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The Other Side of the Fencing

Printers, En Garde!

IT'S A matter of class. Most fencing enthusiasts would no more think about beaming an umpire with a beer can than a baseball fanatic could imagine the play-by-play being broadcast in French. Fencing is supposed to exemplify class. Perhaps that's why the U.S. Fencing Association has learned to live with only 20 spectators showing up for a tournament.

But that was before Robert and Michael Hort of Enterprise Press Inc. took over and became sponsors of the Enterprise Press/New York International Sabre Tournament. The Class A international tournament drew contestants from all over the world, including fencing stars from France, Cuba, Poland, Bulgaria, West Germany, England, Canada and the United States. And instead of the normal 20 spectators, the tournament drew nearly 1,000 people because the two brothers wanted to get people involved.

Although neither are fencers, Michael Hort said they have friends involved with fencing and "truly got involved on impulse," he said. "I've tried to encourage my children to take up the sport, and right now my daughter (age 11) is taking lessons."

Founded in 1915 by Benjamin Hort, Enterprise is a third generation family printing business. With nearly 200 employees, the Manhattan-based printer is a diversified operation offering a variety of services. Sales last year were reported at nearly \$18 million, according to Michael Hort, 45. He added the company is adding four floors to the family-owned building that houses the printing plant.

"We began to consider a sports sponsorship after we decided to keep the company in New York City several years ago," Hort said. "When one of our clients (House & Co.) told us about fencing as a possibility, we thought it was a novel idea; one that could work well if executed properly."

House owner, Edgar House, is a top-ranked sabre fencer and his partner, Phil Reilly, competed in the 1984 Olympics.

What the printers did was pay to be the sponsor. By paying they got to use their name—The Enterprise Press/New York International Sabre Tournament to identify the tournament. They also were allowed to take part in site selection, and any events connected to the tournament.

Hort said because the tournament had been held in the New York Athletic Club in past years—which limited the number of people who could watch the events—the company decided to move the tournament to Columbia and New York Universities.

Hort said sponsoring the event also allowed them to get their salesmen and clients involved in the tournament. "I think it was very good for business," Hort said. "I was amazed at the number of our clients who were either interested in fencing or already knew a lot about the sport. We will definitely sponsor it again next year."

The winner of the World Cup Event, Individual Competition, was given the William Morris Hort Trophy. It was donated by Enterprise Press and the two brothers, in memory of their father.

Enterprise also printed posters, programs and a number of other items for the fencing event, for which it was paid by the U.S. Fencing Association.

"Fencing is a difficult sport," Hort said. "It's fast, it's tactical and it's sophisticated. The judging is done in French and the contestants use electric sabres which help the judges and spectators tell who touched who first."

"Most of the people who watch, or take part in the sport, are sophisticated and upscale."

Hort said America's Olympic bronze medalist, Peter Westbrook, ended up in 11th place in the tournament. ■

— FRED G. PHILLIPS