

THE NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIPS

The National Championships consist of preliminary qualifying rounds, which are held in New York and in each of the sixteen divisions of the League, followed two weeks later by the Semi-Finals and Finals, which usually take place in New York but which are attended by the finest fencers of the country from whatever section.

This year the semi-final round of the men's events will qualify the two highest ranking fencers of each weapon to compete for the Championship in a single final bout for ten touches, with a two-touch margin required for victory. The holding of these climax bouts between the country's two most outstanding fencers in each weapon, under conditions which will serve practically to eliminate the element of luck, is an experimental innovation which, it is believed, will make the National Championships more interesting than ever before, to fencers and non-fencers alike.

On the evening of the Finals, to be held at the New York Athletic Club, the medals which have been won during the year in all individual championship events, men's and women's, Junior and Senior, and all championship team trophies, will be presented. The fencing events and trophy presentation ceremonies will be followed by a supper dance in the Club's main dining room. The new plan under which the Nationals are being conducted assures a reasonably early start of the supper dance.

The schedule for the National Championships is as follows:

SEMI-FINALS, at the New York Athletic Club—

Foils —Saturday, April 23, 1938, at 2:00 P.M.

Epees —Sunday, April 24, 1938, at 2:00 P.M.

Sabres—Monday, April 25, 1938, at 7:30 P.M.

WOMEN'S FINALS, at the Fencers Club, Friday, April 22, 1938, at 7:30 P.M.

MEN'S FINALS, Presentation of Trophies, and Supper Dance, at the New York Athletic Club—

Foils, Epees, Sabres—Tuesday, April 26, 1938, at 8:00 P.M.



THE OLYMPIC FENCING SEAL

As a means of supporting the 1940 Olympic Fencing Team, the Amateur Fencers League of America has designed and is offering for sale the Olympic Fencing Seal here depicted.

The Seals are available in blue, olive-green, light brown, and orange, and may be purchased in sheets of 100 of one color, at \$1.00 a sheet; in sets of four blocks of four (one block of each color), at \$1.00 a set; in single blocks of four (one color), at 40¢ a block; or in envelopes containing one Seal of each color, at 40¢ an envelope.

The Seals, in sheets, may be purchased at the door. Odd lot sets or additional sheets may be obtained from John Howard Hanway, 14 Oak Lane, Pelham Manor, N. Y.

FENCING

*How to Understand
and Enjoy
the Sport as a Spectator*



Although in a short leaflet of this sort it is possible only to outline the more important points necessary to the understanding of the sport of fencing, it is hoped that the brief explanation herein provided will assist you to enjoy the bouts you are about to witness.

AMATEUR FENCERS LEAGUE OF AMERICA

• FENCING •

HISTORY. Fencing, as a sport as well as a method of deadly combat, has been practiced for centuries past, and the game as we know it today, although subject to an ever-growing code of standardized rules, differs little in fundamental technique from its more martial counterpart of other days. Throughout the ages, however, the tendency has been towards lighter and more manageable weapons, culminating in the modern contest weapons which place a premium on speed and coordination and give little if any advantage to sheer strength.

WEAPONS. Three weapons are employed in the modern sport: the Foil, the Epee, and the Sabre. While their basic principles are similar, it is important to have some knowledge of their structural differences and of their varying conventions of play, in order to understand the differing technique which will be observed as between foil, epee, and sabre fencing.

THE FOIL. The foil, the basic weapon in fencing, is theoretically a pointed sword capable of inflicting a puncture wound only. Touches, to be valid, must be made cleanly with the point of the weapon upon a target which includes any portion of the trunk of the body from the top of the collar to the groin lines in front, and, on the back, to a horizontal line passing across the tops of the hip bones. (For women, the lower limit of the target, both front and back, is the hip-bone line.) Generally speaking, the contestant who is attacked must defend himself (parry) with his weapon before assuming the offensive (riposte or return attack). Having parried, he gains the right of way, and so on. To maintain the right of way, however, the attack must be correctly executed (with arm extended and point threatening the target), and the riposte must be made without indecision or delay. The contestant who first scores five valid touches is declared the winner.

THE EPEE. The epee is also a pointed weapon, but heavier and more rigid than the foil. In epee fencing the target includes every portion of the body and there is no right of way, priority of the touch, where both fencers are hit, being determined on the basis of time only. If the contestants are hit simultaneously, a touch is scored against each. Three touches constitute a bout, and if as a result of simultaneous touches a bout ends at three each, it is a tie bout, a result which can never be attained with either foil or sabre.

THE SABRE. The sabre, in addition to its point, has theoretical cutting edges along the entire front and one-third of the back of the blade, so that cuts as well as thrusts may be scored. To be valid, however, the cut must land cleanly on the target and must not whip over a parry adequate to break its force. In sabre as in foil fencing the attacking contestant has the right of way and his opponent must parry before returning the play. There are certain exceptions to this rule, as, for example, when an attack is made in two or more movements and a stop thrust, time thrust, or counter attack is scored before the final movement of the attack has commenced. On the whole, however, a conception of the sequence of attack, parry, riposte, parry, counter-riposte, etc., will enable one to understand the play of foil and sabre fencing. The sabre target includes all portions of the body (the head, the arms, and the hands) above a horizontal line drawn through the highest points of the intersection of the thighs and the trunk of the fencer when in the "on-guard" position. As in foil, the contestant who first scores five touches is the winner. In foil and sabre a touch that reaches any portion of the body which is off the target is a foul touch and, while not scored, halts the bout and invalidates any subsequent action of either contestant.

JUDGING. The Jury includes the Director and either two or, where available, four Judges. The function of the Judges is to see the touches and to call them to the attention of the Director. The Director may also establish the fact of a touch and in this respect may overrule one but never both of the Judges who are watching the same contestant. The principal duty of the Director, however, is to determine the right of way in foil and sabre fencing and the priority of hits in epee bouts. On these matters the Judges have no vote.

The difficulty of judging epee bouts has resulted in the development of aids, of which the first was the *pointe d'arret*, a small three-pronged tip to prevent the point from slipping on the target. A drop of coloring matter is usually placed between the prongs of the *pointe d'arret* to leave its tell-tale mark on the body or equipment of a fencer when a touch has been scored against him. A more recent development, now generally in use throughout the world and prescribed for all senior national epee events in the United States, is the electrical judging apparatus, which indicates not only when a touch has arrived, but also, in the event of double hits, whether the hits were simultaneous or, if not, which fencer was touched first.

HOW TO FOLLOW A FENCING MATCH. With the above points well in mind, you will be prepared to follow the play. Because of the speed of the game, however, this will at first prove difficult, and the following hints may be of assistance:

Do not try to watch both fencers. Concentrate on one at a time, preferably the attacker. See if you can pick out the final movement of the attack; if it is parried, watch the attacker resume the defensive in order to parry his opponent's riposte before returning to the offense. (This, of course, refers primarily to foil and sabre fencing.) Listen carefully to the Director's analysis of the play and to his final decisions.

In time you will find that there is a limited number of attacks and that each may be met by a limited number of parries. In other words, the secret of championship fencing is not the development of new and unusual methods of offense and defense but rather of a high degree of technical mastery of the movements which have been developed through centuries of experience, plus perfect coordination and an almost automatic sense of timing. A fencer to be successful must have more than technical perfection, speed, and endurance. He must know, by intuition or by reasoned observation, just when to attack in that split second when his opponent is mentally unprepared to defend himself; just how, by feint or false attack, to draw his opponent into a prepared position from which he will find too late that he is unable to recover in time to parry a preconceived final thrust. He must know just how closely to approach his opponent to place himself in scoring position, how far to retreat in order to disconcert the opponent's offensive preparations. In short, he must match wits with the contestant with whom he crosses swords; he must deceive without being deceived; he must develop tactics and counter-tactics to meet lightning-fast reactions which may themselves be nothing more than clever deceptions, designed to draw him out of position or out of time.

As your eyes become accustomed to the speed of the game and you come to appreciate these finer points of fencing, you will find that you are actually following the intentions of the contestants or even anticipating the objectives of the strategy which is being developed before you. You will then understand why this fascinating sport has held its place in the imagination of men for at least twenty centuries and is today as modern as it is ancient.