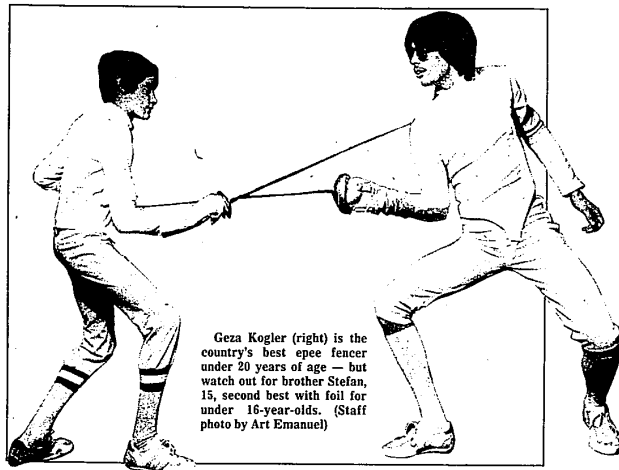


Family reaps laurels with sharpened steel

By MIKE SCANLON



Geza Kogler (right) is the country's best epee fencer under 20 years of age — but watch out for brother Stefan, 15, second best with foil for under 16-year-olds. (Staff photo by Art Emanuel)

Geza Kogler took a national title Sunday doing pretty much what millions paid hard cash to watch Errol Flynn pretend to do, and Kogler did it in an arena seating just 200.

A crowd of 200 for a national competition seems like slim pickings, indeed.

But on the other hand, Kogler is a fencer, not a movie swashbuckler. Some of his sweetest moves are faster than the human eye can follow.

IN TAKING FIRST place in epee for those under 20 during the National Junior Olympics at Harvard University Sunday, Kogler had company. His brother Stefan, 15, took second place for those under 16 in the foil competition. Another brother, Bela, 16, barely missed the semifinals in sabre.

When he's holding an epee in his hand, Geza, 19, is now officially the best male in the country under age 20.

Kogler's win automatically places him in the World Junior Olympics at Notre Dame in April.

Kogler probably couldn't have helped getting involved in fencing. His Hungarian-born father toys with it, his English-born mother is taking a class, he and his brothers belong to the same Southfield fencing club, and his two sisters have taken lessons.

THE KOGLERs' have more fencing swords lying around the living room than most people have table knives.

Fencing is as Hungarian as goulash, and it was Kogler's father who piqued his initial interest.

"I went and saw practice and the next week I was back fencing. I've been fencing ever since," said Kogler, who started when he was 12.

"It was kind of neat, you know, telling the kids you were a sword fighter," said Kogler.

He hoped to get a college scholarship and he did. He's a freshman member of the Wayne State University varsity fencing team, which is coached by Istvan Danosi. Danosi, who insists his students call him "Maestro," is the man Kogler started taking lessons from when Kogler was 12. Like Kogler's father, Danosi is Hungarian.

AN EPEE (pronounced eh-pay) is one of three weapons used in fencing. The other weapons are foil and sabre, and competitors are either epee-men or foil-men. Even if their name is Judy.

All the weapons are similar in appearance, but they are used differently.

Competition with foil features a target area limited to the upper body, about the same as in boxing although it extends to what would be a low blow in boxing.

Epee fighting seems downright dirty by comparison. The front of the body is a legitimate target from head to toe, and you see things like people getting stabbed in the foot.

IN SABRE competition the entire body is a legal target, but the biggest difference between it and epee and foil is that a sabre is basically used to slash. The other two are used for thrusts, or stabs.

Yet, despite the ominous words, fencing is actually a safe sport.

"I've been to a lot of competitions, and I've never seen a serious injury," said Geza.

Geza is already thinking about the Olympics.

"Not the '80, but for '84 I have a good chance," he said. Geza does not realistically expect to do as well in the international Junior Olympics as he did in the national games.

"**THE EUROPEANS** are really tough. It's like our football over there. There's been only a few American fencers in the finals. I have hopes, though," he said.

Bishop asks pension probe

State Sen. Donald Bishop (R-Rochester) this week introduced a bill to create a retirement law commission to review all Michigan's public pension programs. The bill was cosponsored by State Sen. Basil Brown (D-Highland Park).

The action follows a year-long state investigation into the Michigan's public employee retirement systems.

The retirement law commission, according to the bill, would compile information on state and local retirement plans, examine each system's fiscal integrity, and make recommendations concerning any proposed retirement legislation.

"Currently, the retirement programs offered by the state and local units of government are so diverse that it's often impossible for either the retirees or the governmental units to know what benefits are available and appropriate," Bishop said.

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