

France Well Positioned for Beijing

Contributed by Craig Harkins
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The French fencing teams are designed around the team events, which showed when final qualifications were posted on the International Fencing Federation (FIE) site this week. Though France failed to qualify a team in women's foil, they end the qualifying process ranked at #1 for the remaining three team events: Women's Sabre, Men's Sabre, and Men's Epee.

The top four teams in the rankings on March 31 automatically qualify for the Games and the highest-ranked team from each of the four geographical zones also earn berths for the Olympic Games (Aug. 8-24.)

The US qualified teams in 3 of four team events, losing out to regional rival Venezuela for the Americas zonal spot in the men's team epee event.

The US qualified one fencer for the individual men's epee event (Seth Kelsey, ranked 11th) and qualified one fencer for the individual events of men's foil (Gerek Meinhardt, 16th) and women's epee (Kelley Hurley, 31st).

Competition for individual Olympic slots was fierce with #6 ranked Andrea Cassara and #9 ranked Simone Vanni of Italy shut out of Olympic consideration because their teammates were ranked #1 and #3. Also out are former medalist Maureen Nisima and gold medalist Timea Nagy.

A total of 212 athletes will take part in Beijing's fencing competition. Each country is allowed a maximum of 3 fencers for weapons in which there is a team event and two for individual events.

Zonal qualifying events, which take place in April and May, will provide further competitors.