



NEWS RELEASE

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Hangtown Saber Fencers Bring Home Four National Championship Medals ***Two Athletes Named to US Team Going to Veteran World Championships***

PLACERVILLE, CA (July 27, 2022): Hangtown Saber Club in Placerville qualified seven athletes to the recently completed USA Fencing National Championships in Minneapolis, MN and came home with one gold, one silver and two bronze medals, plus a breakthrough performance by their top youth fencer. In addition, Hangtown Saber qualified two fencers to the 2022 Veteran World Championships in Croatia this October.

USA Fencing's National Championships is the largest fencing tournament in the world and offered a final opportunity for veteran fencers (age 50 and over) to earn qualifying points toward a place on the US team going to Worlds. With a bronze medal from the North American Cup in March, and the top four fencers on the point standings making the national team for Worlds, Ted Smith of Placerville needed at least another bronze to qualify. With a 5/1 pool record, Smith, head coach at Hangtown Saber and competing in the Veteran70 category (for 70-79 year olds), put himself in a strong position for the direct elimination segment. With dominant 10-4 and 10-3 victories, Smith headed into his semifinal bout feeling confident, "My opponent was a many-time national and international medalist so I knew he would be tough, but I was ready," said Smith. He jumped out to a big lead but couldn't hold it, losing 9-10. Placing third, while admittedly disappointing for Smith, secured his spot on the US squad for Worlds.

Chaz Smith of Placerville, also a coach at Hangtown Saber, competes in Veteran60 and had rung up a gold medal at the North American Cup qualifier in March. A third place finish at the National Championships would comfortably lock in her spot on the national team for Worlds. "I normally enter my Veteran events planning to win, but I had two significant injuries heading into Nationals so I told myself that making it into the semis would get the job done and not to worry

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about getting any further than that,” said Chaz. She breezed through her quarterfinal 10-2, and with her qualification to Worlds secure, planned to back off in the semifinals to avoid aggravating her injuries. “I kind of figured I was playing with house money by the semis given how much my mobility was hampered and how limited my preparation for the event had been. But, you know, your fighting instinct can be hard to tamp down”.

Chaz battled her way into the final by grinding out a 10-9 victory over the number one seed. Against the fencer she handily defeated in the March final, Chaz didn’t have an answer and fell 4-10, taking home a silver medal. She finished the season tied for number one on the national point standings. Chaz followed up her individual silver with a gold medal the next day in the Veteran Women’s Saber Team event, even though her mobility was further reduced from the toll of the previous day’s championship, forcing her to retire 2/3 through the team final.

Hangtown Saber fielded a third veteran fencer to these Nationals, and Claire Hanamoto of Sacramento may have laid down the most impressive performance. Competing in Veteran70, a top-two finish could qualify her for Worlds but she had a major obstacle in her path. “I suffer from atrial fibrillation, a heart condition that can cause my heart rate to zoom up unexpectedly, and it had worsened in the months leading to Nationals,” said Hanamoto. With one failed treatment behind her and the next one not scheduled until August, Hanamoto decided to compete anyway. “My coaches like to describe me, with great affection, as a stubborn old broad. I just hate to quit!”, quipped Hanamoto. In her quarterfinal match, the afib hit hard. Hanamoto had to sit for nearly 20 minutes until her heart rate came down to a manageable level. Still, she refused to retire from the bout and returned to the strip, where she calmly pulled out a 10-5 victory and a place in the semi-finals. “I really think Claire could have won the championship if the afib had been under control,” said Coach Ted Smith. She lost her semifinal 5-10, but took home a bronze medal she can chock up to her technique, strategy – and pure grit.

In the Cadet event, for fencers under 17, Shingle Springs’ Maya Barnovitz entered the event as the 61st seed, with a C22 classification (classifications range from A down to E).

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A strong pool performance and a 5-1 record found her seeded 27th into the direct elimination table. With a bye into the round of 128, Barnovitz defeated the 102nd seed 15-9 and followed that up with a 15-12 defeat of the 38th seed. Up next, the 4th seed, Kayla Alcebar, a B22 rated fencer from New Jersey. "I knew Maya could defeat Alcabar, and the way she was fencing, it looked like she believed she could, too," said Coach Smith. The victory was actually a comfortable one and never in doubt, Barnovitz leading the whole way to a 15-9 win. Her Hangtown Saber teammates were whooping in unison throughout. Now into the round of 16, Barnovitz faced an A22 rated fencer from New York City, 9th seeded Aria Bevacqua. Fencing just a little too tight at critical moments, Barnovitz lost 11-15, but was rewarded with a B22 classification for placing 13th of the 170 athletes from across the country.

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Hangtown Saber Club specializes in modern Olympic saber fencing. Classes, held at 1297 Broadway in Placerville, CA, are open to all comers starting as early as age 8 and extending to everyone able to stay on task for at least 15 minutes at a time and exert themselves aerobically. Fencing is one of the original sports included in the modern Olympics, and is often referred to as "physical chess."