

ATAC Fencing Club

Student Handbook

All Texas Athletic Center, Inc.

www.ATACFencing.org

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Organization

What is the All Texas Athletic Center, Inc.(ATAC)?

The All Texas Athletic Center is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization operated by a Board of Directors with a special interest in developing amateur athletics in the greater San Marcos area. Neither members of ATAC nor anyone on the board may receive remuneration from the organization. All fees collected and donations made to the organization are dedicated to the growth of fencing in the community. Donations made to ATAC are fully tax deductible to the extent allowable by law.

Mission of ATAC

To promote amateur athletics throughout the greater San Marcos area. In order to accomplish our mission, ATAC will:

- Sponsor a Fencing Club for the development of competitive and recreational fencers
- Sponsor local fencing competitions
- Sponsor a Pentathlon Club for the development of athletes interested in this demanding discipline
- Sponsor community outreach programs ensuring exposure to the sports of Fencing and Modern Pentathlon
- Establish and maintain a staff of qualified, nationally acknowledged Fencing and Modern Pentathlon coaches
- Promote the values of discipline and sportsmanship

Who are the ATAC Coaches or Instructors?

John Moreau, Head Coach

Over 38 years fencing experience

Member 1984 and 1988 US Olympic team in fencing

6 times national champion team epee

Bronze Medalist 1998 world masters games - fencing

Bronze Medalist 2002 FIE Veteran World Championships Epee

Bronze Medalist 2005 FIE Veteran World Championships Epee

Div I US National Champion Epee 2003

3 times world team fencing

Competitor and Medallist in 15 US Olympic Festival Events

Finalist in 10 Olympic trials - fencing and modern pentathlon (equestrian jumping, pistol shooting, fencing, swimming and running)

Coach of Rob Stull - 5 times US National Epee Champion

Coach of Evan Marlin - Bronze Medallist 2002 U-20 Jr. Olympic Championships

Coach SWT fencing club- state champions 14 years

Coach US Modern Pentathlon Team

1983, 1985, & 1986 world champion- NATO military skills

Faculty member - Texas State University - 25 years

M. Ed. - Physical Education

Assistant Coaches

Sean Moreau

Will Cisler

David Morris

Kyle Maysel

Oscar Barrera

Esperanza Barrera

Operational Philosophy

The ATAC Board of Directors believes our coaching staff should be allowed to concentrate on the task of fencing. Therefore, the task of managing and operating the business is left to the Board of Directors. If you have any questions or concerns about the way business is done, please contact a member of the ATAC Board.

Introduction to Fencing

The Weapons

Foil

The foil is approximately 35 inches in length and weighs less than one pound (16 ounces). Points are scored with the tip of the blade and must land within the torso of the body.

The valid target area in foil is from the shoulders to the groin, front and back. The target area does not include the head, neck, arms and legs. Fencers wear a metallic vest called a lame, which covers the valid target area so that a valid touch will register on a scoring machine when fencing in competitions.

Epee

The epee is the descendent of the dueling sword. It weighs approximately 27 ounces, has a larger bell guard to protect the hand and a stiffer blade than the foil. Touches are scored only with the point of the blade; however, the entire body is the target area.

Saber

The saber is the modern version of the slashing cavalry sword and is similar in length and weight to the foil. The saber is a thrusting weapon as well as a cutting weapon; therefore, the tip and the entire blade are used. The target area is from the bend of the hips to the top of the head, front and back, simulating the cavalry rider on a horse. The saber fencer's uniform includes a metallic jacket called a lame, which covers the valid target area so that a valid touch will register on a scoring machine when fencing in competitions.

Choosing a Weapon

Students at the ATAC Fencing Club are initially introduced to the epee. The epee skills are the easiest for beginners to comprehend. At times, an foil or saber student will be asked to return to the basics of epee to retrain certain skills. We recommend beginner fencers learn epee for at least the first 4-6 months of fencing. All beginner fencers will fence with "dry," or non-electric, weapons. As students progress, the coach may recommend advancing to electric equipment. All competitive fencers are required to meet the current requirements of the USFA rules and ensure their equipment is in good working order. Instructors in the Intermediate and Advanced Epee classes may introduce students to the foil or saber. Students usually develop an interest in, or preference for, a specific weapon and request classes or lessons for that weapon.

How to Follow the Action

(excerpted from the 1998-99 U.S. Fencing Fact Book)

Focus on one fencer. The fencer being attacked defends himself by use of a "parry," a motion used to deflect the opponent's blade. Whenever a hit is made, the director will stop the bout, describe the actions, and decide whether to award a touch. Fencers seek to maintain a safe distance from each other, the one will try to break this distance to gain the advantage for an attack.

Fencing "Electric"

(excerpted from the 1998-99 U.S. Fencing Fact Book)

Red/Green lights mean a point or blade has landed in a valid target area. A point is scored for the fencer who makes the hit, depending on the referee's decision of right-of-way. White light in foil means the point has landed outside of the valid target area. No point is awarded for an off-target hit. One or more lights requires the referee to determine which fencer had right-of-way in foil and saber. In epee, a point is awarded to both fencers.

What do the terms mean?

(excerpted from the 1998-99 U.S. Fencing Fact Book)

Advance: Step forward with a fencer's front leg

Attack: Movement or series of movements by which a fencer tries to score a point against his opponent.

Beat: Sharp tap on the opponent's blade to initiate attack or threat of attack.

Counter-parry: a defensive movement by which the fencer makes a small circle with the tip of the blade, around the opponent's blade and moves the opponent's blade away.

Disengage: Break of contact between fencers' blades; movement made by passing the blade under the opponent's blade.

Engagement: Contact of blades.

En garde: Position taken before a bout begins.

Feint: A false attack intended to get a reaction from the opposing fencer which will open them up to a genuine attack.

Fleche: A running attack.

Lunge: Most common attack in which the fencer closes the distance by moving the front leg forward while the back leg remains stationary and straightens out.

Parry: Defensive action in which a fencer blocks his opponent's blade.

Recover: Return to the en garde position after lunging.

Remise: Attacking again immediately after the opponent's parry of an initial attack.

Riposte: Defender's counterattack after parrying an attack.

Can I Fence?

"The novice may possess great aptitude - he may even possess some extraordinary, God-given gifts. But any suggestion of instinctive fencing ability is sheer nonsense. Therefore, the fundamental importance of good mechanics cannot be overemphasized. You will never become a fencer until you have mastered them. Yet, fencing is so perfect an art that once you have accomplished this, your skill as a fighter will depend primarily upon your individual genius. You will get out of fencing exactly what you put into it. Make no mistake about that."

-Aldo Nadi, On Fencing

The staff and instructors of the ATAC Fencing Club believe that anyone who has the desire to learn should have the opportunity to fence. Even those with health problems or physical limitations have the opportunity to learn fencing. Our coaching staff will assist you in developing a program around any limitations you may have.

Parents, Children and ATAC

Fencing is a sport and it is supposed to be fun. We recommend that the young fencer establish his/her own fencing goals. The amount of effort from your child is up to her/him.

The staff and Board of Directors at ATAC try to support children in their attempts to achieve rather than to be victorious over someone else. Athletic achievement can have a significantly positive impact on the growth of the young fencer as she/he learns analogously from handling the obstacles presented in sport. The instructional staff and management at ATAC are constantly attempting to mold a program that realistically stimulates and challenges your children. We ask that the parents refrain from “pushing” so that the fencing does not take on the overtones of “homework.” The Board of Directors of ATAC is part of a team of educators which includes you, the parent, the school teachers, and the fencing instructors. The Board of Directors has established the following guidelines for the success of our school age fencers.

We believe:

- We can help your child be successful in school by forming a partnership with you, the parent, and your child’s teachers. If your child is having difficulty in a subject, let a Board member know. We can provide extra encouragement and, perhaps together, help your child be successful in school.
- A positive reinforcement system works better than negative attention. At no time will a child be embarrassed by public display of poor grades (either through posting or announcement).
- We believe that children perform up to the standards expected of them. We try to create a positive environment, one in which we brag about our successes and ignore those little stumbles. If your child has made the honor roll or done an outstanding job in their work, let us know.
- School age fencers should meet the same requirements as they would if competing on a school UIL team, “no pass, no play.” Students with failing grades should not be allowed on team trips. Parents have the right to request a child not attend a competition based on poor performance in school. School Team members are required to maintain a “C” average in all subjects. Students not maintaining a “C” in their subjects will be allowed to drill, at the discretion of the parent, but not take part in the fun part of fencing, open bouting. We hope that this will encourage commitment and initiative in our children to achieve success. Success in school is more important than success in fencing. If your student needs a little extra time for homework, they are welcome to bring their books to the fencing center and complete the work in the student lounge. Older students and parents often provide guidance and assistance in a variety of subjects.

We expect our team members to have clean uniforms and practice proper personal hygiene. We want you and your child to be happy and feel comfortable at the ATAC fencing club. If there is a problem of any kind, please let a Board member know. We attempt to guide students to the instructor most suited to their weapon, fencing style and personality; however, should your child want to switch to a different instructor, this is not a problem. Talk to us and we’ll be pleased to accommodate your family.

Why Your Child Should Fence

(excerpted from an article of the same name written by Richard Cherry for the USFA magazine, "American Fencing." Coach Cherry served as the Junior Olympic Chair for the Oregon Division and coaches young fencers.)

"Fencing is a skill sport. It requires a special kind of athlete who can satisfy the physical and psychological challenges of head to head combat."

"Fencing is one of the few sports where boys and girls compete against each other on equal terms, no special concessions granted."

"Fencing demands self-discipline. Win or lose, the fencer alone is ultimately responsible."

"Fencers forge friendships with their opponents off the strip. After all, they frequently train together."

"Fencers learn to accept authority. Referees (directors) are always 'correct,' even when a 'bad call' eliminates an athlete from a tournament. At the same time, fencers learn to respectfully question authority."

"Fencers acting as referees (directors) learn to make decisions with confidence. They learn to explain their decisions intelligently and control the action on and off the strip, all the while under the critical eye of their peers and an audience."

"Fencers learn to share. They share equipment and knowledge. A winning fencer will often share what went wrong with the losing fencer's game. More experienced fencers will share previous successful strategies against specific fencers, even though this knowledge may lessen their chances for victory."

"Fencers develop the ability to establish long-term goals. In fencing, an athlete doesn't have to win to be successful. Many young fencers know they don't have the knowledge or the experience to beat a particular opponent or win a tournament; but they learn to set personal goals for themselves, one touch against each opponent for example."

"Fencers can, and do, learn to be winners before they ever get a medal at a tournament."

PROGRAMS AND FEES

LEARN TO FENCE PROGRAM

Emphasis on the beginning fencer and introduction to training

Time: Tuesdays 6:00-7:00 PM

JUNIOR COMPETITIVE PROGRAM

Emphasis on under-19 and all skill levels

Time: Mondays, Tuesdays (bouting only) Wednesdays, & Thursdays 6:00-8:00 PM

Classes are on going and students can join at any time.

ADULT COMPETITIVE PROGRAM

Time: Mondays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays, & Thursdays 7:00-10:00 PM

For experienced fencers

Use of facilities four times weekly

Time: Mondays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays & Thursdays 7:00-10:00 PM

PRIVATE LESSONS

ATAC Fencing Club members as well as participants in the Learn to Fence and Jr. Competitive programs may schedule lessons with ATAC coaches and instructors as often as the student wishes, schedule permitting. Each coach or instructor sets his/her lesson schedule and fees. These fees are paid directly to the coach or instructor. Private lessons are normally offered individually for a 15 - 25 minute session. Not all fencers are able to take a working lesson for this amount of time. The remaining time should be spent asking the instructor questions concerning tactics and rules. Fencers, and fencers' parents, should consult with the respective coach to see how often lessons should be scheduled and how many nights per week they should be fencing.

USFA Membership

It is a requirement for insurance purposes that all ATAC fencing club members participating in the open fencing sessions (Mondays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays, & Thursdays 7:00-10:00 PM) be members of the national organization. Membership in the United States Fencing Association is also a requirement for anyone competing in local or national tournaments. Membership forms are always available at the club. Fees are \$60 for competitive fencing.

Team Trips and Competitions

One of the goals of the ATAC Fencing Club is the development of worldclass and Olympic competitive fencers. Only a handful of fencers ever make it to this level; however, there are numerous competitions locally, in the South Texas Division, and in the Southwest Section for all fencers to compete, beginner to Olympian. The ATAC Team will be traveling to competitions in Oklahoma, Louisiana, Arkansas, and throughout Texas during the fencing year (approximately one per month). All of our fencers are encouraged to join these team trips, but there is no requirement to attend any of them. Special tournaments are held for children; Regional Youth Circuit for Youth (12 - 16) and adults (Veteran's tournaments). Fencers will be asked to sign-up for trips at least 2 weeks in advance. Coaches will be assigned to the team trip if 5 or more fencers commit. Commitment is obtained from the fencer when all paperwork (insurance information, permission forms, etc.) and coaches' fees are received. Our instructors are reimbursed coaches' fees for lodging, meals and travel expenses. These expenses are paid from fees collected from fencers attending the trip. The more fencers attending, the less the expenses to the individual. Fencers are welcome to travel and lodge with the team or with their parent, this has no effect on coaches' fees. Other staff and team representatives may be sent on various trips to act as coordinators for the team. These people will be identified prior to the trip announcement and may consist of parent volunteers, ATAC staff, or other interested parties who are going to the tournament anyway and will not usually receive reimbursement. If a very large team is going to a tournament, one or two of the adults who are planning on attending may be asked to act as team chaperones and may receive reimbursement for their lodging. (Team chaperones usually are asked to share a room with 2-3 youth/junior fencers.)

What does it cost to compete?

Fencing is a relatively inexpensive sport, until you begin traveling to other states to compete at the national level, but there are initial costs to consider for even local tournaments.

USFA Membership

Membership in the United States Fencing Association is a requirement for anyone competing in local or national tournaments. Membership forms are always available at the club. Fees are \$60 per year (Aug 1 to July 31) for competitive fencing.

Electric weapons

Competing at the local or national level, a fencer must have at least two working weapons when they report to the strip. Electric weapons run from \$65 to \$150. For novice competitors, the less expensive weapons are just as good as the expensive ones. Many vendors offer an electric beginner set (blade, body cord, etc.) for around \$100-150. Electric epee sets are less expensive because there is no lamé; saber sets are a little more expensive. Women must add an additional \$25 or so for a breast protector.

Body cords

A body cord connects the fencer's blade to the scoring equipment. In official competitions, two working body cords are required when a fencer reports to strip. The body cords are not interchangeable between foil and epee; you will need foil and epee body cords to compete with both weapons. Body cords are \$15 - 35.

Underarm protector or plastron

Every fencer must have an underarm protector (plastron) to compete. There is a wide variety of materials and quality involved with these, but you are looking for a piece of clothing that will cushion a blow to the soft arm-pit. Underarm protectors range from \$16 to \$100. Chest protectors for women are available at the club for use. Women must have protectors during competition. These are available as a solid plastic sheet or as protective discs that fit into pockets in the jacket, and range \$16-30. Young boys may choose to wear a solid plastic chest protector when first learning. All men should wear athletic cups.

Glove

Gloves come in a variety of material from cotton to the Uhlman washable leather, and range \$10-45. Look at some of the gloves the other competitive fencers wear and ask questions about their choice.

Lame

The lame is an outer conducting garment which defines the target area in foil and saber. Foil lames will run \$40-135; saber lames, \$85-255.

Mask

A good competition mask for foil and epee will run around \$75. Three weapon masks, and the stronger FIE masks, will range from \$95 to \$275. It has been our experience that a little extra invested in a stronger test mask is worth it. Novice competitors may use ATAC masks.

Jacket

Jackets, \$50-230.

Knickers

Knickers may be purchased for \$50-230.

Shoes and socks

The fencer's legs must be completely covered. Long soccer socks, preferably white, under baseball pants or knickers are perfect (\$10-15). Fencing shoes may be purchased for \$45-190.00, Adidas high-tops being the most expensive. Any flat soled deck shoe (Keds) with a light or white flexible sole will work.

Saber manchet

This is a special conducting oversleeve required for saber fencers, \$30-55, if a regulation saber glove is not used.

Fencing bags

Used to carry weapons and equipment, bags run \$25-300 for single weapon bags to wheeled bags.

Tournament fees

Local fees average \$20.00 per event (a tournament is comprised of several events). National tournaments can cost \$45 and up per event. Other costs for tournaments may include travel, meal and lodging expenses and coaches' fees. Coaches' fees are used to offset expenses incurred by the ATAC coaching staff when traveling as the team representative.

Customer Service, Support, and Safety

The staff and instructors of the ATAC Fencing Club believe that anyone who has the desire to learn should have the opportunity to fence. Even those with health problems or physical limitation have the opportunity to learn fencing. Our coaching staff will assist you in developing a program around any limitation you may have.

We want you and your children to be happy and feel comfortable at the ATAC Fencing Club. If there is a problem of any kind, please let a Board Member know. We attempt to guide students to the instructor most suited to their weapon, fencing style and personality; however, should your child want to switch to a different instructor, this is not a problem. Talk to us and we'll be pleased to accommodate your family.

No discrimination, no harassment

The Board of Directors shall not tolerate any discriminatory act or act of harassment, sexual or otherwise, from staff members, other fencers, or observers. If you are uncomfortable at anytime, for any reason, please notify a member of the Board of Directors immediately for a private consultation. We want your fencing experience to be rewarding and positive.

Safety

- Safety is everyone's responsibility. Although fencing is a combat sport, observance of some simple rules will prevent most injuries.
- Never enter the strip area without your mask.
- Always wear your mask when bouting or taking lessons.
- Always wear your protective equipment (underarm protector, proper clothing, breast protector, etc.)
- Examine your weapons and protective equipment prior to bouting.
- Make sure your strip surface is clear of all debris, weapons, masks or other items which may cause trips, slips or falls.
- No horseplay on strip and never attempt to make contact with someone who is bouting on another strip.
- Never enter or exit the fencing area by crossing a strip where bouting is occurring.
- Always use the walkway, but be aware that fencers may come across this area at any time.
- Come physically prepared to fence. Fencing requires vast amounts of energy and uses tremendous stores of body fluids and nutrients. If you have been ill, or are not feeling well, don't fence.
- Warm up before bouting or lessons.
- Practice good fencing techniques, posture and footwork to prevent bad habits which lead to injuries.
- Bout only when a coach or instructor is present, and only under qualified supervision.

Financial Reports

The All Texas Athletic Center, Inc., is a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization.

Donations made to our organization are tax deductible to the extent allowable by law. Consult your tax advisor with questions about your donations.

Fencers remember!

ATAC Coach's Policy is to send a coach to a tournament if 5 or more fencers request coaching for that tournament. The 5 or more fencers will be asked to pay coaches fees which cover travel, lodging, and per diem for the coach. Coach's fees can go from \$10 to as much as \$500 depending on where, how long, and how many ATAC fencers are sharing the fees. Usually at least one of our coaches will remain at ATAC; however, for large team events where a number of young fencers are competing, it may be necessary to send two coaches. It is the fencer's responsibility to notify the ATAC Fencing Club secretary (by completing an "Intent to Compete" form) that they want a coach at a tournament.

The deadlines for notification and payment of coach's fees are:

NAC - 30 days in advance (so we can get the lower airfare and reduce YOUR costs)

Local - 2 weeks in advance

ATAC does not have the means yet to underwrite coach's travel. If fencers don't pay their coach's fees, coaches will not be able to attend those competitions. Look for sign-up sheets for local tournaments at the front desk.