

Smart Rallies - US to Fence for Gold

Contributed by Craig Harkins
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The US men's sabre team of Jason Rogers, Tim Morehouse, and Keeth Smart rallied from a 35-40 deficit to defeat Russia 45-44 in the semifinal round of the Olympic men's team sabre competition. The United States will face France for the Gold medal.

{sidebar id=1}The win against the Russian team of Nikolay Kovalev, Alexey Yakimenko, and Stanislav Pozdniakov, had defeated the United States' team 45-44 at the Athens Olympics in 2004. This match at the 2008 Games was a mirror image over Athens, as then Pozdniakov was the one to overcome a 40-35 lead held by Smart.

Early in the match, the US climbed to a 15-9 lead, but then an 11-4 bout by Yakimenko would put Russia up 20-19. The Russians continued to push the lead and held a 7 point margin going into the last two bouts. Morehouse worked to close the gap against Yakimenko, and won the 7-5 bout to put the US within 5.

"When you've got Keeth Smart closing for you, you just have to keep it close. He's been holding it down for US fencing for the longest time" said Morehouse. "He deserves this win."

Smart entered the match down 5 and quickly went on a 9-4 run to come within a point. Russia held match point at 44-43 and Pozdniakov thought that he had won the match on a parry-ripsoste.

Officials called back the point, however, because it had occurred after play was called dead due to Smart stepping off of the piste prior to the action. The visibly upset Pozdniakov stepped back on strip and Smart promptly scored the next point to tie the match at 44. A few tense seconds later and the match was decided in Smart's favor as he landed the final blow.

In the other semifinal match France defeated Italy 45-41.