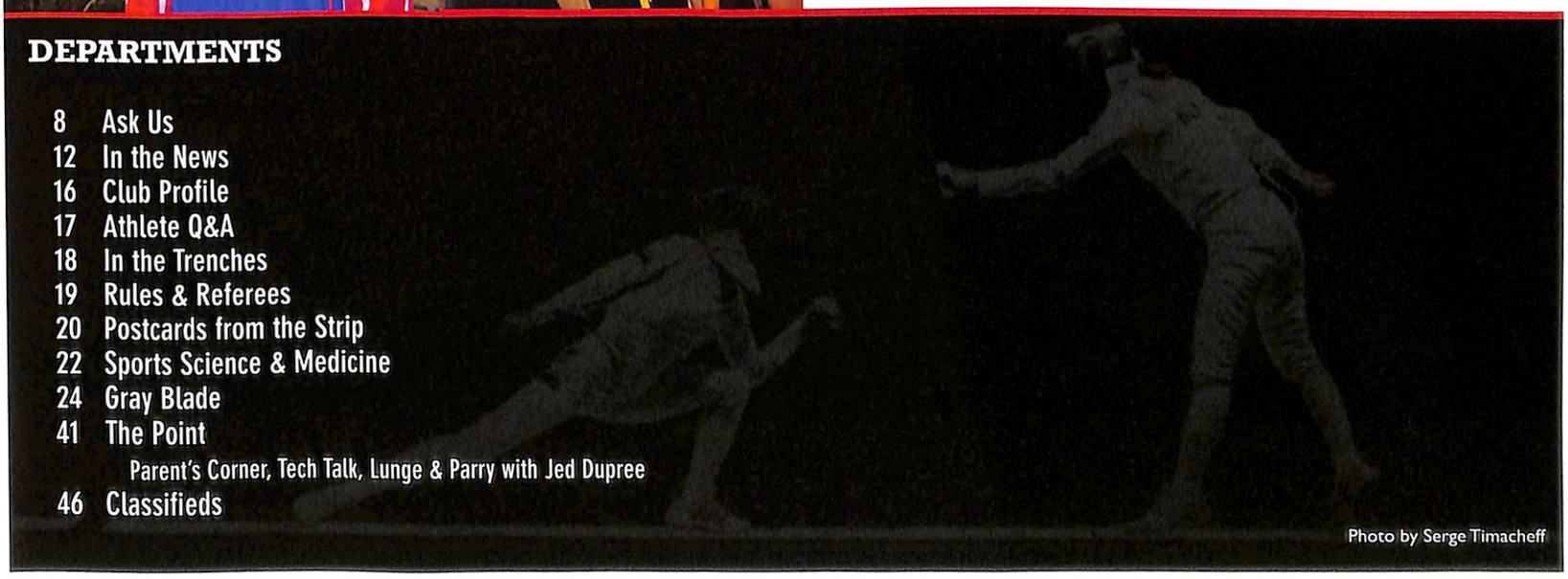


Photo by Serge Timacheff

THE UNITED STATES FENCING ASSOCATION 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.

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CONTRIBUTORS

Jeff Bukantz is a member of the FIE Rules Commission and has been captain of multiple U.S. international teams, including the 2006 World Championships team and the 2004 and 2008 Olympic Games teams.

Ted Li (Tech Talk) is a member of the USFA's Technical Commission. He was the Head Site Armourer for three Olympic Games (1984, 1996, 2000), as well as for Pan-American Games, Universiade, Senior, Junior, and Veterans World championships, as well as NCAA national championships and countless USFA North American Cups. He is a proud student of Joe Byrnes and Dan Dechaine, and has been armouring for more than 30 years.

Carla Mae Richards, who penned the Postcard from the Strip for this issue, is one of the great personalities in U.S. fencing history. She served as the USFA's first executive director from 1983 to 1994, and was a major force behind the USFA's transformation from an amateur group into the organization it is today. Richards also lent a huge hand in helping to copy edit the magazine for this issue.

Professor Peter Harmer, Ph.D., ATC., is the Chief Medical Officer of the USFA and a member of the FIE Medical Commission. He was a keynote speaker at the 1st International Congress on Science and Technology in Fencing in Barcelona in February, 2008, detailing his research on the epidemiology of fencing injuries. He can be contacted at pharmer@willamette.edu

Kathryn Schifferle (Club Profile, product review) is a business counselor for the Small Business Development Center in Chico, Calif., teaches marketing at Chico State University and owns a marketing consulting business called Balestra (www.balestra.us).

Andy Shaw is the Official Historian for the USFA, chairman of the US Fencing Hall of Fame Committee, and owns and operates the Museum of American Fencing in Shreveport, Louisiana.(www.museumofamericanfencing.com)

Douglas E. Richards is the father of an avid 14-year-old fencer named Ryan. He is a frequent contributor of science pieces for National Geographic KIDS magazine and the author of the critically acclaimed science fiction thrillers, The Prometheus Project – Trapped and The Prometheus Project – Captured, for children 9-14. Trapped has been formally designated as "Recommended Literature" by the California Department of Education. This is his second piece for American Fencing.

FROM THE DESK OF THE PRESIDENT

When I walk through one of our North American Cups I am always impressed by the fencers on the strip, fencing at their best to move ahead to the next bout, touch by touch. But I have recently been thinking about those who give so much to our athletes and our sport—our coaches.

Our fencers' actions on the strip are a result of the hours our coaches spend with our athletes, modeling, mentoring, cajoling, reminding, encouraging, sometimes even nagging, to bring out the best in their fencers, whether they are eight, 18 or 58—or more. They work with their students to set reachable goals, design programs that maximize growth, see potential and possibility even after a discouraging loss, celebrate small steps and large victories with enthusiasm.

To do all of this, our coaches are not only teachers but also learners, attending Coaches College, USFCA conferences, reading, expanding their own skills both on and beside the strip. They give not just their time and expertise, but also their enthusiasm and passion for the sport—they give of themselves to create stronger and more able fencers.

All of us, fencers, parents, members one and all, owe our coaches our gratitude—and we owe special thanks to those coaches who brought our athletes to Beijing:

Arkady Burdan
Daniel Costin
Gago Demerchian
Yuri Gelman
Simon Gershon
Nat Goodhartz
Bob Hurley
Ed Korfanty
Buckie Leach
Greg Massialas
Mike Pederson
Paul Pesthy
Michael Petin

Those results belong not only to our athletes but also to the coaches whose knowledge, skills and dedication helped to make it all possible.

Thank a coach today—and tomorrow, and every day, to show your appreciation for all that they do for you, our fencers, and our sport.

Regards,
Kalle Weeks



THE EDITOR SPEAKS OUT



Ah, Auld Lang Syne – time to reflect on the year that passed and the one to come. Obviously it has been a momentous one for US Fencing with a record six Olympic medals (yes, I know everyone knows by now but I still get a kick out of repeating it) and the exit of our executive director.

As we are at the brink of a new era – a post-medal one, a post-Rene Roch one (the FIE President of 12 years' tenure lost his seat in December), and also seemingly a recession – a bit of reflection might inform our march forward. So in this issue, we take a look back at Albie Axelrod's 1960 Olympic medal with Andy Shaw's History column, and a reminder of everyone who brought us to this point with Carla Mae Richard's Postcard from the Strip. And finally, our cover story takes a look at the world of collegiate fencing and where it is heading, as well.

We try to hand out a few bits of advice for clubs, as always, in our Club Tips and Club Profile section. And we take a look at a bit of new 21st century technology in our Equipment Review.

And over the next couple of months, we will be taking a look at this magazine, too. A new administration is in place, and a new AF Editorial Advisory Board will meet and discuss where this magazine is going. If you have anything you would like to add to this discussion, please send it along to editor@americanfencingmagazine.com, because this is your magazine, after all.

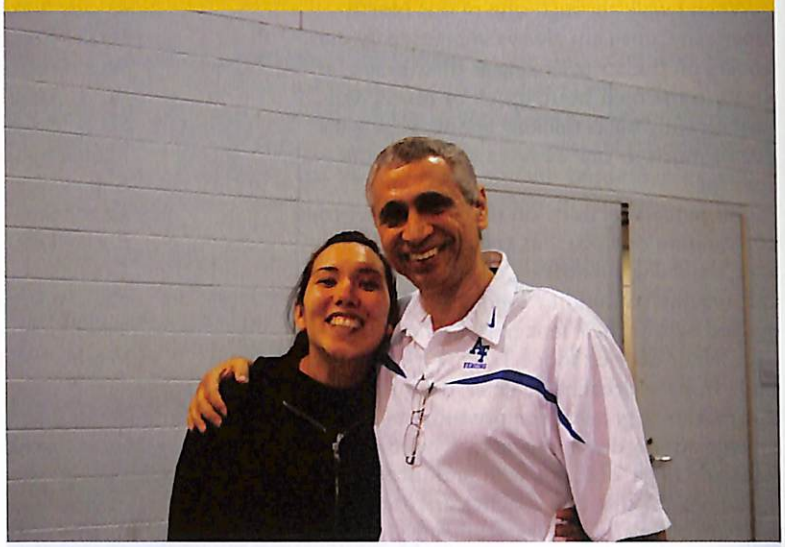
ANNOUNCEMENT

US Fencing Welcomes Its New Executive Director

US Fencing is pleased to announce the appointment of Kurt Aichele as its new Executive Director. Kurt brings sport, for-profit and not-for-profit experience to the association. As a coach Kurt served as the head team coach at the National Gymnastics Village, and later at the Illinois Gymnastics Institute, where he coached nationally and internationally competitive athletes, and placed an athlete in the Olympic Trials and Selection Camp. In addition, he hosted regional, national, and elite gymnastics training camps, and has assisted more than 30 athletes in obtaining full scholarships at NCAA institutions. He served for six years in leadership roles at IGI Sports Core in Westmont, Illinois, where he was responsible for initiatives ranging from strategic planning to developing revenue-generating programs to hosting the world's largest artistic gymnastics event, involving 3,700 athletes in competitions over three days. Most recently he has been the Director of Grants and Teen Programs for the YMCA of the Pikes Peak Region in Colorado Springs, where he developed collaborative relationships with a variety of organizations to meet the needs of at-risk youth. In that capacity he has had responsibility for over $1,000,000 in grants, in addition to volunteer recruitment, financial development, program direction and related activities. Kurt will join the staff as of December 15th, 2008.



United States Fencing Coaches Association



Fencing Coaches Clinics

- Indianapolis, IN
- May 9-10, 2009

- San Francisco, CA
- June 5-7, 2009

- AFA, San Antonio, TX
- Foil Clinic April 3-5, 2009

- Mr. Ma Fencing Center
- 7 Spielman Road, Fairfield, NJ
- May 16- 17, 2009

- Gold Blade fencing Center
  Southlake, TX
- May 29-31, 2009

- 2009 National Conference &
  Annual General Meeting
- July 24 - 26, 2009
- San Diego Fencing Center
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www.askfred.net.

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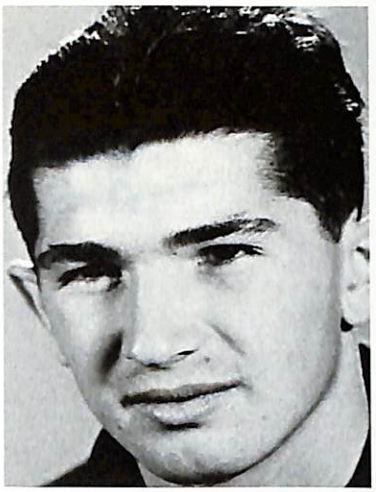
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FAREWELL FRIEND



One of the pillars of the American fencing community, Paul Pesthy, passed away at the age of 70 on October 27 in Bulverde, Texas.

Pesthy was born in Budapest, Hungary. His father, Karoly, was a reknowned Hugarian saber fencer who gave Pesthy a lifetime love of the sport.

Pesthy participated in the 1956 Hungarian Revolution and was forced to flee his country for Columbia. There, influential fencers and members of the U.S. military saw him in competition and arranged for him to emigrate and become a member of the U.S. Army, in which he served from 1958-1962.

Pesthy himself competed both as an epee fencer and in the sport of modern pentathlon. While in the Army, he studied at Rutgers and won several NCAA and Intercollegiate Fencing Association Championships, and was a member of the Rutgers team that won in 1964.

He was one of the very few athletes in history to compete in two different sports at the Olympic Games. He earned a spot on the 1964 U.S. Olympic Pentathlon team and won a silver medal in the team event. He also won world championship team bronze medals in Pentathlon in 1962 and 1963.

Pesthy represented the New York Athletic Club throughout his exemplary career. He won individual U.S. national championship titles in 1964, '66, '67, '68 and '83, the most national epee titles in US history, and was a member of 11 national championship winning teams for the NYAC.

At the Pan American Games, Pesthy led gold medal-winning fencing teams in 1967 and 1975.

He was elected to both the Rutgers and United States Fencing Halls of Fame.

Pesthy was a member of the Olympic fencing team in 1968, 1976 and 1980, but did not compete in the 1980 Moscow games because of the American boycott.

Pesthy moved to San Antonio after the 1964 Olympics, earned a Doctorate in philosophy of education, and taught kinesiology at San Antonio College for more than 20 years.

When he retired from serious athletic competition after winning his last fencing national title in 1983 at age 45, he began a coaching career where his results matched those of his own individual athletic accomplishments. As a pentathlon coach and sports administrator for more than 32 years, Paul the architect of a four year period wherein the United States won World Championship gold medals in Pentathlon from 1997 to 2000, culminating in an Olympic silver medal in 2000 by Emily Deriel, whom he coached from novice to Olympic medalist in only 18 months.

He coached many fine fencers and pentathletes, including 2008 Olympian Kelley Hurley and former pentathlon world champion Bob Nieman. Pesthy also served as a director for the U.S. Modern Pentathlon Association for years.

"Paul Pesthy was such a cheerful and invigorating presence that it was easy to forget what daunting tasks he set himself to accomplish in his 70 years," says U.S. Pentathlon Olympian Rob Stull. "His loss will be felt around the world. For Paul had a freshness and optimism that won friends from every nation as sport took him around the globe."

Pesthy is survived by his wife, Carolyn Pesthy; two daughters, Christina Arp and her husband, Lance, of San Angelo, Texas, and Sabra Testa and her husband, Dominic, of Colorado Springs, Colo.



A SORT OF KNIGHTHOOD

Every year the United States Fencing Coaches Association (USFCA) recognizes the NCAA Coach of the Year and honors the recipient with the Schreff Sword.

This year's winner is Vladimir Nazlymov of Ohio State University. Coach Nazlymov is a six time Olympic medalist and ten time world champion. He earned his Master of Sport degree in his native Russia and coached Soviet national teams for years. Currently he coaches the Ohio State Buckeyes Div. I varsity team, and has turned the team into a virtual dynasty producing All-Americans, NCAA champions, and Olympians.

Nazlymov was quick to say that none of his accomplishments with the Buckeyes would be possible without the help of his fine assistant coaches Alexander Smerdin and Gia Abashidze.

The Schreff Sword was generously donated by David Schreff of Bedare Sports and Entertainment in Greenwich, Connecticut.

The USFCA also recently gave special recognition to our Olympic coaches and cadre (Bob Largman, Jeff Bukantz, Ed Korfanty, Yury Gelman, Michael Pederson, Greg Massialas, and Arkady Burdan) for their efforts in making a historic Olympiad for the United States of America. Other awards given by the USFCA include outstanding NCAA male and female athlete of the year and NCAA All American Awards.

The USFCA, formed in 1941, is the American branch of the International Academy of Arms. It is dedicated training coaches, providing certifications, and continuing education. In addition to awards the USFCA bestows four levels of certifications to coaches: Assistant Monitor, Monitor, Prevot, and Maestro. For more information on the USFCA, please visit www.usfca.org

ABOVE: Vladimir Nazlymov accepts the Schreff Sword from USFCA Awards Committee Chairman Paul Geraci of the USFCA at the North American Cup in Columbus, Ohio.

INSET: The Ohio State University fencing coaches, Alexander Smerdin, Vladimir Nazlymov, and Gia Abashidze, holding the Schreff Sword given to Coach Nazlymov for NCAA Coach of the year.

FUNDING REFEREES

A large donation from a U.S. World Veterans team fencer will allow the USFA to send additional referees to a number of international tournaments for the '08-'09 season despite budget cutbacks this year.

Dan Corrigan, a co-owner of the Fencers Club of Arizona (FCAZ), made the substantial donation in order to help restore the number of referees that will represent the U.S. at F.I.E. (Federation Internationale d'Escrime) competitions.

Due to significant budget overruns in the last two years, the USFA has had to make budget cuts throughout the organization. In the case of international travel, this meant that instead of paying for travel and accommodations for referees for competitions at which U.S. fencers compete, as

required by F.I.E. rules, the USFA agreed to pay fines in lieu of providing some of the referees required.

The F.I.E. enacts quotas in each weapon which dictate how many fencers may compete from each nation. If a nation wants to send a large number of athletes, they must bring at least one and sometimes two referees with them, depending on the quotas for the weapon.

If the nation does not furnish the required referees, they must pay a 500 Euro fine in order for its fencers to be allowed to compete. At the time of this writing, the exchange rate on 500 Euros is roughly $633.

Besides being a waste of money, says USFA Fencing Officials Commission chair Sam Cheris, the lack of a U.S. referee at international competitions can have negative repercussions on the athletes.

"One, there is the goodwill you have from the host organization. Second, the U.S. referee has the capability of getting information to the team just prior to the competition about current rules interpretations. And finally, other referees respect your fencers more if you have your own referee present," says Cheris.

Referees are briefed on rule changes and trends in the call of actions which the F.I.E. particularly wishes to see enforced during meetings the morning of each competition, Cheris points out.

"We think it's important to the performance of our athletes," he says.

The donation will allow five or six additional referees to travel to competitions that would not have otherwise been sent with our teams, Cheris says.

"We were at about maybe 40 percent fewer funds than we had in the prior year. This donation probably made up 25 percent of that deficit," says Cheris.

He emphasized that FCAZ co-owner and internationally-rated referee Bill Becker was due full credit for initiating the donation.

"We want fencers to see that people are willing to help. We believe that hopefully we can get things going back in the right direction. We don't want the fencers to suffer for things that were out of their control," says Becker. "If we go the next two years sending limited teams, we're never to get results we had in Beijing."

Becker says he is continuing to work on raising more funds. Those interested in helping or donating can contact Sam Cheris at fieexec@comcast.net, or Kathryn Schifferle, chair of the Internal and External Resource Development Committees, at Kathryn@balestra.us.

A NEW PRESIDENT

Hot off the presses – at the FIE Congress in Paris in early December, a new FIE president was elected. Incumbant Rene Roch was defeated, and Alisher Usmanov of Russia will take his place.

Usmanov, 55, was a saber fencer in his native Uzbekistan. Usmanov was listed by Forbes magazine in 2007 as the 18th-richest man in Russia in 2007 and the world's 142nd-richest person. He is the major shareholder of Metalloinvest, a steel company, and maintains numerous other holdings including media and mining interests. He has served as both head of the Russian Fencing Federation and the European Fencing Confederation.

Important positions were also won by American fencers. Derek Cotton, 2000 and 2004 Olympic Games referee, was elected to the Arbitrage (refereeing) commission; Sunil Sabharwal to the Executive Committee, Sam Cheris to the Juridique (Legal) Committee, and Dan DeChaine to SEMI (Technical Committee). AF author Peter Harmer was also elected to the Medical Committee.

Red Card

In our Fall '08 issue, AF neglected to give credit to the author of "Recover, Parry, Release and Waiver," our Club Tips column for that issue. This was a sore omission indeed. It was written by Stuart Shapiro, a partner in the Buffalo, New York law firm of Cohen & Lombardo, P.C., where he practices in the area of personal injury and insurance law. He has been an avid fencer since high school, and is a member of the Les Amis Fencing Club and Salle and the USFA. We are extremely appreciative that he lent his expertise to the issue.

Après la leÇon
(After the lesson)

"After a very intensive lesson from the coach, the student left her tools of the trade on a bench under pure northern light.

This was the image I had wanted for the first of my series for the great sport of fencing.

For the last twenty-five years of my life, I have studied two subjects with great intensity. Renaissance painting and the history of fencing.

Thank you, Vincent G. Beatty"



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FROM YOUR NEW EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Happy New Year!

As your new Executive Director, I have already been asked on numerous occasions, "So, why Fencing?" Honestly, it's a great question. You see, though the sport of fencing is new to me, my passion for both the Olympic Movement and the pursuit for excellence in sport is not new to me. Having lived the life of athlete, coach, club owner, national educator, camp director, business development leader, and diehard fan in the world of gymnastics for over 27 years, I believe I can relate to most of those involved in the sport of fencing. Yes, there are some distinct differences…however the similarities easily tip the scales in their direction.

I am looking forward to a series of firsts in 2009. I am excited about the distinct opportunity to meet many of you for the first time. The warm welcome I have received from so many of you - athletes, coaches, parents, board members, referees, and club owners – has been astonishing, and is much appreciated.

Over the last few weeks, it becomes increasingly clear that there is much work to be done. I'd like to give you a brief snapshot of where our efforts will be directed throughout this New Year. First off, I intend to bridge the gap that seems to have developed in the line of communication between the National Office and the rest of the community. I believe each of you is valuable, and I believe it is our responsibility to learn how to serve you most effectively. At various times we will be seeking your input and ideas, and when those opportunities arise, please help us serve you by responding.

Secondly, we'll be working towards capitalizing on available technology in all areas of our organization, including (but not limited to) membership, tournaments, education, communication strategies, web presence, and internal business systems. Improving our use in these areas will allow us to more effectively and efficiently operate as an organization. Both an improved website, and a more efficient mail server should be in place and operational by the time you read this. As we continue to move forward, I will keep you abreast of those developments.

Third, we will be focusing on effectively preparing our athletes and coaches for success in the 30th Olympiad in London in 2012. This will include bringing on a High Performance Director, fully utilizing our relationship with the Sport Performance and Sport Partnership Departments at the USOC, developing a cohesive and fully functional athlete development pipeline, and identifying and equipping those coaches and athletes who have the ability and the desire to represent the United States on the world stage.

Fourth, we're going to start looking beyond 2012 and commence a strategic planning initiative. With the input of the Executive Committee, the Board of Directors, the National Office, and a few other key stakeholders, we will be developing a comprehensive strategic plan that will lay the framework for how we're going to achieve our goals.

Lastly, we're going to be taking a much closer look at our financial position as an organization. The road to Beijing, and the ultimate successes we realized there did not come at a low price. The investment put forth to make that happen was huge, and it is going to take a considerable degree of focused, intentionally collaborative energy to re-establish our foundation as an organization.

Here's where you can help already. In fact, the efforts of many of you have already begun to make an impact. In case you haven't heard, I would like to make you aware of a tremendous opportunity for each of you to demonstrate your support and commitment to the sport of fencing in the United States. We have partnered with an online search engine, "GoodSearch", in a way that has the potential of having a significant impact on our attainment of the goals we have for London in 2012. What's amazing is that it costs us nothing to make this happen.

GoodSearch.com is a search engine that donates half its advertising revenue, about a penny per search, to the charities its users designate. Use it just as you would any search engine, get quality search results, and watch the donations add up! You can also add a GoodSearch box to your Internet browser's tool bar.

In addition to receiving about a penny per search, you can support US Fencing nearly every time you shop online. GoodShop.com is a new online shopping mall that donates up to 37 percent of each purchase to your favorite cause! Hundreds of great stores including Amazon, Target, Gap, Best Buy, eBay, Macy's, and Barnes & Noble have teamed up with GoodShop and every time you place an order, you'll be supporting US Fencing.

Simply type in www.goodsearch.com in your browser, and be sure to enter "United States Fencing Association" as the charity you want to support. That's it – no strings attached. If all of us commit to doing this one small thing, I'm confident that the impact will be HUGE.

To give you a perspective on what can happen when an entire community rallies to do something, there were more than 900 searches that occurred within the first 72 hours after the email blast went out in December. If I could, I would yell a booming "Thank you" to all those who invested the time to give it a shot. If you haven't done so yet, please set it as your home page, add it to your tool bar, and tell your friends and family. It truly is a simple, yet impactful way to work together to achieve our mission.

Well, I better run…I've got a plane to catch early in the morning. If you're at one of the upcoming National events, please stop and say "Hi!" I'd love to meet you.

Kurt


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BY KATHY SCHIFFERLE

The Cafeteria Plan

The last five clubs that we have profiled in this column have been great examples of how to develop and grow a large club by focusing on location, local promotion, clear and appropriate fee schedules, the right coaching and classes, plus other uniquely local elements.

For a change of pace, we will look at three coaches in small or tough markets who already have day-jobs and have found ways to maintain their fencing clubs without actually renting a dedicated club location.

In Honolulu, Hawaii, Colin Chock started a club in an elementary school cafeteria. He is using this large but very inexpensive venue two nights a week to build a youth and adult fencing program. Colin has also launched a one-day-a-week after-school program in a more rural area outside of Honolulu, which now works with a dozen 7- to 12-year olds. His next plan is to develop fencing classes in an upscale downtown sports club, the Honolulu Club. They have been offering private lessons (via Colin) for members at $19.95 per 20-minute lesson and for non-members at $29.95, but have not been offering general classes. Recently they have learned of the increased interest in fencing that followed the success in Beijing, and see that as an opportunity. Bianca Moxey, Group Exercise & Programs Manager for the Honolulu Club, explained that they had tried to offer fencing in the past, but with little interest. One reason she gave was that the general public knew relatively nothing about the sport. "I think people may have been intimidated by the sport," said Bianca. Colin plans to use elements of the new ***Club Resource Kit*** offered on the USFA web site to provide Bianca with promotional tools as well as data on fencing that will help them both build a program.

Located in Northern California, the North Coast Division covers all of California north of Sacramento to the Oregon border. This is one of the largest divisions geographically with the fewest clubs; currently there are only three USFA member clubs. Two of these clubs offer additional examples of how to make fencing happen without a dedicated location.

Chico Creek Fencing Club has been around since 1998. It was founded by Coach Eric Ricketts, co-founder of the original Chico State Fencing Club. The club initially resided in a small dedicated warehouse location. The club grew and expanded into a larger location. At one point they had a satellite location, a Chico Area Recreation District (CARD) children's class and more than 60 member fencers of all ages and weapons. Then Eric went back to earn yet another degree, took on a second teaching job (high school along with community college) and needless to say has had less time to dedicate to maintaining a steady membership. His solution? Propose a partnership to a local health club that was in expansion mode. For the club, he provides fencing classes two nights per week. This means that he could leave his fixed expenses behind, and yet still provide a fencing venue for his daughter, himself and other interested local fencers. The club, InMotion Fitness, is now very interested in adding an after school youth program as well. However, they haven't found staff to fully implement this yet.

The newest fencing club in the North Coast Division, My Fencing Center, was founded in 2005 when owner Margaret Brunelle approached CARD, the above mentioned Park Recreation department in Chico, with a proposal to re-establish the fencing classes. They were receptive to the idea and now adult classes are held Monday, Wednesday and Friday evenings, and children's fencing classes on Wednesday and Friday afternoons. Margaret plans to add classes for home schooled children in the earlier afternoons sometime in 2009.

These are just a few of the more creative, cost effective and time limited ways that fencing is continuing to grow. As always, I welcome examples of successful clubs. Please email them to Kathryn@balestra.us.

Athlete Q&A with Rebecca Ward, 2008 Olympian

Q: The fencers that scream and act so cocky and arrogant really get to me. They throw their masks and weapons around, yet the Ref's don't do anything. How do I handle this?

A: Honestly, that shouldn't be happening. Fencing is supposed to be a very respectable sport. But as a spectator, or another fencer, there's not a lot you can do. If you see someone younger than you, mentor them, tell them that's unacceptable.

But during the bout, frankly, it's a good thing for you. If they're that flustered that they're throwing things, they're not in a state of mind that they're fencing their best. If the referee doesn't penalize them, they'll still definitely get irritated at them. I love to see my opponents act up. I sit back, compose myself, and make sure I'm ready to fence. They're just distracting themselves from what's important at the time. Let the referee deal with it, just try to finish the bout, be a good sport yourself, it's the most you can do.

If it's a celebration, generally the ref should notice that they're over the top and you don't need to illustrate that to them. But frankly it takes a lot for a referee to black card a fencer. Once I saw a saber fencer at a Gran Prix actually try to attack a ref -- twice! – and still not get black carded.

Rebecca Ward, 18, was the 2006 World Champion in Women's Saber at every age level – Cadet, Junior and Senior. At the 2008 Olympic Games in Beijing Ward earned two bronze medals, in the team and individual events. Ward is now a freshman at Duke University.




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IN THE TRENCHES BY EDWIN (BUZZ) HURST



I want to revisit a point that I made some time ago, and which I also emphasize in the *Division Operating Guide*: all terms of office in a Division are for one year. A Division has some flexibility as to the begin & end dates, but the one-year rule comes from the USFA Bylaws and is not subject to creative interpretation. A Division may continue to re-elect its Chair and/or the rest of the Executive Committee if the individuals are willing to continue to serve, but the election process must be held annually no matter what.

I thus segue masterfully into my point that, if members of the Division become disillusioned with the leadership of their Chair and/or Executive Committee, they have usually less than a year to wait before electing someone else. It is therefore not normally useful to begin rioting in the streets, launch a civil war, or head to the nearest courtroom. In fact, if you have a good set of bylaws it will contain the safety valve of having a recall provision that allows you to deal fairly quickly with an ongoing and/or worsening problem. It also gives members a tool to deal with a situation where an officer simply disappears into the shrubbery (something that happens a bit more than a normal person might think).

The reverse side of that coin is "Removal for Cause". However, if the "Due Process" procedures that your state requires are not followed to the letter, the whole thing can easily blow up in everyone's faces and leave the Division in worse shape than it was before. In a recall, the members are simply getting a do-over and they can vote for any reason they want to, and no aspersions automatically attach to an individual so recalled. In a removal, an allegation of misfeasance must be stated and supported, a challenge to it should be expected, lawyers are often called into the play, and do not be surprised if it takes more than a year to resolve. Now please refer to paragraph one above.

The above is just one example of the value of a good set of bylaws, but there are certainly many others. Incidentally, I know that the question which has been haunting you is: "Why do they call them *by*laws in the first place, instead of just plain laws?" Well, the prefix came into English from Old Norse and it meant village or locality, so, bylaw = local law. The ancient concept could also be expressed as "ways to stop Ragnar from hitting Sven with an ax".

But I digress. In any case, most fights to the death in a Division involve the Treasury (not all, but most), and a good way to protect your Division from ill-judged spending (or accusations thereof) is to set limits in your bylaws. We didn't do so in our sample bylaws because we didn't want people to take them as fixed numbers, but you may want to add some numbers appropriate to your local situation. For example: the officers could be authorized to spend up to $300 without EC approval/ the EC is allowed to spend up to $1000 without membership approval/ any larger amount must be voted on by the membership at the Annual Meeting or a Special Meeting.

And another safeguard is to establish a reasonable minimum number of voting members in order for your executive committee to legally conduct business. This number is called a *quorum*, a word that came into English from old Latin and it meant "the minimum number of voting members to legally conduct business". You want to establish a number that is large enough to represent most viewpoints and won't be controlled by one faction. In large Divisions the Internet becomes especially useful in this regard.

Really, the best way to avoid problems is still that old saw: *communicate*. The Chair should remain in routine contact with not only the other officers but the EC as a whole. If your Chair is not doing this, that does not prevent the other members from communicating with each other, and they should. I realize that there are factions in some Divisions out there whose only wish for the opposing side is that it be savaged by diseased iguanas, and that is usually when screams of "Recall!" or "Removal!" (or simply, "Release the iguanas!") rend the air. However, there is almost always a sizable group in the neutral center that just wants peace in the valley. Well, that group has to speak-up. Otherwise it's only acting like a crowd of ancient Roman spectators…watching as the gladiators (and perhaps a lion or two) tear down the coliseum.

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No Wiggle Room with the Safety Rules

BY JEFF BUKANTZ



When giving the referee seminar or mentoring young refs, one of the first things I do is delineate that there are two distinct types of fencing rules.

The first group of rules covers everything from how a competition should be run to the actual combat on the strip. These rules ideally ensure a level playing field and basic fairness. They attempt to prevent cheating. They punish unsportsmanlike behavior. And, of course, they set the guidelines for right-of-way.

Off the strip, a Bout Committee or Directoire Technique enforces the competition rules. On the strip, the referee is responsible for enforcing the rest.

The second group of rules is limited to the area of safety. These rules are specifically there to protect both fencers from a potentially dangerous situation, as opposed to keeping the playing field level.

While all rules should be enforced consistently, and it is not up to whims and caprices of the various Bout Committee or the referee to pick and choose which rules to enforce and which ones not to enforce, we have to be realistic and use good judgment. My late father Dan used to tell me that "Rules are to guide you, not to bind you."

In other words, there is a little ***"wiggle room"*** to use that judgment, but good judgment must always be used.

For instance, if a fencer checks in a little after the close of check-in, the fencer, according to the rules, should be scratched. However, if the pools haven't been posted or even seeded yet, and it would not delay the start of the competition to add in the tardy fencer, what's the big deal? Issues will come up about the consistency of interpretation and bias. Were fencers let in at other events? Is this person from your club? Using wiggle room requires a lot of thought and balancing of interests.

However you feel about that, this is an example of ***"wiggle room."***

When a fencer's mane of hair is clearly hanging and covering part of the back target, that's a card and they need to pull it up under the mask. Remember, the ref's job is to keep a level playing field. However, if a fencer has a few strands hanging out of the mask and barely over the lame, a referee has the ability to use sound judgment.

Another example of ***"wiggle room."***

As long as the playing field remains level, a little ***"wiggle room"*** is always there for the referee and the Bout Committee.

However, when it comes to enforcing the safety rules, **THERE IS NO WIGGLE ROOM!**

Over the years, I've been aghast to encounter situations where referees or Bout Committees turned a blind eye to certain safety rules; in doing so, they put the fencers at risk of a serious injury or possibly death. Yes, death.

Here are a few actual examples:

- At a high school meet in New Jersey, I was officiating the boys' meet. Across the small gym, another referee was handling the girls' meet. I noticed that a girl was fencing with flimsy sweat pants. I immediately called a halt to my bout and ran over to that referee to tell him the girl could not fencer in the sweats. At that point, the coach begged to let her fence, as she didn't have fencing pants. The referee agreed. You can call me whatever you like, but I stepped in and stood on the strip until this situation was straightened out.

(THERE IS NO WIGGLE ROOM WITH THE SAFETY RULES!)

- At the Veterans World Championships in Tampa a couple of years ago, I noticed that a plethora of fencers were about to compete wearing the clunky knee braces outside the knickers. This is not allowed, as a blade could get caught in the brace and snap, putting both fencers at serious risk. I went to the TC and said my piece. The response? "If we don't let fencers compete with their knee braces, we won't have enough fencers left to have a competition."

(This was an example of a TC using judgment. In this case, it was bad judgment. **THERE IS NO WIGGLE ROOM WITH THE SAFETY RULES**!)

- At a collegiate meet last year, I was stunned to see a left-handed Ivy League sabreur arrive on the strip wearing a righty front zip lame. Why his coach allowed this to occur is beyond me.

Despite the fencer's pleading, I made him change it, naturally.

(THERE IS NO WIGGLE ROOM WITH THE SAFETY RULES!)

- At some recent competitions, strips just **eleven inches apart** were being used at the same time! Simply incredible and beyond the pale. This meant that four fencers were at risk of serious injury while these bouts were being fenced. At another event, the wall was almost adjacent to the end of the strip's end line. At yet another event, a referee almost lost an eye, as there was not enough room for him next to the strip.

(THERE IS NO WIGGLE ROOM WITH THE SAFETY RULES!)

- As a referee at the 1996 Olympic in Atlanta, I ran into one of the most dangerous situations imaginable. The raised final strip was constructed without ANY runoff on the sides, which was against the rules. The referees complained, but to no avail. Sure enough, there were three serious injuries that occurred as a result, including a torn Achilles for Italy's Diana Bianchedi.

(THERE IS NO WIGGLE ROOM WITH THE SAFETY RULES!)

- In March of 2004, seventeen-year-old Ukrainian foilist Yevgen Prokopyev was killed when his opponent's blade snapped and punctured his lung. According to sources, Prokopyev had cut away the body of his under-arm plastron, leaving only the sleeve for the referee to feel.

(THERE IS NO WIGGLE ROOM WITH THE SAFETY RULES!)

These anecdotal examples are only indicative of a bigger problem. Some referees allow fencers to compete with holes in their gloves, with shirts hanging outside of the knickers, with masks or bibs that expose the neck, with the tops of their knickers hanging below the jacket and exposing shirt or skin.

Incredibly, some referees don't think it is cool to check for the plastron, let alone have the fencers open up the jacket to show it. Can you imagine how the referee from the Prokopyev incident feels?

Recently, the FOC was presented with an interesting request. A female fencer, for religious reasons, asked to be able to wear a skirt outside the knickers. In the ensuing discussion, we talked about religious freedom, political correctness, potential lawsuits In addition to the safety reason for the rule.

However, the FOC's Rules Committee unanimously decided that the wearing of a skirt outside the knockers was against the rules and would present a potentially dangerous safety issue for both fencers.

At the end of the day, we decided that **THERE IS NO WIGGLE ROOM WITH THE SAFETY RULES**, as the safety of the fencers supersedes all other issues.

The Tournament Committees and the referees owe it to the fencers to enforce the safety rules at all times. When it comes to safety rules, "Rules are to bind you, not to guide you."

When it comes to the safety rules, THERE IS NO WIGGLE ROOM!

Lest We Forget

By Carla-Mae Richards

In the excitement of the superb performances of the U.S. team at the 2008 Olympic Games, we focused on recent trails leading to those victories. As we watched those dramatic moments on the world stage unfold, we could see the culmination of years of struggle and deeply held beliefs of a steady stream of people – athletes, coaches, referees, tournament staff, office staff, and the USFA organization as well as the support of the US Olympic Committee for our top athletes.

Throughout the modern Olympic era, U.S. fencing athletes strove to overcome the power of the European programs. Though the breakthrough was long in coming, there were moments when U.S. athletes stood in the international spotlight. During the last 12 years the successes became more frequent, more consistent and more noticeable, beginning with the junior and cadet fencers and stretching to the senior ranks until the dream became a reality last August when the U.S. fencers garnered three individual medals (gold, silver, bronze), and three team medals (two silver, one bronze).

To better understand that historic moment, we need to return to 1982, a significant turning point for the US Fencing organization. Not only did it change its name from Amateur Fencers League of America (AFLA) that year but it became a non profit corporation, a 501-3(c) corporation, allowing it more freedom to solicit contributions and change its identity from volunteer to formal business.

The person at the helm of these dramatic changes to the organization was Michel Mamlouk, newly elected President of the organization – a person who had a dream and pushed, cajoled, prodded and beguiled the Board of Directors to change from a wholly volunteer organization to a more professional business foundation.

Michel Mamlouk – a fencer, a coach, sponsor of key fencing persons from overseas and enterprising owner of a travel agency in the Washington, D.C. area – had a dream that U.S. fencers could stand high on the international podiums. He saw that it needed to turn itself inside out and 180 degrees, and to believe in its own potential greatness. He led the conversion of a fully volunteer based organization to a professional corporation with full time staff and its own national headquarters.

He knew that if US Fencing was ever going to succeed and grow from a few thousand members and a handful of athletes competing in international events, the organization had to move out of its "Mom and Pop" operation and become a professional organization. It was time to plan, develop and seek a wider and deeper approach to the sport in the United States. Michel Mamlouk accepted that torch as his mission for US Fencing.

When the U.S. Olympic Committee moved to Colorado Springs from New York City, it offered Olympic sports office space to conduct its operations. The initial offer from the USOC included **free** rent, copy services, utilities and maintenance.

The Board was convinced that the organization could afford the manning of a permanent office. Mamlouk set out to hire an Executive Director. To open the office in mid 1982, he found a local person, Anne Whiting, married to USOC Executive, Lew Whiting (a retired colonel). At the February 1983 Board meeting, the Board offered the position as first Executive Director for the USFA to me, the author of this article. The credentials at that time were based on experience in and with the organization and understanding of the immediate goals: to unify the country's numerous and contentious divisions and clubs, to implement plans to raise the level of fencing in the U.S., and to expand the membership base.

As more of the operations of the organization were handled at its national office, the staff grew as well. Though funding was a concern from the beginning, it was found as the membership base increased and programs were initiated to bring in more revenue.

The office staff was responsible for memberships, team logistics and funding, planning and communications.

Since then we have had two more E.D.s, with a third about to be hired at the time of this writing. Seldon Fritchner served for two years and Michael Massik was in the lead role for the past 12 years and was instrumental in bringing the organization to the pinnacle of success on the playing field.

A quarter of a century has passed since the US Fencing organization became a corporate organization, operating in the business of sport, with the demands becoming more complex as well as more varied– from membership to clubs to teams to international tournaments, including World Championships and World Cups to national circuits of multi tiered competitive levels.

There were many persons who sacrificed much of their own careers and lives for the organization: the past presidents of the organization during these last 25 years: Michel Mamlouk, Lewis Siegel, Sam Cheris, Steve Sobel (in two different eras – '72 & '92), Donald Alperstein, Stacey Johnson and Nancy Anderson. We owe all the volunteers and staff a debt of gratitude that has allowed US Fencing to stand tall in the world of fencing.

Without a dream what will we accomplish, without faith in the ultimate achievement, what meaning the struggle?



To the new, incoming administrations

of the United States Fencing Association & the FIE

we welcome you.

Playing the Numbers Game: Statistics in Sport

BY DR. JOHN HEI

Statistics have long played a critical role in sport. Bolstered by new thinking and specialized technologies, crunching the numbers is increasingly critical to competitive success. The mainstream use of hard data to inform decision making has even garnered attention outside of sport in publications ranging from popular science magazines to scholarly journals in economics.

"Moneyball"

The most statistics oriented of all sports, baseball, has been undergoing a transformation in the way numbers are used. Success in professional baseball had become increasingly tied to payroll budgets, with large market teams dominating play to the point where a two-tiered system was inadvertently developing, to the chagrin of fans across the country. Then seemingly out of nowhere, the Oakland A's – with the second lowest payroll in the sport -- nearly broke the record for consecutive wins in the American League. In the best seller, *Moneyball: The Art of Winning an Unfair Game*, Michael Lewis reveals the secrets of their success. He tells how team manager, Billy Beane, factored statistics into his experience as a veteran coach to make critical decisions. A careful look at the numbers revealed longstanding blind spots in the way talent was assessed. Even time honored metrics such as batting average were abandoned in favor of other measures (e.g., on base percentage) which proved to be better predictors of success. This had a transformative effect on the game of baseball, and has since spread to other sports. Now sports statisticians are taking their place among sport scientists in helping coaches at the highest level of sport make better decisions.

Intuition and Statistics

Those intimidated or made uncomfortable by statistics like to suggest that "you can lie with statistics." Of course, one can lie with anything if that is the intention. Those who use "stats" well understand both their value and their limitations. In the final analysis, sport demands an intuitive, rapid-fire decision making process -- that is, the ability to analyze the moment, sift through years of experience, arrive at a timely decision and implement it with confidence. But without checks and balances, intuition can easily go astray. Intuition is largely blind to its own limitations, and is made stronger when balanced by other information, the least biased of which is statistics. Where intuition is about "feel," statistics are about "facts." (See the American Fencing article, "Quantified Intuition," by Olympic Medalist, Jason Rogers, Fall '05 issue).

When feel can be checked against facts, intuition can be trained and made "smarter." When not anchored by objective methods, intuition can easily give way to superstition. While superstitious practices abound in sport, they are little more awkward short cuts to anxiety management. Lucky socks don't win games, but leaving those socks behind can be a potent distraction – and has probably caused more than a few games to be lost.

The value of scouting is well recognized in all sports. In tactical sports such as fencing, being able to profile your competitors – knowing favorite actions and behavior in particular situations is invaluable. Profiling already abounds in fencing, albeit on an intuitive level. Every fencer has been a part of the conversation that asks the question about the next opponent "what are his favorite actions?" Adding a statistical answer to this question makes athlete profiling more complete and more effective.

eScout

The Sport Science program has been developing an electronic scouting tool to enhance the tactical decision making of fencers and coaches -- ***eScout***. Its convenient hand held format (PDA) is designed for strip side use, allowing real time scoring of bouts. eScout provides statistical data, video clips and written comments, enabling the fencer to use the moments before a bout to prepare for an opponent. This is a gateway technology with an array of potential applications including research, referee training, and media broadcast. eScout is now ready for trial use by coaches.

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SPORTS MEDICINE Q&A

BY PETER HARMER

Q. I asked for injury time for a cramp at a recent competition but wasn't given any when the sports medicine staff checked me. I thought there was a new rule that allowed getting treated for a cramp.

A. There is considerable confusion at the moment about the modification to Rule t.33 that has re-introduced the opportunity for a fencer to receive treatment for a cramp, subject to the same limitations in treatment time and occurrences as a traumatic injury. Rule t.33.1. now begins "For an injury or cramp which occurs in the course of a bout and which is properly attested by the delegate of the FIE Medical Commission or by the doctor on duty, the Referee will allow a break in fighting lasting no longer than 10 minutes". The key element, which is often overlooked, is the phrase "properly attested by . . . (the medical staff)". It is important for fencers to understand that the modification is not designed or intended to allow any claim of cramp (or, indeed, even every actual cramp) to receive injury time – the cramp must be clinically evident (that is, significant, severe and sustained) to be attested.

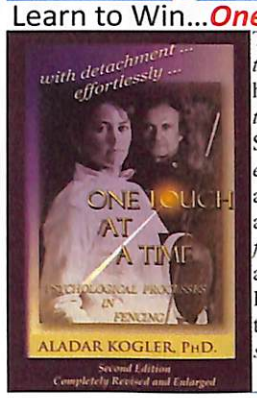
A brief history may be helpful in understanding the reasoning behind the change and the nuanced implementation. Veteran fencers will no doubt recall a previous time when bout stoppages due to claims of cramp were commonplace. Certainly some of these cramp claims were legitimate. Unfortunately, the vagueness of the rule and the difficulty of accurately identifying a cramp in deep musculature, or discerning intermittent cramping, lead many athletes to claim a cramp to rest, or receive coaching, or to break the momentum of a bout. In essence, they used this rule to cheat and, eventually, the opportunity to have a cramp treated was removed. However, it is clear that legitimate instances of debilitating cramping can occur. Although I had made a recommendation to the FIE Medical Commission to revisit the question of treatment time for cramps following an incident at the Junior World Championships in 2002, where an athlete with a legitimate cramp had to continue to fence without treatment because of the prevailing prohibition on cramp "time outs", no action was taken. Various members of the Commission held firm to the belief that cramping was due to poor conditioning and that such athletes should not be given any assistance as the problem was of their own making. Explaining the physiology and epidemiology of cramping had no effect. The situation changed due to the embarrassing spectacle in the men's foil final at the 2006 Asian Games of one athlete being completely unable to defend himself, or move even a few steps, due to severe cramping. FIE President Roch was in attendance and shortly after the Medical Commission received a mandate to review the rule related to injury and cramping.

The Commission's deliberations centered on two things: a) providing an opportunity for treatment of legitimate cases of cramping, and b) minimizing, or avoiding, the opportunity for athletes to receive "injury time" by falsely claiming a cramp. To that end a compromise was reached – it was decided that the "standard" of clinically evident would apply, that is, the cramp had to be easily recognizable to the medical staff. It was clear that some athletes who had intermittent cramping, somewhat minor, but real, cramps, or, potentially, cramping in the deep musculature, may not be given treatment time but it was concluded that in these cases the athletes would be no worse off than they were before the rule modification. However, the modification would be a major advance for those with extensive and debilitating cramping (and it was for this specific group that the change was made). It was designed to minimize disruptions to the smooth running of competitions while recognizing the need to provide care to incapacitated athletes. For this reason, not every claim of cramp (even if real) will be permitted treatment time.

Finally, it is important to understand that Rule t.33.5. indicates that a fencer who claims a cramp (or injury), which, in the opinion of the medical staff, is unjustified (that is, not clinically evident), is subject to penalties according to Rules t.114, t.117 and t.120 (a red card). Based on my experiences at the NAC-A and B this season, athletes, referees, coaches, and organizers need to be more aware of the intent and extent of the modification of Rule t.33 regarding cramping if it is to be retained. Widespread unjustified appeals for injury time for cramping by athletes, in effect returning to the anarchy of previous times, will result in the modification being rescinded, which would be a detriment to those who really need it.

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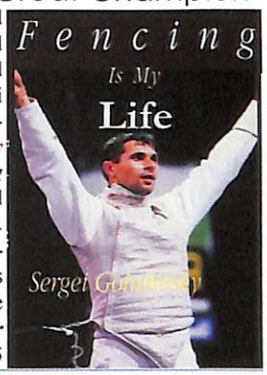
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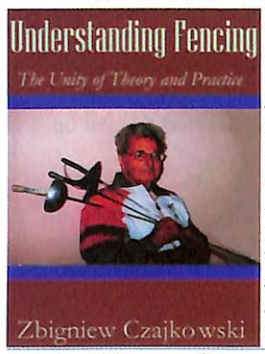


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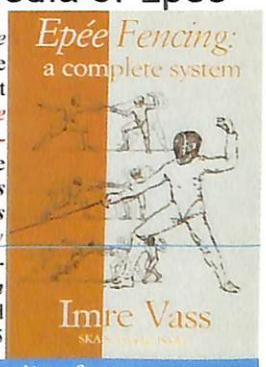
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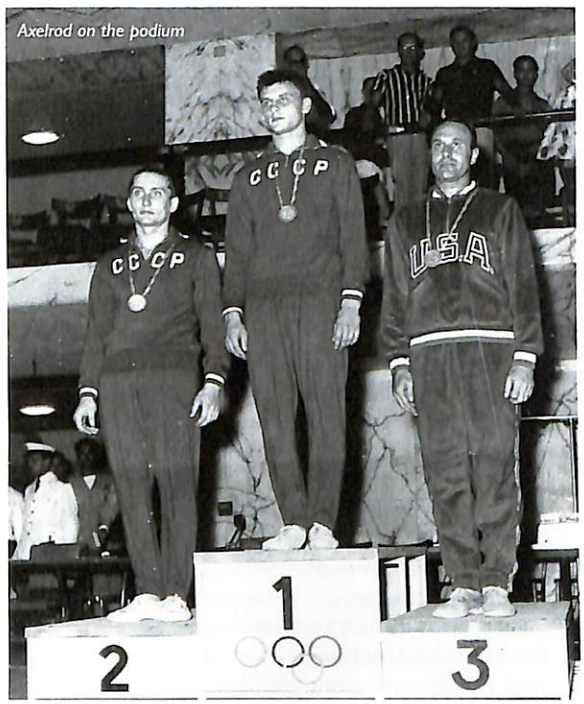
ALBERT AXELROD
UNSURPASSED FOIL FENCER (1921-2004)

BY ANDY SHAW

Think of all the years we have been waiting for a foil medal.

The U.S. women's foil team earned the Olympic silver at the Beijing 2008 Games (The U.S men's foil team won the same Olympic silver medal in the 1904 St. Louis Olympics). This is incredibly exciting and thrilling, no doubt, for all of us in the U.S. fencing community. Can you remember the last Olympic foil medal won by an American individual (man or woman)?: Albert "Albie" Axelrod's 1960 Rome Olympics bronze in the individual men's foil competition is the most recent.

It's been 50 years and no American can match this man's performance. He achieved that pinnacle of his career while working full time, raising a family of two, and commuting between Scarsdale and NYC for fencing practice and little, if any, funding from the fencing organization, the Amateurs Fencers League of America (now the USFA).



Axelrod on the podium

Albert Axelrod was born February 12, 1921, in New York City. "I was sickly, undersized, anemic, and I had a mitral heart murmur," said Axelrod in an interview with Andy Shaw. "I was excused from P. E. throughout my school life."

With his mother watching him like a hawk and sending other boys away yelling that her son had a weak heart, Albie had few friends.

The principal of Public School #44 in the Bronx walked Albie home from school every day to ensure that the boy did not over-exert himself.

As a student at Stuyvesant High School, Albie and one of his closest friends, Lazar Gallet, an immigrant from Russia, decided to take up fencing.

While at Stuyvesant, "I could tell that I was deemed not to have any talent." With little supervision, Albie continued as an "extra person who had to be moved along during the class."

When fencing was temporarily banned from high schools, Albie took Eleanor Baldwin Cass's book "Fencing" out of the library, and determined to teach himself better fencing.

He would hold up the book while glancing into a mirror, moving back and forth, and taught himself to fence. He remembers how stiff he was and how much force he put behind his movements.

In his junior year fencing was reinstated in the city schools. Stuyvesant held tryouts for the starting team, but Albie's forceful manner was considered brutish. When he beat the blade, the other boys were frequently disarmed. The boys wanted to focus on the important bouts with the "real fencers and not deal with fencing Albie."

Albie went undefeated as no one took him seriously and he made the team.

Axelrod met a man in 1938 who would change his approach to fencing and his life. Alec Hern, who studied with the Frenchman Louis Senac designed his own way to fence. He was teaching fencing in ten different places around New York City under the W.P.A. (Works Progress Administration) created by Franklin Roosevelt's administration, to combat the effects of the depression on the country. One of these places where Hern was teaching was the Bronx House near Albie's home.

Hern originally learned to fence from a Spalding "Red Book" written by Hall of Famer Regis Senac. Hern developed a system regarding movement, percussion and timing, taking of the blade, feinting and offensive and defensive moves that would make Albie one of the three most successful foil fencers since the first US Championships in 1888.

After World War II, during which he served in the US Navy for three years, Axelrod returned to the Foils Club for a few more years until it closed its doors forever. Axelrod then fenced for many years at Salle Santelli.

He continued his fencing at C.C.N.Y. where he won the I.F.A. and NCAA foil titles and led the team to the NCAA foil team title in 1948.

In 1955, Albie won his first U.S. national foil title. His parents had never seen him fence, although they had learned that their fragile son was involved in the sport. Since the tournament was at the Concourse Plaza Hotel in the Bronx, a few blocks from their house, his Mom decided to watch her son Albert fence for the first time.

Axelrod gave his mother a front-row seat and fenced his first bout. When he finished, he went over to the pitcher of ice water, poured himself two glasses and drank them down. He then walked over to see how his mother liked watching him fence and found that she was gone. That night, after Albie won the title, he went home to find out what happened to his mother.

She said, "I saw you looking so overheated and then I saw you were drinking that icy water. I knew you'd get sick that way. Then I thought that you would come over to me and I would tell you that you should not drink water that cold and I thought that you might disagree and then we would get into a fight and that would ruin your mood and affect you in a bad way. So I left."

Ralph Goldstein, Captain of the 1960 Olympic Team, said that: "He was unquestionably the best fencer America had … and he was way ahead of the rest of the field. Even the way he parried was different than all the rest of us."

His National Championship success was followed by a fifth place finish at the 1958 World Championships – the only time an American has ever reached the men's foil finals at a World Championships.

In the finals of that event, one Soviet opponent, Sveshnikov, was so intimidated by Axelrod's ferocious attacks that he turned around completely and ran off his end of the strip. In Europe, Axelrod was known as "the black-gloved ruffian."

In 1960 Axelrod won the Olympic Bronze medal in Individual Foil. He beat out all of the Europeans. Only two Russians topped his results.

Axelrod's professional career, which he pursued during his fencing career, was that of an electrical engineer with Loral, CBS - TV, Transitron Incorporated in New Hampshire, RCA Surface Communications Division, CBS Laboratories in Connecticut, and the aircraft/aerospace engineering firm Grumman.

continued on page 50

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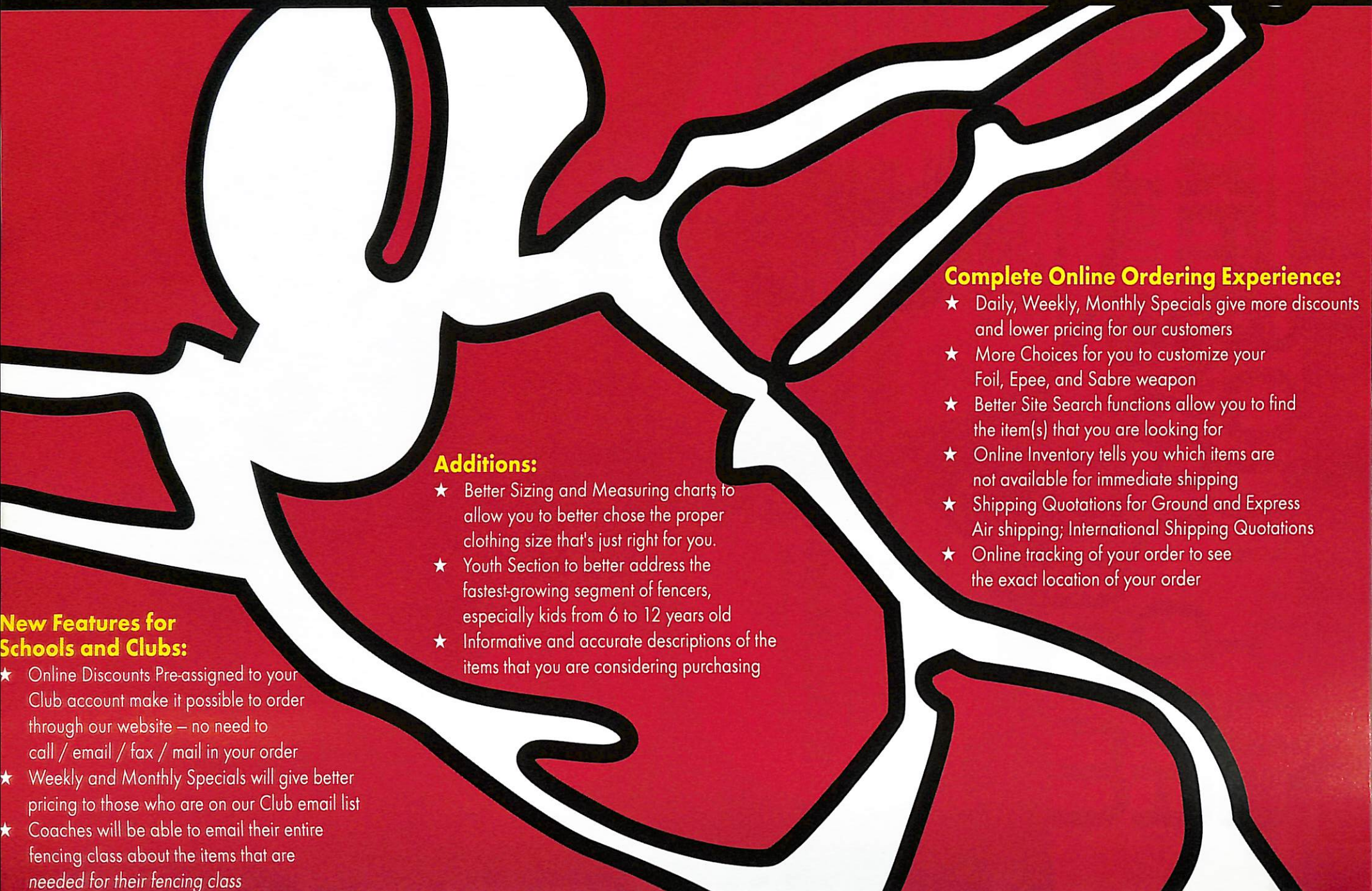
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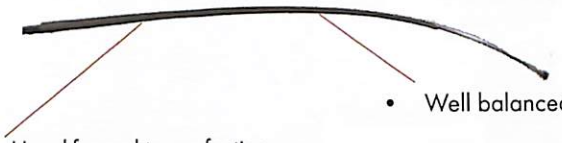
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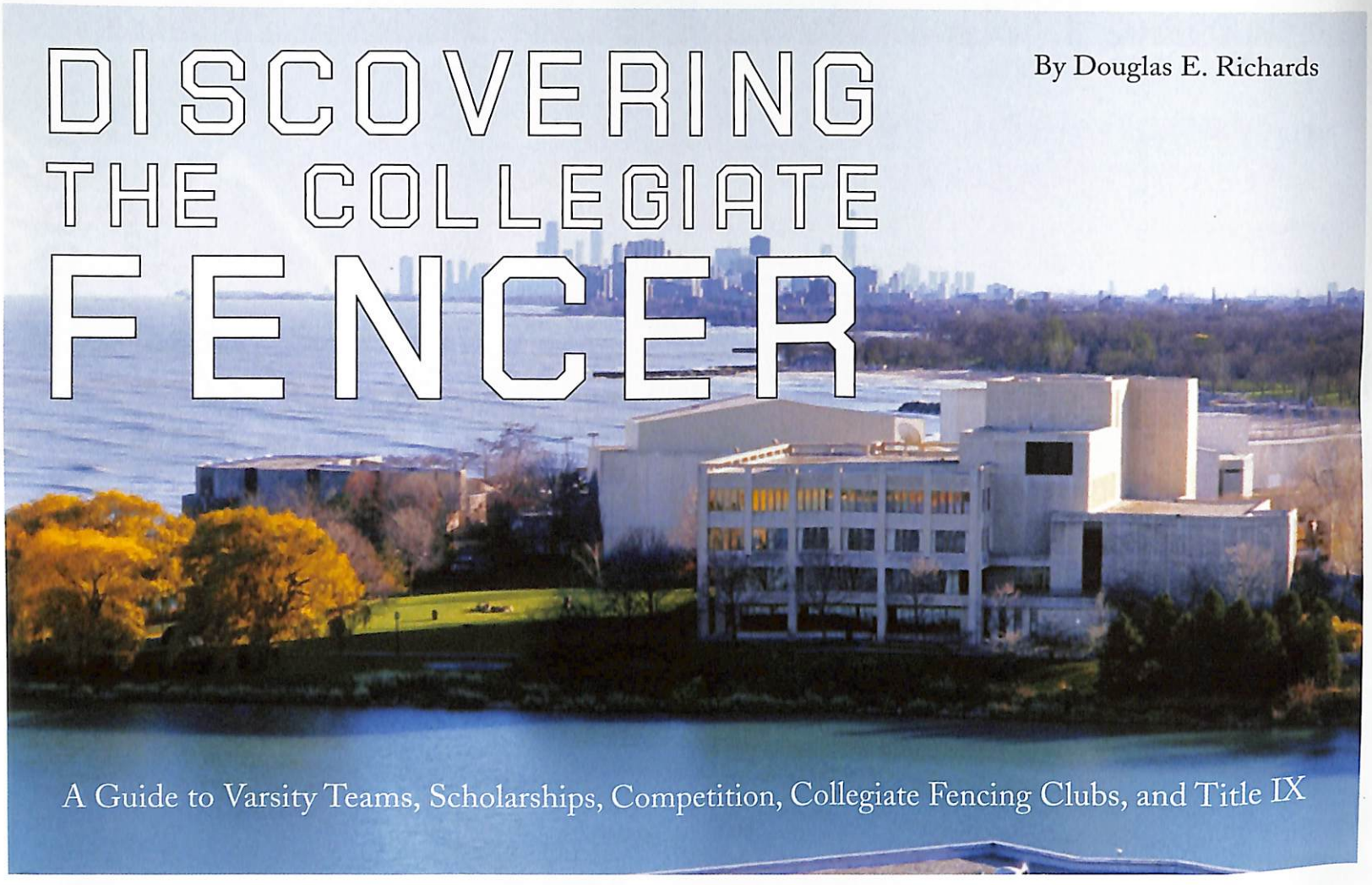
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DISCOVERING THE COLLEGIATE FENCER

By Douglas E. Richards



A Guide to Varsity Teams, Scholarships, Competition, Collegiate Fencing Clubs, and Title IX

Youngsters and parents new to fencing often wonder, "Where are we going with this sport?" If I devote myself to the epee for the next five years, what then? If I want to fence in college or beyond, what are my options?

Clubs often use the lure of possible elite collegiate acceptance and even the possibility of athletic scholarships to draw youth into the sport. It has often, in fact, been regarded as the hidden scholarship sport.

But how realistic are these hopes? An examination of collegiate fencing shows some very mixed answers. What is the range of schools able to entice athletes with a fencing scholarship? Is there a distinction in the opportunities between men and women fencers?

According to National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) statistics, 631 colleges offer varsity football programs. Varsity men's basketball is offered by 1,032 schools; varsity women's basketball, 1,056. Cross Country: 914 and 990 respectively. Tennis: 751 and 902.

So where does of fencing fit in – a sport that has been around for thousands of years, requires incredible quickness, endurance, intelligence and deception, and has been included every modern Olympics? Of the 23 sports with a NCAA Championships, only two sports are offered at fewer schools than fencing.

There are 33 varsity men's fencing teams and 42 women's teams. Only rifle and bowling have fewer NCAA programs. And while there are only two men's varsity bowling teams there are *56* women's teams. This means that women's *bowling* is offered at more schools than either men's or women's fencing. *

Fencing faces trials ranging from lethal budget cuts to Title IX challenges to a lack of visibility and therefore interest among collegiate student bodies. Despite these dismal-sounding numbers, a close look at the sport shows that there are still opportunities, and there just may be a brighter future to come.

Some Nuts and Bolts

School sponsored teams in any sport, also called NCAA-sanctioned teams or varsity teams, are obligated

to follow a comprehensive set of rules and regulations set forth by the NCAA involving eligibility, financial aid, course progress, drug testing and more. Schools fall into one of three categories — Division I, II, or III — each of which has its own set of requirements. As a rule of thumb, the larger schools at which sports play a predominant role are usually Division I, while the schools that are smaller and where athletics are not quite as high-profile are in Division II or III.

Division III schools don't offer athletic scholarships. In addition, the Ivy League, despite being in Division I, has a conference-wide prohibition on athletic scholarships. After subtracting out Division III and Ivy League programs, this leaves 16 men's programs and 21 women's programs that are eligible to offer such inducements, though there is no guarantee that they will.

In fencing, the NCAA permits up to five scholarships per gender, according to Laurence Schiller. Schiller is the coach of the women's varsity fencing team at Northwestern, a Division I school. He has coached the women's team since 1978, and the men's team from 1978 until it was dropped in 1994.

So how many schools do offer fencing scholarships? According to Schiller, between twelve and fifteen, including Stanford, Air Force, Northwestern, Notre Dame, Ohio State, Penn State, Wayne State, Cleveland State, University of Detroit, and St John's.

But outside of college, club fencing is growing by leaps and bounds. The membership of the USFA, for instance, has doubled in ten years, from 10,000 in 1996 to 20,000 today and growing. Given that explosive growth, scholarship recipients need to be more accomplished than ever. "In terms of significant scholarship aid at a university," says Schiller, "a fencer really needs to be in the top twenty in the U.S. Junior standings, and the Junior age group is getting tougher and tougher every year."

The NCAA hosts an annual championship to determine men's and women's individual national standings as well as team standings. Division I, II, and III are combined for these championships, as each division alone doesn't field enough teams to hold a separate event. For school standings, results for both the men's and women's teams are combined to determine a winner, making it virtually impossible for a school that has a women's team but no men's team to win.

"That's a little sore point, something we've been struggling with for some years now," says Schiller.

He explains that in the late '80s the NCAA decided to save costs by dropping the championship for any sport that didn't have a minimum number of schools with varsity programs. Fencing narrowly avoided the cut, but was forced to combine the men's and women's championships in 1990.

Since that time the NCAA has guaranteed that every Olympic sport will never be dropped because collegiate programs are strong feeder systems for U.S. Olympic teams.

Diminishing Opportunities

Although exact statistics are difficult to find, there is no question that there are fewer varsity fencing teams than there once were. "It's definitely dwindled," says Schiller.

There are a number of reasons for the loss of varsity fencing teams, including budget cuts and Title IX (described further below). As reported in American Fencing Fall '06 issue, Rutgers cut both men's and women's fencing teams, as well as men's tennis, men's swimming, and men's crew, citing both of these reasons.

"At Rutgers, the Athletic Director would rather spend $160 million building luxury boxes at the football stadium," says Schiller. "Unfortunately what you've got right now is an emphasis on spectator sports and on big money, and we've moved away from the point where intercollegiate athletics is for the student athlete. … You could take a fraction of the money these guys are going to spend for redoing the stadium at Rutgers and spend it on 10 different sports and service 100 student athletes and more. And these kids would have good grades and would be living the dream of the intercollegiate athlete.

"But unlike football or basketball, most sports lose money. I've had one losing season with my women's team in 30 years, but I haven't brought a penny into the school.

It's up to the institution to decide

NCAA SPONSORED FENCING TEAMS (2008)

	MEN'S				WOMEN'S			
DIVISION	I	II	III	TOTAL	I	II	III	TOTAL
# OF SCHOOLS	18	3	12	33	23	4	15	42

— is it worthwhile to have a fencing program to service this number of student athletes? In Rutgers' case they said, we don't care. We don't need crew. We don't need tennis. We don't need fencing."

Title IX

According to many NCAA coaches the threat to men's varsity fencing looms larger than that to women's due to the way Title IX legislation is currently enforced. The Title IX Educational Act was passed in 1972, banning gender discrimination in colleges and universities. Schiller calls Title IX an "invaluable tool to increase women's participation in sports, and one that has been incredibly successful." He believes this upsurge in participation contributed to the unprecedented success of the American women fencers in Athens and Beijing, as did the influx of Eastern European coaches after the fall of the Berlin Wall (including Olympic coaches Yury Gelman and Arkady Burdan of Russia and Edward Korfanty of Poland).


NW Foilest Samantha Nemecek

Schiller stresses that nothing he says should be construed as being against Title IX, legislation that he feels was badly needed to correct obvious inequities. The problem is that the principle test used by the government to ensure compliance is a quota system, meaning that if fifty percent of the student body is female, fifty percent of all varsity athletes must also be female. This has led to any number of unintended consequences.

Thirty-three schools offer both men's and women's varsity fencing. Nine schools offer women's varsity fencing only. But not a single school offers men's fencing only. There is an even greater disparity in other sports. There are 1016 colleges that field varsity women's volleyball teams, while there are now only 82 schools that field men's. And the 56 varsity women's bowling teams (compared to 2 for the men) have already been mentioned.

The quota system creates problems because football teams, with rosters of 100 or more, and men's wrestling have no female equivalent to balance them, and there is often less interest in sports among women, leading to unfilled rosters. For these reasons, schools say they are forced to comply with Title IX not just by adding women's sports, which they have done in large numbers, but by cutting men's. This is what happened to the varsity men's fencing team at Northwestern, now a club team. While Schiller believes Title IX was critically important in addressing an unfair imbalance, he believes the way it is enforced has caused the pendulum to swing too far the other way.

Northwestern, Cornell, Michigan State and Temple are among those schools that have cut their men's varsity fencing programs. Queens College added a varsity women's team in 2001 but blocked all attempts by male fencers to establish a team due to Title IX. Rutgers cut men's and women's fencing, citing Title IX and budget cuts. Cal State Fullerton cut both men's and women's fencing in June of 2008, also citing budget cuts. James Madison University (JMU) cut women's fencing, along with a number of other (mostly men's) sports, citing Title IX.

Since Title IX is often used to explain why men's programs are cut, the fact that it has been cited by Rutgers and JMU as a reason for cutting *women's* fencing is counterintuitive. An explanation of this comes from Eric Pearson, chairman of the College Sports Council(CSC), a group dedicated to the reform of Title IX. Pearson told the *Wall Street Journal*, "Administrators are just concerned with getting their numbers in line. That causes them to drop small-roster women's sports, like fencing and gymnastics, as well as cut men's sports." In support of this contention, the president of JMU conceded to the *New York Times* that women's fencing was cut because the team had struggled with a dwindling roster.

"Virtually every men's athletic team in the country has a strict roster cap limiting the number of guys that can participate on a team," says Jim McCarthy, a CSC spokesman. "Yet on the women's side of the athletic department the rosters are all virtually unlimited. There are enormous opportunities for women in a multitude of sports."

"As long as you have proportionality as the only demonstrable way that schools can comply then you're going to have these perverse unintended outcomes. Like the fact that women's rowing is the fastest growing sport in the NCAA, despite the fact that there is scant high school

COLLEGIATE FENCING CLUBS

A Thriving Alternative to Varsity Fencing





While the number of schools with varsity fencing teams has been declining or holding steady, the number of schools with club teams has been growing rapidly. "A club team isn't subject to NCAA rules or bound by Title IX," explains Schiller. "Schools are happy to have club sports — they have minimal impact on their budgets. So we have all kinds of club teams at Northwestern — crew, men's fencing, men's volleyball, etc. Each of these teams sets its own rules subject to the club sport rules of the institution."

The United States Fencing Association lists 89 schools with active fencing clubs on its web site, and there are far more that are not on this list.

"Fencing club teams are organized into leagues with other club teams," says Schiller. "But they'll also often fence NCAA programs, especially in the Midwest or the West. For example, although UCSD is varsity, they'll fence UCLA and Santa Barbara, which are club teams. I'm the commissioner of the Midwest Fencing Conference. Over the past ten years we've expanded our conference from about 8 club teams to 13. Now we've got club teams going at Indiana, Iowa, Minnesota. Places where there weren't clubs for a long time. And the kids are enthusiastic. They want to fence."

And while club teams are not eligible to participate in the national NCAA championships, beginning in 2003 an organization called the United States Association of Collegiate Fencing Clubs (USACFC) has been putting on a national championship of its own. The 2006 USACFC National Championships, held at Clemson, represented the largest gathering of collegiate fencers in the country, with more than 500 fencers competing. By the 2008 season, participation had grown to more than 600 fencers.

Bruce Capin, president and co-founder of USACFC, fenced for Penn State, an experience he calls priceless. Capin passionately believes in the power of sports to build character. "Club fencing is thriving," he says, "and the USACFC championships help. Because now club fencers have something to train for. Something to look forward to. And unlike many athletic departments, we have not lost sight of the proper perspective — why we're doing what we're doing."

Fifty different schools have participated in USACFC championships since its inception, a large percentage of them from NCAA's division I, and the number is increasing each year. "And these teams are dedicated," says Capin. "Most pay some or all of the money to fly across the country to get to the tournament out of their own pockets. And the emotion and the effort and the passion is there, and it's a fantastic experience for them."

Collegiate fencing clubs will continue to grow and thrive, predicts Capin. "High school fencers are going to say, 'Well I can't get into Harvard or I can't afford out-of-state tuition. And there are a limited number of varsity programs. But there's a club team right here that can offer me the same kind of wonderful experience.'"

participation. Schools are adding women's sports that young women aren't really doing in high school or aren't that interested in. But they put them in because they have big rosters," McCarthy says.

"If it was me, I would say let's look at the amount of interest in different sports on the campus. Are the facilities equivalent? Do the men's and women's teams have equal access to them? Are there equal opportunities for men and women to participate in the sports they want to? Are the coaches paid reasonably equivalent? And so forth. And then if you've done all that, what difference does it make what the roster is?" says Schiller.

"No one is trying to inhibit women from participating in sports. In fact, quite the opposite. All of the coaching groups in our coalition have dedicated their lives to getting young men and women both involved in sports. The other side would have you believe that there's an insidious conspiracy in higher education to shut women out of sports — it's absolute lunacy," says McCarthy.

There have been calls to base compliance to Title IX on surveys of student bodies to determine interest level in various sports. If surveys determine that everyone who wishes to participate in a given sport has the opportunity, a school would be in compliance. The Women's Sports Foundation (WSF), a Title IX advocacy group that didn't return calls to comment on this story, strongly resists this concept, believing that the methodology of such surveys would be flawed.

In addition, a fact sheet on the WSF website says that this change would "eliminate schools' obligations to look broadly and proactively at whether they are satisfying women's interests and threatens to reverse the enormous progress women and girls have made in sports . . .."

WSF also rejects the notion that Title IX has hurt men's sports in any way. While they acknowledge sports such as men's wrestling have been decimated, they cite increased spending on football and basketball programs as the principle reason for the reduction in other sports. They also cite statistics showing that men's *overall* participation in NCAA sports has increased in the past 25 years. McCarthy counters that this analysis doesn't take into account the substantial growth in the number of NCAA schools during this period, and that if not for quotas men's participation would be considerably higher without impacting opportunities for women.

In at least one example there is one

us team is the big winner at the veterans world championships limoges 2008

By Rinaldo A. Campana

The 2008 Veterans World Championships was held in Limoges, France, October 1 – 5 at the "Complexe Dojo-Escrime Robert Lecomte," the site of the 2001 Veterans World Championships.

The US Veterans Team won nine medals -- four silver and five bronze -- and was the top ranked of all participating countries with Great Britain second with seven medals.

Rene Roch, President of the FIE, was impressed by the large field for a Veterans World Championships -- more than 400 competitors from 35 nations. These Championships reflected the expansion of fencing as an international recreational sport.

There were more former National, World, Olympic and Veteran World Champions than had competed in Sydney, Australia last year. They also included more fencers with extensive international experience who competed for the first time in the Veteran World Championships. One fencer, Jujie Luan, who won the Women's Foil 50-59 age group, was the 1984 Olympic Champion for China and recently competed in the 2008 Beijing Olympics as a member of the Canadian team.

On the second day of competition Linda Nowell won the silver medal in the Women's 60+ Saber. She missed winning the gold by only two touches in her bout against reigning World Champion Marguerite Langton from South Africa.

The Men's Epee 50-59 category constituted the largest field, with 55 fencers. As usual, Walter Dragonetti, a consistent veteran world class fencer, made the final 8 and won the bronze medal, losing to the eventual winner, Sweden's Peter Barvestad.

In the Men' Foil 60+ Jan Patterson, who finished 9th, was fencing his best, leading by three touches against Marco Bernhard, from Switzerland until Bernhard came from behind to beat him 10-9. Patterson ended with the bronze medal.

The Men's Saber 60+ demonstrated the overall strength of the US team. Had it not been that all of the US team was in the same bracket with Paul Apostol, the eventual silver medalist, more would surely have won a medal.

In the Women's Saber 50-59 three of the team members ended up in the same DE bracket.. In the fourth round of the DE, Jane Eyre and Delia Turner faced each other and Turner won a very close 10-8 match, taking her to the gold medal bout against Jane Hutchison of Great Britain, which she lost 10-9.

The Men's Foil 50-59 was dominated by the veteran fencer of the US team, Joseph Biebel, who finished with a silver medal after defeating teammate Joseph Streb in the second round of DE.

This trip could not be realized without the hard work of the USFA's Jeanna Mendoza and. Brad Baker, who agreed to referee on very short notice. Every year the team has had the privilege of Scott Harkey as the official armorer. Harkey volunteers his services so that the team can focus on the fencing. Scott, we thank you again and look forward to your participation in Moscow next year.


Jane Eyre's bronze


Linda Nowell, silver, and Ellenn O'Leary, bronze, 60+ WS


Joe Biebel, silver, 50-59 MF


Enjoying the moment


Delia Turner, silver, and Jane Eyre, Bronze


Walt Dragonetti congratulates Nowell, Kallus, and O'Leary at the team dinner


Celebrations were in order

THE RESULTS ARE IN

WOMEN'S EPEE, 50-59 (37)

1 RIMGALIENE Rasa LTU
2 KIRCHEIS Astrid GER
3 FISCHER Dagmar GER
3 REGUIGNE Patricia FRA
9 SZABUNIA Margo USA
17 BOSCO Marianne USA
19 LEIGHTON Louise USA
20 STRAKA Paula USA

WOMEN'S EPEE, 60 AND OLDER (29)

1 SOMEROJA Marja- FIN
2 DEMAILLE Marie Chantal FRA
3 GARDINI Iris ITA
3 KALLUS Diane USA
7 BEDROSIAN Patricia USA
10 ANNAVEDDER Mary USA
22 NOWELL Linda USA

MEN'S EPEE 50-59 (49)

1 BARVESTAD Peter SWE
2 KARAGYAN Ashot RUS
3 DRAGONETTI Walter USA
3 FISCHER Volker GER
13 MCGOVERN Vincent USA
13 RIDGE John USA
29 RANES Evan USA

MEN'S EPEE 60 & OLDER (44)

1 JOHNSON Ralf GBR
2 DAVENPORT Robin GBR
3 LAPOUGE Gerarg FRA
3 PASMANS Leo BEL
10 COCHRANE JR. Robert USA
11 MESSING Arnold USA
12 SEXTON III Ray USA
30 PARY Theodore USA

WOMEN'S FOIL, 50-59 (35)

1 LUAN Jujie CAN
2 CHERNOVA Liudmila RUS
3 CIRILLO Gianna ITA
3 TANAKA Yumiko JPN
10 OFFERLE Judith USA
13 WALTON Yvonne USA
19 STARKS-FAULKNER Jenette USA
24 WALTERS Anne Marie USA

WOMEN'S FOIL 60 & OLDER (32)

1 SOMEROJA Marja- FIN
2 PALM Kerstin SWE
3 DEMAILLE Marie Chantal FRA
3 GREUNKE Brigitte GER
18 RECKLING Diane USA
19 NOWELL Linda USA
24 BEDROSIAN Patricia USA
26 O'LEARY Ellen USA

MEN'S FOIL 50-59 (38)

1 BLASCHKA Robert AUT
2 BIEBEL Joseph USA
3 HINOSHITA Kenichi JPN
3 ROYER Bruno FRA
13 STREB Joseph USA
18 DORFMAN Mitchell USA
27 MATTOX Norman USA

MEN'S FOIL 60 & OLDER (36)

1 PAUL Graham GBR
2 NARITA Masashi JPN
3 BERNHARD Marco SUI
3 IDE Eiichi JPN
9 PATTERSON Jan USA
11 SEXTON III Ray USA
21 ADAMS James USA
29 CAMPANA Rinaldo USA

WOMEN'S SABER 50-59 (29)

1 HUTCHISON Jane GBR
2 TURNER Delia USA
3 BANDIERI Claudia ITA
3 EYRE Jane USA
5 BENDER Jeanine USA
9 RUNYAN Heidi USA

WOMEN'S SABER 60 & OLDER (18)

1 LANGTON Marguerite RSA
2 NOWELL Linda USA
3 EARL Silvia GBR
3 O'LEARY Ellenn USA
7 EVENS Muriel USA
13 FELTY Louisa USA

MEN'S SABER 50-59 (37)

1. CARRARA Vittorio ITA
2 KAS Geza FRA
3 BONEHILL Richard GBR
3 PAROLI Giulio ITA
8 HICHA Paul USA
10 SMITH Warren T USA
18 YUNG Wang USA
23 HARTSTEIN Keith USA

MEN'S SABER 60 & OLDER (27)

1 COHEN Richard GBR
2 APOSTOL Paul USA
3 BARON Peter GBR
3 SEXTON III Ray USA
6 SBARBARO Philip USA
16 PINKUS Larry USA

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and improvisation.

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within yourself,
under your mask,
beyond your weapon.



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veterans news:
meeting at world veterans championships

The meeting of the Heads of Delegation was attended by Max Geuter, representing the FIE. Since no member of the host country was present, Rinaldo Campana was asked to Chair this meeting.

The key issues that were unanimously adopted were:

I. Entry Fees

It was unanimously agreed that in the future the organizers of a World Championship must ensure that expenses for the event be covered by the published FIE rate of 55 for entry fees, and payment of those fees, no more or less, to Veterans Fencing World Championships should be obligatory.

II. Referees

That the FIE be approached regarding referees, in that active and respected -FIE referees who are 60 or older and have been retired from the FIE referee list, be allowed to referee at the World Veterans Championships until the age of 65 if they have continued to be active for one year prior to their 60th birthday.

III. Transparent masks

After discussion it was agreed that the FIE be approached for a change of rules, so that the use of transparent masks should not be obligatory in Veterans World Championships. There is no TV presence at the Championships and excessive costs are incurred by the participants who have to meet all of their own expenses, with many of them at retirement age.

IV. Conductive Lame Bibs at Foil

It was agreed that the use of conductive bibs at foil should be adopted in line with the FIE's timescale.

V. Wireless Scoring and Video Review

After discussion it was agreed that the use of wireless scoring and video review should not be the rule for Veteran World Championships and that the FIE be approached for a change of rules.

VI. Team Championship

The subject of having a Team Championships alongside the Individual Championships was raised. It was generally accepted that this be initiated in a gradual way, to be able to assess its effect on the organizers and the level of participation.

It was agreed that a pilot event be added to the Championships program, as was done with Women's Saber, as soon as possible.

The team event should be based on nine bouts per match, not relay. The teams should consist of three persons per team with a minimum age per person of 50 years and an aggregate age to be determined. The question of whether or not members must have entered the individual event was not resolved and needs clarification.

VII. Competitive Age Categories

It was unanimously agreed that the FIE consider that there be an expansion of the number of veteran fencing categories at the Veteran World Championships to be more in sync with the veteran competitions held in different European countries that have the 70 + category. In addition, consideration should be given to the formation of a Veteran Masters category for fencers over 30 and 40 +.

VII. Gala Dinner

The meeting expressed its regret that there were insufficient Gala Dinner tickets available and that some nations were therefore excluded. It was agreed that in the future organizers needed to make sure that adequate accommodations for all participants are available for the Gala Dinner.

VIII. Communication

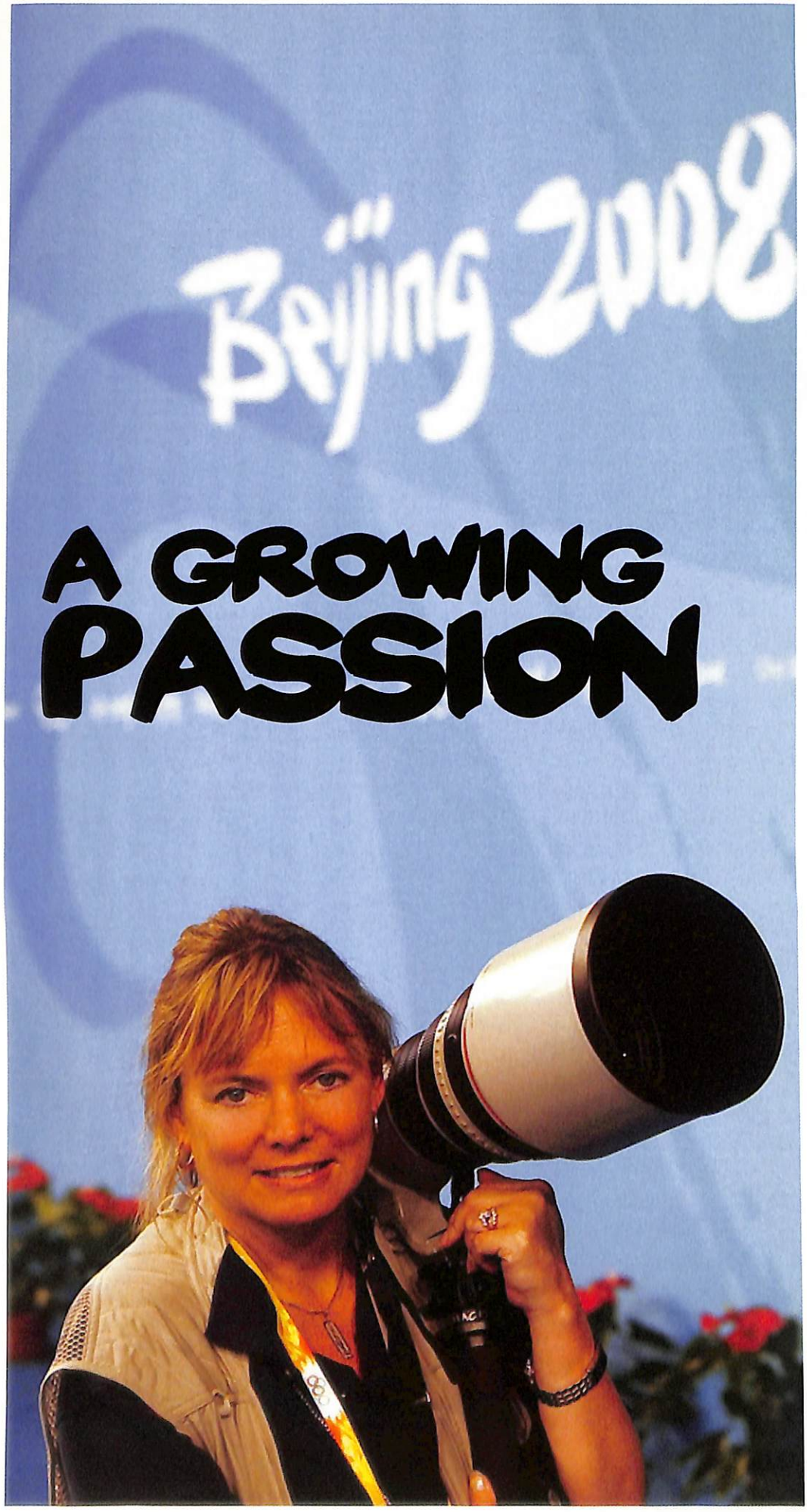
It was unanimously agreed that Veteran Fencing World Championships organizers must ensure that the website publish all information in the three official FIE languages; French Spanish and English.

It was also unanimously agreed that all information and communication at the Championships be translated for all participants in the official FIE languages.

It was also unanimously agreed that the organizers must ensure that their website be properly managed to enable participants to communicate with organizing officials.

World Championships 2010

The representative from Bulgaria expressed interest in bidding for the 2010 Veterans World Championships. The representative was advised to contact the FIE, since the delegation meeting had no authority to address this issue.



A GROWING PASSION

Up and coming artist Amy Alden Timacheff was the team photographer for the U.S. Olympic fencing team in Beijing this year, capturing moments both on- and off-strip.

Amy Timacheff is originally from Berkeley, California. Her career as a photographer began only in 2001, when she and Serge founded Tiger Mountain Photo, a commercial studio located just outside Seattle. FencingPhotos.com, which she helped conceptualize and operate, came later. She worked at the 2005 World Championships in Leipzig, Germany, the Monal Grand Prix in Paris, and the Junior & Cadet World Championships in Linz, Austria. Recently, she has focused more on U.S. events, running medal ceremony photography and "strip shoots" at Summer Nationals and the Junior Olympics.

Though her background is in design (she worked as a garment buyer and then in the design depart-

ment for Levi Strauss before college), Timacheff says she did not consider becoming a photographer until recently. Until the past couple of years, her time was devoted to the couple's children, Tatyana and Alexander.

"My passion for photography grows every day. I love creating photographs that describe personality, character, and lifestyle," she says.

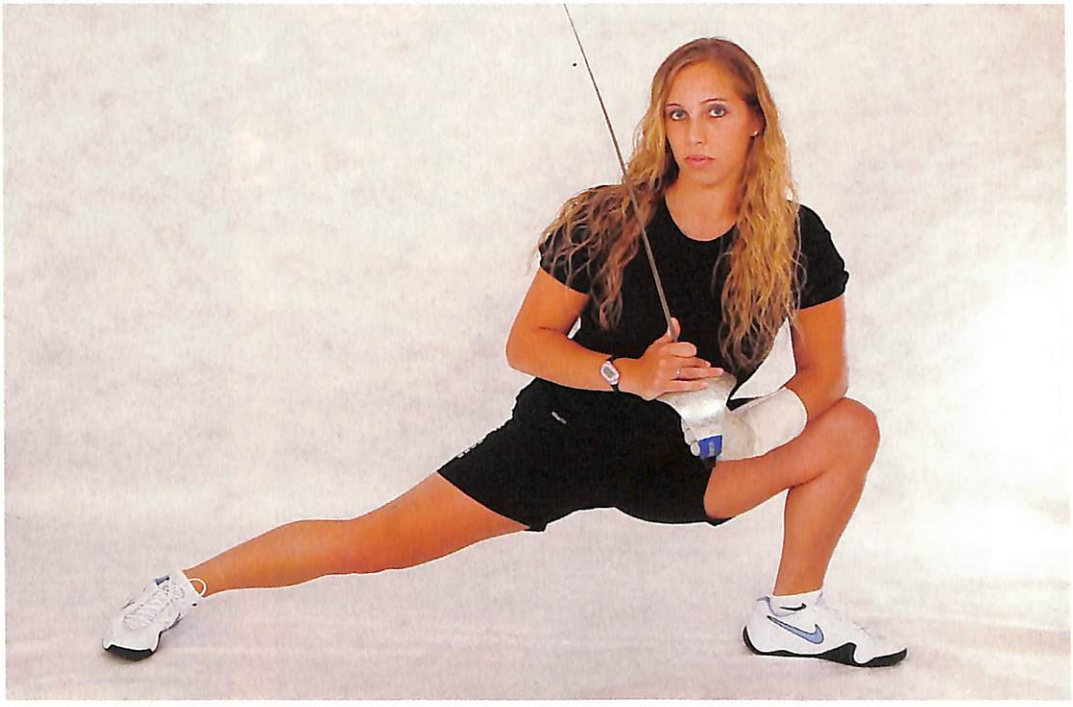
While her husband, Serge, focuses more on action shots and world teams as the official FIE photographer, Amy provides portraiture, commercial images, and team shots at events and formal occasions. The pre-Olympic season began for her in April at the National Championships in Portland, Oregon, where she created the official U.S. team and individual portraits. They are featured on the USFA Web site and will be included in the soon to be published 2009 USFA/Fencing.net calendar. Timacheff's expertise in portraiture and posing came in handy for her shots with Mariel Zagunis in the official Nike-sponsored outfits, such as the studio shot shown here.

As part of the U.S. team in Beijing, she kept close with their activities and whereabouts during the Games — especially for events taking place to celebrate the medals won.

"I was really proud not just to be a photographer at the Olympic Games, but to be part of the U.S. Olympic fencing team at such a momentous and historic occasion as what we achieved in Beijing," Amy said. "It was an incredible high point in my life to be able to share the excitement and absolutely incredible energy at such close range."

For Amy, the Olympics began when she was able to get a seat for the Opening Ceremonies. "With such a fantastic spectacle to begin the Olympics, I knew intuitively that it was going to be the ultimate experience," she says.



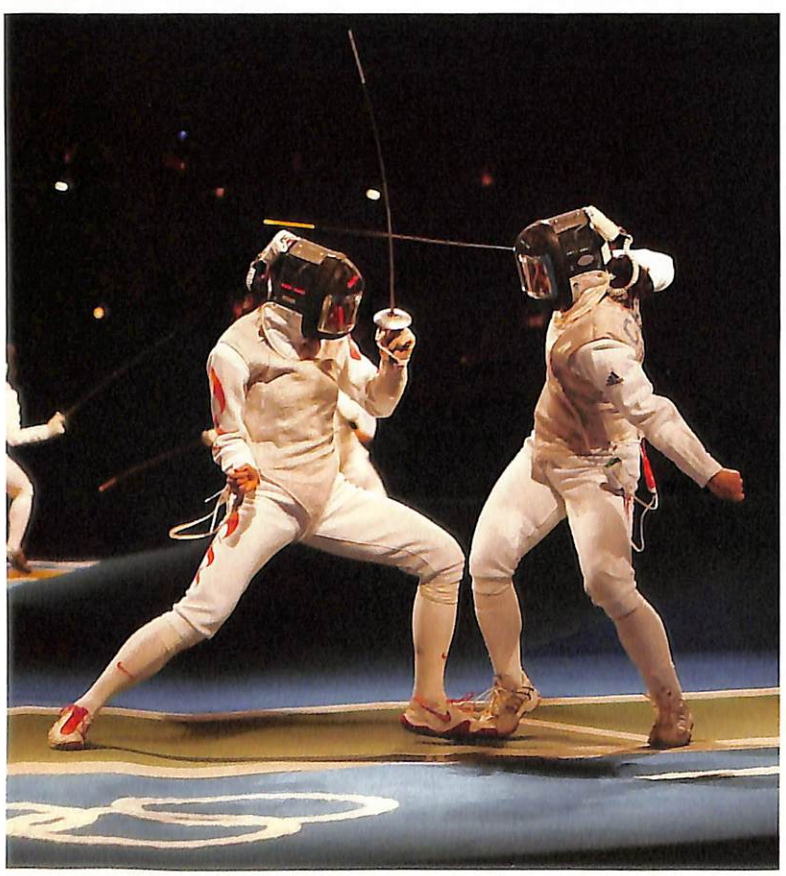


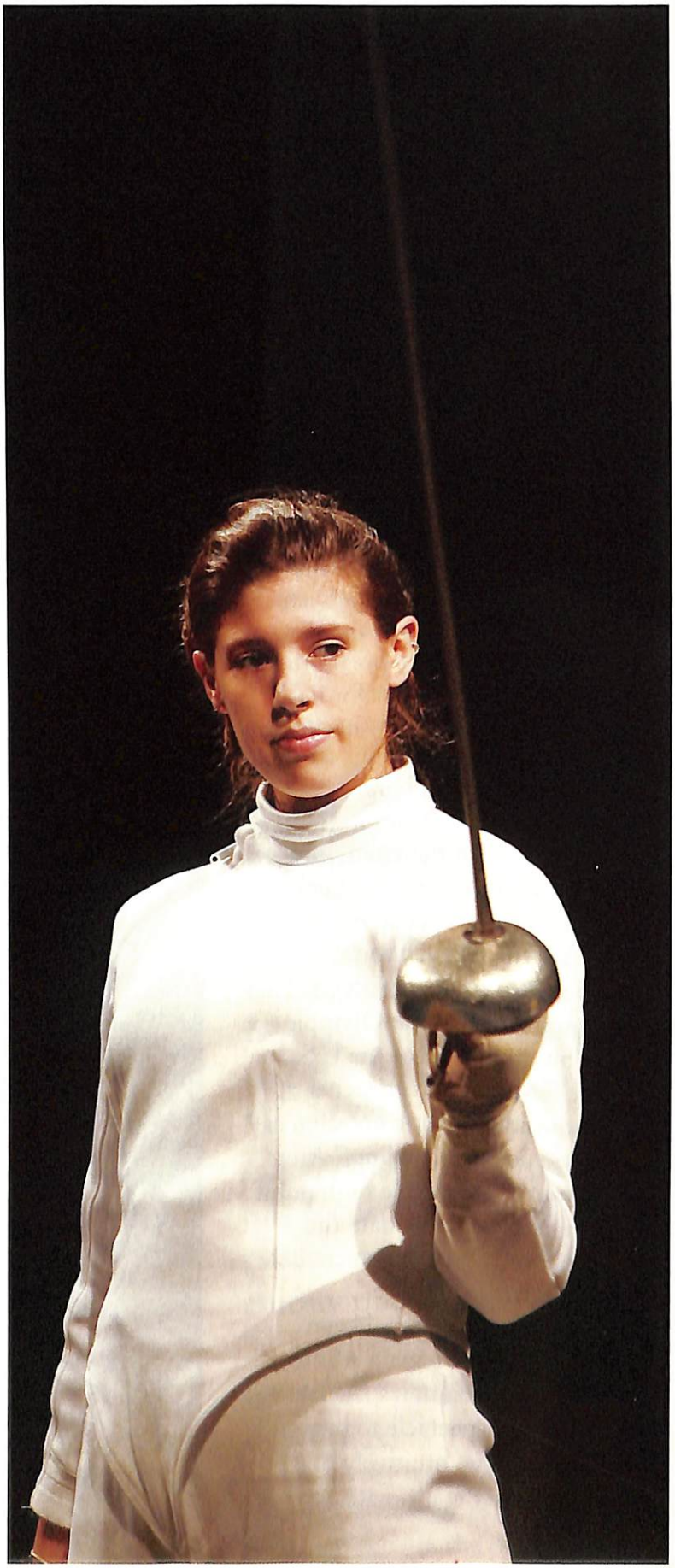


A GROWING PASSION: MORE PHOTOS









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Lucchetti Fencing USA is bringing its popular French-American Fencing Camp to the east coast. This camp is geared for all fencers who are looking for great fencing experiences with a European flair here in the US. Some of France's finest fencing masters led by Regis Mantzer and Christophe Goyallon and distingushed US coaches including Marcos Lucchetti and Steve Kaplan will be in charge of the daily training. The camp will feature high level private lessons, footwork, video analysis, lectures with focus on technique, tactics and mental preparation. The camp will end with an international tournament. The participation of more than 25 cadets and junior fencers from France will make this a tremendous fencing and life experience for all campers. Under the direction of Marcos Luchetti this camp has been a big success in northern California for 7 years and this summer is being hosted for the first time on the east coast at the beautiful Cobra Fencing Club in Jersey City, NJ. The club is a 25,000 square foot facility with 20 competition strips, cafe and lounge just minutes from New York City, and Newark Airport.

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LUCCHETTI FENCING USA

STEVE KAPLAN

COBRA FENCING CLUB JERSEY CITY

REGIS MANTZER
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CDE

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The Point

PARENT'S CORNER

FENCING FOR FUN

The USFA once had a non-competitive membership category called "Fencing For Fun." That category is long gone, but unfortunately for some young fencers today, so is the fun. According to the National Alliance for Youth Sports, 70 percent of sports participants drop out by the age of 13, and the reason most often cited is that it has stopped being fun. Hearing a child say, "I want to quit" is a dilemma for parents. We want our kids to be happy, but also to see things through. Here are ways parents can help kids enjoy and stay with fencing.

Success – No one is happy feeling incapable. Make sure your child is developmentally and physically able to do the skills taught in class. Ten-year-olds may quickly lose interest if they can only practice with skilled 14-year-olds and vice versa. Ask the coach and even other parents if a class is age-appropriate for your fencer.

Finding a suitable level is also important in competition. At first, your child will need to stick with the age and classification restricted tournaments, such as "Youth 12" or "D and under," to give her chances to score touches, win bouts, and experience success. Once she is old and confident enough, she can explore the fun of an open age tournament.

Friends - We can't make friend for our kids, but we can look for friendship opportunities. If your child isn't fitting in with the others in a club, you might look for somewhere else to fence. In my opinion as a parent, this is just as important as finding the right coach. Nothing makes fencing more enjoyable than sharing the experience with friends.

Expectations – After three classes, your son wants to quit because he isn't "sword fighting." Your daughter is frustrated because at her first open, boys and girls competed together, and she was the only female saberist. At an important competition your son seems to have forgotten how to win. Time to rein in all those expectations and seek out information. You and your fencer should work with the coach and more experienced parents to find out what a novice should be doing in six months or a year. What are the pros and cons of each weapon? How does one combat nervousness before a competition?

Of course there are many reasons fencers want to quit, from time and school pressures to the sport just not being the best fit for a child's capabilities. Fencing is too rich of an experience to have "it's just not fun" be the reason, especially when parents can watch for situations that prevent fun.

HINTS FOR HELMET HEADS

Keeping Score

While reffing, a written record of the score is important! But holding the whole clipboard makes hand signals impossible.

Tear a scrap off of the scoresheet, keep small tally marks you can show in case of disputes. Keep the scrap tucked under your wristwatch or a rubber band around your hand between touches.

TECH TALK

"I CAN SEE CLEARLY NOW" - CLEAR-FRONT MASKS

By Ted Li

With more and more clear-front (visor) masks being used for saber and foil, there are some caveats which need to be observed to preserve their safety and their optical clarity.

Do's:

• Protect the visor from scratches by using the padded case provided by many manufacturers. If one wasn't provided, a padded pillow case will suffice.

• Since the useable life-span of the visor is mandated as two years from the manufacturing date stamped on it, make it a habit to change the visor before its useful life expires.

• Clean the visor only with water. Window cleaners, acetone and other chemicals can degrade the plastic visors to the point where their optical clarity and, more importantly, their safety are compromised.

• Use the "tear-offs" which BMX riders and ice hockey players use to protect the surface of the visor from scratching.

• Be sure that all of the screws and/or nuts holding the visor frame together are present and secure. You may want to replace the factory supplied 3mm machine nuts with 3mm stop-nuts (available from McMaster-Carr, www. McMaster.com) to lessen the chances of the nuts loosening due to vibration.

• When installing a new visor, install the center screws/nuts first, then, symmetrically install the screws/nuts to evenly spread the physical stresses on the visor. The installation process can be facilitated by a special 5.5mm hex wrench available from most fencing distributors, or by a 5.5mm hex socket attached to a universal joint and ratchet. When installing the fastening screws and/or nuts, do not over-tighten them, as you may break them, and compromise the safety of the frame.

Don'ts:

• Store or transport the visor mask without protection against scratching.

• Clean the visor with anything other than clear water and a soft cloth.

• Use an undated visor or one with a date stamp more than two years old.

• Use the mask if there are fastening screws or nuts missing.

The visor masks have been shown in testing to be as strong and as safe as steel mesh masks, but they do require some special care to maintain their integrity and their optical clarity. By paying attention to the age of the clear visor and its care, your visor mask can provide as many years' service as an all-steel, mesh mask.

AN HONEST APPRAISAL?

BRIGHT LIGHTS

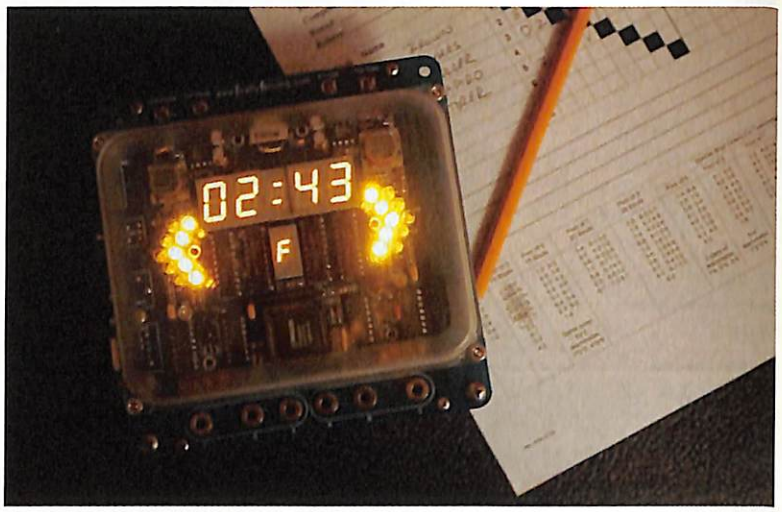
– Kathy Schifferle

The recently introduced Firefly, a three-weapon scoring machine, is a pleasant combination of affordability and features. The Firefly has a transparent cover (which looks cool) over the circuit board. The 5.5" x 5.5" x 1.5" box is held up by a small tubular stand. The two-page 'manual' was very easy to understand and I was pleased to see that I could identify and easily control all the features.

The basics are done well: bright green and red arrows, plus smaller off-target arrows and a crisp buzzer which does not become activated until both fencers are connected and ready to fence (yeah!).

What makes the Firefly unique, especially for a modest $239, is the inclusion of a very visible clock display with unique functionality. Firefly's AutoClock (patent pending) feature lets you select from a three-minute bout, a one-minute sudden death, a one-minute rest and a ten-minute rest. In fact, there are two internal clocks, each with a memory, so you can time an injury while fencing a three-minute bout. Fencers can also use AutoClock for practice bouts. A beep will indicate that the clock is activated, and then a second, trilling beep, will signal the fencers to begin fencing. The second beep is on a random delay to emulate a referee's timing for 'on guard-ready-fence'.

Coach Ronald Kilby of Southern Oregon Fencing Center says, "The great value of the Firefly for me as a coach is the ability to simulate real bout-time independent of a timekeeper. Fencers need to learn to manage their bouts, which general unsupervised practice doesn't permit, and this nifty box is the answer. Particularly, I like putting one minute on the box and telling one of the fencers, 'OK, you have a minute and you are three touches behind! Go win!'"



Other nice features include a 'Flip Coin' button for priority, an LED that shows the current weapon mode, grounding lights and a connector that lets you download updates and install from your computer via a USB cable. There is a simple remote available; one button to change the preset (3:00, 1:00, etc.) and another button to start/stop.

Chris Atwood, Head Coach George Mason University Fencing Club, said, "Great visibility, significantly better than any of the other inexpensive scoring boxes."

The Firefly is exclusively available online at FireFlyFencing.com



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ScoreCounter

Michigan fencer Gary Hayenga has created a touch-pad scoring application for the Iphone and Ipod Touch. Features include count down timer, red/green score display, multiple Start/Stop timer button locations for easy access. Version 1.0.1 will include even more functionality.

Available for free at the iTunes Apps Store. Features discussed at http://66.93.4.109/ScoreCounter.html.

Panasonic HDC-SD9

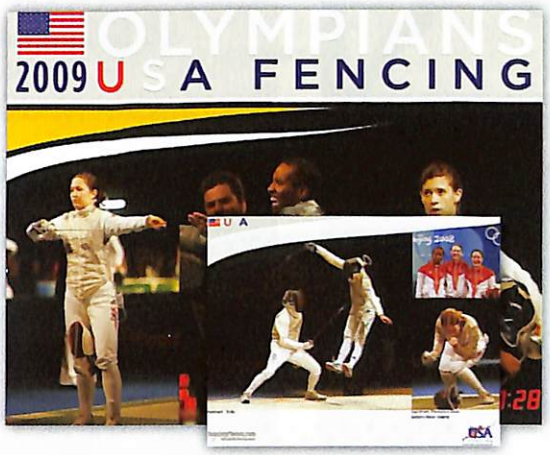
This slim little HD camcorder makes shooting your practices and bouts a breeze. It's got quality Leica lenses and a 10x optical zoom and 1920 x 1080-pixel recording as well as good battery life. New models also incorporate Panasonic's highly touted Advanced Optical Image Stabilization and face-detection systems.

Available for $1099.95 (with 8GB SD memory card) at retailers nationwide.

USFA Team Calendar

For the first time ever – hot off the presses, the USFA's own 2009 Olympic Team calendar. Produced with Fencing.net, featuring the photography of F.I.E. photographer Serge Timacheff. Includes USFA event dates. Plus, Fencing.net donates $3 to the USFA for every calendar sold!

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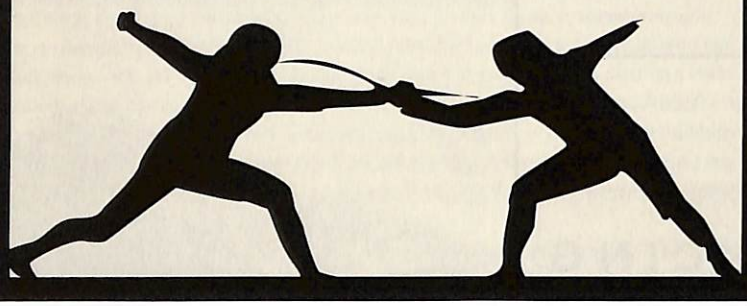
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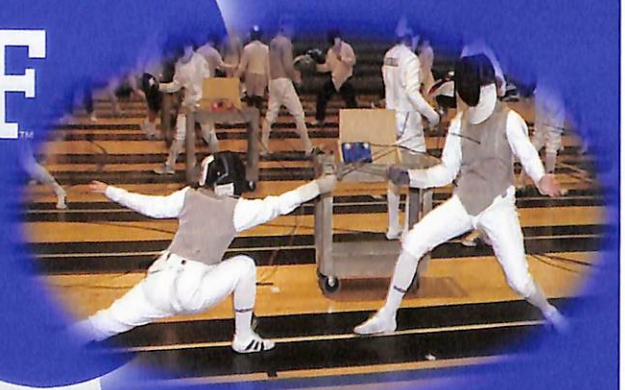
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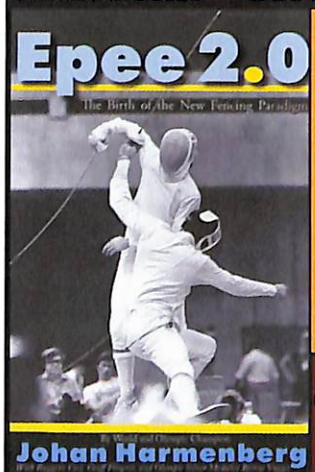
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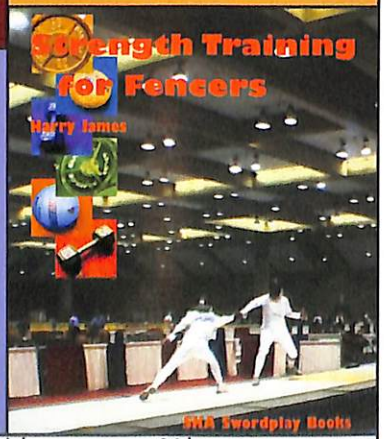
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Epee 2.0:
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THE POINT

CLUB TIPS

AWARDING GOOD PERFORMANCE

Motivating kids to continue fencing with your club is always a problem. Some clubs around the country have attacked the issue with a page out of the karate book – a graduated reward system very similar to the belt system used in that martial art. These clubs have found giving kids concrete accolades for their accomplishments builds a brand loyalty for fencing that is hard to beat – and entices them to stay for more classes.

Whether you give belts, badges, patches, or certificates, there are lots of ways to implement a graduated skills program, but the central point is always this: to advance to the next class or level within the system, students must complete a set of skills.

When they do, they receive some type of citation and a celebrated move up to the next level group or class. Coaches at clubs with graduated systems say they create consistency, motivation to continue fencing and clarity for students and parents alike.

At Northwest Fencing Center in Beaverton, Ore., the achievement system is fully integrated with the curriculum. NFC has three basic levels – Youth, Youth Competitive, and Precompetitive – before fencers can advance to the Competitive level, which is gradated even further.

Skills go beyond technical fencing. Students must also prove their mettle by refereeing and armoring; at advanced levels they must even serve with national armorers at North American Cups.

"We like it because the athlete doesn't miss any skills, they get to go at their own rate of progression, and the motivation is inherant in the system. You want that gold star, you see your teammates doing it."

Marx says it works well to keep the students' progress posted with skill sheets on the wall so everyone can see each other's progress.

"That's great for the parents, they can see where their kid is, too," says Marx.

The scope of the system extends all the way through the Olympic level and beyond – in fact, Marx says, no one, not even 2004 Olympian Cody Mattern, has reached the top level.

Programs can be as complex or simple as your club demands. The Three Rivers Fencing Center in Pittsburgh, Pa. just implemented a similar system on a much smaller scale in September, says Iana Dakova, Three Rivers head coach.

Dakova created her system after speaking with Marx, as well as with Greg Massialas's M Team in San Francisco and Dan Tibbets at the California Fencing Academy in San Jose.

"We didn't have great continuity between levels," says Dakova. "We had beginners and some higher-level fencers and when those would leave for college we might not have anyone competitive for years. I talked to coaches and they said in these systems, people don't get stuck, they progress."

Three Rivers' students work their way simply through Beginner, Beginner II, Intermediate, and into two different Competitive levels. At the end of each class, the students take a test of practical and theoretical skills. Passing students advance to the next class and receive that level's colored uniform patch. Non-passing students still receive a certificate of achievement for having completed a class, and can take the level over again in a unique class.

It can be challenging to create levels that work for your club. Dakova, for instance, found that as she only had a few very young kids, the youngest were having problems passing her written tests. She says she'll have to work on levels or create a sub-program for youngsters to make them age-appropriate.

For Three Rivers, results are already promising.

"I have to say most of the students from September immediately signed from Beginner I to Beginner II, and that was not necessarily happening in the past," says Dakova. "Before, they disappeared one by one once they moved into the big group. Now, having stages as we do, it's very clear how you progress."

SOME SKILLS & ACHIEVEMENTS YOU MIGHT REQUIRE:

Technical skills: footwork patterns, parries, simple and compound attacks and other bladework

Refereeing skills: knowledge of terminology, hand signals, rules, ability to call actions

Armoring skills: ability to fix own weaponry, rulebook knowledge regarding equipment, ability to fix club equipment

Attendance: commitment to increasing numbers of practice days at higher levels

Competition: participation at different levels of local, regional, national events

Teaching: ability to lead footwork or aid lower-level fencers, even give lessons

IN THE SPOTLIGHT



PAUL APOSTOL

Paul Apostol's latest accomplishment was winning a silver medal at the 2008 World Veterans Championships in France.

Apostol has been a member of six World Championship and World Cup teams, as well as the 1972 and 1976 Olympic fencing teams. He finished 8th in Munich in '72 and tied for 13th individually in '76. He is a member of the New York University Hall of Fame.

Apostol says he finds balance in water gardening and raising Koi. He also coaches Ramapo High School's fencing team in New Jersey.

Who is your "fencing hero"? Yury Gelman, who propelled me to two World Championships in my current career.

Favorite Bout? The final bout of the 2006 Veterans Championship where I went from being down 1-5 at the break *(Veterans DE bouts are 10 touches with a break at 5)* to pulling myself together and refocusing to win 10-7. To finally take the podium as number one and to see the American flag raised and hear the Star Spangled Banner played was a thrill like no other.

STATS & FACTS

Hometown: Wyckoff, NJ
Birthdate: Oct. 23, 1945
College: New York University, 1967
Club: Manhattan Fencing Center
Coached by: Yury Gelman

HIGHLIGHTS:

World 60+ Men's Saber Champion, '06, '07, Silver '08
'06 U.S. Veteran 60+ National Champion
'04 U.S. Veteran 50+ National Champion
'76 Olympic Games, 13th
'74 Pan American Games, Team Silver
'73 U.S. National Sr. Champion, Men's Saber
'72 Olympic Games, 8th
'67 IFA Champion
'66 NCAA Champion

CLASSIFIEDS

COMPETITION CLASSIFIEDS

Alcazar Youth Challenge, Dec. 21, 2008, Shaker Heights H.S., Shaker Heights, OH. A Regional Youth Circuit Event. $25 registration, $5 late fee for entries after Dec. 15. On-Line (www.askfred.net), Mail, e-mail, and Phone registration accepted. USFA Membership and fencing attire are required. Also, see www.northernohiofencing.com. For info: William Reith, 216-381-0669, cell 216 469-8004, or Alcazarfencing@aol.com.

Challenge C.E.P.-Marathon -- Youth and Cadet international foil competition, 14-15 Februrary 2009, Paris, France. Contact Stéphane Le Bleis, Club d'Escrime du C.E.P - Cercle des Escrimeurs Parisiens, 10 rue Albert 75013 Paris, Tel/Fax : 01.46.77.00.84, www.escrime-cep.com, Marathon@escrime-cep.com.

Great Lakes High School And Middle School Fencing Championships, February 21 & 22, 2009. Independence Field House, Cleveland, OH. Register: askfred.net. Registration $15, Entry $25/event, free T-shirt for pre-paid registration by 1/01/09. Hotel accommodations at Sheridan, Independence. Comp breakfast and shuttle to event. Susie Dumas 216-406-4371 for info.

COACH CLASSIFIEDS:

Work Wanted

Alexey Karpov, 25 years of epee coaching experience. Has coached five champions of All-Russia fencing championships; coach in training camp of Russia National team - '96 Olympic Games. Coach of Singapore National team for 3 years; prepared champions of both individual & team events in South East Asia Fencing Federation in '06. karpovsin@gmail.com.

Italian Fencing Master, current coach of the Univ. 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 Carmino Galanto, tel. 045-522084, address Via A. Scarlatti, 1/A, 37131 - Verona, Italy.

Coach Wanted

Seeking Coach: Oregon Fencing Alliance in Portland, OR has an opportunity for a sabre coach to work alongside Ed Korfanty and his World and Olympic Champions. Part time position teaching Beginners the sport of fencing. Individual needs good communication skills and must enjoy working with young kids. Send resume and contact OFA Director of Programs: CZagunis@aol.com//503.880.3512

Intermediate/Advanced Foil and Saber Coach Wanted for growing three-weapon fencing club in Albuquerque. Must speak some English. Students age 8 years to adult, group classes, individual lessons. Some relating to parents expected. Must be able to armor. Base 20-25 hours/wk, extra hours possible. Occasional paid travel. Three-month trial offered, travel allowance for moving. Toby Tolley at Duke City Fencing, (505)872-0048.

Big competition coming up? Looking for a coach? Looking for a job? Send FREE classified listings to: Cindy Bent Findlay, editor@americanfencingmagazine.com. 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. Spring magazine deadlines for all classified ads is Feb 15, 2009.

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2007 World Championships
St. Petersburg, Russia

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school where Title IX seems to be working for fencing, not against it. Stuart Lee coached the men's and women's varsity fencing teams at the University of California, San Diego (UCSD) from 1997-2004. He says there was no limit to the women's roster, while the men's roster was tightly capped, and he was forced to make cuts every year. "The university definitely encouraged me to field a bigger women's team," says Lee. "The problem was there just weren't that many women interested. We would have a fencing exhibit on campus and we would pass out fliers saying we needed women fencers, but we didn't get many takers."

"Title IX has worked," says Lee. "In high schools around the country women are participating more and more and are becoming healthier, and it's a fantastic trend. But if you question anything about how it is enforced you're immediately tarred as anti-female."

While the issues surrounding Title IX remain unchanged, in the four short years since Lee left UCSD the experience gap between men's and women's fencers has been closing. UCSD Assistant Coach Josh Runyan, responsible for recruiting fencers from 2004 to the present, has seen an upswing in the depth and breadth of the fencing talent pool since America's success in Athens, and expects this to continue after Beijing. "Almost all starters on the UCSD women's team are experienced before they get here now," he says, while acknowledging that some of the non-starters are still fairly new to the sport. "And of course, there are also some women we would love to have on the team who don't have the grades to satisfy the requirements of the University. At schools like ours that stress academics," says Runyan, "fencing talent alone isn't enough for admission."

Looking to the Future

So will the number of fencing programs, especially men's programs, continue to dwindle? "When I started thirty years ago we had 74 or 75 programs," says Schiller. "Most schools had both men's and women's. We lost a number of programs for economic reasons or Title IX, but it's been fairly stable over the past ten or fifteen years. And while we've recently lost teams like Rutgers, JMU, and Cal State Fullerton, at least we picked up Sacred Heart, which didn't have a program until a few years ago."


North Western's Schiller

"The explosion of interest in fencing among young people, both boys and girls, is great for the sport," says Runyan, while acknowledging that the larger talent pool and current environment make it more difficult for boys to become NCAA fencers. He notes that while it is more challenging than in the past on the women's side, opportunities for girls to fence in college remain strong. "There are still fewer girls than boys in the Juniors and a greater number of NCAA schools that offer women's fencing."

While many of the top women's fencers go to schools like Ohio State, Northwestern, and Notre Dame — and the depth of talent on such teams is truly impressive — schools like UCSD don't require this level of ability.

"There are a greater number of experienced women at all ability levels than ever," says Runyan, "but there are also many promising female prospects I speak with who decide not to fence in college, or choose a non-NCAA school based on other considerations. So young girls who work hard at fencing, even for just a few years, and keep their grades up, still have a great chance to fence on an NCAA team if they want to. Even though there aren't that many schools, those schools will still be happy to take them."

So, although, fencing is not at the collegiate level does not reflect the significant growth of the last 20 years in the sport, it remains as a strong feeder system to the sport itself. It has reached a steady state of participation with a growth in schools where fencing is active as a club sport. The competition for acceptance at schools with NCAA fencing program is much greater now than it was even 10 years ago but the opportunities a fencer will find if accepted at any of those programs is vast.

Olympic team either graduated from college or are currently in school.

Seth Kelsey, Air Force Academy

Gerek Meinhardt – freshman, Notre Dame

Hannah Thompson – The Ohio State University

Emily Cross – junior, Harvard University

Erinn Smart – Barnard College of Columbia University

Doris Willette – junior, Penn State University

Kelley Hurley – junior, Notre Dame University

Sada Jacobson – Yale University

Mariel Zagunis – Notre Dame University

Rebecca Ward – freshman, Duke University

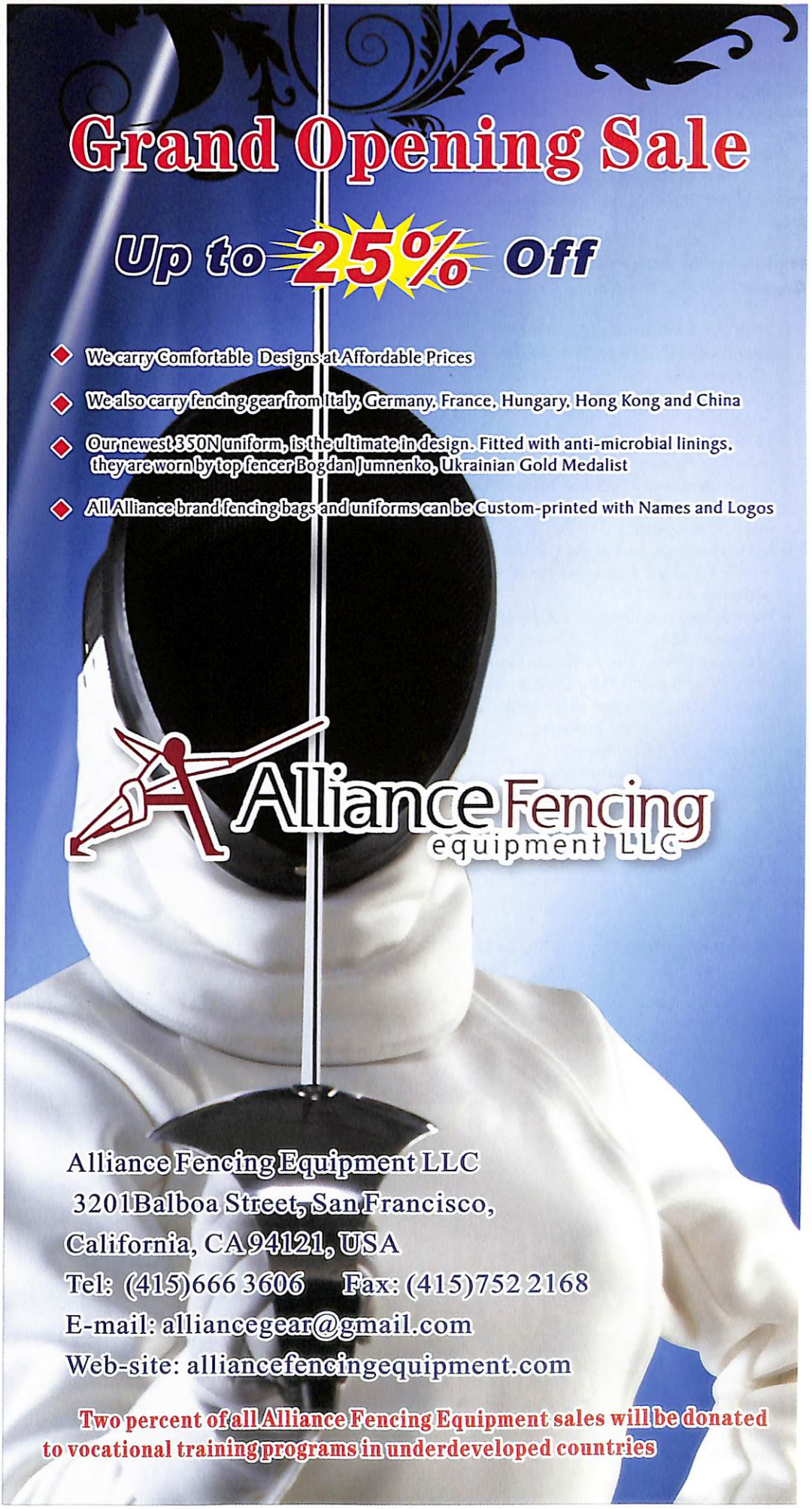
Dagmara Wozniak – St. John's University

Keeth Smart – St. John's University

Jason Rogers – The Ohio State University

Tim Morehouse – Brandeis University

James Williams – Columbia University



History (cont. from page 24)

Axelrod's engineering career brought some equally great rewards. He was responsible for a number of patents used in the field of frequency signal generator testing.

Axelrod passed away in February of 2004 from a heart attack at the age of 83. He will long be remembered as one of American Fencing's true greats.

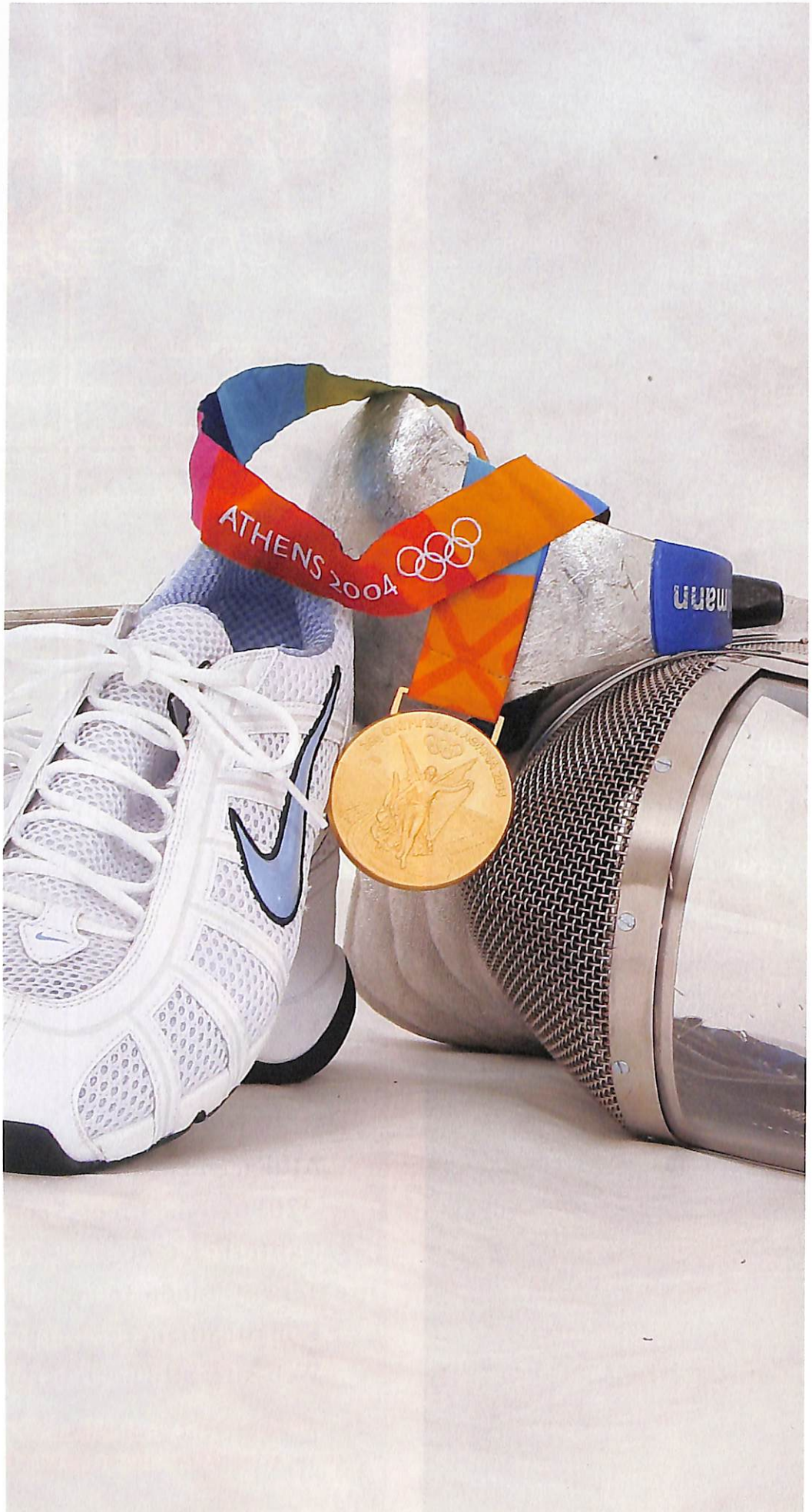
Highlights of Albert Axelrod's Fencing Career:

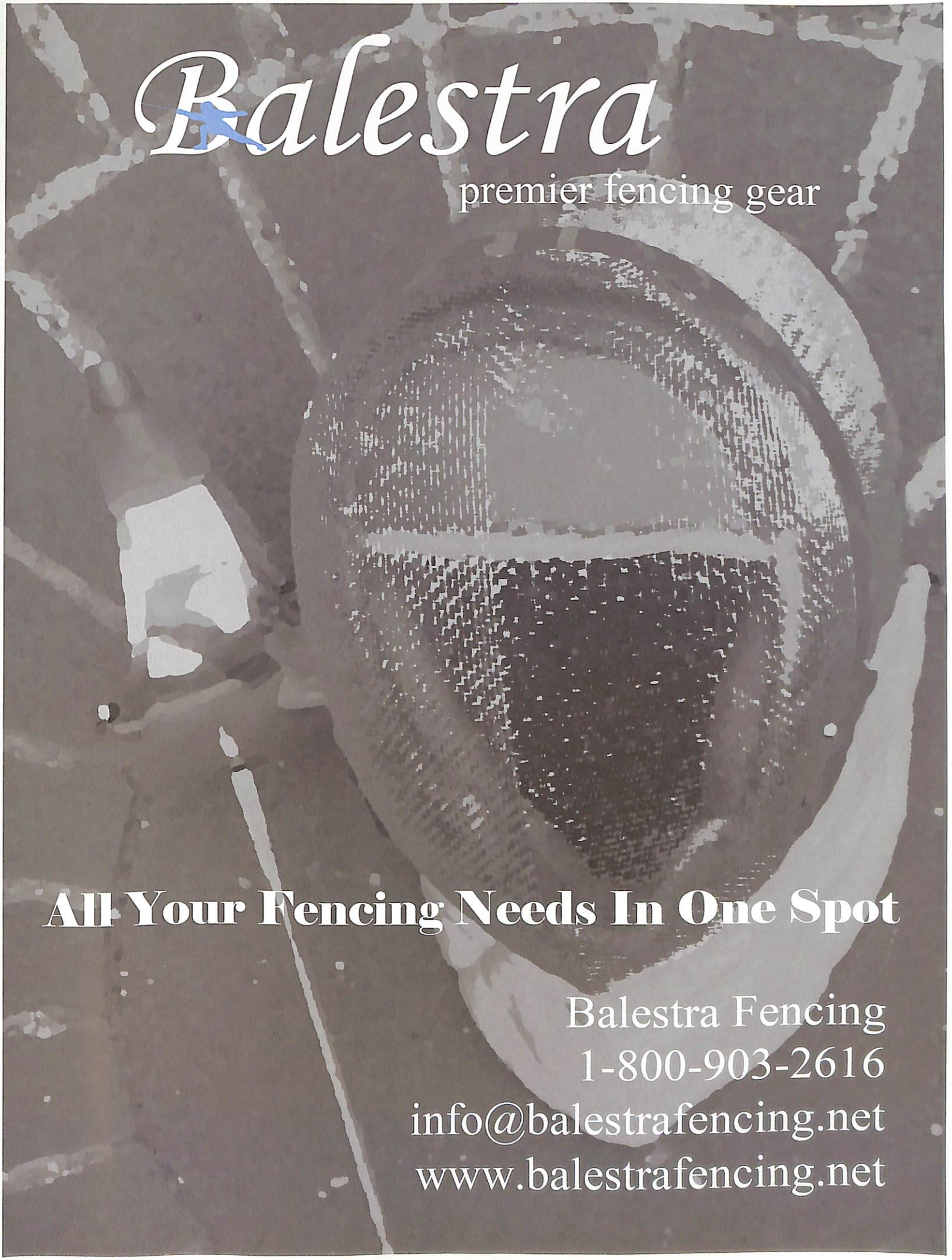
- 1948 IFA & NCAA Foil Champion & member of CCNY NCAA Foil Team Champions
- 4 times United States Men's Foil Champion
- 1955, 1958, 1960 all Salle Santelli, 1970 NYFC.
- 5 times National Men's Foil Team Champions and 6 times National Three Weapon Team Champions
- Axelrod was second in the US National men's foil event 8 different times to 8 different men.
- Five consecutive Olympic Teams: 1952 through 1968
- Four consecutive Pan American Games Men's Foil Teams: 1955 - 1967; three team gold medals, one team silver medal, and four individual silver medals
- Maccabian Foil Champion
- Six Maccabian Foil Teams for the US
- Four US World Championships Teams

The only American Men's foil fencer in history to make the finals of the World Championships: 5th in the 1958 World Championships held in Philadelphia.

Contributions by Andy Shaw, editing by Carla-Mae Richards.

NOTE: For a more in depth article on Albie Axelrod, see "Veteran Fencers Quarterly", Vol. 2., No. 4, March 1988. Also check out.wikipedia.org on the internet.




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