



SO, You Wanna Learn to Fence??



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WHO STARTED FENCING?

In the steamy mists of ancient history, the sport of Fencing can be traced to the first swords. Swordplay was originally developed as a form of survival: “Live by the sword, die by the sword” was often the custom. It is said that swordfighting may have been in the original Olympic Games in ancient Greece.

ORIGIN

Fencing began as a form of combat and is known to have been practised well before the birth of Christ. Relief carvings in the temple of Madinet-Habu near Luxor, Egypt, dating from approximately 1190 BC depict fencers competing. Many other ancient civilizations, including China, Japan, Persia, Babylonia and Greece, practised swordplay as training for combat.

As a sport, fencing began in either the 14th or 15th century and both Italy and Germany lay claim to the origins of the sport. German fencing masters organized the first guilds in the 15th century, notably the Marxbruder of Frankfurt in 1480. In 1570 Henri Saint-Didier of France gave names to fencing's major movements and most of that nomenclature remains. From the 16th to the 18th century, sword fights and duels were common. Combatants in these duels used a variety of weapons, including singlesticks, quarterstaves, and backswords, and the bouts were often bloody and occasionally fatal.

Three innovations in the 17th century led to the popularity of fencing as a sport. The first was the development of a light practice weapon with a flattened or "foiled" tip that was also padded to reduce the risk of injury. This weapon was soon called the foil. Second was the development of a set of rules that limited the target to certain areas of the body. The final innovation was the quadrille wire-mesh mask which protected the face and made fencing a safe activity.

OLYMPIC HISTORY

Fencing was first contested during the 1896 Olympics and is one of the few sports to have been contested at every Olympic Games. Fencing was one of the few sports that admitted professionals prior to the 1980s. In fact, the original Olympic rules, written by Baron Pierre de Coubertin (founder and second President of the International Olympic Committee), specifically stated that fencing professionals, called masters, could compete. Events for masters at the Olympics were held in the foil in 1896 and 1900. Masters also competed in épée and sabre events at both the Olympics in 1900 and the Intercalary Olympic Games in 1906.

Today, men compete in both team and individual events at the Olympics using three types of swords - the foil, the épée and the sabre. Women's fencing first appeared in the Olympics in 1924. Women compete in both team and individual events at the Olympics using the foil and épée. Women's épée events were first added to the Olympic program during the 1996 Olympics in Atlanta.

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How Does It Work?

Fencing rules are simple: Hit your opponent without being hit. Usually, you must score five points in order to win a bout. In modern fencing, competition is divided among three swordforms, the foil, the epee, and the sabre.

THE FOIL



The Foil is a light, swift weapon. Points may be scored only with the tip of the foil, not the edges. In foil, the trunk of the body is the target area.

THE EPEE



The Epee (pronounced ep-pay) descended from the original duel weapon. Slightly heavier than the foil, the epee is also a thrusting-only weapon form. In target area, epee is the entire body - from the tips of your toes to the top of your head.

THE SABRE



The Sabre used in today's bouts comes from the days of the mounted cavalry. It was a weapon designed to attack the upper portion of an opponent who was riding a horse. Thus, the sabre is used as a slashing and thrusting weapon. Sabre's target area is everything from the waist up, head included.