

## Ward Completes Sweep for US Women

Contributed by Craig Harkins  
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Rebecca Ward won a closely contested bronze medal bout to complete the sweep of the women's sabre medals by the United States. Early in the match, Velikaya had stayed ahead. Ward admitted that she was a bit hung up on her semifinal loss to Mariel Zagunis but pulled through in the end with a 15-14 victory over Velikaya. The bronze medal bout features Rebecca Ward of the United States vs. Sofia Velikaya of Russia. How will the fencers respond their semifinal losses?

The first touch is close, but awarded to Velikaya on the attack. Becca takes the next point attacking into the Russian. Velikaya continues attacking and scores the next 4 points and Ward is quickly down 5-1. The next point has Becca taking it to Velikaya but the referee awards the attack to the Russian which survives a replay protest. Becca pushes Velikaya down to the end of the strip, pulls her back and then makes the attack to regain some momentum.

Another quick attack and then a beautiful skyhook puts Becca back in the game 4-6. She follows it up with a long attack and now is down one but may be gaining momentum. At 6-5 Velikaya catches Ward short to go up 7-5, then catches Becca's blade and riposts to be up by 3 at the break.

8-5 Velikaya

After a brief talk with coach Ed Korfanty, Ward waits on piste for the second period to begin.

Ward starts off the period taking an attack to Velikaya for a one-lighter. The next action has both fencers closing and the referee throws it out. Becca continues to press and another attack is called, and protested. The call is upheld and it's 7-8 for Becca. On the next point Ward drives to the end of the strip, but it is one light for Velikaya. Another long attack and this time Ward hits. It is 8-9 favoring Velikaya.

Velikaya gets off a step quicker to get to 10 and then attacks again for a 3 point lead. After moving back and forth Ward catches the riposte to make it 9-11. The referee isn't sure of the blade action on the next point and goes directly to the replay box. The call ends up Becca's way to whistles of protest from the Russian crowd.

Becca takes the next attack and ties up the match. Both jump out of the gate on the next Allez. After one simultaneous call the fencers play out the same action, but this time V held her arm back. Attack to Ward. Ward follows up with a riposte and takes the lead to 13-11.

Velikaya wins the next point on the attack and then both fencers dance back and forth across the strip. After multiple blade actions Velikaya pulls off a riposte and it's tied at 13. Again, both fencers go and again Velikaya pulls her arm back. It's match point for Ward. Velikaya won't go easily, however, and ties it up with an attack of her own. 14 all.

Quick actions by both, with Ward accelerating and taking over the attack. "Please don't hit the guard" was Becca's main thought going for the attack. No guard, just target and Ward wins 15-14.