

## FIE Press Conference Notes August 9th

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Rene Roch held a press conference today as he promoted the advances of the FIE over the past few years. At the same time Roch highlighted advances on the technology and fairness of fencing as well as the advances of non-European nations to show that fencing is a modern and worldwide sport.

At the same time, Roch attempted to downplay the Baldini doping scandal and avoided a rehash of the incident that prompted the video replay system now in place at the Olympic Games.

Some notes from Roch's statements and answers to press questions:

- In Beijing, fencing is contested in one venue and not two, which makes the event easier on the fencers and spectators
- All 4 of the pistes are fully recorded, up from only 1 piste in Athens
- The technology of the visor (or lexan) mask is moving forward to all weapons
- The sport is no longer dominated by Europe. The fact that a fencer from an African nation (Besbes) made the top 8 and the dominance of the United States team in women's sabre was held out to be proof.
- Video refereeing is pretty much perfected and provides the ability to better educate the spectators as they can see on the replays why a fencer earned a point.
- The task at hand is to gain two more medals for fencing so that events do not have to be eliminated.

On Baldini:

- Fencing has become a big sport and there is now a doping scandal. This is not the publicity that the FIE wants, but it does show that the FIE is working as hard as any sport to keep the athletes clean
- Baldini is suspended until his hearing. The hearing is scheduled for September 3rd when Baldini will be allowed to put up his defense.
- There was most likely no conspiracy, but rather Baldini was not being very careful.
- It is amusing to look through the doping control forms and see that almost every athlete is on some sort of medicine. You would think they were sick up there on the piste.

On China and the US:

- The Chinese did well. The US team have been champions for years and in fencing bout experience helps greatly.

(I guess someone forgot to tell Besbes that she didn't have enough bout experience to defeat Perrus!)

Takeaways:

Video refereeing is seen as a large improvement and as a way to make sure that referees do not unduly influence the outcome of the match. Fencers who were asked about the video replay were in favor of it and felt that it led to the correct calls being made.

The lexan mask is still hailed as a very positive marketing development but questions were raised about why it is taking so long to get the mask to all three weapons.

Doping may become an issue in the future. After the Olympics attention should be paid to Baldini's hearing. He could be suspended from competitive fencing for some time, which would have impacts on the Italian team.