

Angelina Yang

Fairmont Preparatory Academy

Fencing's Unwavering Heart

The familiar crisp sound of blades rang in my ear as I solemnly walked through the halls. The light glared onto the metal strips where hundreds of fencers were warming up, almost mocking and reflecting the harshness of competition. My parents, immigrants from China, looked as if they were experiencing the world for the first time. This competition was a huge step for me and my fencing career, a crossroad where my parents worked to put me on.

The competition was fierce, and with every match, the pressure mounted. I was determined to win, to prove not only to myself but also to my family that the sacrifices we had made had not been in vain. As the day continued, the bouts became increasingly intense, each point a battle of skill, wits, and dedication. My coach would go on about describing the importance of character qualities, but it wasn't until this semi-finals that I truly understood the definition of integrity.

I found myself against a formidable opponent, a fencer known for her impeccable technique. The match was tiresome, with neither of us willing to give an ounce of mercy. As we neared the end, the score was tied, and the tension in the air was palpable. A controversial call from the referee left both said fencer and me bewildered. In my mind, I knew this point was not mine, yet the outcome of the match luckily hung in the balance. I had a choice to make: accept the referee's call or speak up and lose it all. My heart pounded, and the weight of my integrity bore down on me like an anchor.



I caught sight of my parents in the stands, their eyes beaming with pride and expectation. It dawned on me. These are the moments they had prepared me for and these are the principles that were instilled into me. I approached the referee and requested a video review of the disputed call. The crowd fell silent, and the tension was unbearable as the footage was analyzed. Finally, the decision was made, and it was clear that the call had been incorrect. The point was awarded to my opponent.

The applause that followed was deafening, for the act of sportsmanship that had just taken place on the strip. In the end, I did not advance to the finals, but I had earned something far more valuable – the respect and admiration of my fellow fencers, coaches, and most importantly, my family. As I left the competition hall that day, I couldn't help but ache through the stinging disappointment. But I was okay with losing. I had shown myself and those who believed in me that winning at any cost was not the path I would choose. In that moment, I knew that the true measure of a fencer lay not just in victory but in the commitment to doing what is right, even when it's the most difficult choice of all.