

CARUSO AND THE SWORD

Advisory Committee Update

September 19, 2010

Hello,

As you may remember, we have an Advisory Committee for CARUSO AND THE SWORD (C.A.T.S), a family comedy film in development that features fencing.

The purpose of the Advisory Committee is to offer input on ways that the making of C.A.T.S., through all phases of production, can help promote fencing, fencing clubs, and fencers.

The first Advisory Committee meeting experienced numerous software issues, but many thanks to those who persisted with humor, grace, and some very valuable insights. Below are some of the responses we've received to date. There were some variations, but a common theme ran through the concerns. Issues facing club owners, coaches, and others included letting people know a club exists in their area, building membership, retention, and dispelling myths about fencing.

While there are numerous resources, such as AskFred and Fencingnet, for those interested in tournaments and the technical aspects of fencing, very few address the issues related to the marketing of fencing and clubs.

We also plan to put this newsletter online so that comments and ideas can more easily be shared. A club in New York with a great marketing idea is not in competition with a club in Chicago.

"Preaching to the choir" is a comment I've heard often. A web guru told me that preaching to the choir is important in order to build a base of supporters. He said the base of supporters are the real "golden nuggets" upon which everything else is built. So, those of you reading this aren't just the choir - you're the "golden nuggets."

Thank you,

Paula Smith
Writer/Producer
CARUSO AND THE SWORD

What is your biggest issue as a fencer, club owner, or coach?

Publicity

I would have to say that the biggest issue facing me as a club owner is that people don't know that fencing exists in their community as a sport. They simply don't know that we are here and that they can fence as a sport. As a coach, my biggest issue is balancing the needs of the casual fencer (the beginners and intermediates) with the needs of the more dedicated competitive fencers. One is tied to the survival of my club as a business and the other is tied to training of good competitive fencers. As for the fencers in my club, their biggest issue aside from the money needed to keep fencing is finding enough fencers at their level or higher to train with.

My biggest issue, and I think the biggest issue facing all of us, is numbers. We need to publicize the sport of fencing and show that it is local, affordable and accessible.

Every kid, at some point in time, plays at swordfighting. We need to show that fencing is not an esoteric, elitist sport, but something that you can go to the local rec center, YMCA, etc. and learn.

The connection never seems to be made from films like The Three Musketeers, The Princess Bride or The Duelists to the modern sport of fencing. Even a film like By the Sword, set in a modern fencing club, didn't spark any interest. Of course, it's entirely possible that no non-fencer ever heard of the film.

My biggest problem with running fencing clubs is retention.

What would you like to see this committee accomplish?

Help to promote fencing as a mainstream sport

I'd like to see this committee be able to create a promotional network that helps clubs bring fencing more into the public eye. If more people know that there is a fencing club in their area, then more people will come to fence.

What are some ways that you could utilize the making of this film to garner publicity and members for your club or help with your biggest issue?

(Example 1) Obtain a grant for an Olympic fencer to speak to high school students during the day. In the evening have a fundraiser for the movie. There would be Press Releases and displays about the event.

(Example 2) Buy fencing lesson and get a DVD (when the movie is finished).

(Example 3) Tie in the 100th year of the Boy Scouts with fencing/DVD.

Movie posters and/or DVDs in "goodie bags" that medal winners typically receive at tournaments

Host a "bring-a-friend" movie night for high school students

"Swordmaster" listing in the movie credits for committee members who are coaches or fencers

Being able to have public showings of the film at a local "movie viewing night in the park" might help garner publicity for a club and the film. There are a number of such events in my local area. They are billed as family gatherings and would be packed with kids and parents. A club could also use the showing of the movie to raise money for the fencers in the club to be able to buy equipment and pay for travel and other fencing-related expenses, especially if there is a non-profit working with the fencers in the club.

If we use the sport of fencing to market the film, we'll be preaching to the choir. We need to market the film as a family movie, then use Caruso to market the sport.

I have no idea how to make this work, but rather than give a DVD free with a fencing lesson, we need to give a free fencing lesson with the purchase of a DVD. maybe a voucher included with the DVD and a link to a site listing all participating clubs?

I don't think U.S. Olympic fencers have enough name recognition to help much. Again, it would be preaching to the choir. My 2010 USOC calendar didn't have a single member of the fencing team on it, even after the Women's sabre team swept their event and brought the U.S. its first medals at Beijing. The new calendar has a half-page on Mariel Zagunis and Darryl Homer, sharing a page with November and December 2010.

I don't see any Boy Scout merit badge for fencing. Way back when there was a badge for singlestick, or so I've been told. That would be quite a task, to create a new badge.

However, the Boy Scout magazine, Boy's Life, is still going and an article in there would reach a lot of active, imaginative kids

How about trying to generate awareness and/or interest in fencing by having a generic press release that clubs can use to send to the local media in their town to announce/share any news they have going at the club (of course with a blurb on C.A.T.S.). We can build media databases if people do not have them already that we can then use help promote C.A.T. S. Also, most papers on and off line have a calendar section that can be used to let people know what is going on at the club,

Another way to get the movie out, albeit without making much or any money, would be on www. Could a clip or a scene lend itself to go viral? Could that be used to create desire to watch the whole movie may be even for a fee? That most certainly would broaden the basis of the viewing audience.

Could a short section of the movie be shown as a preview in movie theaters? AMC has a long time period before movies where all kinds of "clips" are being shown. Could it be used to recruit kids to a "fencing birthday party" at a club?

In general I think it is better to look for a target audience outside of the fencing community if one of the purposes of the movie is to attract the "non fencing" public.