

FENCING SUMMER NATIONALS AND NACS

A GUIDE FOR NEW FENCERS AND THEIR PARENTS

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ACADEMY OF FENCING MASTERS

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Introduction

As I write this book, summer quickly approaches. Excitement is in the air because the 2014-2015 fencing season is in the final stretch to Summer Nationals. In fencing clubs across the country, every practice and every lesson is becoming focused on preparing for the season's final competition.

Each year more and more fencers participate in the national-level fencing tournaments - North American Cups (NACs) and Summer Nationals. These newcomers often join the Youth categories; so every year brings lots of new young fencers, and along with them, their parents who are also new to fencing - for many, Summer Nationals 2015 will be their first big national-level competition.

I know from personal experience that first-time parents (and first-time fencers) often feel anxious and have a lot of questions heading into their first big national event. The amount of information can be overwhelming and people are genuinely and understandably intimidated. Traveling to what's likely a new city to attend an event where you're unsure what to expect, where to go, and who to ask adds up to a lot of uncertainty.

Throughout this book, we will point to helpful blog posts on the current topic. Look for these boxes for further helpful information.

This book is meant to help parents and fencers prepare for their first national competition - to lower the anxiety and give them more time to enjoy such an exciting experience. The more you know about what to expect and how to prepare, the more you can relax and enjoy the ride!

Why go?

Some of you may be wondering if you should even attend. In short, the answer is YES! It is worth the traveling and the coordination to attend national-level fencing competitions. I would argue that any fencer with a full season of experience should give it a try if given the opportunity.

Why?

Well, first of all, these competitions are exciting and fun. Your child will bout against fencers from all over the country. They will gain confidence, self-esteem, and social skills. They will create memories that last a lifetime.



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Second, it's best to take advantage of the chance to fence in their current age category. Fencing in the Youth categories can be less intimidating and usually gives your fencer a better chance of doing well. Also, fencing in Y10 is less intimidating than Y12, and so on - so if your fencer can compete in Y10 this year, but will be bumped up to Y12 the next, that can be a big difference. Children grow and mature a lot from age 10 to age 12! Plus, when fencers attend national tournaments early on, they will already have some experience under their belt when they graduate to higher age categories.

All that said, if you feel your child is not ready because of their individual personality or rate of maturity, you should of course make your own decision. You should also consult your fencing club - coaches and administrators will likely have thoughts on the matter.

Initial Planning

National-level fencing events require planning and forethought. It's not just about watching registration deadlines, you also need to consider which competitions to attend throughout the season for the best chance of qualifying. And of course, as a family you need to consider travel costs and vacation schedules.

First Look

I recommend taking your first look at the situation a full year before the competition - or at least at the start of the fencing season. While the event may not be announced just yet, you can make inferences based on past events. Look online for when last year's event was held for the relevant age group. It's safe to assume that this year's event will be around the same time. The blog post in the callout box includes information and links on how to get started.

Planning the Fencing Season:
<http://academyoffencingmasters.com/blog/how-to-plan-your-childs-fencing-competitions-for-next-year/>

Next, start to think about whether the trip will fit in with your family's schedule and start talking with your child about whether they want to go. If you think it might work, talk to your child's coach. If you're in the off-season, you could wait until the start of the next season, but get the coach's input early on. Most coaches will be excited that you are considering the competition and together you can create a program for your child's best chances of qualifying and doing well.

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Throughout the Season

Reviewing qualification paths and your child's status is an ongoing activity throughout the season. The first step is to understand this year's rules for qualification, and then you can start planning to attend the right events to meet the requirements (see Planning the Fencing Season blog post linked above). As the season progresses you can reassess where you stand using the tips in the Tracking Progress blog post below.

Booking Travel

Okay, so you've decided to go and you're monitoring qualification - now it's time to plan the trip! How will you get there, when do you want to arrive, and where will you stay?

Tracking Progress to Summer Nationals Qualification
<http://academyoffencingmasters.com/blog/track-youth-fencers-regional-points-standing-summer-nationals-qualification/>

If you choose to fly, I recommend buying trip insurance if you're not 100% sure you can or will attend. It's a great option to give yourself some wiggle room, but still capitalize on earlier fares. If you're deciding between driving or flying, the pros and cons are similar to anytime you make this decision. Cost vs. convenience, how much do you want to take with you (easier to throw stuff in a car), do you need a car once you're there? The

next section covers packing for travel whether you drive or fly and might help you with this decision.



If you're traveling more than a couple hours to a competition, I strongly recommend arriving the night before with plenty of time to settle in, have a healthy dinner, and get a good night's sleep. Traveling with children and coordinating with other people from your club is enough to consider without squeezing your timeline. Also, we've found it's often fun to come early or stay late depending on the location to have some family time and maximize the benefits of your travel costs!

When you choose a hotel, the most important factor is distance from the venue. You may find that hotels are cheaper farther from the venue, but that distance doesn't come without a cost.

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Pros of Staying Close	Cons of Staying Far
Convenient to travel from hotel to venue	Travel costs each time you go to/from venue
Easier to transport fencing gear around during the competition	May need a rental car to get to/from venue if you stay farther away
Easier to attend team events like dinners if everyone is centralized	Much less convenient to move from competing to team dinner
Quick visits to the room between events or before dinners	Probably won't be able to return to room during the day

Registering

Registration for national-level tournaments is managed through the USFA website: usfencing.org. Click on “Event Registration” in the top bar and then “Tournament Schedule and Entry Forms.” From here you can filter by Level and Division to find the desired event.

For example, right now if I select “National” tournaments in the Level filter, I only see two results since it's towards the end of the current season. The first entry is for the 2015 Summer Nationals and if I click on the dates for the event, I am taken to much more detailed information on deadlines and qualification.

Make sure to put reminders on your calendar for important dates like when registration opens, when regular entry closes, and when late entry closes. Late entry means higher fees, so register early if you know you're going! Right now, registering late for 2015 Summer Nationals is triple the fee compared to registering by 5/18/2015.

One other note about registration, it's best to go through the age verification process with USFA. When you create your profile on the website, you can find instructions for sending a copy of a birth certificate or a government-issued ID to verify your child's age in connection to the USFA membership. This way when you arrive at a large national tournament, you can check in at the automatic stations by simply scanning your USFA membership card. More on checking in later, but it's a good idea to get the age verification out of the way when you start planning to attend national-level tournaments.



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Packing

Packing for a fencing competition is quite different from packing for the beach! You want to protect your weapons and electronic equipment from any damage, especially when you're heading to a big tournament.

Packing your Fencing Gear for Air Travel

<http://academyoffencingmasters.com/blog/summer-nationals-tips-packing-your-fencing-gear-for-air-travel/>

If you're flying, a great way to travel with fencing weapons is to use a plastic golf case. If you have a golfer in the family, maybe you already own one. If not, you have to consider the investment vs. how sure you are that your child will keep fencing. If you expect to continue for years to come, it's a good idea to get a case. The post in the callout box includes detailed instructions and pictures from those with experience flying with fencing equipment.

Another important point is that I recommend putting all gear except your weapons in your carry-on luggage. Airlines lose luggage, it happens. If you have all of your gear in one place and you lose it, you've got quite the debacle on your hands. If you are missing only your weapons, you can replace them in time to compete and the problem is much more isolated.



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What to Expect

Large tournaments are undoubtedly overwhelming for someone who's never attended one. I've learned that a little information about what to expect can go a long way toward making both fencers and parents a lot less anxious about their first national competition. The post in the callout box is geared towards the first competition, but has some helpful information on what to expect at any competition.

What to Expect at Your First Fencing Competition

<http://academyoffencingmasters.com/blog/what-to-expect-at-your-first-fencing-competition/>

At national events (e.g., NACs, Summer Nationals) the venue will be large with many, many strips. Here are the key areas:

- **Check-In Area:** Located just outside the hall where the tournament is being held. There are typically three stations: self-registration machine that reads barcodes from your membership card, manual registration station (manned with tournament personnel), and USFA Information area (manned with USFA representative to address your questions and requests).
- **The Bout Committee Area:** The Bout Committee essentially runs the show and is typically located in the middle of the hall with easy access from anywhere in the tournament. It should be easy to spot and marked "BC." Pay attention, there are many members of the Bout Committee with each responsible for an event or group of events - you will see labels denoting their specific responsibilities so you know whom to approach. If you want to talk to the Y10 Men's Foil BC Member, you should locate that person specifically and not the Div2 Women's Sabre BC Head who happens to be closer to you.



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- **Pods:** Strips are organized into pods that are denoted with a letter, and each strip is numbered 1-4. For example, Pod K refers to strips K1, K2, K3, and K4. Each pod has the same layout: four strips in the middle and, on the outside of the strips, carpets for the referees that are guarded by rails. Behind the rails are chairs for fencers, coaches, parents, and teammates. Only fencers and referees are allowed inside the pods during the bout action, and coaches are allowed inside only during the one-minute breaks.



- **Display TVs:** You will see TVs displaying important information on schedules, check-in status, strip assignments, and later on, results and updates.
- **Vendors:** Vendors will be selling fencing gear, repair services, stenciling, fencing outfits, memorabilia, and more.
- **Medical Station:** Typically located close to the Bout Committee, somewhere in the middle of the venue. The personnel there can help you with minor issues and basic medical supplies such as ice and band-aids.

- **Weapon Check:** This is a USFA setup station with several armorists who will perform the required gear checks. Refer to the blog post in the callout box to learn about what should be checked.



Equipment Check

[http://academyoffencingmasters.com/
blog/12-important-tips-fencing-
equipment-check/](http://academyoffencingmasters.com/blog/12-important-tips-fencing-equipment-check/)

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- **Club Base Camps:** Clubs create base stations for gathering before and in-between events and usually travel with a club banner that they display in front of their area.
- **Food Vendors:** In general, you should not count on the food vendors to provide healthy, athlete-friendly competition food for a fencer. Parents may find good lunch or dinner options, but I suggest bringing healthier options for fencing children. See the callout box for the do's and don't's of eating at competitions.

Eating at Competitions: Do's and Don't's
<http://academyoffencingmasters.com/blog/eating-on-fencing-competition-day-dos-and-donts-2/>

You'll want to familiarize yourself with the locations of these areas when you arrive, which takes us into the next section.

Competition Day

If you're heading to nationals, you've probably been to a fencing tournament or two. But, national-level competitions are bigger, more exciting, and adhere more strictly to some of the rules. Some of this section may touch on things you already know, but it's important to understand the basic flow of activities and key things to know as you move along.

Before the event

The first important piece of advice for before the event is that it's hugely beneficial and almost imperative to visit the venue before it's time for your first event. You can familiarize yourself with the layout, get a feel for the atmosphere of the competition, and get some pre-event activities out of the way.

If there are events on the day you arrive, that's a great time to take a trip to the venue. If your event is in the afternoon and you can visit in the morning on your first day, that works too. Visiting the venue will help you acclimate to the feel of the competition. The exciting atmosphere, the sounds, and the overall feel of the venue. This way when you arrive for your event, you're not showing up somewhere brand new and unfamiliar. It can help you start to deal with any anxiety ahead of time as well.

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When you visit, here are the things you want to make sure to do:

- **Locate important areas:** Bout Committee, informational TV displays, your club's base camp, the strip (or pod) where you'll be starting your first event if you know, or simply getting familiar with how the strips are organized so you can find it more easily later on.
- **Check in:** If you're visiting on the day of your competitions (e.g., visiting in the morning and competing in the afternoon), you can go ahead and check in. Use self check-in and don't forget your membership card! You can only check in on the day of your event, so if you're visiting the day before, do this first thing when you arrive the next day.
- **Check your weapons:** Head to the Weapon Check area and have your weapons checked and marked.

Doing this ahead of time gives you a chance to address any issues if you don't pass. Things happen. For example, you might not be aware that your lame has dead spots—then it fails the test and you need to buy a new one, have it checked, and stencil it with your name. Plus, you can look for a time when the line is not long, whereas if you start early the next day and everyone is trying to check their weapons at the same time, you can end up waiting in a long line. Also, with early events this gives you some more time in the morning and one less thing to worry about.



List of equipment that needs to be checked:

- Mask
- Body Cord
- Mask Cord
- Glove
- Lame
- Epees with French grip: must be brought to weapon check to verify that grip is appropriate

Read the blog post in the callout below for tips on checking your own equipment to minimize problems and for better maintenance.

Checking Your Own Equipment

<http://academyoffencingmasters.com/blog/check-fencing-equipment-competition/>

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- **Watch some bouts:** Get a feel for the referees, cheer on your clubmates if they're competing. Try to watch a bout in your weapon for an age group close to yours.
- **Get stenciled:** If you or your child's uniform is not yet stenciled with their last name, you must do this before the competition starts.

For national competitions, fencers are required to have their last name clearly visible on their uniform. That means either on the lame or knickers in the case of foil and sabre, or on the jacket and/or knickers for epee. I think it's preferable to label the jacket/lame because they tend to last longer than knickers. Knickers, especially with young boys, tend to become very dirty—and because they are one of the cheaper parts of the uniform, they are often the first to be thrown away and replaced (at least that's what I've noticed with my own kids!). Also, you usually take off your jacket during breaks, so the label can help to locate it if you lose it.



- **Shop:** These tournaments are great places to purchase new gear. You can try different styles and sizes and buy any missing items.

At the event

This section will cover the day of your event. When to arrive, what to bring, and where to be when.

When it's time for your event, first make sure to arrive at the venue early. I suggest an hour ahead of the start time for a fencer who is new to these large competitions. However, if your clubmates are fencing before you, you may consider coming a couple hours early to cheer them on.

When you arrive, head to your club's base camp to get settled. I'm assuming you have already checked in and had your weapons checked on your earlier visit. If your club doesn't have a base, find a space to create your own against a wall and out of the way of any traffic areas. Check the monitors to locate your name and make sure it shows you as checked in, and double check your strip assignment. Note, your strip assignment will not always be specified right away. Sometimes you will be assigned a pod (e.g., K, L, M) and only later the Bout Committee will assign actual strips.

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Once settled, it's critical that your fencer warm up before their bouts. Here is an excerpt from our first book, *Parents' Guide to Fencing* on how to warm up:

First, warm up using routines learned at practice that include running, stretching, and footwork exercises. Next, it's important for your child to fence before the start of competition to get a feel for their weapon. Ideally, teammates should gather together on an empty strip and warm up by fencing each other. It's expected and normal for fencers to warm up on empty strips and does not

require permission; just ensure that you do not disturb anyone. If it's empty, go for it! If your child is without teammates, encourage them to find a warm-up partner by asking someone else. Don't worry about points, save the counting for when it matters.



At the close of registration time periodically check the monitors or the tournament website to locate your strip. The Bout Committee will make announcements, but it can often be hard to hear. I find it best to check on a smartphone or tablet or use the monitors.

Fencing Penalties 101 for Parents

<http://academyoffencingmasters.com/blog/fencing-penalties-101-parents/>

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By this time, you should be fully geared up. Ensure all of your equipment is marked as needed from the weapons check. Not having a mark will lead to a yellow card. (See the callout box for a blog post on the basics of fencing penalties.)

For epee, check the screws before every bout. An epee without a screw is cause for a yellow card. For foil, ensure the end of your weapon is properly taped. Never assume your weapon is properly set simply because it was in the last bout - check every time.

When you get your assigned strip and it's time to compete, head to the strip with your entire bag or at least 2-3 weapons and body cords, a towel, and water. If your weapon or cord malfunctions, you need to have a spare right next to the strip to avoid a delay penalty.

Sometimes the number of pools exceeds the capacity of the venue, either from too few strips or too few referees. In these cases, you may see "TBD" next to your name instead of a strip number. That means that the Bout Committee will assign strips as the pool progresses based on what's available. They will assign a strip as soon as possible and make an announcement. If your strip is TBD, make sure to listen carefully and periodically check the status on the monitor or your phone/tablet.

Start of competition

Parents and fencers who have not been to many competitions are usually still learning the protocol and what to expect. We have a series of blogs for the novice parent on the rules, objectives, and strategies that you can find in the callout box. This section will cover some of the highlights of the actual competition with some specifics for national-level tournaments.

At your event you are assigned to a pool of fencers and you fence each person once. At a large tournament like this, you will mostly have pools of seven and perhaps a few of only six.



Once you know your strip number, go to the strip area and occupy a chair (or several if you are with your parents and friends) outside of the pod. Bring with you all of your spare weapons and body cords.

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Each pool is assigned a referee, sometimes two. First, the referee will call all fencers to the strip to check their equipment and gear. Here is another excerpt from Parents' Guide to Fencing on how the testing is completed:



When your child arrives at the strip for their bout, they should come with all equipment to show to the referee. The referee will ensure that women have a chest protector and underarm protector and that men have an underarm protector. The referee will also check foil and epee weapons for holding the appropriate weight, which means that the tip of the weapon can withstand a force of 500g for foil and 750g for epee without registering a touch. For epee, the referee will also perform a “shim test,” which checks for an appropriate distance from tip to barrel. ... If a weapon is replaced mid-bout, the checks are repeated.

Rules and Objectives:

<http://academyoffencingmasters.com/blog/fencing-rules-for-the-novice-parent-objective-and-procedures/>

Rules Differences by Weapon

<http://academyoffencingmasters.com/blog/fencing-rules-for-novice-parents-differences-for-foil-epee-and-sabre/>

Strategy Differences by Weapon

<http://academyoffencingmasters.com/blog/fencing-rules-for-the-novice-parent-strategy-differences-for-foil-epee-and-sabre/>

They will also check for the proper marks indicating appropriate weapon checks prior to the competition. Then they will move on to starting the bouts.

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Each fencer is assigned a number. Remember yours and pay attention as numbers are called. The referee will call a fencer to the strip or notify the next fencer that they are on deck. Some referees will use a fencer's name and will verify with the fencer a correct pronunciation, and sometimes they will call you by number—especially if the referee is afraid to mispronounce your name.

When it's your turn to compete, head to the strip in the order the numbers are called. The first number called goes to the side of the referee that matches their dominant hand: right-handed goes to the right and left-handed to the left. If both are left-handed, the first called goes to the right side. Place your spare weapons near the reel (where the scoring box is and where you connect your cords) so you can access them quickly if needed.

Connect your cord(s), but do not put your mask on just yet. Read this excerpt if you're unclear on starting protocol (Parents' Guide to Fencing):

To start, the fencers walk to the strip fully dressed other than their masks. In foil and sabre, they test their weapons by touching each other's target areas in order to make sure the electronic scoring equipment is connected and functioning correctly. In epee, they touch each other's bell guards to ensure they are properly grounded and do not register a touch. They then take their positions at their respective starting lines. The fencers salute each other, the referee, and the audience. A fencing salute is not the same as a military salute; it involves raising the sword to a vertical position and then lowering it. The referee will signal the fencers to get ready by saying "En garde!" ("On guard"), and the fencers then put on their masks and assume the appropriate starting stance.



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When the bout is over, go behind the starting line, salute your opponent, meet in the middle to shake hands, then disconnect your cords and collect your weapons. Then you can head back to your chair and wait to be called for your next bout.

In between bouts, it's important to keep an eye on your pool. Some bouts are much faster than others and things can move along quickly—always know when you are up next.



When all bouts are finished, the referee will ask all fencers to sign the pool sheet. This is your opportunity to double-check all results. Referees make mistakes and you just might catch one, but once you sign, the results are irreversible. From Parents' Guide to Fencing:

If you think you've caught a mistake, politely point it out to the referee. Usually the referee will immediately realize the mistake and agree, or call over the other fencer to verify the correct score. If the referee doesn't remember the mistake and your opponent does not agree to the change, the referee will not change it.

For a cautionary tale about why it's so important to check the pool sheet, see the blog post in the callout box below.

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Why It's Important to Check your Pool Sheet

<http://academyoffencingmasters.com/blog/should-a-bout-committee-at-fencing-summer-nationals-bend-the-rules/>

Typically after your pool finishes, you will spend some time waiting. The Bout Committee has to wait for all of the pools in your event to finish before calculating the results and posting the schedule for Direct Elimination (DE). For many reasons, it's hard to predict the wait time. Among other things, it depends on how quickly your pool finishes compared to others, whether it's a double-flight event (more pools than strips where one set of pools has to wait for the first to finish), and whether there are strips and referees available to start DE. It's best to assume the wait will be long and prepare accordingly.

Once the Bout Committee publishes the pools results and makes the announcement, they wait about 15 minutes for fencers to report any discrepancy. Do not take anything for granted. Even if the score on the pool sheet was correct, the bout committee member may have made an error in transferring the scores to a computer. Check again. Usually the pool scores will be available in the live feed and on the monitors shortly after the referee submits the pool results to the Bout Committee, so monitor and check them early on to catch any mistakes.



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For some Youth events, 100% of fencers advance to DE and for others (Cadets, Juniors, Seniors), only a percentage of fencers advance to DE. Here's another excerpt that helps explain seeding for DEs:

The fencers will be seeded in one list for all pools based on pool play results. The seeding at this point is based on (1) percentage of wins in pool, and if that is equal then (2) the higher indicator (the difference between the total number of touches scored and total number of touches received in pool play), and if that is equal, then (3) the total number of points scored. If all of these are equal, the assignment will be random. The list will then be used to populate an elimination table of 16, 32, 64, or 128 fencers, going from worst record to best record. The higher seeded fencers might get a "bye" in the first round (i.e., a free trip to the next round) depending on the total number of fencers (e.g., if there are 30 fencers in the event, the top two seeds will get a "bye" to account for the difference from 30 to 32).



Information will be posted on the TV monitors and results website when the Bout Committee has finished calculating results. Listen for announcements that your results have been posted, check the monitors, look online from your phone - this is a time to pay attention and make sure that you know when your DE schedule is posted so you can check where to be and when. Once published, the monitor should tell you which strip to go to for your first DE bout. However, similar to being in an airport and having your gate moved, you may be reassigned - so listen for announcements and keep an eye on the monitors.

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If you have trouble, don't hesitate to ask the Bout Committee for help. That is a big part of the reason they are there, to field questions and make sure things run smoothly. Head to their table and look for a post that includes the name of your event - that will direct you to the right person.

As the name implies, DE is single elimination: one loss and you are finished. If you win, you advance to the next round and have another bout. When you advance (congratulations!), you need to check the monitors yet again.

If the event is relatively small, DEs will be held in the same pod(s) as pool play. The head referee of the event (who dispatches fencers to the strips for DEs) might tell you where to go for the next DE. Listen to this person - once in the DE stage the head referee is the one to tell you where to go.

If you win a DE bout, the referee may ask you to take a bout slip to the Bout Committee for them to enter the bout results into the computer. Take this slip to the person on the Bout Committee who is responsible for your event. Please note that parents are often tempted to take the slip for the kids, but the Bout Committee will refuse to accept this slip. The fencer needs to be the one to turn it in!



Strip coaching

I want to touch on one specific aspect of the competition here, and that is strip coaching. If you're new to this subject, "strip coaching" is when a fencing coach provides input or direction during the idle time in your bout (idle means between "halt" and "fence"), during the one-minute breaks, or in-between bouts. We have a series of three blog posts on this topic (see callout) and I want to summarize some of that here.

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First, what should you expect from your coach? Well, for starters, you should not expect them to attend all of your bouts because it might not be feasible. If they aren't there, simply remember what you've learned at practice and focus on your fencing.

When your coach is present, they are officially only allowed to coach you in between "Halt!" and "Fence!" But this rule is not uniformly enforced and many coaches will coach during a point - and most of the time the referees won't stop it.

If your opponent's coach is breaking this rule to the point of distracting you from your fencing, you can and should tell the referee that it's disturbing you. The referee should then enforce the rule.

Strip Coaching: Insight into the coach's philosophy

<http://academyoffencingmasters.com/blog/fencing-strip-coaching-insight-into-the-coachs-philosophy/>

Strip Coaching: Maximizing your coach's input

<http://academyoffencingmasters.com/blog/fencing-strip-coaching-maximizing-your-coachs-time-and-input/>

Strip Coaching: Why parents shouldn't help

<http://academyoffencingmasters.com/blog/parents-fencing-strip-not-assist-coach/>



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Now let's talk about what you should expect from your coach when they are able to attend your bout and how best to communicate with them. Here are some key things to remember:

- **Quality not quantity:** Sometimes the best strip coaching is a single word to remind a fencer of something they have practiced - to maximize the guidance without creating distraction.
- Your own skills and attitude are the biggest factors in your performance at a bout.
- **Take time to talk with your coach ahead of time about their philosophy:** Knowing what to expect can help avoid any negative feelings or confusion. You can also share some of your preferences and see if they are open to them - although it's ultimately up to the coach how they choose to encourage or guide you.
- **Tell your coach when you're up!** The second blog post in the callout box above talks about creating a protocol so you can keep your coach updated on when you're competing, giving them a better chance of attending your bout.
- **Parents should not help:** Please see the last blog post above—strip coaching is a COACH'S job, not the parent's. This is true for many, many reasons and you can read the blog post for more information.



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After event

When you lost a round of DE, you are finished. No need to check out or anything else. However, it's strongly recommended that you cheer for your teammates or friends if they are still competing. This helps establish club culture and friendship. If you don't have teammates competing, it's always great experience to continue watching the bouts all the way through the finals and even the awards ceremony. Maybe you made some friends during your competition that you can go watch - the fencing community is very small so you're likely to meet the same people again! Watch and learn - enjoy your sport!



If you're truly exhausted, need to fly back, or have an early morning event the next day and must rest, head on back to the hotel and relax! You accomplished a lot today no matter how you finished, you competed in your first national-level tournament and you should be proud!

Conclusion

I hope this book has eased your concerns and answered some of the questions you have about attending national competitions. Summer Nationals and NACs are exciting events that create lifetime memories. The best fencers from around the country gather in one city to share in their love of the sport and competition. I can't overemphasize how valuable I think the experience is for fencers of any age, but particularly for younger fencers who are growing as both athletes and people.

Also, please note that fencing rules are subject to change - particularly qualification paths to national-level events. This material is accurate to the best of our knowledge at the time of publishing, but it's best to keep up with updates from USFA as rules may change in the future.

If you still have questions, I'd like to hear from you and know what we missed. Please see our contact information below if you have any comments or thoughts on this book or other fencing-related questions.

We hope to see you in San Jose 2015 or one of the many Summer Nationals to come!

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2. <http://www.fencingofficials.org/blog/2012/12/non-combativity-some-commonly-asked-questions/>
3. USFA website: usfencing.org
4. [askFRED.net](http://askfred.net): database of all local and regional tournaments (all local, RYCs SYCs, and ROCs), clinics, and camps; also results from posted tournaments.

