

Profile: New Jersey Fencing

Contributed by Jeff Savit
Wednesday, 28 November 2007

This is the first in a series of locally-focused articles and profiles of fencing in various communities in the United States. This profile focuses on New Jersey's fencing community.

New Jersey is the most densely populated state in the US, and maybe that's why it has such a full tournament schedule as well. The division has over 150 scheduled events spread throughout the calendar year, from the season openers in August, and the "Fall Festival of Fencing", to the Hayfever Open in the summer.

Most events are hosted by the division's clubs, with a few "division run" events like the annual Denise O'Connor tournaments, and the Summer National and Junior Olympics qualifiers. The division's Tournament Committee meets before the season to plan the schedule and ensure that events are spread out to avoid having multiple tournaments for the same weapon on the same weekend.

There is very strong representation in age group competitions from age 10 and up. These events often have very high attendance and visibility. This season there are over 30 youth tournaments on the schedule - some of which offer 3 weapon events for both age groups in multiple age categories.

The division has several keynote events held every year. Most prominent of these is the Denise O'Connor High School and Youth Tournaments in honor of the 2 time Olympian, Pan-American medalist, captain of national champion Salle Santelli teams, and Brooklyn College coach. This pair of events attracts talent from throughout the region for emerging high school and age group fencers. The recent Denise O'Connor high school tournament had 245 fencers competing over two days, with new classifications awarded (including 3 new "B"s). We also hold a "Fall Festival of Fencing", and a "Hayfever Open" in all weapons to bracket the season. New Jersey residents can also fence in the Garden State Games fencing event held in the summer.

One of the features of the division is the "New Jersey Cup" awarded to the top fencer in each event, based on results in the major division events (the Fall Festival, the Hay Fever Open and the Division Championship) and one designated event per weapon per club. This fosters strong events, as it encourages fencers to compete and gain Cup points even in events where they can't gain in classification.

The growth in events and schedules has been dramatic over the last few years - with 5 times as many tournaments as there were only 5 years ago, and with much larger attendance at each event. Fencers in any age group or weapon can have a full competitive schedule in New Jersey, throughout the year.

Coming up in future features: a closeup on tournaments and clubs.

If you would like to provide an article featuring your club, division, or large regional tournament, please contact us via email: [webmaster AT fencing.net](mailto:webmaster@fencing.net).