

Inexperience Spells Championship

Cindy Hite went out a week ago and won seven straight matches and the Southeastern Regional fencing title in Tallahassee for women under 19.

Sorry, but it wasn't years of hard work bringing their just reward. Cindy is not one to lock herself in her room for six hours a night and practice with the mirror the opponent. Such dedication usually has the mirror quitting before the athlete.

Her championship took practice, okay. And it took an outstanding instructor in Norbert Fuhrmann, who has been at it since his diaper days in Germany, to pull it off.

She has had so little experience you could spell it inexperience.

Fuhrmann conducted fencing classes at Adirondack-Southern, an upper middle class school for girls on St. Pete's southside, for two weeks in the fall. Cindy, 17, is one of the school's 42 pupils.

Mid-winter the course resumed again. That, friends, is the nutshell of her experience. The same can almost be said for four of the five members of the school's team — Gail Sawyer, Mliz and Gina Fry and, of course, Hite. Kathy Waite had tried it at summer camp.

Not since the school was opened in St. Pete in 1961, after its birth many years before as a summer camp for girls in the Adirondacks (New York), has there been organized competition.

Adirondack-Southern points with some pride to its academic strength and stress on English. It also has a four pupil to one instructor ratio and a compelling program of sports. Arch-



BOB CHICK
Sports Editor

ery, water skiing, horseback riding, tennis and swimming all get their just do.

Competition was always within, never without. Then school director George H. Longstaff noticed a fencing picture in the paper and asked Fuhrmann, one of a fencing family of five brothers, why he didn't enter it.

An inquiry at the Dunedin school of fencing and a couple of steps later Adirondack-Southern made its athletic debut at Florida Presbyterian in the Central Florida Divisionals. Next came the event at Florida State and the emergence of Cindy Hite.

"We didn't want to put any additional financial strain on the parents but the girls had to chip in \$20-\$25 apiece in order to go. It's the first time in my life I've ever gone to a tournament without even a set of foils and not even a fencing jacket," said Fuhrmann.

So they borrowed some. The sectionals were a bit different.

Each fencer is wired to an electric coat that lights up when a touch has been made.

Briefly, four touches equal a match. There is also a time limit of four minutes per bout.

Out of the seven bouts and a possible 21 touches against her, Cindy, who is majoring in languages but might eventually try modern dancing, was only scored upon four times.

"She had the class. She was making all the right moves," said Fuhrmann, who also doubles as a German and math teacher. "And I don't mean she was messy and tried just violent attacking methods to win. And we as a team didn't stand by on the sidelines and yell instructions and scream at the opponent. That's not the way it should be done."

And, of course, Adirondack-Southern teaches a different brand of refinement but the joy is the same.

Flushed with success, Cindy will go on to the nationals to be held June 19-25 in San Francisco. Don't worry about the over-emphasis for the Greenwich, Conn., daughter of a radio-television announcer for WCBS in New York.

"At first I loved it," she said yesterday, sitting on a couch, her body deeply tanned and brimming with excitement. "But I don't want fencing to become a profession."

She must have said the right words. "I don't want them so hooked on it so they can't see either right or left of fencing," said Fuhrmann. "Then they would be addicted. Fencing can't become a life and death matter."

And no need if should. For there's always next year. Only Kathy Waite graduates and the school's fencing team should be even stronger. Well, a little bit of addiction isn't that bad.



Cindy Hite Reaches Regional Fencing Heights