

SIX OLYMPIC SPORTS YOU CAN TRY IN CENTRAL IOWA

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EMILY WYNN
SPECIAL TO THE REGISTER

Michael Phelps. Katie Ledecky. Simone Biles. All three are wonderful, inspiring Olympic athletes. But they represent only two sports: swimming and gymnastics. The Olympics features many more interesting events. There are more than 30 different sports, and many of them aren't featured during primetime on NBC. But that doesn't make them any less valued. Not to the athletes in Rio, and not to the athletes watching at home.

I've been glued to my computer watching all the fencing I can. I started fencing last summer when, at age 25, I decided I wanted to try it. Now I can't imagine my life without fencing. And, for the record, U.S. Fencing had an amazing Olympics in Rio. The Des Moines area has various opportunities to try the less-talked-about Olympic sports, if you know where to look. There is everything from rowing to judo happening right here in central Iowa. Here is a short list of places in the metro to check out. There are more clubs and sports around, but the ones listed are affiliated with the national governing body of the sport, or Team USA, and follow important rules and safety regulations.

1. Fencing
What is it? Fencing is a combat sport with three different weapons to choose from: epee, foil and saber. For more information, visit <http://www.usfencing.org/fencing-101>. Steve Behrends, president of Des Moines Fencing Club, warns that swordfighting in movies is not fencing. "If you haven't seen fencing at the Olympics, you probably haven't seen fencing," he said. "Forget Zorro and The Princess Bride. What you see in the movies is almost exactly nothing like the sport of fencing."
Olympics highlights: In Rio, the men's foil and women's saber teams won bronze medals, and Alexander Massialas and Daryl Homer both won silver in their weapons, foil and saber, respectively.
Try it here: Des Moines Fencing Club, 801 73rd St, Suite J, Windsor Heights, [facebook.com/DesMoinesFencingClub](https://www.facebook.com/DesMoinesFencingClub)



BRET PARKHILL/SPECIAL TO THE REGISTER
Judo is an unarmed combat sport.

2. Judo
What is it? Judo is an unarmed combat sport, with roots in jujitsu.
Olympics highlights: In Rio, Kayla Harrison won the gold medal in the women's 75 kg division, and Travis Stevens won the silver in the men's 81 kg division.
Try it here: Des Moines Judo Academy, through Farrell's Martial Arts, 2706 Beaver Ave, Des Moines, 515-255-0095, [farrellsusma.com/Judo](https://www.facebook.com/farrellsusma.com/Judo)
3. Rugby
What is it? Rugby is a contact sport played with an oval ball that is passed backward, kicked or carried. The Olympics features 7s Rugby, which is 7 minutes a half and each team has 7 players.
Olympics highlights: Rio was the first time Rugby 7s was featured, and Fiji won the gold, earning the country its first Olympic medal.
Try it here: Des Moines Rugby Football Club, 120 39th St., West Des Moines, [desmoinesrugbyclub.com](https://www.desmoinesrugbyclub.com). For junior, non-contact rugby, visit [jrrugby.com](https://www.jrrugby.com). Seth Hoveland of DMRFC said all the home games are free and a great way to get familiar with rugby.
4. Rowing
What is it? Rowing is a racing sport in which teams propel boats forward using oars. Brenda Copley, president of Des Moines Rowing Club, said it's very physically demanding. "Once a race starts, there is no stopping for the rower," she said. "That places huge demands on the body's aerobic system, [so] rowers utilize oxygen better than almost any other athlete."

Olympics highlights: And In Rio, Gevvie Stone earned the silver medal in the women's single scull event, and the US women's coxed eight team won the gold.
Try it here: Des Moines Rowing Club, Birdland Marina, Birdland Drive, Des Moines, [desmoinesrowing.org](https://www.desmoinesrowing.org), [facebook.com/desmoinesrowing/?fref=ts](https://www.facebook.com/desmoinesrowing/?fref=ts). For information about where to watch the annual Head of the Des Moines Regatta, visit headofthedesmoines.org/. Copley suggests signing up for the fall Learn to Row event, which will be held in October at Gray's Lake, or even just watching the regatta to get an idea of what rowing is like.
5. Sailing
What is it? Sailing races involve maneuvering wind-powered boats along courses marked by buoys. For more information, visit firstsail.org/sailing-basics.
Try it here: Saylorville Yacht Club, Saylorville Lake Marina, 170 NW Polk City Drive, Polk City, [saylorvilleyachtclub.org](https://www.saylorvilleyachtclub.org), [facebook.com/sycss.org](https://www.facebook.com/sycss.org). Saylorville Yacht Club offers classes at lakes throughout the metro.
6. Trap shooting
What is it? The Olympics features International trap-shooting, which differs from regular trapshooting. Participants start with the shotgun at the waist, then when signaled the bird comes out either on time or delayed, and once the bird comes out the shooter brings the gun up to the shoulder to make the shot.
Try it here: New Pioneer Gun Club, 31454 312th Place, Waukee, 515-987-4415, [newpioneer.org](https://www.newpioneer.org). Brooke Vogel of New Pioneer Shooting said that while the club does not have classes, there is always someone willing to help new shooters. New Pioneer does not rent out guns and is only a shotgun range.

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