

OLYMPIAN

FENCING CLUB

How to get the most out of strip coaching at tournaments

- Coaches are there to provide tactical and motivational support during the tournament. It is too late to provide technical guidance - that is what practice at the club is for.
- Tournaments are incredible learning experiences and coaches can point out things that fencers may not notice.
- If you have any questions during the tournament, seek out a coach and ask him/her.
- Oftentimes we have multiple fencers fencing simultaneously at tournaments across the same event or multiple events. Coaches do their best to provide strip coaching fairly amongst all participants but it is not always possible for a coach to be present during the entire duration of every bout. That is why it is also important for fencers to become knowledgeable about tactics, strategy, and learn how to "read" their opponents on their own.
 - Coaches will prioritize direct elimination (DE) bouts over pool bouts.
 - DE bouts for medal rounds will prioritize DE bouts in earlier rounds.
 - In general, coaches will prioritize providing guidance to younger/new fencers over more experienced fencers.
- No coaching is provided when teammates fence each other. Please be respectful and limit cheering for your fencer against a fellow teammate. Parents or other family members can provide water and guidance during breaks in DE bouts.

Before the Bout

- Find a coach and consult with him/her BEFORE you fence your bout. Once the bout starts, it's harder for a coach to provide more detailed tactical information.
- You can text coaches to let them know that you or your fencer is about to begin a bout but that does not always guarantee that a coach is available at that moment (e.g., a higher priority DE bout is taking place).
- If possible, watch your opponents before you fence them to help develop your tactical plans.

During the Bout

- Once the bout starts, the coach is limited in the guidance they can provide because the environment is hectic, stressful, and often a fencer cannot clearly hear the coach. Therefore, coaches usually keep their instructions very clear and direct: "Sit lower!", "Keep moving!", "Watch your distance!", "Move forward!" (when a fencer is at risk of going off the end of the strip), "You have 15 seconds left!", "Keep fighting!", etc..
- Fencers need to know:
 - the rules
 - how much time is remaining in the bout
 - who has priority
 - what P-cards are
 - if you are a lower initial seed than your opponent (and would lose in a tied P-black scenario for DEs)

When time is running out there may not be enough time for the coach to explain the situation to you during a bout so you need to be aware of the situation and the implications. Refer to tournament best practices for more details.

- Be sure to occasionally look back at the coach in between touches to check if there is something they want to communicate to you before the next touch. Coaches will typically stand behind you during bouts.
- More detailed tactical or technical advice can be distracting or confusing during a bout which is why it is usually avoided. Also, we don't want our opponent to hear what our strategy against them is. This is also why it is important to discuss strategy with the coach BEFORE the bout begins.
- During the 1 minute breaks the coaches will offer observations about what the opponent is doing, provide moral support, and point out potential opportunities.

After the Bout

- It is the fencers' responsibility to seek out the coach for a debrief after a bout where he/she has watched you fence. Coaches will NOT chase you down. Additionally, a coach will likely need to rush to another bout in progress to support another teammate and cannot waste time chasing after a fencer.
 - If you are too "hot" or emotional after a bout to talk about it right away, then take the time needed to calm down and then seek out a coach for guidance/debrief summary.
 - If you do not get a debrief from a coach, this is a wasted learning opportunity. If you're too emotional to get a debrief then it is very important to learn strategies to control your emotions - otherwise, it will be extremely difficult to be successful at tournaments.
- The best way to learn is to write journal entries about each bout. These entries should be done as soon as possible while the information is fresh. This is also a great format for reviewing bouts with coaches. Journal templates are available in the "Club Resources" page on our website.
- Be courteous and let the coaches know when you are leaving an event. Our expectation is that fencers stay as long as possible to support their fellow teammates still in the tournament before leaving. Fencers can also learn a tremendous amount by watching the later rounds of tournaments and what stronger fencers are doing to achieve those results. Do not waste this opportunity.