

Olympic Team Qualifications - US Men's Epee Falls Short

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March marks the last month for earning points to qualify teams and individuals for the 2008 Olympic Fencing competitions in Beijing.

The last Men's Epee team competition was held in Stockholm on March 9th, which sealed the fate for the US squad and one more event remains for the men's and women's sabre squads to attempt to change their seeding, but at this point most of the team spots are set.

How Team Qualification Works:

8 teams will compete in the following fencing disciplines at the Beijing Olympics: Men's and Women's Sabre, Women's Foil, and Men's Epee. The teams qualify being in the top 4 in the world rankings as of April 1st and then the next 4 slots go to the next highest ranked team in each of the Olympic regions (Americas, Europe, Asia/Oceania, Africa.)

The practical upshot is that some very good European teams will not be able to compete in the Olympics and some really bad teams will be in for the sake of geographic representation.

Who's In?

Women's Sabre

The US women's team is assured a bid as they are tied for 2nd in the world with Russia at 328 points and well behind France. With two team events remaining, the US has a chance to determine if they will face off against Korea or Canada in their opening match. No matter what, they look to be locked in the 2/3 position, which puts them against Russia in the semi-finals with the winner to face the winner of the France/China side of the table.

Last in - Tunisia, 17th in the world with 82 world cup points (to France's 372.) Last out - Poland, the #6 ranked team had too much ground to make up, being 68 points behind #5 Ukraine for the European at-large bid.

Qualification table - Women's Sabre (as of March 12, 2008)

World Rank	Country	Points
1	France	372
2	United States	328

3
Russia
328

4
China
318

5
Ukraine
298

7
Korea
224

9
Canada
193

17
Tunisia
82

Men's Sabre

The last team event in Algeria will be a battle among the European sabre powers as only 8 world cup points separate three countries from the European at-large bid. China is barely in the #4 spot (4 points ahead of the #5 ranked Belarussia), which lets Korea in at the Asian at-large bid.

The US is well ahead of Canada, so they will be the Americas at-large and the #7 seed for the tournament.

In Algeria on the 20th several teams will be fighting it out. Belorussia, Italy, and the Ukraine are out for the European at-large bid and if one of them breaks seed and gets to the semi-finals, then they should earn enough points to go. Korea will be cheering for China to do well so that they stay in the top-4.

On the bubble - Italy is #6 with 200 points and the Ukraine is #7 with 196 points.

Qualification table - Men's Sabre (as of March 12, 2008)

World Rank
Country
Points

1
France
272

2
Hungary
242

3
Russia
228

4
China
208

5
Belarus
204

8
Korea
188

9
United States
159

16
Eqypt
96

Women's Foil

The women's foil field is set, with only an individual tournament left for entry into the individual events. Women's foil saw a very competitive race, with 6 of the top 8 teams in the world coming out of Europe. The top 4 teams are all European, which left France out in the cold by 2 points to Germany for the at-large bid. The US team stayed 4 spots (and 44 points) ahead of Venezuela to gain the Americas at-large entry and will be the #7 seed for the tournament.

Qualification table - Women's Foil (as of March 12, 2008)

World Rank
Country
Points

1
Russia

388

2
Poland
3263
Hungary
3204
Italy
3125
China
2566
Germany
2328
United States
22819
Eqypt
68

Men's Epee

A poor performance at the 2007 World Championships put the US Men's Epee team well behind Venezuela to start the 2007-2008 season. The US placed ahead of Venezuela at the last tournament, but it wasn't enough to overcome a 12 point deficit in world cup standings, so the US Men's Epee team misses out on the Olympics and the focus will be on one of the US team to qualify for the individual event.

Europe is home to 7 of the top 8 teams in the world in this event, so the #6 Germany and #7 Russia will be left out.

Qualification table - Men's Epee (as of March 12, 2008)

World Rank
Country
Points

1
France
356

2
Hungary
352

3
Italy
348

4
Poland
276

5
Ukraine
234

8
Venezuela
210

10
Korea
201

19
South Africa
100