

GREAT LAKES SECTION
UNITED STATES FENCING ASSOCIATION
NEWSLETTER
JULY, 2004

As many of you know, after many years of diligent service to the Great Lakes Section, Sarah Kass of the Northern Ohio Division resigned at the May GLS Board Meeting due to her ever growing schedule and marriage plans. The author of this newsletter was elected to attempt to fill her shoes, and I will endeavor to do so to the best of my ability. This is the first Great Lakes Section Newsletter that I have had the privilege to produce, and I hope you find it informative and interesting.

**GLS SECTION MEETING WAS HELD
AT BOWLING GREEN, OHIO, MAY 15th**

At the Great Lakes Sectional Meeting held at the site of the GLS Championships on May 15, 2004, the following actions were taken:

A. RESIGNATION OF KASS: The Board accepted the resignation of Sarah Kass as Chairman. Sarah is to be congratulated on her many years of service to the GLS and the sport of fencing.

B. ELECTIONS: Joseph S. Streb of the Columbus, Ohio Division was elected as Chairman. The officers for the Great Lakes Section for 2003-2004 are:

Joseph S. Streb, Chairman, Cols., OH
Matt Dossmann, Vice-Chair, Madison Hts, MI
David Leighton, Secretary, Mishawaka, IN
Jaison Laker, Treasurer, Ft. Wayne, IN

C. 2004-2005 GLS CHAMPIONSHIPS:
The GLS Championships for next season will be held in the Michigan Division in April. It was decided by the Board that more time was needed for reporting results to USFA; therefore, the GLS Championships will no longer be held in May. It will be up to Mr. Dossmann as Vice-Chair and representative from the Michigan Division to arrange for the GLS Championships to be held within the Michigan Division in April of

2005. As of this writing, no firm date or place for the event has been set. It has been requested that the Michigan Division make these matters a priority.

D. SECTIONAL CIRCUIT EVENTS TO CONTINUE: The Sectional Circuit Event Schedule used in the past has not been altered; therefore, each GLS Division should plan on having one Sectional Circuit Events during the following months:

September, open
October, Northern Ohio Div.
November, Kentucky Div.
Dec./Jan., Columbus, Ohio Div.
February, Indiana Div.
March, S.W. Ohio Div.
April, Michigan Div.
May, open
June, open
July, Summer Nationals

The purpose of the Sectional Circuit Events schedule is to allow fencers from around the Great Lakes Section to gather for large events reflecting the strength of the Section, not just one Division. The GLS Secretary, David Leighton, calculates the results of the GLS point championships based

upon how well fencers place at Sectional Circuit Events and based upon the size of each event.

April sometime, NAC: Div. I, Youth, Wheelchair; TBA
July 1-10, Summer Nationals; Sacramento, CA

SELECTED MATTERS FROM THE USFA BOARD MEETING

At the USFA Board of Directors Meeting held on July 5, 2004 at Charlotte, a number of interesting items of information, discussion, and action occurred, and here are some of note:

- Financially, the organization is operating in the "red" this year.
- International events are losing money, but the outgoing administration led by Stacy Johnson believes the good results and potential for Olympic gold medals (and possible corporate sponsorship) justify the expense.
- Despite the FOC "game fee" or because of it, the FOC is substantially over budget.
- Certain USFA board members questioned how the game fee was being used.
- The utility and structure of the Regional and Super-regional Youth Circuit events was questioned.
- A resolution was passed requiring publication of AM or PM starting times of competitions at national events to facilitate airline reservations.
- A resolution was passed requiring scores to be visible at strips or clearly announced after each touch.
- A proposed resolution to allow qualification for youth events to flow downstream was tabled. In other words, if a person qualified for U16, he or she would also be qualified for U14, etc., assuming the age qualification was also met.
- A resolution was passed adopting the most recent FIE rule changes, the most startling of which are as follows:

RULE CHANGES, effective August 1, 2004:

Article t.72 (saber). A touch which arrives on a non-valid part of the target is not counted as a touch; it does not stop the fencing phrase

E. REGIONAL YOUTH CIRCUIT EVENTS: As a result of the growth in membership of USFA over the past four years (approximately 10,000 new members for a total of 20,000) and the increasing numbers of youth participants at national events, USFA has approved the Regional Youth Circuit system and appointed a committee to oversee it. For Y10 and Y12 fencers to qualify to attend the Summer Nationals, they must now participate in at least one Regional Youth Circuit event. There has been some criticism of the Regional Youth Circuit system, and the committee is to make further reports and recommendations to the USFA Board in the fall. However, as of now, it is suggested that each Section have at least three (3) Regional Youth Circuit events next season.

MATTERS OF INTEREST FROM THE NATIONAL FENCING TOURNAMENT & USFA BOARD MEETING HELD AT CHARLOTTE, NC, JULY 3-11, 2004

As is usually the case, the USFA national office did distribute a preliminary schedule for the 2004-2005 fencing season at the Summer Nationals. It is reproduced in part hereinbelow to assist GLS Divisions with scheduling. The official schedule should soon be available on the USFA website.

PRELIMINARY NATIONAL SCHEDULE:

Following is the tentative national fencing schedule for the 2004-2005 fencing season:

September 3-5, Veterans World Championships; Krems, Austria
October 8-11, NAC: Div. II, Cadet, Youth 14; Atlanta, Ga.
November 5-7, Junior A 6 weapon; Louisville, Ky.
December 10-12, NAC: Div. I, Veterans, Wheelchair; Richmond, Va.
January 14-17, NAC: Div. I, Junior; Overland Park, KS
February 18-21, Junior Olympics; Arlington, TX
March 11-14, NAC: Division II, III, Veterans; TBA

and does not annul any subsequent touches.
 If a fencer substitutes a non-valid part of his target for a valid part, either by covering it or by any abnormal movement, the Referee must penalize him/her by applying the penalties specified in Articles t. 114, 116, 120 *and any touch scored by the fencer at fault is annulled.*

Article t.46. DELETED: The language prohibiting advancement of the shoulder of the non-sword arm in front of the shoulder of the sword arm and annulment of any touch scored is deleted. Reversing shoulders is no longer an offense.

Article t.45. In all three weapons, a fencer may not have equipment allowing electronic communication with a person off the strip. This is penalized as per the penalty chart.

Article t.87. PASSIVITY: Where the fencers show manifest passivity or unwillingness to fight, during the first two minutes of a pool bout, the Referee will warn the fencers (without imposing a yellow card), and if the conduct continues, the Referee will call "halt" and advance to the last minute of the bout. No further penalties if the conduct continues. If the conduct occurs in the first or second period of a direct elimination bout, the Referee shall call "halt," give the fencers one minute rest and proceed to the final 3 minute period. No other penalties for the conduct.

Article t.120. PENALTY CHART: In addition to current penalties, any touches scored while committing the following offenses for the first time result in a yellow card *and annulment of any touch scored:* (Editor's note: Generally any yellow card annuls any touch scored while committing a foul)

- simple corp a corps (foil and saber)
- touching/taking hold of electrical equipment

-- covering/substitution of valid target

NOTABLE 2004 SUMMER NATIONAL RESULTS OF GLS FENCERS:*

- Div. IA WF, Ann Marsh, 1 of 64
- Div. IA WS, Ann Marsh, 3 of 40
- Div. IA WE, Lauren Willock, 10 of 69
- Div. IA WE, Brittany Leader, 15 of 69
- Div. IA MF, Wm. Jeter, 6 of 105
- Div. IA MF, Fredrick Bentley III, 25 of 105
- Div. IA MF, Anatolie Senic, 30 of 105
- Y10 MF, Eugenio Bonello, 18 of 72
- Y10 WF, Lee Kiefer, 2 of 48
- Y12 MF, Ryan Howell, 34 of 147
- Y12 WF, Dayana Sarkisova, 11 of 89
- Y12 WF, Lee Kiefer, 22 of 89
- Y12 MS, Gabriel Wright, 13 of 75
- Y14 WF, Hayley Reese, 15 of 119
- Y14 WF, Dayana Sarkisova, 16 of 119
- Y14 WF, Radmila Sarkisova, 27 of 119
- Y14 ME, Joshua Dolezal, 9 of 127
- Y14 WE, Simone Barrette, 20 of 74
- U16 MF, Joseph T. Streb, 19th of 143
- U16 MS, Sean Kelly, 16 of 100
- U16 ME, Max Dettlinger, 22 of 123
- U19 MF, Wm. Jeter, 10 of 125
- U19 MF, Sam Wunderlich, 13 of 125
- U19 WE, Lauren Willock, 18 of 78
- U19 WF, Amy Delahanty, 9 of 90
- U19 WF, Samantha Nemecek, 3 of 90
- U19 ME, Zachary Morell, 9 of 96
- Vet40 MF, Gary Hayenga, 3 of 49
- Vet40 ME, Julio Mazzoli, 8 of 60
- Vet50 ME, Wm. Willock Jr., 9 of 50
- Vet50 MF, Joseph S. Streb, 5 of 35, qualifying on points for Vet World Championship in Krems, Austria 9-5-04
- Vet50 MS, Joseph S. Streb, 2 of 31
- VetME, Charles Schneider, 2 of 50, qualifying on points for Vet World Championship in Krems, Austria 9-4-04
- Div. II MS, Stan Prilutsky, 36 of 143
- Div. II MF, Joseph Williams, 11 of 200
- Div. II MF, Patrick DeSimio, 36 of 230
- Div. II MF, Fred Bentley III, 47 of 230
- Div. II ME, Danny Rudzinski, 3 of 194
- Div. II ME, Wm. Willock Jr., 15 of 194
- Div. II WE, Jennifer Holland, 7 of 149
- Div. II WE, Rachel Smathers, 28 of 149
- Div. III MS, Aaron Nungester, 11 of 145
- Div. III MS, Sean Kelly, 21 of 145
- Div. III MS, Tim Mills, 27 of 145
- Div. III MS, Cruz Baisa, 30 of 145
- Div. III MS, Ben Radding, 38 of 145
- Div. III ME, Jonathan Hoerle, 18 of 186
- Div. III ME, Danny Rudzinski, 20 of 186
- Div. III ME, Benjamin Schleis, 22 of 186
- Div. III WS, Ann Marsh, 3 of 81
- Div. III WS, Julie Crimmins, 3 of 81
- Div. III WF, Hayley Reese, 24 of 177

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Div. IIIME, Luke Ingram, 38 out of 186
Div. IIIMF, Brendan Fullerton, 31 out of 210
U16WS, Lillian Siebert, 8 out of 57
U16WS, Marina Kraujalis, 10 out of 57
*Any omissions are unintentional

GLS FENCER/COACH INTERVIEW: A new part of the GLS Newsletter will be fencer/coach interviews, so that we may better know some of the interesting persons within the Great Lakes Section. Suggestions for future interviews are welcome. Since I am new to the position of GLS Chairman, I have elected to publish a previously conducted interview with me and my son:

QUESTIONER: Kendra Preston Leonard, S.W. Ohio Division

RESPONDENTS: Joseph S. Streb, Sr. & Joseph T. Streb, Jr.

DATE: April 28, 2004.

Questions for both Joes together:

Q. One obvious question for any family members who compete together and against each other is “how does that work?”

A. It is a process of give and take. From the perspective of the parent-coach, it is a very long and sometimes frustrating road. It is necessary to push the child-student but not too far or too fast. Learning is a gradual process that can take years. As long as the student is making some progress, one must be satisfied. The bottom line is that I want my child to do as well as possible, including doing better than me.

From the perspective of the child-student, it's not that difficult. You grow up not knowing anything but fencing with your parent, and so it seems normal. Until recently the issue of fencing one another has not been a problem. In the past, I, the student, was never good enough to compete with my father, but more recently, I have begun to make it more difficult for him. Basically it comes down to whoever is fencing well that day.

Q. Do you train together frequently, or only meet up on the strip at tournaments?

A. We train together quite frequently, although it is very important to fence other people. There are times when we have no choice but to fence each other in practice because nobody who is present feels up to fencing us.

Q. Does the rivalry end when you leave fencing for the day, or is it always present? Are there times when competing together are more difficult than others?

A. There is always a certain amount of tension in the parent-child relationship which the parent must find way to minimize, the child not usually being possessed of the skills to do so. As a result, it can be said that the rivalry never ends, but as to specific incidents that happen on the strip, they are left on the strip. One way to help accomplish this is to observe the formalities of fencing etiquette, such as, saluting at the beginning of the bout and shaking hands at the end. It is also important not to gloat about victories over the other person, admit that the victory was probably due to bad officiating, and, conversely, to congratulate the other person, if he has a good day.

Q. Over the past few seasons, you've both begun to compete in sabre as well as foil. What is the impetus behind this?

A. It is good to fence a second weapon for a variety of reasons. If one has a bad outing at a tournament in one weapon, it is often possible to make up for it by doing better in the other weapon. It is also fun to experience the variation in mentality necessary in doing one weapon and another. We often do saber because it involves the concept of priority like foil and similar foot work to foil.

Q. What do you consider your primary weapons?

A. There is no question that we each consider foil to be our primary weapon. We enjoy the multiple attacks and defenses available in foil fencing.

Q. What are your goals for each weapon?

A. We try to do the best we can in whatever weapon we are fencing. We are usually disappointed if one of us fails to win first place, or at least places in the top four, in any local fencing event.

Q. Do you see yourselves fencing epee competitively as well in coming seasons, or will you stick with foil and sabre?

A. We both occasionally fence epee. There is something exhilarating about the point-in-line, all out fleche of epee. And, although epee defense involves complete parries, we find that our foil skills often frustrate epee fencers who are not used to being parried.

Q. You're both known as being vocally vehement on the strip, especially when it comes to disagreeing with directors. Any comments?

A. Until FIE figures out a way to go to a "one light" system of scoring in foil and saber, there will always be a certain amount of subjectivity involved in referee decisions. At the top levels, all the fencers have coaches who attend important bouts and protect their students from bad calls. They also often intentionally attempt to influence referee judgments. It has been said that the intervention of a good coach can be worth 3 touches in a 15 touch bout. In addition, when the coach complains, the fencer is usually not penalized by the referee. Unfortunately, at the local level, coaches are usually not available, so one has to be one's own advocate. This is a necessary but tricky process. It also requires knowing the rules and rules interpretations at least as well as the fencing official. It is important to let a fencing official know that you disagree with bad calls; otherwise, the official may repeat the bad calls. On the other hand, fencing officials have been known to react badly to criticism. The best way to question a call is to ask the official to explain his or her call and then point out the errors in fencing logic. Then, as the infamous Salle du Lion T-shirt says, "Shut Up And Fence," at least until the next bad call.

Q. When is it appropriate to cross the lines of "good sportsmanship" if you disagree with a call?

A. Generally, it is never appropriate to cross the lines of good sportsmanship. Rarely is it proper to personally attack the fencing official or opponent. On the other hand, if one is going to act badly, it is better to do it in a sporting context than in real life. Bad sportsmanship can usually be remedied with an apology or the passage of time, as athletes tend to know the demands of competition sometimes result in negative behaviors. But, bad acts in real life often have irreversible consequences. When an opponent acts badly, the best thing to do is simply beat the opponent. When a fencing official acts badly, which usually takes the form of favoring a particular

competitor but sometimes occurs out of incompetence, the best thing to do is to complain to the bout committee, as the fencing rules specifically allow the bout committee to remove an official who is biased or incompetent. To minimize the inevitable hurt feelings, it is best to complain before the fencing commences.

Q. What local directors do you think set a good example for up-and-coming directors?

A. Andy Tulleners is a fine director with a good eye and good judicial temperament. Lloyd Howell is also a fine director, and Mark Hediën has an excellent eye. The problem we have right now in the GLS is that many of the better fencers do not want to jump through the hoops to become members of the Fencing Officials Committee (FOC). It is important to learn the rules and to go to national events to see how things are called at that level. There are many styles of directing, especially in foil, and it is important to model local officiating on what the better and currently practicing national officials do. Otherwise, local fencers are at a distinct disadvantage when attending national events.

Q. What advice do you have for less experienced directors looking to improve their skills?

A. First, it is necessary to fence against and to direct the better fencers in practice. This takes considerable patience since the better fencers tend to be unforgiving of bad calls in the club context. Second, it is important to study the rule book. Third, it is important to realize that all rules are subject to interpretation. In fencing, the interpretations of the rules are controlled by highly rated international officials and coaches who change the interpretations slightly each year or two in order to favor their country's fencers. There is then a trickle-down effect whereby those on the outside of the loop find out about the new interpretations by losing to fencers from these countries. One of the real reasons why youthful American fencers are enjoying more international success is that the influx of former Soviet and East European coaches to the U.S. has increased the speed of adaptations to rules interpretations. Ultimately, what USFA should want is to set the interpretations, i.e., to have enough influence to set the as yet undefined "American style" of fencing.

Questions for Joe Sr:

Q. How did you get started in fencing? Have you fenced since you were a kid, or did you start as an adult?

A. I started as an athlete. I have always had a need to compete. I grew up in the small town of New Philadelphia, Ohio, right across the Tuscarawas River from Dover. In those days, we only had traditional American sports of football, basketball, and baseball. The only small sport was wrestling, and I was never sure how they found out about it, but I was happy they did because I was not a stellar basketball player. I was an all-Ohio football quarterback and an all-Ohio wrestler. I also played baseball. I earned 8 varsity sports letters in high school. When I moved to Columbus, I eventually discovered soccer, and I played and coached for many years. In 1991, my right leg was completely broken by a bad tackle in a soccer match. I had a cast from hip to toe and I could not bend my leg to drive a vehicle, so with aid of my brother, I found an old Cadillac Eldorado with a bench seat. I could put my right leg out across the seat and drive with my left foot. In the back seat was a copy of an old suburban newspaper with an article saying that the former Ohio State varsity fencing coach, Charles Simonian, had started a fencing club in my suburb, Upper Arlington. I had taken some fencing classes just for fun as a graduate student at OSU, so I decided to go to the Columbus Fencers Club and try it again. I have not stopped going since.

Q. You're one of the sections better fencers as well as a full-time practicing attorney. What kinds of training regimen do you follow to make the most of your limited fencing time?

A. It is true that my training time is limited. My schedule is sometimes unpredictable and on any given day long hours are necessary. I fence two or three times per week for about 2.5 hours per session. Before big, national events, I also sometimes run sprints and lift weights. The key is regular and continual training.

Q. You've recently begun competing in veterans' events. How does the fencing style or strategy change for these events?

A. On the whole, veteran fencers are not as fast as youthful fencers, especially in terms of foot speed. However, many have deceptively quick hands, and they have tricks that they use to make up for their lack of youthfulness. At the top levels, many veteran

fencers are former national champions and U.S. open team members. There is virtually no difference between fencing these top veterans and fencing very good 20 year old fencers. There is a difference between fencing top veterans and fencing top Division I fencers. In addition to the increased foot speed, the top Division I fencer will attack from greater distance, generally about one to two feet farther away than one believes possible.

Q. What are your fencing goals for the 2004-05 season?

A. I hope to regain a spot on the 2004 Veterans' World Championship team and compete in Austria in September. I am currently ranked #3 in the U.S., and the top four fencers qualify. However, there is one qualifying competition to go, and there are two fencers who could conceivably knock me out of the top four. [Note: J.S. Streb, Sr. did qualify for the 2004 U.S. Veteran's World Championship foil team]

Questions for Joe Jr:

Q. You've been fencing on the Youth & Junior circuit. How have you had to adapt your training or style to compete at these levels? What have been your biggest challenges?

A. Fencing at the Youth and Junior levels is not very different than fencing in the open levels. The only differences are in the size of your opponents, which at the junior level is not an issue, and the speed at which the fencing occurs. Usually in the Junior levels, the speed of the bout is much faster, and the timing and movements are much more precise. The biggest challenges at the age restricted levels, are adapting to the sometimes weird styles and staying in good enough shape to compete.

Q. Is it difficult to train with or compete against your dad? What's your strategy when you meet up in a tournament?

A. I've been training with my dad my entire fencing career. It's no different now than it was when I was just a small boy. Though at times I get more frustrated by his coaching than I did when I was younger. Competing against him is exactly the same. I started my fencing career fencing in open tournaments and having the chance to fence him. The only difference now is that I have a greater chance of beating him.

Overall, I really have no particular strategy for fencing my dad. My strategy changes each time I fence against him. Usually I just look to beat him by a reasonable margin, considering the fact that he is usually the one paying for me to be there.

Q. What are your fencing goals for the 2004-05 season?

A. My goals for the upcoming season are to improve my fencing skills as much as possible, and I would like to at least come close to getting and 'A' rating. I also want to keep my national ranking within the top 15 in the country. I am currently rated #10 in the U.S. in U16 foil and also have a national rating in U19 foil. I would also like to try to improve my referee rating.

Q. Will you be going to a fencing camp this summer?

A. I'll almost definitely be attending fencing camp this summer at Ohio State. It is a very interesting experience and really helps me to hone my skills before the national tournament. I also enjoy meeting people from around the country, even the saber fencers – just kidding.

--End--

MICELLANEOUS: On behalf of all of the officers and fencers of the Great Lakes Section USFA, we wish all U.S. Olympic fencers the very best of luck in August Olympic Games in Athens, Greece.

NEXT GLS MEETING: The next GLS Board meeting will be held at the GLS Championships in Michigan in April 2005.

YOURS IN FENCING,
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