

GREAT LAKES SECTION
UNITED STATES FENCING ASSOCIATION
NEWSLETTER
MARCH 4, 2006

Editor's Note: The Schedule of Events for the GLS Championship has changed, see below. Division Officers are requested to e-mail any changes to the remainder of the 2005-2006 fencing event schedules to the GLS webmaster, Doug Bliss, at dbliss@columbus.rr.com as soon as possible for inclusion on the Great Lakes Section Schedule which appears on the GLS website, www.columbusfencing.org/gls/index.html.

GREAT LAKES SECTION OFFICERS

Dr. Joseph S. Streb, Chairman, Columbus, Ohio
Marcia Pierce, Vice-Chair, Richmond, Kentucky
David Leighton, Secretary, Mishawaka, Indiana
Jaison Laker, Treasurer, Ft. Wayne, Indiana

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Sam Cheris, Vice-President
Ro Sobalvarro, Vice-President
Ed Wright, Vice-President
Derek Cotton, Treasurer
Michael Massik, Executive Director
Donald Alperstein, General Counsel
Steve Sobel, Associate General Counsel
Kalle Weeks, Tournament Selection Committee Chair
Kelly Williams, Youth Development Committee Chair
Cindy Bent Findlay, American Fencing Magazine

**SELECTED MATTERS FROM THE USFA BOARD OF DIRECTORS
MEETING OF FEBRUARY 19, 2006 at HARTFORD, CT:**

The Board of Directors of the United States Fencing Association (USFA) met on February 19, 2006 at Hartford, CT, and a number of interesting items of information, discussion, and action occurred, and here are some of note:

THE RECALL OF USFA PRESIDENT NANCY ANDERSON:

As most members know, USFA President, Nancy Anderson, was asked to resign her office by a group of influential USFA members led by Jeff Bukantz (who writes the refereeing article for *American Fencing Magazine*) on the basis that Ms. Anderson is an ineffective leader and has damaged the prospects of the high performance international fencers. A formal recall petition has been circulated. Since many of the issues regarding Ms. Anderson's performance relate to high performance international fencing matters, many GLS members are indifferent to the recall effort. In response, the proponents of the recall also are advocating more control over the national office. It is expected that past president, Sam Cheris, would be appointed to fulfill the remainder of Ms. Anderson's term should the recall be successful. In order to provide all options to GLS members, Recall Petitions will be available at the Great Lakes Section Championships for anyone who wants to sign one.

At the February Board meeting, motions were made and treated as urgent which sought to clarify the rules regarding any recall petition. The first two motions stated in substance that for any recall petition signature to count, it must be dated, and that the signer must be a member of USFA at the time of signing and at the time the petition is presented to the Election Committee. These two motions were passed. The third motion stated in substance that petition signatures shall be valid for only 90 days. This motion was defeated.

THE U13 AGE RESTRICTION ISSUE:

As many of you know, on or about January 24, 2006, the USFA national office issued a News Blast stating that USFA members must be 13 years old or more to compete in local "open" fencing competitions. This was not favorably met in the Great Lakes Section where traditionally open events have been open to anyone who wishes to fence, regardless of age. As a result, the GLS Chairman submitted the following revised motion to the USFA Board Of Directors:

BE IT RESOLVED, that to compete in USFA nationally sanctioned Div. I, Div. II, Div. III, Junior, and Cadet fencing competitions or any qualifying competitions for said nationally sanctioned competitions, all fencers must be at least 13 years old on January 1 of the competitive season in question or have national points allowing for participation in the appropriate nationally sanctioned event; however, this rule shall not be construed to prevent fencers under the age of 13 from competing in divisionally sanctioned fencing competitions, unless otherwise restricted by the sanctioning division.

RATIONALE: The minimum age rule, as represented in a January 24, 2006 national publication, has as its underlying logic "an attempt to give young athletes appropriate competitive bouts as they grow." However, this is a determination best left to coaches and parents. Because in many areas of the country, it is not possible to provide any meaningful fencing competition without operating an "open" fencing event, to deny any young fencer the opportunity to participate is to deny that fencer the right to improve through competitive fencing. The proposed revised rule leaves the decision regarding who is ready to fence in purely local "open" competitions to those best able to judge based upon specific facts and circumstances, but it leaves unaltered the rule with respect to national events and national qualifiers. The Revised Motion is designed to clarify the alleged existing rule regarding age limitations for nationally sanctioned fencing tournaments and qualifiers and to create an exception for divisionally sanctioned fencing tournaments, not otherwise restricted. For any fencer under the age of 18 years old, parental consent is required to participate in any fencing competition because minors lack legal authority to assume the risk of injury. As long as parental consent and assumption of risk are documented, including without limitation, by presentation of a valid USFA membership card for the minor fencer, nothing further is required for insurance purposes. Of course, divisions are free to impose whatever restrictions they wish on youth fencers, including requiring that all participants in "open" fencing events be 18 years old or more.

FURTHER NOTE: As of February 19, 2006, no valid USFA rule against U13 fencing existed because no such rule was ever properly created, and the statements regarding the same on the USFA website are apparently false. At the February 19, 2006 Board Meeting, the predecessor to the above-stated motion was referred to committee. There was some comment that the Executive Committee might adopt the motion or promulgate its own rule on the matter but no such action has been taken as of this

time. Therefore, it was suggested to the USFA national office that the website be changed to reflect the current status of the matter, until a properly promulgated rule of the Executive Committee or the full USFA Board Of Directors is published.

USOC AUDIT OF USFA GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE:

The United States Olympic Committee (USOC) has announced to USFA national office that it intends to conduct an "audit" of the USFA governance structure. Apparently, at least two such audits occurred in the past with no adverse consequences to USFA. However, because of financial scandals within USOC, its own governance structure has been changed. In the past, USOC was structured much like USFA; it was a non-profit corporation with National Governing Bodies (NGBs) as its members. Past USFA President, Stacy Johnson, is the USFA representative to USOC. On the basis of a Memorandum prepared by Ms. Johnson and Steve Sobel, it is believed that USOC desires to require all NGBs to have the following governmental structure: (a) Small board of directors limited to 9 persons with a majority of board members from the business community and not the sport; (b) elimination of representative forms of governance, such as, the USFA Congress (of course, the Congress has only the power to suggest legislation to the USFA Board under current By-laws); (c) elimination of the committee structure (now used by USFA) and replacement with corporate employees in charge of all business functions; (d) consolidation of power in the hands of an Executive Director who operates the NGB instead of a board of directors; (e) adoption of Sarbanes-Oxley type accountability for all corporate managers and functions.

It is the opinion of this writer that while Sarbanes-Oxley type management may be appropriate in the for-profit corporate environment, especially where there is a history of financial malfeasance (such as with Enron Corp. *et al.*), it is not necessarily appropriate to the management of a sports organization like USFA.

USFA general counsel, Donald Alperstein, stated to the Board that he could not undertake litigation on this matter on a *pro bono* (free) basis. In response to the news of the USOC audit and to Mr. Alperstein's statement, to its credit, the USFA Board of Directors set aside up to \$150,000 to contest any legally questionable action by USOC. Outside legal counsel will probably be engaged should litigation become necessary.

THE PRIOR PUSH TO REORGANIZE USFA:

No further effort has been made by the USFA Executive Committee or past President, Stacy Johnson, to force any reorganization of USFA. Perhaps, in light of the USOC audit and the stated USOC goals for the governance structure of NGBs, the Executive Committee and Board of Directors have come to see that the current USFA member organization with its relatively democratic process is not so bad. Especially, when the alternative is to be governed by a board of directors substantially composed of members of the outside business community who have no knowledge of the sport of fencing.

REPORT OF THE MEDIA, MARKETING & PROMOTION COMMITTEE:

The Media, Marketing & Promotion Committee, through Susie Paxton and Sunil Sahbarwal, gave a lengthy report to the Board, including mention that Circone & Associates of Columbus, Ohio had

been hired to do promote the sport. As always, it is difficult to measure the effects of marketing efforts; however, there were some additions to the decorations at this year's JO event.

REPORT OF THE NATIONAL TOURNAMENT TASK FORCE:

Considerable time at the Board meeting was devoted to a report by the relatively new, National Tournament Task Force, headed by Kalle Garritz, who also heads the Tournament Committee. The purpose of the Task Force is to review the USFA national tournament structure to determine whether changes should be made. The impetus for the creation of this Task Force was concern over the increasing size of national tournaments, especially by referees, and concern over what could or should be done about it. The thrust of the Task Force report was that according to a completed survey, the members are currently happy with the national tournaments.

THE NEXT USFA BOARD MEETING:

The next USFA Board meeting will be held on Sunday, July 2, 2006 at the Summer Nationals in Atlanta, Ga. A meeting of the USFA Congress will precede the Board Meeting. Both meetings are open to all USFA members. Each Division is required to appoint representatives to the Congress.

REMAINING USFA NATIONAL SCHEDULE:

March 10-13, NAC: Division II, III, Veterans; Reno, NV
April 21-24, NAC: Div. I, Youth, Wheelchair; Sacramento, CA
June 30 to July 9, 2006, Summer Nationals; Atlanta, GA
September 2-4, Veterans World Championships; Bath, England

**2006 GREAT LAKES SECTION USFA FENCING CHAMPIONSHIPS
WILL BE HELD AT EASTERN KENTUCKY UNIVERSITY IN
RICHMOND, KENTUCKY ON APRIL 1 & 2, 2006**

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT THE TOURNAMENT CHAIRPERSON, Marcia Pierce at her e-mail address, Marcia.Pierce@EKU.EDU. Also, event registration must be done through the "AskFred" website. Fees may be higher for on-site registration. The event schedule is projected to be as follows, but check website for changes:

	<u>Saturday, April 1st</u>	<u>Sunday, April 2nd</u>
9:00am	Open MF	Open ME
10:00am	Open WE	Open WF
11:00am	U-19 WF	U-19 WE
1:00pm	U-19 ME	U-19 MF
2:00pm	U-19 WS	U-19 MS
3:00pm	Open MS	Open WS

*Note times listed are projected start of event; arrive earlier for registration.

**GLS SECTION MEETING TO BE HELD
AT RICHMOND, KENTUCKY,
APRIL 1, 2006:**

The annual meeting of the Executive Committee of the Great Lakes Sectional USFA will be held at Eastern Kentucky University in Richmond, Kentucky, the site of the 2006 GLS Championships at the conclusion of fencing on April 1, 2006. Each Division is expected to send at least one representative; however, see the GLS By-laws for a description of the Executive Committee. Although individual GLS members may not vote, they are encouraged to attend. The Minutes of the last meeting are available on the GLS website, www.columbusfencing.org/gls/index.html. Some of the matters likely to come before the meeting are set forth hereinbelow:

A. ELECTIONS: The Executive Officers will be elected. None of the current officers have indicated any desire to resign. As per custom, the Vice-Chair of the Section is the person responsible for organizing the next GLS Championship.

B. REVISED BY-LAWS PROPOSED: The GLS adopted By-Laws at the 2005 meeting, but some amendments are necessary to memorialize Section customs. Hence, revised By-laws will be presented for adoption.

C. SECTIONAL CIRCUIT EVENTS: The Sectional Circuit Event Schedule used in the past has been slightly altered upon request. Each GLS Division should have hosted one Sectional Circuit Event during the current season, and the schedule for next fencing season will be set:

August, open
September, Michigan, Sept. ___th
October, Northern Ohio Div., Oct. ___rd
November, Kentucky Div., Nov. ___rd
Dec./Jan., Columbus, Ohio Div., Jan. ___th
February, Indiana Div., Feb. ___th
March, S.W. Ohio Div., Feb. ___rd

April, GLS Championship, ____, Apr. ____
May, open
June, open
July, Summer Nationals,
See, www.columbusfencing.org/gls/index.html.
for more information on Sectional Circuit events.

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.

D. REGIONAL YOUTH CIRCUIT EVENTS:
As a result of the growth in membership of USFA over the past few years and the increasing numbers of youth participants at national events, USFA has approved the Regional Youth Circuit system and allowed a committee to oversee it. For Y10 and Y12 fencers to qualify to attend national fencing events, they must now participate in at least one Regional Youth Circuit event. Further, the Youth Development Committee has divided the nation into 12 geographic areas that roughly resemble Sections. Applications have been solicited for persons to be Regional Youth Coordinators to oversee RYC and Super RYC events in each of the 12 Youth Sections created by the Youth Development Committee. The Youth Region into which most of the GLS falls includes the geographic area of the present GLS, plus Tennessee and Western Pennsylvania. Last season, the Youth Development Committee appointed Frank Foley and Beth Bell to be the RYC Coordinators for our Region. Frank and Beth operate a fencing club in Pittsburgh, Pa., and they may be contacted at sabremaster@comcast.net

DERECK COTTON TO CONDUCT REFEREE SEMINAR AT GLS CHAMPIONSHIP:

Olympic Fencing Official, Dereck Cotton of Los Angeles, will conduct his renowned referee clinic on Friday, March 31 and Saturday April 1 from 6pm to 10pm each evening. The national fencing official's written test will be administered, and practical referee evaluations leading to referee ratings will be administered for prospective and current fencing officials. The cost of the seminar is \$50.00 per person, and the GLS has provided one tuition scholarship to each member Division in addition to funding Mr. Cotton's expenses. All persons interested in becoming fencing officials or who simply wish to know more about how fencing calls are made should attend. The referee examiner will have the option to reverse patently incorrect calls by persons being evaluated for referee ratings at the GLS Championships since this event is a qualification event for summer national tournaments.

NOTABLE 2006 JUNIOR OLYMPIC RESULTS OF GLS FENCERS:*

In the past, the information necessary to complete this section of the Newsletter would be readily available on the USFA website, but the website is often not operating. Unfortunately, the current administration and the national office have been unable to deliver on repeated promises that the website would be upgraded in a timely fashion.

U20 ME, Max Dettlinger, (Ky) 20 of 234
U20 MF, Craig Budzynski (MI) 15 of 255
U20 MF, Joseph T. Streb (Col OH) 34 of 255
U20 WE, Jane Pozydaev (N. OH) 18 of 170
U20 WE, Barbara Niklinska(IND)31 of 170
U20 WE, Kimberlee Montoya(IND)33 of 170
U20 WF, Samantha Nemecek(Mich),12 of 204
U20 WF, Dayana Sarkisova, (Mich) 26 of 204
U20 WF, Radmila Sarkisova, (Mich) 33 of 204
U20 WS, Jennifer Sawicki (IND)17 of 126
U17 ME, Joshua Dolezal (IND) 9 of 245
U17 ME, Preston Davis (N.OH) 27 of 245
U17 ME, Nicolas Bethoux (N.OH) 29 of 245
U17 MF, Frederick BentlyIII,(KY)3 of 280
U17 WE, Simone Barrette (KY) 33 of 158
U17 WF, Dayana Sarkisova (Mich)3 of 213
U17 WS, Haley Reese, (KY) 7 of 213

U17 WF, Radmila Sarkisova(MI) 14 of 213
U17 WF, Oliva Dobbs, (MI) 29 of 213
U17 WS, Elena Tatarchenko(C.OH)32 of 127

*Any omissions are unintentional

GLS INTERVIEW WITH THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY ASSISTANT FENCING COACH, GIA ABASHIDZE:

Q. Where were you born?

A. [I was born in Tbilisi, Georgia \(former Soviet Union\).](#)

Q. When and how did you discover the sport of fencing?

A. [I began fencing in middle school, when I was eleven years old.](#)

Q. Where did you go to school and how do you believe it was different from the US schools?

A. [I went to school in Georgia, and I believe there are higher standards of education there. In college, however, they taught a lot of subjects which were not needed.](#)

Q. What training in fencing did you receive in the former Soviet Union?

A. [There is a very strong school of fencing in the Soviet Union, and they had the best fencing training programs.](#)

Q. What were your best results in fencing competition and when?

A. [I was 6 time Soviet Union champion, I became European champion in 1979. I won the World Cup in Budepest in 1978. In 1998, I took 1st place in the World Masters Games for the over 40 foil event.](#)

Q. When did you emigrate to the United States?

A. [1994.](#)

Q. Why did you emigrate to the United States?

A. [I wanted a better opportunity for me and my family.](#)

Q. What did you do when you first came to the United States?

A. [I was working with Vladimir Nazlymov in Kansas Club during 1994-1996. After that I moved to Portland, Oregon.](#)

Q. When did you first become fencing coach at The Ohio

State University?

A. 2001.

Q. Do you ever become home sick for your homeland?

A. Yes of course, almost every night I'm back to Georgia in my dreams.

Q. How do the training techniques in the United States differ from those used in the former Soviet Union?

A. In the Soviet Union they pay attention not only to how you handle a weapon, but also to footwork, your distance and timing.

Q. Do you believe it is more difficult to coach children or adults in fencing?

A. Adults understand more; with children you have to make it fun to make sure they would stay interested in lessons.

Q. Who was your most influential fencing instructor?

A. My first instructor in Georgia, who started training me, and of course Vladimir Nazlymov.

Q. Who was or is the best fencer you coached as part of your Ohio State University teams?

A. I have had a few: Hanna Thompson, Boaz Ellis, Andras Horanyi . . . and a few others.

Q. Who is the best fencer you have ever coached?

A. Cody Mattern, Tasha Martin, Monique Debruin.

Q. Who is the best fencer you ever saw?

A. Vladimir Smirnov.

Q. Who is the best fencer you ever beat in competition?

A. Alexander Romankov, 5 time individual World Champion. He was also an Olympic Champion.

Q. What makes a person a great fencer?

A. Good training and talent, of course.

Q. What do you consider your greatest accomplishment as a varsity fencing coach?

A. Coaching Boaz Ellis, as he was the NCAA champion, for individual foil, twice.

Q. Is there any significant difference between coaching college fencers and non-collegiate fencers?

A. College, varsity practice is more organized.

Q. What are some of the more significant changes you have witnessed to the sport of fencing since you first became involved?

A. Speed and technique.

Q. Do you have any suggestions for improving fencing in the United States?

A. There has to be an environment created for young athletes to continue their training after college.

Q. Do you have any suggestions for improving fencing in the Great Lakes Section?

A. We need to have more competitions for children, and have more summer camps where we can improve there skill level.

Q. What are your views on the current foil fencing rules and scoring machine timing?

A. Rules are okay, scoring machine timing is terrible, it decreased speed of fencing and offensive actions have almost disappeared.

Q. What gives you the greatest satisfaction as a fencing coach at this point in your career?

A. Victories of my students.

--END OF INTERVIEW--

YOURS IN FENCING,
Joseph S. Streb, Chairman GLS, USFA
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