

# Star Tribune

August 14, 2004, Saturday, Metro Edition

Minneapolis: Sports; Pg. 12C

## Spotlight

### Keeth and Erinn Smart: U.S. fencing Olympians Brother, sister in medal hunt

Jay Weiner, Staff Writer  
Athens, Greece

2004 Athens Summer  
Olympics

According to Erinn Smart, her mother "chose to torment" her and her brother, Keeth Smart. That's the only reason Erinn Smart can figure that Audrey Smart gave her daughter two N's and Keeth two E's.

But it started a trend. They were automatically distinctive as little kids, and that's remained the case now as both big brother and little sister are fencers at these Athens Olympics.

Keeth, 26, will hope to become the first U.S. fencer to win a medal in 20 years today when he competes in the individual sabre event. Last year, he was ranked No. 1 in the world in the event.

Erinn, 24, a **Barnard College** graduate and occasional model, goes Wednesday in the foil.

The fencing thing started by both of their parents forced Keeth to make a decision 12 years ago. He was a typical 14-year-old growing up in Brooklyn, N.Y., playing

basketball and football. But Audrey Smart, a teacher, wanted her teenager to begin doing something that would be "unique" for college applications.

The family heard of the Peter Westbrook Foundation in Manhattan, started by the last American to win a fencing medal, a bronze in 1984. He started a fencing academy for inner-city kids.

There Keeth and then Erinn began fencing and also confronting some strange looks in the New York City subway system and the mean streets of Brooklyn.

"Wow, Zorro, Skywalker, don't stab me now!" is what kids would say as Keeth Smart walked from the subway to his apartment.

Carrying their weapons on the subway raised some eyebrows, too.

"They stare, but don't overly stare," said Keeth, with a chuckle, of the other riders on the "Q" or "D" trains.

Said Erinn: "It definitely kept us safe."

They got into fencing so deeply and so quickly that they attended Brooklyn Tech High, a rare school with a fencing program. But it wasn't exactly as popular as the basketball team.

"There's this beautiful 4,500-seat auditorium there, maybe the biggest in the city," said Keeth, who went on to New York's St. John's University. "We were on a stage holding a fencing meet with five people in that auditorium, and two of them were my parents."

He got used to the anonymity. He became an expert in an esoteric sport that has its cinematic moments.

His favorite movies are "The Empire Strikes Back" and "Die Another Day," a James Bond film with a duel scene.

"Pretty accurate," said Keeth, "but we don't fence in libraries with mahogany furniture."

Today, it's not a library. Today, it's a new fencing hall in suburban Athens. Keeth Smart wants to improve on his 30th-place finish in Sydney. Keeth Smart wants to add a distinctive medal to those tormenting E's.

Jay Weiner is at  
jweiner@startribune.com.

GRAPHIC: PHOTO