

# THE DALLAS MORNING NEWS

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## Fencing siblings are sharing Olympic dreams, stage Jacobsons, Smarts hope to win first medal for U.S. in sport since '84

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ATHENS, Greece - They are the literal definition of dueling siblings, which is not to say they are rivals.

They are U.S. Olympic fencers. The 14-member American fencing contingent, in fact, includes not one, but two sibling pairs.

Keeth and Erinn Smart and Sada and Emily Jacobson represent double-hope for their families, as well as improved odds that America will earn its first Olympic fencing medal since 1984.

Last March, saber specialist Keeth Smart became the first American fencer to earn a No. 1 world ranking. Three months later, Sada Jacobson climbed to No. 1 in women's saber and has held the position since.

"I feel like if we are able to bring home a medal, who knows what could happen for the sport from there?" says 24-year-old Erinn, ranked No. 18 in the world in women's foil.

If one didn't know better they might think the U.S. Olympic Committee is trying to use gene pooling to boost America's medal count.

The nation's 500-plus athletic contingent includes eight sibling pairs and one cousin tandem.

"I'm lucky that I have my sister on the same team," 21-year-old Sada Jacobson says of Emily, 18.

Sitting side-by-side at a news conference Thursday, the Jacobsons wore wide smiles even though they had just received bittersweet news: When the 64-woman draw for Tuesday's saber competition was announced, the sisters learned that they would face one another if both advance to the quarterfinals.

Emily is ranked No. 10 in the world, but the high school senior from Dunwoody, Ga., is 2-2 against big sister this year.

The Jacobsons come by fencing naturally. Their father, David, was a member of the 1974 U.S. saber team.

Dad still occasionally fences his daughters, but the Jacobsons confine their competitiveness to the 6-foot wide, 44-foot long fencing strip, which is called the piste.

"People always ask after the bouts, 'Do you fight?'" Emily says. "No. We're the same as

before we walked on the strip."

The Smarts don't have to worry about crossing swords in competition, since men and women compete separately. But because the basic footwork is the same in all fencing divisions - foil, epee and saber - they often practice their footwork together.

The Brooklyn, N.Y., natives got into fencing after their father, Tom, who worked in the advertising department at Sports Illustrated, saw an ad for the Peter Westbrook Foundation.

Westbrook took bronze in saber in the 1984 Olympics, becoming the first American fencing medalist since Albert Axelrod earned bronze in foil in 1960. In 1991, when Westbrook started a foundation to utilize fencing as a way to work with disadvantaged children, Erinn Smart was among his first students.

Keeth, then 14, soon joined Erinn, who is 18 months younger. But he didn't last long in foil.

Saber, the modern version of the cavalry sword, has a similar length (about 35 inches) and weight (less than

a pound) as the flexible-bladed foil, but the saber is a cutting as well as thrusting weapon.

"I switched because I wasn't good at it," Keeth said.

Keeth won the 1997 and 1999 NCAA titles at St. John's. Erinn, who graduated from Columbia University's **Barnard College** in 2001, won U.S. national titles in 1998, 2002 and 2004.

Both Smarts went to Sydney in 2000. Erinn was an alternate and didn't compete. Keeth finished 30th, but their highlight was the fact that their mother, Liz, who was in the midst of chemotherapy for colon cancer, was able to make the trip. She since has recovered, has had no cancer recurrence and plans to be in Athens.

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#### IT'S ALL RELATIVE

Siblings, cousins and married couples who will compete for the U.S. in Athens:

Siblings Sport Hometown

Troy and Justin Dumais  
Diving The Woodlands, Texas

Keeth and Erinn Smart  
Fencing Brooklyn, N.Y.

Sada and Emily Jacobson  
Fencing Dunwoody, Ga.

Paul and Morgan Hamm  
Gymnastics Waukesha, Wis.

Tara and Dana Kirk  
Swimming Vermerton, Wash.

Kalyn and Klete Keller  
Swimming Phoenix

Bob and Mike Bryan Tennis  
Camarillo, Calif

Cousins Sport Hometown

Misty May Beach volleyball  
Newport Beach, Calif

Taylor Dent Tennis  
Huntington Beach, Calif.

Married couples Sport  
Hometown

Mary Beth, Vahogorashvili  
Modern pentathlon San  
Antonio

Danika, Ben Holbrook Rowing  
Princeton, N.J.

Alan, Shayne Culpepper  
Track and field Boulder, Colo.

GRAPHIC: PHOTO(S): 1. Emily Jacobson 2. Sada Jacobson 3. Erinn Smart 4. Keeth Smart
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