



OHIO STATE BUCKEYES

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Ohio State Duels to Begin 2007-08 Campaign Saturday

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Holly McKibben and the Ohio State fencing team will begin the 2007-08 season by hosting the OSU Duels



GETTING IT STARTED

COLUMBUS, Ohio – The Ohio State fencing team opens the 2007-08 season Saturday as host of the Ohio State Duels French Fieldhouse. After three years of the event falling in the midst of the winter schedule, the OSU Duels returns to the fall schedule for the first time since 2003-04 and will begin at 8 a.m. and be contested into late afternoon.

Joining the Buckeyes in the competition will be Chicago, Michigan, Michigan State, Xavier, Indiana, Detroit Mercy, Purdue, Bowling Green, Cleveland State and Case Western Reserve.

Led by ninth-year head coach Vladimir Nazlymov, the Buckeyes are coming off a fifth-consecutive Midwest Conference championship and finished fifth at the 2007 NCAA Championships. This season, seven All-Americans return to a veteran unit poised to make a run at the second combined national championship in school history (2004) and third overall (1942 men)

The Buckeyes have dominated their home invitational in recent years, including an unbeaten run over the last four seasons. Over that time, the Scarlet and Gray have posted a combined record of 66-0 with the last loss coming to a No. 2-ranked Notre Dame squad in 2003. Last season in this event, both men's and women's teams went 9-0, led by junior Siobhan Byrne, who went 22-0 in sabre.

WE'LL BE BACK

In addition to the OSU Duels Saturday, Ohio State will also host the 2008 NCAA Fencing National Championships. Held March 13-16, the best teams in the nation will descend on Columbus for four days to decide national supremacy.

A VETERAN SQUAD

After losing just two letterwinners from the 2006-07 team, the 2007-08 version of the Buckeye fencing team will be stocked with both talent and experience. The women's team, which was plagued by injury a season ago, returns three-time All-American Kaela Brendler to the epee squad. Also coming back from injury is sophomore Lindsay Knauer, whose freshman season was cut short before competition began.

Highlighted by returning national foil champion Andras Horanyi, the men's team will again be one of the toughest lineups in the nation. Junior Mikhail Momtselidze will look to capture his first national title for the Buckeyes after finishing in fourth place at the NCAA Championships last year. Epee specialist Mykhaylo Mazur also figures to be in the midst of national competition come March, looking to improve upon his ninth place finish at the NCAA Championship in 2006-07.

Sophomore Sergey Smirnov impressed in his freshman season, going 39-10 and finishing second in the Midwest Conference. Fellow sophomore Dexter Wilde joins him to fill out the men's sabre lineup, one of the strongest units on the team. Behind Horanyi in the foil will be the freshmen tandem of Colin Sutter and Ben Parkins. Both are ranked nationally in the Top 25 and will be looked to for significant contributions during the season.

Teaming with Mazur on the epee squad is sophomore Sean Harder and junior Jason Pryor. Pryor has twice traveled to the NCAA Championships and last season finished in the Top 3 at the Midwest Conference Championships. Harder showed promise in his freshman campaign, posting a 17-8 varsity record and achieving a national rank of 21st in the senior men's epee.

The women's sabre unit may be one of the toughest in the nation, with seniors Byrne and Eileen Grench both returning for their final season. Last season Byrne recorded a team-high 51-3 varsity record and a Midwest Conference title while Grench racked up 43 wins against varsity competition. Joining them is freshman Falencia Miller, who is ranked 19th nationally in senior women's sabre.

Revitalized by the return of Brendler, the women's epee team will help Ohio State make a run for a national title. Senior and returning All-American Alexandra Obrazcova will join Brendler to create one of the most lethal one-two punches in the nation. The final piece of the epee team will fall to Leslie Lampman, who took second at the Midwest

Regional Qualifier last year.

Sophomore Julia Tikhonova will headline the women's foil unit after a freshman season in which she posted a 44-10 varsity record and finished fifth at the NCAA Championships. Knauer, who was previously ranked as high as second in the senior women's foil, returns to the lineup, as does sophomore Holly McKibben who went 27-27 in varsity play last year.

Last season, 15 freshmen joined the roster and many were asked to jump in and contribute right away. This year those freshmen have returned with collegiate experience and will be asked to soar to greater heights.

NATIONALLY RANKED BUCKEYES

Eight members of the fencing team are currently listed in the national rankings. The highest spot belongs to junior Andras Horanyi, who comes in at fourth in the senior men's foil. Other Top 10 performers are senior Eileen Grench, who is eighth in the senior women's sabre, and junior Mikhail Momtselidze who placed 10th in the senior men's sabre. For Grench, the ranking comes on the heels of a silver-medal performance at the Pan-American Games this past summer with Team USA.

Also ranking are freshmen Colin Sutter and Ben Parkins, who are 14th and 25th, respectively, in the senior men's foil. Fellow freshman Falencia Miller tied for 19th in the senior women's sabre while Lindsay Knauer dropped to 42nd following an injury. Sean Harder rounds out the Buckeyes in the senior rankings with a 35th place spot in men's epee.

Several Buckeyes also received nods in the junior rankings. Dexter Wilde, Robert Douville, along with Harder, Miller and Parkins all ranked nationally in the junior circuit. Hanna Thompson and Jason Paul, who competed for the Buckeyes from 2002-05, are each ranked in the Top 4 of their specialty. Volunteer assistant coach Adam Crompton also ranks in the senior men's sabre, and recently departed Christian Rivera placed 20th in the senior men's epee.

FOIL DOMINATION CONTINUES

In winning the individual national title in the men's foil last season, Andras Horanyi kept alive a streak of three-straight titles for an OSU foilist, which began with former Buckeye standout Boaz Ellis. In 2004, Ellis recorded a spectacular 37-1 record and helped lead Ohio State to a national championship while also earning his first national title. The following season, Ellis again won the individual national title, posting an 18-4 overall record in the regular season. In 2006, his final season fencing for the Buckeyes, Ellis scored a 20-1 record en route to his third individual national title and third consecutive All-American honors.

Horanyi is coming of an action-packed summer in which he took home the gold with Team USA at the Pan-American Games. A native of Boulder, Colo., Horanyi toppled Felipe Alvear of Chile, 15-4, in the men's foil gold medal match, marking the most lopsided final bout of the competition.

GILBERT, KALKINA STEP INTO OSU HALL OF FAME

Former Buckeyes Ivan Gilbert (1940-42) and Yelena Kalkina (1997-99) were inducted into the Ohio State Hall of Fame this fall. Gilbert helped lead Ohio State to the 1942 national title and was named Ohio State's Male Fencer of the Century by the Touchdown Club of Columbus. Kalkina was the first OSU woman to win a national fencing title when she went 69-0 in 1997. The Touchdown Club of Columbus named her the Outstanding Athlete of the Year in 1997.

"I am happy for this individual honor, but what I would really like to see is the whole team get in because all six members were outstanding young men," Gilbert said. "Three of us went to medical school, one went to law school, one earned a Ph.D. in chemistry and one earned a Ph.D. in speech. And we had a great coach. He wouldn't let you fence unless you were in the Top 20-percent academically and in the Top 10-percent in reflex skills.

"And remember that there was no money for our team back then. We had no scholarships and paid our own way to drive to the national championships in St. Louis. We stayed in the dorms and ate in the dorm dining hall. After we got back, I don't think anyone knew we had won a national title. It was never in the papers. Paul Brown was the football coach back then and that was the focus. He was a tremendously dynamic guy."

'IT'S CHESS WITH A SWORD'

Ivan Gilbert on the sport of fencing getting another former member into the Hall of Fame

"Life is what it is. I'm just glad the sport got recognized. Today, the team has the best coach in the country, scholarships and a great facility. Back then, we weren't even recognized by the University. We

won because we had a coach, who was not paid mind you, he was a volunteer but was a great fencer, who would say, 'see that guy? He has done that three times, so you're going to do this.' It's chess with a sword."

Gilbert on being at Ohio State and fencing during World War II

"There were very few men on campus. I was only here because I was in medical school. We had friends dying every day overseas. For me, fencing was a diversion from medical school. That was intense. Fencing was a way to get of energy, work out and do something rigorous."

Gilbert on the success of the OSU fencing program today

"Two things happened. One, Ohio State made a commitment to fencing. They got a great coach, one of the best in the world, and two, they put money into scholarships. The program today is entirely different from what we had. I'm proud of their success."

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[Back](#)

