

Poland, France win Team golds; US Men fall early

Contributed by Cindy Bent Findlay
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In St. Petersburg, Russia today, the teams from Poland and France took away the final gold medals from the 2007 World Fencing Championships.

The French men's epee team bested Italy 45-38 to win the gold, and the Polish women's foil team carried the day over Russia 26-25.

The U.S. men's team of Seth Kelsey (26, Brush Prairie, Wash.), Cody Mattern (26, Colorado Springs, Colo.), Soren Thompson (26, San Diego, Calif.) and Benjamin Ungar (21, Bronx, N.Y.) were upset in their first match of the day, by 24th-ranked Sweden, 45-33.

As this match was in the round of 32, the ninth-seeded U.S. squad was eliminated from further placement rounds and would finish the day placed 17th.

Both Canada and Venezuela finished ahead of the U.S. men, which could be a setback in the squad's attempt to qualify for Beijing in the epee fencing event.

In the women's foil event, a shocking loss by Italy to Japan by the bizarre score of 17-16 in the quarterfinals left the world's top-ranked women's foil team reeling.

The U.S. team of Emily Cross (20, New York, N.Y.), Erinn Smart (27, New

York, N.Y.) Hanna Thompson (23, Rochester, N.Y.) and Iris Zimmermann (26, Rush, N.Y.) lost their first match, to Romania, by the heartbreaking score of 29-28.

They won their next placement match, against the team from the Ukraine, 32-26, and then dug in and achieved a 28-27 victory against a tough Korean team. Finally, the U.S. women lost to France 24-19 in their last placement-round match to finish tenth.

The U.S. foilists finished ahead of their nearest rival for Olympic qualification, Venezuela. After World Championships, the U.S. women are ranked seventh, well ahead of Venezuela. The U.S. men's epeeists are ranked ninth, behind seventh-ranked Venezuela.

Overall, it was a rough Championships for the U.S. team, which did not earn any top-three or top-four finish this year. Last year, the team won four

medals overall.