



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: Jan. 10, 2024

CONTACT: Maria Hernandez

PHONE: (909) 447-2406

El Monte Union Student Strikes Gold In Saber Fencing, Advances to Junior Olympics

EL MONTE – Arroyo High School sophomore Richard Cobian will showcase his talents in saber fencing – and seek to inspire others in his community to develop a love for the sport – when he competes against elite fencers from across the country at the 2024 USA Fencing Junior Olympics in February.

Cobian earned his spot at the Junior Olympics after winning a gold medal during the qualifier in December.

“I started fencing because I was inspired by my mother and grandparents who all fenced in college,” Cobian said. “Once I felt I was ready, I began entering tournaments and it’s finally paying off.”

Cobian started fencing when he was a fifth-grader at Río Hondo Elementary School, which was close to his studio, the West Coast Fencing Academy. The Academy offers classes for all ages and skill groups, including recreational and competitive fencers.

Cobian specializes in the saber category – one of three disciplines in modern fencing, which are sabre, foil and epee, with each specialty using a different kind of blade and set of rules.

“On behalf of the District, we are extremely proud of Richard for his accomplishments and for putting El Monte Union on the map as a home to competitive fencers,” Superintendent Dr. Edward Zuniga said. “We look forward to continuing to watch him hone in on his craft and grow as a competitor.”

According to the West Coast Fencing Academy, fencing is one of the most popular sports within Ivy League Universities, such as Stanford and Yale, and many top-level fencers are recruited for collegiate fencing teams at these institutions.

Cobian said he aims to share his love of the sport with other Arroyo High students by forming a fencing club on campus. He is looking for interested supporters, starting with his cross country and track teammates.

“Once I have some potential club members, I think I can convince one of my fencing coaches to lead the club at Arroyo,” Cobian said. “My goal is to have enough fencers to eventually start competing at scholastic tournaments and represent El Monte Union.”

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PHOTO CAPTIONS:

EMUHSD SABER FENCING 1: Arroyo High School sophomore Richard Cobian celebrates his gold medal in saber fencing with a fellow coach from the West Coast Fencing Academy after competing in the SoCal Junior Olympics qualifying tournament in December.

EMUHSD SABER FENCING 2: Arroyo High School sophomore Richard Cobian earns gold in saber fencing at the Cadet level during the SoCal Junior Olympics qualifying tournament held in December.

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The vision of the El Monte Union High School District is to empower and motivate our students to be resilient, college and career ready, lifelong learners and contributing members of our global society.