

Sword Play

Junior Brandon Benavides explains his favorite after-school activity: fencing

By Bella Bar-Yadin

Many kids dream of being in the Olympics. They spend their whole lives training in sports, such as swimming or gymnastics. Junior Brandon Benavides was first attracted to the art of fencing when he was 8 years old and watching the 2008 Beijing Olympics on television.

"For the few amount of people who do it, it's very competitive, it's very difficult, and you have to keep your concentration the whole time," Benavides said.

Benavides has been fencing since he was 9 years old, and all of his hard work really paid off. With the support of his family and friends, Benavides was ranked at the top of the charts with an A rating on Saturday, Sept. 10, 2015 that he won at a rated tournament.

"It makes me feel like all my work has paid being rated this high," Benavides said.

Junior Evan Jensen gladly talked about his friend's success.

"It's awesome to see him achieve so much," Jensen said.

"It's quite amazing because he was a great swimmer and quit to pursue fencing, which was completely unknown to him."

Benavides' longtime friend, junior Jim Foster, also agrees that he has had great success over the years.

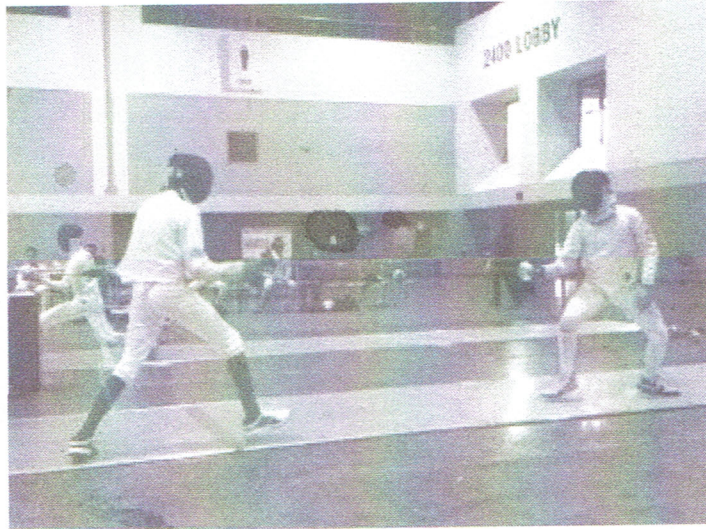
"He's been dedicated to fencing for years, and it shows," Foster said. "He places highly at his matches."

Benavides practices three times a week from 6 p.m. to 9 p.m. with the Olympian Fencing Club at the University of Incarnate Word. He is often up late doing homework after his practices.

"I've been able to balance the two fairly well so far, so I don't think it takes away from school," Benavides said.

Benavides thinks he wants to pursue fencing in college even though he admitted he isn't positive on where he would like to go. He also said he doesn't plan to pursue fencing as a job.

"I am probably not going to pursue it as a job as much as I love it; I would rather do



ANOTHER WIN: On Saturday, July 2, 2016, Junior Brandon Benavides fences opponent at the National Tournament of the summer at Columbus, Ohio. "I felt happy because I ended up getting the point and winning," Benavides said. PHOTO BY VELIZAR ILLIEV

something else and as for the Olympics," Benavides said. I'll leave that as a maybe."

Benavides hopes to pursue a career in the medical field. He's also thinking of studying biology or be a business major, but he hasn't decided completely yet.

"I've always wanted to do something related to business

or to open one up," Benavides said.

His coach of five years, Velizar Illiev, is also the head coach of Olympian Fencing Club at the University of Incarnate Word.

"I'm proud of him; he's grown a lot since he first started," Illiev said. *By Sydney Spillman*