

For Immediate Release

Hackettstown fencer wins gold at Junior Olympics

Albuquerque, NM. Friday the thirteenth proved to be a lucky day for Eric Gurnowski of Hackettstown, NJ, who won the gold in the U-20 Junior Men's Épée event at the US Fencing Association's Junior Olympics competition.

On February 13-16, the best young fencers from across the country gathered in Albuquerque, NM, for the Junior Olympics, having earned their way through local qualifying events. Gurnowski, representing the New Jersey Division, finished his seeding pool with sub-par results: 4 wins and 2 losses, including a bitter loss to a college teammate who scored 4 "touches" (points) in the last minute of the bout, and the winning touch in overtime.

Gurnowski emerged seeded 41 out of 203. According to his coach, Maestro Yakov Danilenko of Medeo Fencing Club in Bridgewater, NJ, Gurnowski tapped into his "amazing will power, concentration, and determination" to fight his way through the direct-elimination table and win the gold.

Gurnowski has only been fencing for four years, yet in 2007 he captured the title of Junior National Champion, and in 2008 he was New Jersey State Interscholastic Athletic Association Champion. Also in 2008, he was a finalist in the Division 1 USFA North American Cup. Division 1 includes A-ranked "senior" fencers, ages 14 and up, usually with many more years of training and competitive experience.

"Fencing has provided me with opportunities I never would have had otherwise, like traveling to Europe," said Gurnowski. "It also helped in getting me into the college of my choice." He is currently a Freshman studying Criminology at The Ohio State University.

"Eric is a great person and a very talented fencer," said Danilenko. "He has a lot of good qualities, which are helping him become a champion. There is something about Eric which elevates him above many other good fencers. He is very smart. Eric fences as if he is playing chess. In my opinion, this is the best quality a fencer can have."

Danilenko claims Gurnowski is "indestructible" on the fencing strip. But on the coaching strip, this young man's greatest quality is trust. "From day one we developed great rapport," said Danilenko. "He trusted my expertise 110%. I developed a fencing style exclusively for him. He had the courage to trust me when I told him it would work. And it worked just fine."

Danilenko founded the Medeo Fencing Club (www.medeofencing.com) in 1998, two years after his immigration to the US from the Republic of Kazakhstan, where he was a National Fencing Coach. He has produced medalists and champions in Europe and the

Soviet Union, at the Asian Games, and at the World Cup. Since coming to the US, he has trained about 25 A-ranked fencers, and several champions in national, college, and high school fencing leagues. The world-class coaching staff at Medeo offers private instruction, classes, and open bouts for fencers of all ages and abilities.

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