

## Olympic Fencer

World renowned fencer, Joshua McGuire has proven time and time again that fencing is a real sport. Throughout his life, he has achieved several of his goals and has become very successful at fencing. Fencing is “an elegant, prestigious, and traditional sport which reflects the success qualities that are important to contemporary people who seek a challenge to both body and mind through an effective blend of patience and determination, discipline and competitiveness”<sup>1</sup>. Josh has chosen to focus his career on the area of foil fencing, which is “modern version of the original practice weapon for duelling sword.”<sup>2</sup> When attempting to score points, the fencer must strike his opponent on the torso using the point of the sword, and a metallic vest records the number of strikes using an electronic apparatus<sup>3</sup>. Now, at the age of 27, Josh has faced challenges of financing and training, yet has been able to achieve many significant accomplishments in the world of fencing.

Born on June 15, 1983 in Hamilton Ontario, Josh started fencing at the young age of six, taking lessons at McMaster University where he began to excel in the sport. By age eleven, he had won several senior provincial competitions. Appearing on national television, in magazines and newspapers, Josh became a spokesperson promoting the art of fencing. In 1996 he joined Canada’s national team, and in 2000 he won gold in both the junior and senior Canada’s national, and also placed first in the Cadet World championships. Continuing his success in 2002, he placed third at the junior world championships. In order to give himself a break, while not training, Josh enjoys playing his guitar and spending time with his family and friends<sup>4</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Canadian Fencing Federation. [http://www.fencing.ca/what\\_is\\_fencing\\_eng.htm](http://www.fencing.ca/what_is_fencing_eng.htm)

<sup>2</sup> Canadian Fencing Federation. [http://www.fencing.ca/what\\_is\\_fencing\\_eng.htm](http://www.fencing.ca/what_is_fencing_eng.htm)

<sup>3</sup> Canadian Fencing Federation. [http://www.fencing.ca/what\\_is\\_fencing\\_eng.htm](http://www.fencing.ca/what_is_fencing_eng.htm)

<sup>4</sup> Josh McGuire. [http://www.fencing.ca/athlete\\_bios/joshua\\_mcguire\\_bio.htm](http://www.fencing.ca/athlete_bios/joshua_mcguire_bio.htm)

His Olympic career began in 2004 when he qualified to go to Athens. Due to a lack of proper coaching and funding in Canada, Josh headed off to New York to train for the Olympics. While Europe would have had the best coaching options, the young Canadian athlete was on a tight budget and could not afford the expense. Another challenge that he faced, upon competing in Athens, was a change in the scoring for the foil event. These changes required slower and more tactical moves as compared to his former technique and style. This scoring change became a major shock to Josh, whereas the European athletes had been playing by these rules for some time, therefore putting him at a disadvantage. Josh stated “there is a big difference between an intermediate fencer and an Olympian”<sup>5</sup>. At the age of 21, Josh headed to Athens to participate in the 2004 Olympics where he placed 29<sup>th</sup> in the overall standings. After leaving Athens, he made the decision to change his way of thinking and strategy in order to do better at the next Olympic Games. “I won’t get caught on the hype, just focus on the competition. I won’t go to the opening ceremonies; I’ll be in and out.”<sup>6</sup> Josh stated as he began planning for the 2008 Beijing Olympics. On May 30<sup>th</sup> 2008 at the World Cup event at the Center Claude-Robillard in Montreal, Josh finished 13<sup>th</sup> in the Men’s foil competition. This result improved his qualifying for the Olympics.

Canadian National team coach Dominique Teisseire stated “the best in the world all have elaborate strategies along with great physical fitness. Josh struggles to keep pace with competitors at the same tactical level, but who are physically superior. In preparation for the Olympics, he’ll attend various training camps in Europe to refine his conditioning.”<sup>7</sup> Now known as the baby-faced swashbuckler with a strong strategic mind, Josh travelled to Beijing to compete in his second Olympic Games. By drawing Tomer Or of Israel into an attack, and

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<sup>5</sup> Hamilton Spectator. July 21, 2008. <http://www.thespec.com/article/406304>

<sup>6</sup> Hamilton Spectator. July 21, 2008. <http://www.thespec.com/article/406304>

<sup>7</sup> Canadian Fencing Federation. May 30, 2008. [www.fencing.ca/press\\_releases/20080530\\_josh\\_eng.htm](http://www.fencing.ca/press_releases/20080530_josh_eng.htm)

countering with a “sneaky” move using his height to make a hit, Josh won the round of 32 match in overtime (11 – 10). He then played against the world’s fourth ranked foil swordsman Salvatore Sanzo of Italy. Josh was “just plain out-fenced” and eliminated in the round of 16<sup>8</sup>. His matches placed him 16<sup>th</sup> overall in the Men’s individual Foil division<sup>9</sup>.

After achieving his lifelong goal to represent Canada in the Olympics, Josh decided to take some time for himself. Travelling to India with his brother, Josh learned the ancient art of Kalari hoping that it would be useful in helping him improve his foil skills. “A fencer could take a lot of positives out of Kalari, such as the hand-eye coordination and the agility”<sup>10</sup> states Josh. Upon his return from India, he claims that his passion for fencing will always be a part of his life. This can be seen in his long-term goals to coach high performance athletes and to help raise the profile of fencing in Canada. Meanwhile, in a sport that is not defined by age, Josh has a long and hopeful career ahead of him.



<sup>8</sup> Hamilton Spectator. Aug 14 2008. <http://www.thespec.com/article/418267>

<sup>9</sup> Josh McGuire. [www.olympic.ca/en/athletes/joshua-mcguire](http://www.olympic.ca/en/athletes/joshua-mcguire)

<sup>10</sup> Fencing Net. [www.fencing.net/forums/thread38130.html](http://www.fencing.net/forums/thread38130.html)

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