



Point in Line

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In Memory of Eric Sollee

By Bryan Marquard, Globe Staff / September 2, 2008

Fencing came so easily to Eric Sollee that he was elected captain of Harvard's freshman squad not long after picking up the sport, and went on to become an All-American, placing fifth in the NCAA championships in 1952. Then one day a friend asked him to stop by the Carroll Center for the Blind in Newton and take on some sightless opponents.

"Eric, wearing a blindfold, lost all three bouts to the blind students," the center said in a tribute on its website, "and was greatly intrigued by their ability and the value of fencing to the rehabilitation training of persons who are blind."

Beginning in the late 1960s, Mr. Sollee started teaching the blind to fence at the Carroll Center. As a fencer and a teacher, he won matches around the world and coached at MIT and Harvard. Mr. Sollee died June 30 in Wentworth-Douglass Hospital, not far from his Dover, N.H., home. He was 82 and previously had lived in Newton for more than four decades.

"Eric's enthusiasm is infectious, it's absolutely great," Rabih Dow, rehabilitation director at the Carroll Center, told the Globe in 2005. "His understanding of the application of fencing skills to orientation for the blind is quite deep; he knows it well. He's a fantastic coach, there's no question about it. Students worship this guy."

And Mr. Sollee worshiped fencing, a sport to which he was introduced while serving in the Army.

"He picked up fencing from this guy who he was trying to teach boxing to," Alison Sollee of Durham, N.H., said of her father. "This guy knew some fencing skills and taught them to my father, and that became the love of his life - except for my mother."

At Harvard, from which he graduated in 1952, Mr. Sollee also was captain of the varsity squad as a senior. In one American Fencing League Association tournament, he won all three divisions - foil, epee, and saber - and he also won the Greater Boston Open Foils Championship, according to the Harvard Varsity Club website. Mr. Sollee was inducted into the club's hall of fame in 1999.

While he knew from the outset that fencing was his calling, it took a while before he turned his pastime into a full-time pursuit.

"I huckstered pharmaceuticals and investments abroad and domestically for 22 years after graduating," he wrote in the 50th anniversary report of his Harvard class. "When my wife, Natalie, earned a PhD in psychology and joined Children's Hospital, we became a two-income family. I used the opportunity to switch my work to fencing for a living - teaching and coaching, that is."

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WHY HOST A USFCA CLINIC?

Having already begun teaching blind students to fence at the Carroll Center, Mr. Sollee became head fencing coach at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in the early 1970s, launching a women's program soon after. He coached until the early 1990s and counted among his students Johan Harmenberg, who went on to win a gold medal in the 1980 Olympics.

Sometimes, he instructed his college varsity players to don blindfolds and fence in matches against blind students from the Carroll Center. And like their coach had years earlier, the college team members often were outmatched by the sightless fencers.

Eric Tennyson Sollee was born in Los Angeles. His father was a Norwegian immigrant and his mother was from the Philippines. During World War II, the family was in his mother's country, where his father was working as an engineer when the Japanese army began placing US citizens in the Santo Tomas Internment Camp in Manila. At 14, Mr. Sollee was listed as a child traveling with his father, who had a US passport, so they were held in the camp.

His sister was listed on the Filipino passport of their mother, and the two of them waited in the Philippines until the family was reunited when the war ended. The Sollees moved to Newton, where Mr. Sollee graduated from high school. After serving in the Army to take advantage of the GI Bill, which paid for his college expenses, he went to Harvard. There he met Natalie Dosick, a student at Radcliffe College.

"They were both English majors and they both loved literature," their daughter said. "In their older years, they would read Shakespeare aloud together."

Athletic in a number of pursuits, Mr. Sollee noted in the 10th anniversary report of his Harvard class that he also enjoyed "skin diving, water skiing, and fishing in the reefs that abound in the seven thousand islands of the Philippines."

Fencing, however, was always his first choice. After retiring from coaching at MIT, Mr. Sollee was an assistant coach at Harvard and continued to teach regularly at the Carroll Center into his late 70s.

"He brought much more than fencing to those he taught," the center said on its website. "His commanding voice, dynamic personality, and expertise in modifying fencing for therapeutic purposes were wonderfully balanced with his genuine interest and help with each client."

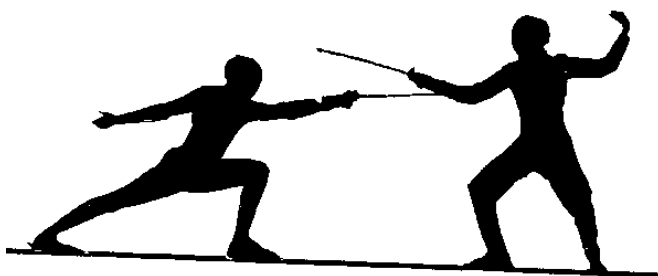
Peter Brand, head coach of men's and women's fencing at Harvard, formerly served as an assistant coach to Mr. Sollee at MIT, and the two had faced each other in matches.

"He was a fierce competitor," Brand told the Globe in 2005. "Even in his 40s he was still a formidable, tough guy. He was just like he is now. He came out extremely aggressively. He was boisterous, but in a positive way. It never grated on you. He was a winner. He absolutely hated to lose."

He coached until the early 1990s and counted among his students Johan Harmenberg, who went on to win a gold medal in the 1980 Olympics. Sometimes, he instructed his college varsity players to don blindfolds and fence in matches against blind students from the Carroll Center. And like their coach had years earlier, the college team members often were outmatched by the sightless fencers.

In addition to his wife and daughter, Mr. Sollee leaves a son, Brand of Rottach-Egern, Germany; another daughter, Jessica of Somerville; two grandsons; and two granddaughters.

A memorial service will be held at noon on Nov. 1 in Memorial Church at Harvard University.



USFCA AWARDS COMMITTEE REVAMPING AWARDS

By Maitre Laurence D. Schiller

The Awards Committee, now under Chairman Prevot Paul Geraci, has been considering a series of proposals to revamp and add awards to the NCAA Coach of the Year award that has been given for many years. At this point we are soliciting comments on our plans and would welcome any input from our members. Please be aware that all awards for coaches are for USFCA members only. We are proposing the following:

- 1) **NCAA Coach of the Year.** This is an existing award but we want to add a nomination process and change the voting procedure. The Awards committee will solicit nominations and then put out a ballot with three candidates after the NCAA Championships. After 2010, the nominees must be members of the USFCA.
- 2) **NCAA Outstanding male and female fencers of the year.** In the past this was a largely ignored popularity contest voted on by the athletes at the NCAA Championship. We would like to bring it into line with other sports where nominations are made and supported by the institution's Media Services departments and a decision made after the conclusion of the season. It would then be announced to Media and NCAA outlets. It is our proposal to have separate awards for Division I and II, which have scholarships, and for Division III, which do not.
- 3) **USFCA All America Awards.** We intend to continue awarding these as before.
- 4) **US Association of Collegiate Fencing Clubs Awards.** The USACFC is an organization of Collegiate fencing clubs (non-varsity), which holds a championship each year in April. It is our intent to create parallel awards to the NCAA awards for 'Coach of the Year' and "National USFCA All USACFC" selections. We want to do this not only to promote fencing on the collegiate level but to, hopefully, publicize the sport to institutions who might be adding a collegiate team.
- 5) **USFCA Lifetime Achievement Award.** This would be an award to recognize a lifetime of service for a retiring coach.
- 6) **USFCA Club Coach of the Year Awards.** These awards would be given to the private club or secondary school coach for outstanding achievement. We are proposing two awards: "USFCA Club Coach of the Year" and "USFCA Developmental Coach of the Year". College coaches would only be eligible for these awards if they also work in a private club.

The Committee would appreciate any comments on these awards, either about what they are, the criteria for them, or any ideas about sponsorship. Currently we have a sponsor for the NCAA Coach of the Year, but we would be very pleased to have the other trophies sponsored. Please send your comments by October 15, 2008 to Prevot Paul Geraci (geraci51@aol.com) and to Mtre Laurence (Laurie) Schiller (LDS307@northwestern.edu). Thank you.

AN OLYMPIC QUICK LOOK

By Walter G. Green III, Maitre d'Armes

The 2008 Beijing Olympics goes into the record books as the most successful games for United States fencing in history. The US Team won one individual gold (women's sabre), one individual (women's sabre) and two team silvers (women's foil and men's sabre), and one individual and one team bronze (both in women's sabre). The last time the United States swept a weapon was in the 1904 St. Louis games - the US Single Stick team won first through third (there were only three entries). You may remember that the United States won 10 medals in the 1904 games – but only three countries (Cuba, the United States, and Germany) competed (and there may have been only 2 Cubans and 1 German in the events). The table below gives a look at US medals in fencing:

Games	Total Medals	Gold	Silver	Bronze
1904	10	1	5	4
1920	1			1
1928	1			1
1932	2			2
1948	1			1
1960	1			1
1984	1			1
2004	2	1		1
2008	6	1	3	2

The number of medals is not the whole story. Look at the count by nation:

Country	Individual	Team	Total
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Italy	2G, 2B	3B	7
United States	1G, 2B	3B	6
France	2S	2G	4
Germany	2G		2
China	1G	1S	2
Roumania	1S, 1B		2
Russia		1G	1
Ukraine		1G	1
Poland		1S	1
Korea	1S		1
Japan	1S		1
Spain	1B		1
Hungary	1B		2

In 2008 the United States (1) was the only nation to sweep an individual weapon, and (2) ranked second in the overall medal count. This is a spectacular result, and every American fencer and coach can take pride in what our elite athletes and coaches have accomplished, and in what we have all accomplished in building American fencing over the past 112 years of Olympic history.

Sources: NBC's online fencing results (<http://www.nbcolympics.com/fencing/index.html>) and the 2004 edition of David Wallechinsky's *The Complete Book of the Summer Olympics*.

PUBLICITY AND PUBLIC RELATIONS COMMITTEE

By Kathy Vail, Chair, Publicity and Public Relations committee

The mission statement of the Publicity and Public Relations committee is as follows:

- To increase awareness of the USFCA in the coaching community
- To work toward increased membership in the USFCA
- To promote the stated goals of the USFCA

The work of this committee will be to determine the best way to tell US coaches why they should join the USFCA. How do they benefit from joining our organization? What do they get from the USFCA that will impact their business?

There are three ways to accomplish this:

1. Target assistant coaches with the ways in which the USFCA can help them to advance in their field
2. Target USFCA head coaches asking them to encourage their assistant coaches to join the USFCA.
3. Target fencers who are interested in the coaching profession

Increasing the visibility of the USFCA at NACs, JOs, and Nationals is the first step. With this in mind, the Publicity and Public Relations committee is in the process of creating a new brochure for distribution this season. As requested by the Executive Committee, this brochure, when complete, will be available for download from the USFCA website.. Additionally, the Publicity and Public Relations committee is obtaining quotes for a USFCA display stand for use at NACs, JOs, and Nationals.

Comments and suggestions for publicizing our organization are welcome at bbhk@mindspring.com The coaching community must view participation in the USFCA as an important and necessary part of the coaching profession.

NEW USFCA WEBSITE

The US Fencing Coaches Association is proud to unveil its new website. The website went public on Monday, August 25. With a dramatically new interface, the new website will make finding information on the USFCA and its services much easier. The first phase of the rollout includes the public content - that is, all the information that is available to everyone who accesses the website.

One significant new feature will be the "Find a Coach" function, which allows the public to find USFCA member coaches in their area.

The second phase of the rollout includes an email to all current USFCA members informing them of their user ID & password into the site. This will give them access to the "Members Only" areas of the website, which includes a rapidly

expanded knowledge-base of coaching information. This valuable resource will immediately include a large archive of "Swordmaster" magazines, articles from various sources, and thesis papers from Fencing Master candidates. This knowledge base will be augmented by more information over the next several weeks, and will eventually include the entire USOC catalog of fencing-related articles & thesis papers, foreign papers and articles, videos and other reference materials.

Inactive members of the USFCA will also receive an email informing them of their user-id & password. They will be Registered Users on the website, but not current members. Registered members are eligible to receive newsletters and other notifications from the USFCA. Being a registered member also makes the membership subscription process easier.

Over the next several weeks, we will be making incremental changes in the website, both in functionality and in content. We will also be correcting information on our members, so please review your membership information once your login information is sent to you.

WHY HOST A USFCA CLINIC?

Here are some good reasons to host a USFCA Coaching Clinic. Your fencers, parents, and especially your assistant coaches will benefit. It is a way to generate funds and publicity and develop a relationship with local businesses. It offers an opportunity for coaches to get tested with less expense. A USFCA Clinic is a great opportunity to exchange your knowledge with other coaches. It supports your USFCA.

For more info please contact President@usfca.org

WE NEED YOUR VIEWPOINTS, ARTICLES, PHOTOS AND NEWS FOR POINT IN LINE.

Some items to think about including might be recent awards presented to members, specials and discounts on products or services, announcements of new products, and of course articles on fencing pedagogy. Be sure to include your name as you want it to appear as the author of the submission along with any degrees, certification or titles you wish to use to refer to yourself. Please also include your contact information (email or phone) if you would like for members to be able to contact you regarding your submission.

For more info please contact President@usfca.org