

(4) The US Fencing Officials Commission

i) Composition and Responsibilities

The Commission is composed of twelve (12) to sixteen (16) members, each of whom normally serves a term of four (4) years. The terms of the entire Commission are staggered in four (4) groups, each identified by the final year of its term so that in each year the terms of three (3) or four (4) members expire. The President of the USFA nominates candidates to fill vacancies and submits them for approval by the Board of Directors, whose approval is required. If necessary, the President of the USFA will nominate members to fill vacancies which occur due to a term that is not completed. These nominations must also be approved by the Board of Directors. In addition, any USFA member who is a member of the FIE *Commission d'Arbitrage* is automatically a member of the Fencing Officials Commission (FOC). A member of the USFA Technical Committee will be appointed annually by the President of the USFA to serve ex officio on the Commission so as to provide expert opinion on technical matters. The FOC members will annually elect a chair or co-chairs from among themselves. The Commission members, due to the nature of their duties, are expected to hold a valid current FIE referee license or one of the highest USFA domestic classifications.

The Commission has responsibility for:

- developing referees
- assigning US referees to international teams and competitions
- submitting candidates to the FIE for examination or removal as an international referee
- preparation of clinic formats
- examination development
- rules legislation and interpretation
- conducting hearings on matters referred by the USFA Board of Directors
- administration of referee examinations for Classes 1 through 5 ratings
- selecting and assigning of referees at the National Championships and at all competitions in the United States which are part of the qualifying procedure for international teams
- liaison with schools and colleges on referees

ii) Referee Classifications

Ten domestic classifications (10, the lowest, through 1, the highest) and the international (FIE) classifications are recognized by the USFA. Classes 10 and 9 are awarded at the divisional level with written and practical testing conducted by a division-designated examiner. The written portion of the Classes 10 and 9 examination will consist of 25 questions. Classes 8, 7 and 6 are awarded at the sectional level with written and practical testing conducted by a Commission-designated examiner. The written portion of the Classes 8, 7 and 6 examination will consist of 50 questions. Classes 5 and 4 are awarded at the national level with the written portion of the examination administered by a Commission-designated examiner and the practical portion of the examination conducted by two Commission-designated examiners with at least one of them being a member of the Commission. The written examination for Classes 5 and 4 requires a \$10 fee payable to the USFA. Classes 3, 2, and 1 are awarded by a vote of the Commission. The passing grade for all written examinations is 90%.

Examiners are to submit a copy of the written answer sheet and the practical evaluation form to the Commission's Chair of the Ratings Committee for any members earning a referee classification. These documents are to be sent within fourteen days of the examinations; examiners are to retain a copy of reports for one year. Examiners are to also give written notification of passing to any members at the time the examinations are passed.

The level of qualification is indicated as follows:

DIVISIONAL CLASSIFICATIONS:

- 10 Qualified to referee in non-rated competitions
- 9 Qualified to referee in the finals of a competition in which the winner earns an "E"

SECTIONAL CLASSIFICATIONS:

- 8 Qualified to referee in the finals of a competition in which the winner earns a "D"
- 7 Qualified to referee in the finals of a competition in which the winner earns a "C"
- 6 Qualified to referee in the finals of a competition in which the winner earns a "B"

NATIONAL CLASSIFICATIONS

(Based on Elite National Championships):

- 5 Qualified to referee to determine places 97-120
- 4 Qualified to referee to determine places 49-96
- 3 Qualified to referee to determine places 25-48
- 2 Qualified to referee to determine places 9-24
- 1 Qualified to referee any bout (including the gold medal bout)

All sectional and national referees rated must attend a Commission-approved seminar every year. Candidates for a sectional or national rating may take the written examination whenever one can be arranged with an examiner, but they must attend a Commission approved seminar prior to taking the practical examination.

The Commission publishes periodically (at least annually) a list of nationally and internationally rated referees and is responsible for maintaining the quality of the list. Referees' classifications may be changed by the Commission. Classifications of referees will be lowered automatically one level if the referees do not referee at their rated level for a period of two years. After two more years of not refereeing at their rated level, the referee classification will be removed. Lists of rated referees published by the Commission will indicate the most recent year of activity.

One must be a current member of the USFA to be retained on the list of referees. Referees who allow their memberships to lapse for more than one year will lose their ratings; to regain their ratings, they must retake the examinations.

In order to assist a candidate in obtaining a national classification, the Commission has established the following policy regarding examinations at national competitions. One must understand that the examination of referees may not be considered as the primary function of a national competition. Every effort will be made to allow for examinations at these competitions as long as they do not interfere with the proper conduct of the competition.

Only those candidates who have passed their Class 5 written examination may be considered to take the practical examination.

Only those Class 5 candidates who have submitted a request in writing to the Commission which has been endorsed (in writing) by the candidate's division chair or by a Commission-approved Class 5 Examiner in that weapon may be considered to take the practical examination. Such written notification must be received at least three weeks prior to the competition.

Only those recommended Class 5 candidates who present themselves to the Commission representative thirty minutes prior to the start of the competition may be considered to take the practical examination.

Written examinations for Class 5 may be administered if requested in writing to the Commission. Such written notification must be received at least three weeks prior to the competition.

Nationally rated referees who wish to be observed for a possible increase in classification must send their request in writing to the Commission. Such written notification must be received at least three weeks prior to the competition. The referees must then present themselves to the Commission representative thirty minutes prior to the start of the competition, and they must be available to preside at least two levels below their classification (i.e., a referee with a 5, 4, or 3 classification must be present at the start of the competition; a referee with a 2 classification must be present at the 4 level of a competition – the point in the competition that is a 4 level will be determined by the Commission representative).

The Commission representative may have to deny a properly presented request for an examination if, at the discretion of the Commission representative, it would not be in the best interest of the competition (e.g., those who could act as examiners must be utilized as referees). Examinations, written or practical, may not in any way disrupt the competition.

The Commission is the sole authority for the submission of candidates to the FIE for examination or removal as an international referee. A nationally rated referee who would like to be rated by the FIE should send the request, in writing, to the Commission. The Commission will notify the candidate if the request is approved and, if it is, when and where the candidate may take the examination. If the Commission is considering removal of a US referee on the FIE list due to inactivity, etc., the Commission will notify that referee, in writing, that removal is being contemplated prior to any action being taken.

iii) Procedure for Handling Complaints Against a Member of the FOC

WHEREAS, the Fencing Officials Commission (FOC) was established to examine, accredit and assign referees for national and international events. It is further charged with the duty of evaluating referee performance and the awarding of domestic ratings to these officials. In order that the corps of referees be free from partisan or political influences, the FOC is, and must be, the sole authority regarding these issues; and WHEREAS, the USFA Board of Directors controls the FOC budget and the USFA President appoints or re-appoints up to 25% of the Commission's members each year: THEREFORE, the FOC, acting under authority delegated by the Board, has the primary responsibility for monitoring the proper performance of their FOC duties by the Commission's members and desires to establish a procedure with the Board for handling complaints regarding members of the FOC itself in the following manner:

No complaint against a member of the FOC will be acted upon unless made in writing and delivered to both the Chair of the FOC and the USFA Officer Liaison. The latter will place the establishment of a Disciplinary Panel on the agenda of the next Board of Directors meeting as an Urgent item. If the Board approves such motion, the Panel will consist of five (5) members and be formed as follows: two (2) members will be appointed by the President, two (2) members shall be appointed by the Chair of the FOC and one (1) member shall be appointed with the joint concurrence of the President and the Chair. At least one athlete shall be a member of the panel.

The Disciplinary Panel will review the complaint. It may then dismiss it as either spurious or without merit, or, if it determines that the complaint presents a prima facie case (if the facts are as alleged, the complaint has substance) it will investigate the allegations using USFA procedures for due process and make a determination of an appropriate discipline, if any.

This may be a reprimand, removal from the FOC, or suspension or revocation of USFA membership. In all cases, the Panel will submit a written report to the Board of Directors.

If Board action is recommended, the accused and the complainant shall be notified in writing. The accused shall have the opportunity to speak to the Board and to be represented by counsel (of his/her own choosing and at his/her own expense) prior to the Board's decision. The Board of Directors can either ratify the recommendation of the Panel or decide by majority vote in favor of a lesser penalty. It cannot vote in favor of a harsher sanction than that recommended by the Disciplinary Panel.