

## Rebecca Ward Interview

Contributed by Craig Harkins  
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Serge Timacheff of FencingPhotos.com catches up with Rebecca Ward the day after her historic Grand Prix win in Las Vegas.

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### Full Transcript:

Interviewer: Becca Ward, great job last night here in Las Vegas at the Grand Prix. What a fabulous win for you.

Rebecca Ward: Thank you very much. It was really a fun tournament.

Interviewer: I don't &ndash; when was the last time you got into a final or a semi-final with Tan?

Rebecca Ward: Actually, in Hanoi we were &ndash; she won a second in that competition.

Interviewer: So what was it that you did this time to overcome what you didn't last time? What was it that led you to have such a crushing victory of 15-7?

Rebecca Ward: Well, the entire tournament yesterday I was working my attack a lot more. My coach said that I finished more attacks last night than I had in the last two years. So I think that helped a little bit.

Interviewer: So how do you achieve that in your training? How do you &ndash; what do you work on that allows to more of a psychological factor or is it more of a physical factor?

Rebecca Ward: A little bit of both. Usually I'm really afraid to get hit in preparation so I just make myself short and depend on my defense. But I don't know. I guess it was just working for me last night.

Interviewer: You were in the zone, apparently, all day is from what I heard.

Rebecca Ward: It was a good day yesterday.

Interviewer: Yeah. So what's coming up next for you here?

Rebecca Ward: We have the final \_\_\_\_\_ later today and then some nationals. Then we have a little bit of a \_\_\_\_\_ for a little bit.

Interviewer: What's it like for summer nationals? Do you need to change to sort of switch gears, defense your fellow Americans there and to go and do like \_\_\_\_\_ one or is it &ndash; is it pretty much the same kind of approach that you take to the Grand Prix circuit?

Rebecca Ward: Well, every competition you want to go and you want to fence your best no matter who you're fencing. So it really shouldn't be that different of an approach. There's a little bit less on the line for me there, so it'll be a little more relaxing and a little more fun in the tournament.

Interviewer: So the summer is then coming upon you and you're gonna be &ndash; are you going to the Pan American Games did you say?

Rebecca Ward: I'm not going to the Pan American Games.

Interviewer: Then during the summer, you'll be doing what to keep in shape and train?

Rebecca Ward: Well, we have a little bit of a break after some nationals. Then after we take a little bit of a rest, we'll get back to training, a lot of conditioning, more than the actual circuit, but a lot of conditioning, a lot about \_\_\_\_\_, general preparation up until \_\_\_\_\_.

Interviewer: Obviously, you live a bit of a stage door life as a teenager and with this huge competition circuit around the world. What do you do for school?

Rebecca Ward: I'm actually home schooled, but I have a lot of correspondence classes and I end up taking most of them with me on trips.

Interviewer: And you actually get the time to study when you're travelling?

Rebecca Ward: I allegedly do, yeah.

Interviewer: So then, the next big competition for the next season will obviously be St. Petersburg for you. So talk to us a little bit about St. Petersburg and what your thoughts are for preparation for that.

Rebecca Ward: Well, this will be my third World & Senior World Championship so I'm just gonna take it like I took the others, lots of preparation, conditioning, make sure I'm in a good state of mind and just have fun with it.

Interviewer: Is it too soon right now & I know we're in the qualification \_\_\_\_\_ already, but is it too soon to really start thinking about the Olympics? Are you trying just take it a touch at a time or what is it that goes through your head in terms of preparation for the Olympic Games?

Rebecca Ward: Well, in a competition itself, I try to never look too far ahead. So right now, look at the Olympics, which is a year and a half away, is a little premature. It's a little overwhelming. So I try to keep it in the moment.

Interviewer: Tell us a little bit about your kind of & I realize there's maybe not a week for you, but tell us a little bit about your & what you do for training and what the typical training day and week for you stay in shape and to keep at the peak of your performance.

Rebecca Ward: Well, every day we have fencing practice from 5:00 to 7:30. I get three or four private lessons a week, and then three or four days a week I go and I workout privately for cross training.

Interviewer: What do you do for cross training?

Rebecca Ward: I do everything, like \_\_\_\_\_ sprints, like weights, core work.

Interviewer: What would be your favorite sport if you weren't fencing?

Rebecca Ward: I really like volleyball actually, volleyball. But if I had to do another sport, I'd do tennis.

Interviewer: Why is that?

Rebecca Ward: I'm kind of short and there are some good endorsement deals for tennis.

Interviewer: Tell us about video refereeing. This is something I ask all the athletes and I'm getting different responses from different people. How is video refereeing working for you? What do you like about it? What do you not like about it?

Rebecca Ward: I like it. I think it's a good thing because there are some & some of the referees will just like make an immediate call and then like in their head you can see like, "Oh, no, that was wrong." So the video replay gives them a chance to get a little bit of a second break. I think it cannot really be abused, but it gets a little tedious if like there are a lot reversals. It really interrupts the flow of the bout. Also, there are some referees that they will not reverse their call come hell or high water and so it just really antagonizes them. So like anything, it has its drawbacks, but on a whole, I like it.

Interviewer: And what about wireless? Wireless has been around for sabre longer than any other weapon. Is it something you just don't even think about anymore at this point?

Rebecca Ward: It's \_\_\_\_\_ like we all bring our wireless tee shirts. It's gotten pretty painless.

- Interviewer: I always forget that there's a wireless tee shirt. How does that fit? Where does it go within your jacket and lamé and everything else?
- Rebecca Ward: You wear it like you would wear a regular tee shirt, but it has to be \_\_\_\_\_ getting contact.
- Interviewer: What's the purpose for that? For conductivity? For grounding? Do you know?
- Rebecca Ward: Pass.
- Interviewer: Okay. 'Cause I'm not sure. An interesting question. Oh, if you could change something about video refereeing what would it be — I'm sorry — about wireless? What would it be?
- Rebecca Ward: It's pretty good. I really don't have any complaints before. My bayonet body cords would never work on it, but they \_\_\_\_\_ two prongs. So I don't really have any problems with it.
- Interviewer: What has been your favorite venue this year to fencing? Which place did you like fencing the most? Why?
- Rebecca Ward: I think this venue is really nice because it's very AC.
- Interviewer: Here in Las Vegas?
- Rebecca Ward: Yeah. Here in Las Vegas the air conditioning is really nice. Just coming from Vietnam and China where it was very hot and very humid, it's nice. But then again, we're in Las Vegas. I actually really like the venue in Orleans because they were so into fencing and it was really nice to be in there versus a little obscure basketball gym.
- Interviewer: Obviously, with the success that you've had, you've had a lot of attention and you seem to be very calm and very modest and it doesn't go to your head, whereas, for a lot of people, they might have become a little more arrogant or — but you stayed the kind of down to Earth person that you are. How does that kind of fame and attention affect you?
- Rebecca Ward: Well, fencing doesn't change me. I am who I am no matter how I do. Fencing isn't really what defines me. So if I'm really good at fencing, I'm still the same person and I don't see a reason why I should act any differently.
- Interviewer: Let's say that — this is another question that I ask everybody. But let's say you're in St. Petersburg and you make the final, you've already had this experience in the World Championship. Let's say you're in St. Petersburg, you make the final, who is the person you would least like to have standing at the other end of the strip as your opponent?
- Rebecca Ward: Hmm. Well, honestly, it would be probably be Mariel because I always fence her. I wouldn't get coached at all. I wouldn't get coached against Sada either, but I fence Mariel so much that it's like — I want her to do well and I want to do well obviously, so it's like — it may happen. I don't know. It'd be nice — it's so nice to have a crowd for you. It's so nice to get the energy and the momentum from everyone that — fencing in American is more like just in your head, kind of can you do this, can you be there, up there by yourself with no one there to help you. So honestly, I'd rather not fence Sada, Mariel, or whoever we have on the force.
- Interviewer: Is that uncertain at this point?
- Rebecca Ward: That is very uncertain at this point. Our fourth and fifth, \_\_\_\_\_ and Katie Thompson, I believe, are seven points apart at the moment. \_\_\_\_\_ will determine who's on the team.
- Interviewer: So that's a big race.
- Rebecca Ward: It is. It's exciting.
- Interviewer: From a team standpoint, since we're talking about team, there's a difference in how you approach team because of the strategy and who you place as the anchor, who you place, maybe who you trade in as an alternate, who the opposing team is, how do you guys approach that problem?
- Rebecca Ward: Well, we take it by bout, who's having a good day, which team we're fencing if we're fencing. If Mariel can fence the Polish people very, very, very well, we'll put her as anchor. If we're fencing Ukraine, and Sada can always decimate someone, we put Sada in. If fencing China, and I can do well, it depends on who's fencing well, who we're fencing, and certainly what the day has entailed.
- Interviewer: I'm also really interested to understand your personal experience of transitioning from being a cadet

and junior fencer to the seniors. How is transition &ndash; how would you describe that transition? To go from all of a sudden to be thrown into the world ranks and then, of course, to come out on top of them, that&rsquo;s the really amazing thing for you. But how would you describe that general experience of the transition from the juniors to the seniors?

Rebecca Ward: I&rsquo;d say it&rsquo;s kind of a blurry line. &lsquo;Cause I did my first Senior World Cup when I was &ndash; when I had just turned 14. I did &ndash; what was it &ndash; two years &ndash; I did just the cadet and juniors, \_\_\_\_\_ been like &ndash; \_\_\_\_\_ like two years left in cadet, I started the senior circuit. I did well in it. I didn&rsquo;t like always go out the first day. So it really hasn&rsquo;t been that black and white of a change.

It&rsquo;s more been kind of gradual slide to the point where I was fencing Cadet World Championships a junior team through senior events. So it really hasn&rsquo;t been that much of a, &ldquo;Huh! Oh, my gosh, I&rsquo;m a senior!&rdquo; Although, being \_\_\_\_\_ cadet right now is kind of weird for me &lsquo;cause I always remember being a 10-year-old and thinking, &ldquo;Oh, my God! I get to fence cadet now!&rdquo;

Interviewer: And how old are you now?

Rebecca Ward: I&rsquo;m 17 right now.

Interviewer: This year in Turkey, they seem like they had some very, very strong fencers. Have you seen the Junior World rankings improve in quality overall?

Rebecca Ward: Oh, definitely. Fencing is always improving. If you look back at it, when I first started like ten, there were seven people, and now there&rsquo;s like forty. The field&rsquo;s getting deeper. The competitors are getting stronger. There&rsquo;s more seasoned athletes. It&rsquo;s definitely improving.

Interviewer: So for all of those other junior fencers out there who look up to you and who are working on their own game, what bit of advice would you have for them to &ndash; from someone who has achieved so much &ndash; what would you tell them are the two or three most important things that they can work on to become better fencers? Assuming they&rsquo;re sabre fencers for now.

Rebecca Ward: I would say make sure you have your techniques down well. But mainly, I&rsquo;d say just work hard and make sure that you&rsquo;re enjoying fencing because you can put in all the hours, but if you don&rsquo;t really love it, you&rsquo;re not going to go anywhere.

Interviewer: Anything else you&rsquo;d like to share?

Rebecca Ward: It always helps to have a good attack and preparation.

Interviewer: Okay. Well, thank you very much and good luck with the season.

Rebecca Ward: Thank you very much.

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