

**USA FENCING VETERANS COMMITTEE
CHAIR'S REPORT TO THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS
JUNE 20, 2024**

COMMITTEE COMPOSITION 2023-24

The current committee includes nine voting members: Chuck Alexander, Valerie Asher (chair), Creston Bailey, Keith Baker, Jane Carter, David Hitchcock, Ed Kaihatusu, Jude Offerle, and Kate Sierra. Rita Comes, US representative to the FIE Veterans Council participates ex officio. Vic Bianchini, who now represents Portugal internationally, serves ex officio as a voice for V80 fencers. Abdel Salem and Phil Andrews participate as board and staff liaison respectively.

The Veterans Committee represents the interests of athletes across three weapons and five different age categories. It is therefore important to look at the composition of the committee across gender, age category, and weapon. While several of the committee members compete in more than one weapon, their main weapon is considered in the analysis below. The voting members include:

- 5 men and 4 women
- 2 foilists, 2 sabreurs, 4 epeeists
- 4 V50, 3 V60, 2 V70

This season's committee includes six members who have served this committee previously and three new members.

There is the potential to add members to the committee as athlete representatives through the Athlete Council. This route may be used to add additional members to create balance among the viewpoints listed above.

2023 VETERAN WORLD CHAMPIONSHIPS - DAYTONA BEACH

While the Veterans Committee was not directly responsible for the planning and execution of the 2023 Veteran World Championships, we want to acknowledge the many people who made this an outstanding event. Team USA was directly supported by Kaitlyn Litten, Donald Alperstein, Al Merritt, Bryan Wendell, Nicole Kirk and Dr. Chris Dean. Because this World Championships was hosted by the US, a much bigger group also deserves thanks - the tireless staff from the National Office working under our CEO Phil Andrews and our National Events Director Glen Hollingsworth; the armory staff under Ted Li; Dan Berke who was on-site for Fencing Time; David Blake, Maggie Dull and all the computer replay and IT staff; Dr Miriam Zakary and the rest of the medical staff; and the Americans who participated in the Directoire Technique - Jennifer Yamen, Selina Kaing, and Rita Comes. A special thanks to Shiela and Kim from Art of Fencing Wear who designed a t-shirt for the team and to Absolute Fencing and Leon Paul for offering

discounts for team members. We also want to acknowledge the many members of the US Veteran Fencing community who showed up to volunteer and cheer for Team USA.

Team USA had an outstanding showing, topping the medal count with 24 medals: 13 gold, 4 silver, and 7 bronze, with 20 in the individual events and 4 in the team events.

US VETERAN WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP TEAMS - WEAPON SQUAD CAPTAIN SELECTION PROCESS

Since 2014, Veteran World Fencing Championships has included a team event. Each country can have up to two fencers in each of three age groups (V50, V60, V70). During the competition each of the six weapon squads needs to have a team captain. While fencers have served as team captain (sometimes while fencing in the event) it is now more common that some of the personal coaches (whose expenses are paid by the fencers themselves) act as team captain/coach. There has been no written selection process for identifying a captain; in practice the captain/coaches are selected the day before by the chef de mission with input from the fencers. There have been some complaints about the current process, showing the need for a written policy setting forth a process that is both orderly and transparent. A survey was sent to the 2022 and 2023 US Veteran World Team members asking them for input. Over half of respondents expressed a preference for naming team captains prior to arriving at Vet Worlds, and many of the respondents provided concrete suggestions for this process. The responses from this survey have been given to the Veterans Committee to draft a selection process. This draft will then be submitted to Kate Reisinger, the Sports Performance Director for approval.

VETERANS COMMITTEE AWARDS PROCESS

The Veterans Committee has honored members of the Veteran fencing community since 2005. However the criteria and processes for choosing these honorees over the years have not been clearly documented. This year the Veterans Committee worked to articulate criteria, descriptive language, nominating processes, selection processes, and selection timeline for Fencer of the Year and Lifetime Achievement awards. We felt that the previous categories of Male and Female Fencer of the Year did not allow us to recognize competitive excellence in the age groups who were not included at World Championships. The committee has now chosen to recognize Fencer of the Year in each of the competitive age categories, using objective points-based criteria to select honorees. The committee also chose to solicit nominations from the community for the Lifetime Achievement Awards.

VETERAN COMMITTEE AWARDS DINNER

The dinner was held during the January NAC in San Jose. The National Office did an outstanding job supporting the event, which had over 100 attendees. Before we presented the evening's official honorees, Rita Comes and Valerie Asher recognized some of the many

veterans who are helping to build the community at the grassroots level: John Lawrence (East Coast Fencing Gang), Mark Wheeler (Zoom Veterans Class), Michael Marx, Adam Maczik, and Sharrie Zafft (Marx Fencing pre-Worlds Vet Training Camp), Syd Fadner, Monisha Tasker, Pat Lutton (Ladies who Lunge).

Veterans Committee Honorees 2022-2023 Season

Vet 40 Fencer of the Year - Inga Cho
Vet 50 Fencer of the Year - Julie Seal
Vet 60 Fencer of the Year - Mark Lundborg
Vet 70 Fencer of the Year - Jane Eyre
Vet 80 Fencer of the Year - Costa Nichols

Lifetime Achievement Awards: Jennette Starks-Faulkner
 Jan Patterson

VETERANS COMMITTEE TOWN HALL APRIL 2024

In the past, the Veterans Committee held an open meeting during Summer Nationals. However attendance by the wider Veteran community was spotty, and with the advent of Zoom, in-person committee meetings are less common. To better understand the needs of the Vet fencing community, an ad hoc Town Hall was first held during the 2021-22 season. The meeting was well-received and clearly fit the needs of the community. The Veterans Committee has continued to host an annual Town Hall at the April NAC. In past years, many of the participants had raised issues relating to tournament scheduling. This year, Dan Berke (tournament committee member, veteran fencers, and creator of Fencing Time) gave an outstanding presentation on the scheduling process that was very helpful to our community. At least 40 people came to the meeting, and everyone who wanted to speak was given the opportunity. Kaitlyn Litten took notes, and then Kaitlyn, Phil, and Valerie met to follow up and respond to the issues raised during the Town Hall. These notes have been published to the website, and the NO is working on implementing some of the ideas discussed. .

VETERANS COMMITTEE - SURVEY

The Veterans Committee remains interested in understanding who participates in Veterans events and the demographics and preferences of our community. It is difficult to come up with precise numbers for competitive veteran fencers. In March 2024 USA Fencing had 1389 competitive members who were 40+. This does not include USA Fencing members in other membership categories who choose to compete (Coach, Life Members, Life Olympians, and Life Installment members) nor does it include those who choose to compete locally with Access memberships. We are working to access better data about the Vet Fencing community. As part

of this, an updated demographic survey of competitive veteran fencers was sent out in late May. In order to reach as many athletes as possible this will stay open until after Summer Nationals. The previous survey, collected in 2018 can be seen [here](#):

VETERANS COMMITTEE - LOOKING AHEAD

- The Veterans Committee continues to support the addition of Vet 80 events to Veteran World Championships and ask for the continued support of the Board and the National Office in presenting this position to the FIE.
- The 2025 Veteran World Championships will include V40 events as a test event. The FIE has not yet officially announced the format for the 2025 World Championships. Once this is announced, the Veterans Committee anticipates that USA Fencing will need to add selection criteria for this event in the 40-49 category.
- Prior to COVID, the Veterans Committee had been told that a second Veteran team event could be added to the competition schedule. For the 2024-25 season a second team event has been added to the competition schedule, with team events now at the January NAC and Summer Nationals.
- At the Town Hall, many of our Veteran athletes expressed an interest in more Veteran ROCs. The number of Veteran ROC events on the 2024-2025 schedule has increased from 22 to 24. The challenge for the Veteran community is increasing attendance at these events.
- The Tournament Committee has been asked about developing a qualification pathway for Veteran athletes to the Div I July Challenge using the Veteran Combined Point Standings.
- The committee is working with the National Office to schedule the Veterans Committee Awards Dinner at the January NAC and the Veterans Town Hall at the April NAC.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Veterans Committee would like to thank our staff liaison, CEO Phil Andrews and our Board liaison, Abdel Salem for their active engagement with this committee and their commitment to Veteran fencing. We would also like to thank the staff members of the National Office who have worked directly with us over the past year on some of these projects: Michael Aiken, Amanda Lilly, Kaitlyn Litten, Glen Hollingsworth, and Bryan Wendell. They are an outstanding group and a pleasure to work with. Lastly, a big thank you to our fellow volunteers on the Tournament Committee for a productive and cooperative experience in meeting the needs of our Veteran competitors.

-