Fencers qualify for Nationals

By Mike Hlasnik

Charles Kwon '84, fencing team captain, Russell Holtz '84, and Alan Williams '85 qualified Sunday for the National Collegiate Athletic Association National Championships March 19-21 at Princeton University. Defending champion Holtz was undefeated in the foil individual competition of the Intercollegiate Fencing Association Championships after a slow start in the epee.

Kwon qualified in the sabre competition and Holtz finished eighth in the foil competition to qualify. Holtz defeated the defending NCAA champion, who had beaten him during the team competition Saturday.

The MIT team finished 16th in the 12-team field with 40 team points. Columbia University scored 68 points to win the team championship, edging Yale with 66 points and the University of Pennsylvania with 65 points.

MIT Coach Eric Sollee was pleased about sending three fencers to Nationals. "Since I've been here we've always qualified at least one fencer and more often than not, we've sent all three," said Sollee.

"It's nice to be on the winning side with the gold with Russ. He won in an even more convincing fashion than last year," he added.

The Engineers finished eighth in the foil team competition Saturday, which was expected to be their strongest event. Mitch Kwon '84 and John Sheffield '84 both failed to qualify for the finals. "Our foil team didn't do as well as we hoped," Sollee said. "We need a lot more competition with skilled fencers."

MIT finished ninth in the epee team competition. Williams was the only MIT fencer to advance to the individual finals, where he finished seventh. Harvard and Yale tied for the team epee title.

Kwon was the only MIT fencer to advance to the individual sabre finals. "I'm very happy about going to nationals," said Kwon, who also finished seventh in the finals. "I finished well today, but I had a bad start." Columbia won the saber competition, scoring 29 of a possible 33 points.

Holz commented on his performance: "I was hoping to win it, but it was a disaster. I did poorly yesterday, but I did better at the end of the day and I carried through to today. I put in a lot of hours working for it." He added that he thought he fended as well as he could.

Holz finished 12th in last year's NCAA Championships. Sollee said Holz will be very competitive at nationals. "I hope he's in good health and that he continues to be at his competitive peak. He has a good shot to finish in the top three."

Kwon, who started fencing as a sophomore, can finish in the top two-thirds at Nationals, Sollee also said, and Williams "can go against the best."

"We'll find out in two weeks," he said.

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