

Fencing

The Oregonian SATURDAY, AUG. 9, 2008 | SECOND OF 17

TODAY'S TV HIGHLIGHTS

+> 2 a.m.: Women's soccer: Nigeria vs. Germany, Brazil vs. North Korea (live), MSNBC

+> 7 a.m.: Beach volleyball; soccer; volleyball (taped), Telemundo

+> 10 a.m.: Women's volleyball: USA vs. Japan; beach volleyball;

fencing: women's sabre gold-medal final (live), NBC

+> 8 p.m.: Swimming: men's and women's 400 IM gold-medal finals; beach volleyball; men's gymnastics (live), NBC

+> 9 p.m.: Tennis: first-round singles and doubles (live), CNBC

+> 11 p.m.: Men's soccer: USA vs. Netherlands; men's basketball: Argentina vs. Lithuania; tennis; beach volleyball, USA Network

THE WEAPONS

Foil: 3 feet 6 inches end to end, 1.1 pound maximum, has thin blade, thin grip and small guard

Épée: 3 feet 7 inches end to end, 1.7 pound average, has thicker blade and grip and a larger guard

Sabre: 3 feet 5.3 inches end to end, about one pound, has thicker blade and grip and a closed guard

OLYMPIC DEBUT: 1896

One of the nine original sports in the modern Olympics, fencing's Egyptian origin dates to the 1200s B.C. and was popularized by the French in the 16th century. Women's fencing was added in 1924.

ALL-TIME EVENT MEDALS

FRANCE	39	38	34	111
ITALY	43	37	26	106
HUNGARY	34	23	27	84
RUSSIA	19	17	18	54



THE OBJECT

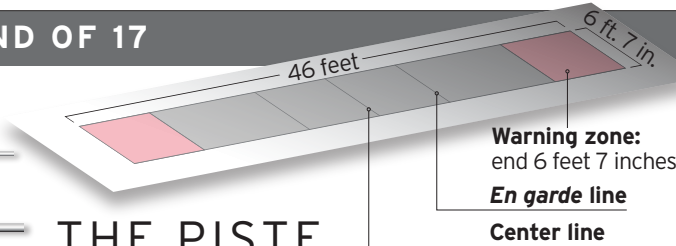
Fencing is a sword-fighting sport in which contestants score points by thrusting and hitting the blunt tips of their weapon with enough pressure against their opponent's target area to register electronically with the scoring system. Individual matches are three three-minute periods with a one-minute break between. The first fencer to 15 touches or the one with the most after the end of the third period wins and moves to the next round of the single-elimination tournament.

THE GEAR

Competitors wear white uniforms, harkening back to the days before electronic scoring when blades were covered in ink to leave marks when a touch was scored. Underneath, fencers wear rigid pads over the torso for protection, along with gloves, a stiff wire mesh mask and a sturdy bib covering their neck.

THE PISTE

Fencing matches take place on a thin, long raised platform called the piste or the strip. Its surface is usually metal or rubber with a base made out of a conductive material so touches can be registered on the electronic scoring system. Fencers start each bout at the *en garde* line and are penalized for stepping out of the strip.



SCORING

Foil: Only touches with the tip of the blade to the torso target area score. An electronic button at the tip of the blade registers points to the scoring system.

Épée: Touches with the tip of the blade to any part of the body scores.

Sabre: Touches with the tip, front edge or the last third of the back edge to the target area scores. The sabre target area is from the bend of the hips to the head.

THE EVENTS

Men's individual foil, épée and sabre; men's team épée and sabre; women's individual foil, épée and sabre; women's team sabre and foil

ONE TO WATCH

Italy's **Valentina Vezzali**, aiming for third women's foil gold in a row

U.S. HOPEFUL

Beaverton's **Mariel Zagunis** won gold in 2004 in women's individual sabre

Fencer's mask