

OLYMPIAN FENCING CLUB COMPETITION FAQs

Which competitions should I attend?

You should consult with the head coach before making any final decisions, but here are some general guidelines. Beginning fencers should start with local youth tournaments. Youth tournaments have age divisions, denoted by the top age allowed in the division (for example Y10 is 10 and under, and your “fencing age” is your age as of January 1 of that calendar year). More experienced fencers interested in competing nationally will probably want to start with the Regional Youth Circuit (“RYC”) tournament. Above RYC tournaments are Super Youth Circuit Tournaments, the USFA North American Cup (NAC) tournaments, and the USFA Summer Nationals. There is no limit to the number of tournaments that a fencer can attend during a fencing season, but coaching will not be available at all tournaments. “Open” tournaments are generally for high school fencers and older.

How much does it cost?

The entry fees for a competition range from \$20 to \$120, with the local tournaments generally being less. IMPORTANT NOTE: For an out-of-town tournament, the Club divides the travel costs of the coach (if a coach attends) among every participant in the tournament. You will receive an e-mail with your share of the expenses before the tournament. There is also a coaching fee for tournaments (although coaching is optional), please see club policies.

What is an RYC?

An RYC is a Regional Youth Circuit tournament. You cannot earn USFA national points at an RYC, but attendance does qualify you for Y10 and Y12 events at Summer Nationals and the North American Cup tournaments. You cannot earn a rating at an RYC unless there are enough C rated fencers attending (this is unlikely).

What is an SYC?

An SYC is a Super Youth Circuit tournament. These are bigger national tournaments designed to provide national level competition to youth fencers. If you place in the top 40% of your event, you will earn national ranking points. Y14 events may also be big enough that you will have the opportunity to earn a rating if you finish in the top 8 or so. You can attend as many SYCs as you choose, but points from only one SYC will count in the national rankings. Attendance at an SYC will qualify you for the NAC and for Nationals.

What is an ROC/NOC?

The USFA has recently created a "Regional Open Circuit" (also called the "National Open Circuit") to provide larger opens that are not as focused on the elite fencers as the Div. I NACs. These are generally very good competitions. They also constitute a qualifying path for Div. 1A at Summer Nationals. More information is available at <http://usfaroc.askfred.net/>

What is a NAC?

A NAC is a North American Cup tournament run by the USFA. All of the best fencers in the country attend the NACs. You must attend an RYC or an SYC to qualify to fence in Y10 or Y12. There are no qualification requirements to fence in Y14 at a NAC. You can earn national points if you finish in the top 40%, and they will round up to include that entire bracket to a maximum of 32 fencers.

What events am I eligible for?

You can fence in your age group and in one group up. Age groupings are based on your age on January 1 of the competitive season. In 2009-2010, fencers born in 1995-1998 can compete in Y14. Fencers born in 1997-2000 can compete in Y12. Fencers born in 1999-2002 can compete in Y10. Before you decide to “fence up” an age group you should ask the head coach if you are ready. There is a significant ability jump between age groups, especially at national tournaments. If you have a national ranking (see below) in your older age group, then you

are eligible to “fence up” to the next grouping. For example, if you are 10, but have national points in Y12, you can fence in Y14.

If you were born between 1993 and 1996 you may be eligible for Cadet Events. You should talk to the head coach about these events.

How do I qualify for Summer Nationals? Should I go?

To qualify for Y10 and Y12 you only need to compete in an RYC or an SYC. The RYC (or any other RYC) will automatically qualify you. If you cannot attend that one, there are other RYC's later in the year, but you will have to travel out of state. A list of RYC's is available at <http://usfencing.org/competitions/youth>

To qualify for Y14 and Cadet, you must place in the top 25% at Divisionals in April, or have national points in that age group (see below). For Juniors, and Division I, I-A, II, and III, qualification is through the Southwest Sectional tournament or through national points and previous performance at national tournaments. See the USFA website.

Don't worry if Summer Nationals is your first national tournament. While the competition at the top is very tough, there is a wide range in abilities from top to bottom.

What Equipment do I need?

For competitions, each fencer will need a complete set of equipment. For local beginner tournaments, it may be possible to borrow some of the club's equipment, but it will be available on a first come basis and you should talk to the head coach about availability.

If you purchase equipment, the beginner fencers (and most intermediate fencers) do not need the more expensive “FIE” equipment.

1. 2-3 Electric Epees. If you are fencing in Y10, you will need junior blades (also known as #2 blades); all other fencers use senior blades (also known as #5 blades). Because everyone uses senior blades in class, if you will only be fencing Y10 for one year, you should be able to borrow junior blades from the club (ask the head coach). When ordering your blades, ask for "German" wiring, tips and sockets. Most OLYMPIAN Fencing Club fencers use this system and this allows interoperability and eases repair problems.

2. 2 Body Cords.

3. Jacket. If you fence in an SYC, NAC, or Summer Nationals your name and country must be printed on the back of your jacket. Your last name needs to be in all capitals and the print must be dark blue.

4. Knickers.

5. Plastron (an underarm protector).

6. Socks. Fencing socks are available but soccer socks work too. White is the standard color, although some fencers wear multi-colored soccer socks. The socks should come up to the bottom of the knickers. Some directors will not let you fence with exposed skin and better safe than sorry.

7. Plastic chest protector. A chest protector is required for girls at all national tournaments and some regional and local tournaments. It is not required for boys, but they can wear one. If you choose to wear one, it is a good idea to practice in it a few times to get used to it.

8. Glove.

9. Mask.

10. Shoes. Fencing shoes are available, but they aren't necessary. Indoor soccer shoes, tennis shoes and volleyball shoes are good for fencing and they are cheaper and easier to find. Regular gym shoes will work too.

Do I need to join the US Fencing Association?

You must be a USFA member to compete in RYC's, SYC's and NAC's. Some local tournaments may require membership. You can usually join at the tournament when you get there. You must bring your membership card to the tournament. If you don't, you will be required to join again.

How do I register and what is askfred?

AskFRED.net is a clearinghouse for fencing tournaments. Many, but not all, tournaments are listed here. You can search for tournaments, pre-register, see who else is pre-registered, get the day schedule and find out hotel information at askfred. You can usually register for local tournaments and RYC's the day of the event (for an extra fee). Information and registration forms for the NAC's and some of the Super Youths are available at www.usfencing.org and www.usfaryc.org (check both schedule and documents links). You will have to fax your entry for these tournaments and you must pre-register, usually a month or more in advance. Information for local tournaments may also be available at the Southwest Section website, www.southwestfencing.org. Tournament results can usually be found at askfred, the Southwest Section website or the USFA website, depending on the event.

When should I arrive?

The event time listed for a tournament is the close of registration time. You should arrive early enough to check-in, get your equipment checked and warm-up. Check-in at local tournaments shouldn't take too long. At larger tournaments you will probably want to arrive at the venue at least an hour before close of registration. Depending on the tournament, they may conduct a safety test on your mask and check your body cords and blades to make sure they are legal and working.

What happens at a tournament?

Assuming the tournament is running on schedule, your event will begin between 15 minutes and an hour after the close of registration time. The smaller the tournament, the sooner it will start.

The group of fencers will be divided into pools of no more than eight fencers. You will fence every fencer in your pool. These bouts will be five point bouts with a three minute time limit. The results from the pools will be used to seed the direct elimination bouts (just like NCAA brackets). At most youth tournaments, everyone advances to the direct elimination (DE) bouts. For Y10 and Y12, DE bouts are best-of-3 five point bouts, with a 1 minute break between bouts. For Y14, it's a 15 point bout with three 3 minute periods. If you win your DE, you go on to the next round.

Before you fence, your "strip director" will check your weapon to make sure it is working properly. You must have two weapons available in case one of them fails. If one fails, you will get a yellow card for that bout. If none of your weapons pass the test, you will not be permitted to fence.

What is a national ranking, why do I want one and how do I get one?

The USFA ranks fencers who have earned national points at SYC's, NAC's or Summer Nationals. You earn points by finishing in the top 40% of your group at one of these tournaments. The points are used to seed fencers in the pools of SYC's, NAC's and Summer Nationals. For example, in Y10 at Nationals, the first 4 seeds are the top four ranked fencers, the next seeds are fencers with ratings, and the next seeds are the other fencers with rankings, followed by unrated and unranked fencers. As a youth fencer, it is not that important to focus on national points, although some of the top fencers do factor this in. For Cadet, Junior, and Senior fencers, points matter to qualify for international tournaments and USA teams.

What is a rating, why do I want one and how do I get one?

Ratings are designed to indicate a fencer's ability. Fencers are rated from U (unrated) to E (the lowest rating) then up to A (the highest rating). Ratings are used to seed the pools at tournaments. At national tournaments, a combination of ratings and rankings are used to seed pools. Some events have rating eligibility requirements (for example, C and under), but these events are usually for older fencers. Whether or not you can earn a rating at a tournament depends on the number and quality of fencers. The rating classification chart is available at <http://askfred.net/#>

My question isn't here.

Ask the head coach. Or, one of the parents whose kid currently competes; we remember the beginning.