

## US Men Take Silver in Team Sabre

Contributed by Craig Harkins  
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The United States team of James Williams, Keeth Smart, Jason Rogers, and Tim Morehouse took the Silver medal today in the 2008 Olympic men's team sabre competition. The heavily favored French team of Nicolas Lopez, Julien Pillet, and Boris Sanson won the match 45-37.

{sidebar id=1}Nicolas Pillet won the Bronze medal in the 2008 Olympic men's individual foil competition. Pillet is ranked 13th in the world and Sason 22nd. The French team had defeated the United States 45-44 in semifinal match of the 2004 Athens Olympics.

France jumped on the US fencers right from the start amassing a quick 5-1 lead. Over 5 bouts they extended the lead to 25-16. Smart would come to the strip in his anchor role down 28-40.

Smart and Pillet traded touches, and then Smart started to make a run, reeling off 6 straight points, one time running Pillet off of the end of the strip until Pillet scored the 44th touch on a flunge. Smart would score again but then Pillet scored the final point to end the hopes of a third US comeback.

Fencing in his first Olympic bout, James Williams went right after the more experienced French fencers. "Surprisingly, I didn't feel very nervous. I was actually more nervous watching. It's all very surreal and hasn't really set in yet." Earlier in the year Williams had been within one touch of Pillet in world cup competition, losing a direct elimination bout 15-14.

This result marks the 6th fencing medal won by the United States at the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games, and the 26th overall medal in US fencing history. The United States came in 2nd in overall fencing medal count behind Italy's 7. France is 3rd with 4 medals.

Keeth Smart joins sister Erinn as an Olympic medalist. The women's foil squad of Erinn, Hanna Thompson, and Emily Cross, with alternate Doris Willette, won the silver medal the night before. The medal win by the women's squad provided extra inspiration to the men's sabre team for today.

In the Bronze medal bout Russia and Italy held a close match. Russia started off strong, but Italy held close and the Russians held a two point lead heading into the final bout of the Bronze medal match. Team anchors Pozdniakov (RUS) and Montano (ITA) squared off. Montano came back to tie the match at 42. Pozdniakov then took the next two points. After a brilliant riposte by Montano and then a quick attack, the score was deadlocked at 44-all. Montano scored the final point on an attack to give Italy the Bronze medal.

Earlier in the day, the US defeated reigning world champion Hungary 45-44 and followed it up by dispatching 3rd ranked Russia 45-44. In both matches US anchor Smart overcame deficits to put the US team ahead and win those matches. Against Hungary Smart overcame a 4 point deficit and against Russia a 5 point margin.

"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.

The bout vs. Russia was a mirror image replay of their match at the 2004 Athens Olympics. In that match, the US went into the 9th period holding a 40-35 lead, but Russian anchor Stanislav Pozdniakov coolly came back to beat Smart and

the US team 45-44.