

club sports

Fencing a sport not well known but appreciated by its followers

By NICK DAWSON
Of the Emerald

Fencing is a sport that has yet to catch on in the United States, though its appeal in other parts of the world, especially Europe, is unquestioned.

As a matter of fact, the sport may never catch on in the U.S. However, fencing does have its believers in this country. It even has believers at Oregon, as evidenced by the Club Sports Fencing Club.

"The sport itself is an individual sport," explained Kurt Septon, who serves as player-coach of the squad. He said each club usually fields three individuals per tournament, with a fourth individual serving as an alternate.

Because fencing is so little known in this country, the whole concept of fencing as a competitive sport is unknown to most Americans.

Septon explained fencing in a way that most of us would understand. "Some people have called it physical chess, because it involves strategy, and because of the physical activity involved."

Both parts of fencing are important, emphasized Septon. Setting up opponents, as in chess, is a very important part of fencing. "You try to make them move the way you want them to move," Septon said. "You make them believe something else," he said. It's then you hit them with what they don't expect.

"Both people think how they're

going to defeat the other person," he added. "There's a lot of indirect communication."

Besides playing the sport in the mind, the physical activity required to compete is also extremely important.

"Most people don't think about this. It is an extremely physically demanding sport," stated Septon. He explained many muscles are used in matches that are not normally used, thus creating quite a strain on the body. Matches can turn into offensive flurries where the whole floor is used for attacks and retreats.

Septon said there are three types of weapons used in fencing.

The foil had its beginning in the Renaissance period when it was used as a practice weapon. The epee and the sabre were both originally used as weapons to fight with. Of the three, only the sabre is a cutting weapon.

There is actually little danger in fencing, said Septon. "It's less dangerous, obviously, than playing football," said Septon, who has played football. He added the only possible injury a fencer could get would be if the foil accidentally broke, thus creating a jagged edge.

Septon explained that the injury factor is only one misconception people unfamiliar with the sport have. He explained that since the only thing most Americans hear about fencing is unusual occurrences, such as injuries, their picture of the sport is warped.

As an example, Septon pointed

to the incident in the 1976 Olympics involving a Russian pentathlete cheating in the foil competition, as an example of the unusual occurrences that Americans hear about. Still, since fencing is purely amateur, reaching at its highest level the Olympics, the public isn't affected too much by The unintentional misrepresentation.

In the United States, fencing programs are organized by the Amateur Fencers League of America.

Oregon is currently in the middle of a season that stretches from the end of October until the national championships in the last weeks of June. "It's a real long season," understated Septon.

The Oregon club, which consists of Septon, Mark Beemer, Lynn Carroll and Jeff Mayhew, just competed in a match last weekend in Portland that they won. This upcoming weekend, the University club members will compete in the Portland Salle Auriol Sixth Annual Fundraiser. The event raises money for Junior Olympic fencers.

Because fencing is a Club Sport, Septon likes to keep the fencing program open to anyone. Some of the members are interested only in the recreational aspect of the program, while others focus more on the competitive side of fencing, said Septon.

But it doesn't matter if it's recreational or competitive, as long as they know about fencing.

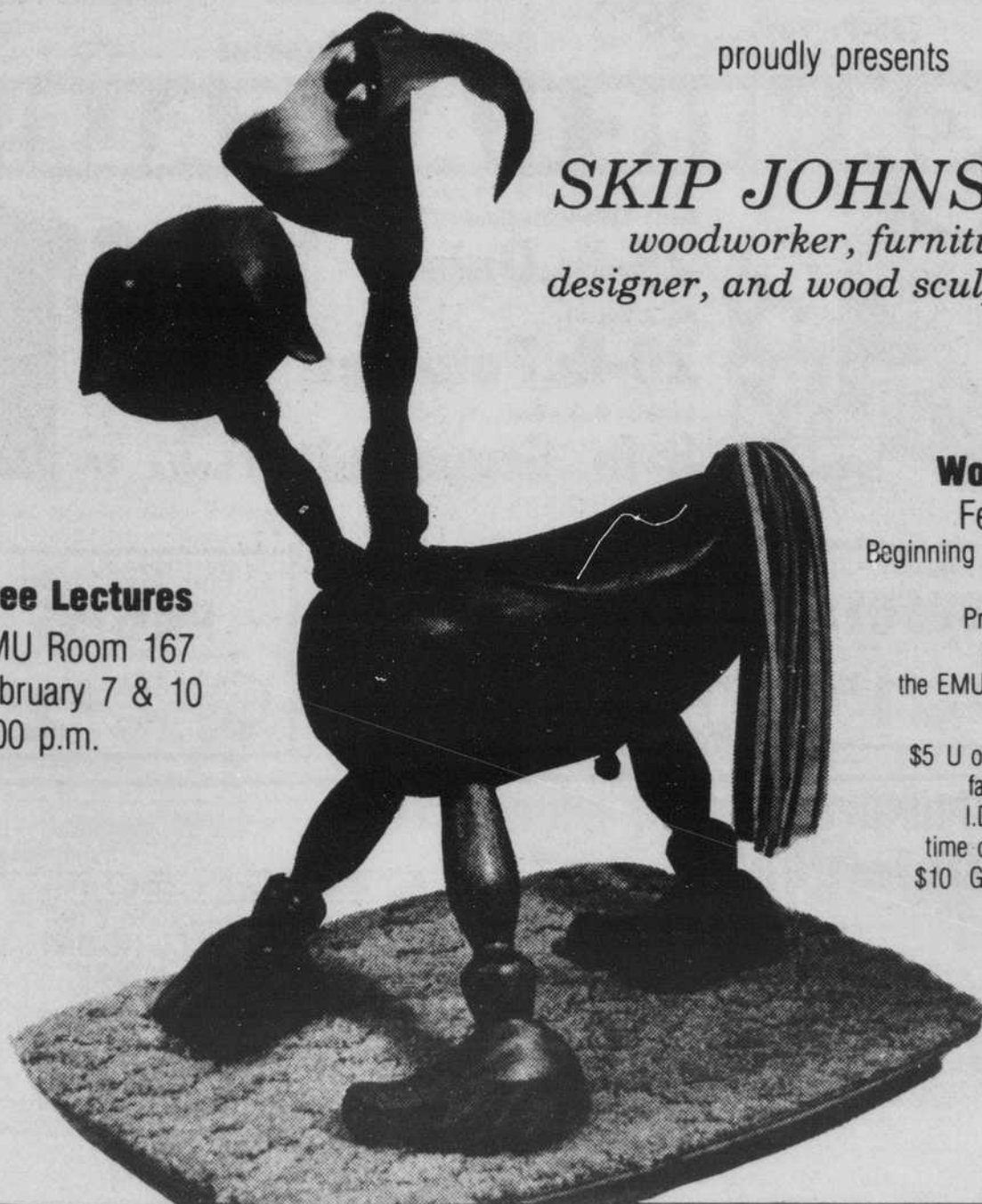
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