

For Immediate Release

## **Lambertville fencers get gold medal and other impressive results at North American Cup**

Atlanta, GA. John A. "Drew" Ridge secured his spot on the U.S. Veterans' Fencing Team by winning the gold in the North American Cup Veterans' 50-59 Men's Èpèe event on February 28<sup>th</sup>. He is now one of only four male fencers over 50 years of age who will represent the U.S. at the Veterans' World Championships in Moscow on September 23-27, 2009.

At the Atlanta NAC, Ridge emerged from the preliminary round-robin pools seeded second, and progressed uneventfully through the direct elimination rounds to the final. "The challenge was to stay sharp through the whole competition," said Ridge. "I developed the confidence that allowed me to marshal the timing and distance."

None of the spectators were surprised when, in the final bout, Ridge met number-one seeded Walter Dragonetti, a 52-year-old air traffic controller from Ohio. They were surprised, however, when Ridge, down 7-8, earned three single touches (points) in a row, to win the bout 10-8. "I've never defeated Walter before," said Ridge. "He's a wonderful fencer with indomitable will. It was both a physical and emotional 'rush' to have things come together for me."

Ridge, a resident of Ivyland, PA, and surgeon at the Fox Chase Cancer Center in Philadelphia, started fencing only 7 ½ years ago at the age of 51. His twelve-year-old son, Lukas, developed an interest in the sport, and Ridge began driving him up to Bucks County Academy of Fencing (BCAF) in New Hope, PA. Ridge figured that since he was driving his son all the way to New Hope, he might as well take lessons, too.

Whereas Lukas moved on to other interests, Ridge got hooked. "Fencing is physically and technically demanding, with the added enjoyment that comes from mental discipline," he said. "It's a lifelong sport." Ridge trains at BCAF (now located in Lambertville, NJ) under the auspices of Maestro James Flint, who is also coach of the Hunterdon Central Regional High School fencing team.

Ridge brings to the game "intelligence, focus, a willingness to put in the work, and the ability to add and integrate new concepts," said Flint. "It also doesn't hurt that he is tall and left handed."

Two other BCAF fencers had stellar results at the Atlanta NAC. Katie Elbert took 5<sup>th</sup> out of 110 fencers in Division 3 Women's Foil, and she placed 18<sup>th</sup> out of 116 in Division 2 Women's Foil. Harry Adams took 23<sup>rd</sup> out of 131 in Division 3 Men's Foil.

Elbert, a resident of Ringoes, NJ, is a junior at Princeton Day School. She's been fencing for four years under the tutelage of Maestro Mark Holbrow, founder of BCAF. Like Ridge, Elbert was exposed to the sport through a relative, her brother Oliver. Elbert

credits Oliver with helping her stay focused during the NAC. “It felt really good to go that far, but I didn't want to stop,” remarked Elbert. “I wanted to fence in that final bout. There were girls that were better than I, but I feel like I'm almost there.”

Holbrow admires Elbert’s skill and determination: “Katie has explosive speed, a long ballistic lunge, an extensive repertoire of tactical variations, and—in spite of her sweet demeanor off-strip—she’s a tenacious fighter in competition.”

Adams, a resident of York, PA, is a sophomore in the Science Academy at Central York High School. He began fencing at York Fencing Club in 2007, but now trains with Holbrow at BCAF. During his second day of fencing at the NAC, he developed flu symptoms, but persevered through the competition “one touch at a time,” finishing impressively for such a young, inexperienced fencer. “I am happy when my fencing is clean and I can meet my personal goals,” said Adams. “I understand that this is a long process.”

Holbrow admires Adams’ mental abilities: “Harry is an excellent athlete with a good head for dealing with the pressures of competition. He is an analytical thinker and learns quickly from his mistakes.”

In 1981, Holbrow opened the Bucks County Academy of Fencing in New Hope, PA, with about 30 initial members. The club continued to grow, and in 2003 moved to its current location at 287 South Main Street in Lambertville. The club ([www.bcaf.com](http://www.bcaf.com)) now boasts over 230 active members, and welcomes newcomers of all ages and abilities.

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