Fencing Facts

1. Fencing is one of only four sports to be included in every modern Olympic Games, since the first in 1896. Fencing was also a sport in the original Olympic Games in ancient Greece.

2. Baron Pierre de Coubertin, the father of the modern Olympic Games, was a fencer.

3. The tip of the fencing weapon is the second fastest moving object in sport; the first is the marksman's bullet.

4. Fencing is conducted on a 14m x 2m "strip" or "piste" to replicate combat in confined quarters such as a castle hallway. The end of the fencing strip represents the line drawn in the earth by duelists' seconds: to retreat behind this line during the duel indicated cowardice and loss of honor.

5. The 750 gram weight test used to ensure a touch is scored with sufficient force is based on the amount of tension required to break the skin. In a duel, honor was done when blood was first drawn -- even if from a minor wound such as a blister.

6. The target area in sabre, originally a cavalry weapon, is from the waist up because it is contrary to the rules of chivalry to injure an opponent's horse.

7. There was originally no time limit on a fencing bout, until a Masters Championship bout in New York in the 1930s lasted for seven hours. Thereafter, bouts were limited to 30 minutes. Today, the time-limit has been reduced to just 3 minutes for 5-touch bouts and 9 minutes for 15 touches.

8. Fencers wear white uniforms because before the advent of electronic scoring, touches were recorded on the white surface with a wad of ink-soaked cotton on the tips of the weapons.

9. Famous Fencers: Bruce Dickinson, the lead singer of Iron maiden - foil. Neil Diamond, entertainer - sabre. Prince Albert of Monaco - sabre. Andrew Jackson fought a duel of honor with swords. General George Patton, competed in fencing in the 1912 Olympics and once owned a riding crop with a blade in the handle made by Georgio Santelli, New York fencing instructor and equipment manufacturer. Movie stars Jerry O'Connell - saber, Madonna, Catherine Zeta-Jones, Tom Cruise, Will Smith and Dennis Haysbert. And suprisingly, soccer star David Beckham!

10. The New York Fencers Club, founded in 1883, is the oldest continuous running club devoted exclusively to fencing in the U.S.

11. The first electronic scoring machine for fencing was invented in 1936 by Alfred Skrobisch, an engineering student at Columbia and a future U.S. Olympian.

12. In April 2003, Men's Saber Keeth Smart became the first United States Fencer to acheive a Number 1 World Ranking. He was quickly joined by Sada Jacobson, who claimed the Number 1 spot in Women's Saber, and still holds that spot going into the Athens Games.

13. Mariel Zagunis (Beaverton, Ore.) is the first fencer in the world to hold four World Championships titles in one season: 2001 Cadet World Champion, 2001 Junior World Champion, 2001 Junior Team Champion, and 2000 Women's Sabre Team World Champion.

14. Women's Foil was added to the events at the Olympic Games in 1924. Women's Epee was added in 1996. The 2004 Olympic Game in Athens, Greece was the first time that Women's Sabre was an official part of the Olympic program. United States Fencers Mariel Zagunis and Sada Jacobson won Gold and Bronze in the women's sabre event at Athens.

15. Athens was the first Olympics in 100 years at which the United States won a gold medal in fencing. And it was the 20 year anniversary of the last bronze medal, which was won in 1984 by Peter Westbrook- men's sabre.