

Tagliariol Ends Gold Medal Drought for Italy

Contributed by Craig Harkins
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Matteo Tagliariol (pictured, right) came into his first Olympics with dreams of being a modern day d'Artagnan and bringing home Italy's first gold medal in this event in 48 years. Fabrice Jeannet came to Beijing to best his 5th place finish in 2004 and secure his name among France's great fencers.

The Italian was the lone survivor of an upset ridden elimination table and the Frenchman was the prime architect of the upheaval. In the round of 16, Matteo Tagliariol was the highest seed remaining and Fabrice Jeannet was the lowest seed to survive. In the gold medal bout the #4 Italian would match up against the 27th seeded Frenchman

"Others dream of being footballers. I dreamed of being d'Artagnan and I kept on dreaming for 25 years," said the 25 year old Tagliariol, when asked about his inspiration coming into his first Olympic Games.

The bronze medal was won by Jose Luis Abajo (ESP) who bested Gabor Boczko (HUN) in the penultimate bout of the evening.

Earlier in the day Jeannet began his bid for a medal by engaging in what he characterized a "street fight" with Sergey Katchurin of Khirgiz, a brawl that he narrowly escaped 15-14. He built on the early success by besting 6 seed Seth Kelsey 15-11 then was firmly in control with a 15-7 win over Canadian Tikhomirov and then a 15-11 over #3 seed and medal favorite Jung Jin Sun (KOR).

Jeannet's older brother, Jerome, will have to rely on his teammates for a medal in the team epee competition. The #1 seed lost to semifinalist Jose Luis Abajo (ESP) in the round of 16.

Matteo Tagliariol came into the day looking for a chance to give Italy it's first individual men's epee gold in 40 years. He was left alone to continue the quest as teammate Alfredo Rota lost his first bout by stepping off of the end of the piste. Tagliariol was never challenged until facing his semifinal match against Abajo, but even then seemed in control with a 7-3 second period to put him ahead 11-9. He would end the match winning 15-12. Earlier the young Italian defeated Norwegian Sturta Torkildsen then sent Robeiri of France packing with a 12-5 second period to win 15-11 which was the same score in his quarterfinal win over Dutch fencer Bas Verwijlen.

Tagliariol and Jeannet fought a hard match, but the Italian fencer was ready for Jeannet's speed and matched it with quickness of his own. Tagliariol let the first period 7-3 and never let Jeannet gain enough momentum to put the bout in question. At the end, the Italian epeeist put the exclamation point on his victory with a strong attack on Jeannet to secure the gold medal in a 15-9 victory.

[Read here for recaps of the final four bouts.](#)