

British Fencing Association Annual Report 2005/06

PRESIDENT'S REPORT by Keith Smith, BFA President

July 6th 2005 was a landmark date for British Sport. The International Olympic Committee awarded the 2012 Olympic Games to London. Britain will be hosting the greatest sporting event on earth in the capital city and naturally we will have all the advantages of playing "at home" before large, and I am sure very enthusiastic, crowds. British Fencing would like to offer once again its congratulations to Lord Coe and all his team on securing the top prize in sport for our country.

Since London was awarded the 2012 Olympic Games UK Sport, the British Olympic Association and we have been in negotiations to acquire the necessary funding to support our fencers and to help support Team GB in their aspiration to reach fourth on the overall medal table in 2012. We know that Team GB cannot achieve this very ambitious target unless sports such as fencing, which have been in the medal zone with Richard Kruse's top 8 in Athens, make that extra step and win Olympic medals in either the individual or team events.

We should not forget that as the host nation we will be allowed to enter up to eight fencers as of right and this could well be as two teams. Naturally, we also hope that British fencers will qualify in their own right. I am very pleased to report that UK Sport has awarded British Fencing £2.7 million for the period ending in March 2009; this is a major increase in funding from the £110,000 we received from UK Sport when I became President in 2000. This money will all be tightly ring fenced for international fencing and hopefully it will enable us to compete on a much more professional basis than before. I wish to pay tribute to those fencers who have achieved such excellent results and have aided us, by their performances, in negotiating additional funding from UK Sport. In addition my thanks to Graham Watts for his hours of unstinting effort as our International Manager which is now beginning to pay very real dividends.

During the period of this report British Fencers have achieved a great deal on the international scene. Alex O'Connell won the World Cadet (Under 17) Men's sabre title and Corinna Lawrence was eighth in the World Cadet Women's Epee championships. Our Men's Foil team was sixth in the Senior European Championships and our Junior Men's Foil team was fifth in the Junior European Championships. In the FIE world team competitions our best results were our Men's Foil team coming sixth in St Petersburg, defeating the Chinese team en route, and our Women's sabre team coming seventh in Moscow. Individually, James Beevers was unlucky to miss the World Championships final by one hit, while Richard Kruse excelled to make the FIE Grand Prix Foil final in Shanghai. These results all augur well for the future, especially so as most have been achieved by our fencers training and being funded as amateurs. We hope the new funding that is now coming on stream, and also our new training centre at The Factory in North London, will help to make a step change in performance between now and the London 2012 Olympic Games.

The Veterans movement is very strong in Britain and I am pleased to report that Ralph Johnson and Richard Cohen won the World Veteran Championships at epee and sabre respectively. At the European Team Championships held in Finland our Women's sabre team won the championships and our Men's Sabre team won the bronze medal. These were two very pleasing results. I am sure all our veterans and their supporters are now eagerly looking forward to the Veteran's World Championships to be held in Bath this September. It will be a pleasure for British Fencing to welcome this World

Championships to the UK. My thanks in advance to the NVA for all the hard work they are putting into this exciting and challenging project.

This year British Fencing hosted the Eden Cup and Leon Paul Men's Foil FIE as well as the FIE Women's Sabre World Cup events at Whitgift School, South Croydon. The BFA is indebted to Dr Christopher Barnett, the Headmaster, for his kind sponsorship of these two events. It is vital that our fencers can gain international experience at home and it is also only right that we take our part in organising FIE World Cup events. It was a pleasure to have Joe Eden come to present the prizes at the Eden Cup and an equal pleasure to host the Chinese Women's Sabre team at Whitgift for the week prior to the women's sabre world cup. British Fencing has made a large effort this year to improve the presentation of our World Cup events, including coloured pistes and a reception for all the participants and officials.

British Fencing hosted FIE refereeing examinations in London this year for the first time. Our thanks go to the European Fencing Confederation for their financial support of these examinations. All the British candidates were successful; this was vital as in the years ahead we will need to support our international teams with internationally qualified referees and additionally we will be expected to provide eight referees for the 2012 London Olympic Games. This latter fact should provide a sufficient carrot to encourage our referees. During the past year Linda Strachan and David Sach were selected by the FIE to referee at the World Championships, with David refereeing in the sabre finals. Additionally, Matthew Haynes, Mike Thornton and Paul Greening were all selected to referee at FIE Grand Prix events.

BFA membership has now topped 10,000 - a significant increase since 2000. British Fencing's target is to double that membership by 2012. Although development is now the remit of the Home Countries, we are eager to do all we can to support development and publicise our sport.

As well as our membership increasing our competitions have never been so large and the British Senior Championships had over 750 competitors and the Public Schools' Championships had 1600 competitors this year. The Open competitions are now very large; consequently Mike Thornton is heading a review of our competition structure and calendar. Indeed in 2005/6 the British Championships at Cadet, Junior, Senior and Veteran levels were the largest ever recorded. We want to maintain and increase this interest in fencing. Another innovation has been the growth of Minifence, which allows young children to be introduced to fencing without having to buy traditional fencing kit.

British Fencing continues to be well represented on bodies connected with sport but outside of our own. Penny Spink was re-elected to the Executive Committee of the CCPR and Mary Glen-Haig sits on the British Olympic Committee, as do I. In addition I was elected Vice President of the European Fencing Confederation. It was very good to see Rodney Francis be awarded a Torch trophy by HRH Princess Anne in recognition of all his volunteer work for Fencing and also Richard Bonehill in winning the Coach of the Year for Cornwall. Another way in which we have formed excellent links is the Talented Athlete Scholarship Scheme (TASS). Initially Fencing was not included in this scheme but after effective lobbying we now have twenty-seven grant recipients.

It was excellent to see a Junior Commonwealth Fencing Championships being held in India in 2006. This gave our younger fencers from the Home Nations the chance to compete against other Commonwealth fencers. I was very pleased that John Ramsay our British Fencing Technical Director was chosen to organise this event. Looking ahead we have the Senior Commonwealth Championships in Belfast this year, which will surely provide much needed finance and publicity and in addition to the Veteran's World Championships in Bath. Lastly, fencing has been included in the UK School Games to be held in Glasgow in September. These games are intended to culminate in a Youth Olympics in 2012; it is wonderful that fencing has been included from the outset. This will allow our younger fencers to compete against each other in a multi sport competition. I would like to thank to Julia Bracewell of Sports Scotland for all her support. We hope that

this event will support Glasgow's bid to host the Commonwealth Games in 2014, at which we hope to see fencing re-introduced.

A great deal has happened over the past year and I am pleased to report that fencing is in a very healthy state with great future prospects. I would like to thank UK Sport for their confidence in us and for their increasing financial recognition, the British Olympic Association for their professionalism and wise guidance, and to each of the Home Country Sports Councils for their support of fencing. The Sports Aid Foundation continued to financially support our younger fencers and this is very much appreciated. I would also like to thank the BFA office staff Gillian, Kim, Nosheen, and also Jennifer at the BFA HQ but above all I would like to thank the numerous volunteers who continue selflessly to help our sport thrive. However, my greatest thanks is reserved for the actual fencers as they represent the lifeblood and future of our sport and they are why I am determined to do all I can to help our sport progress over the coming years.

RULES COMMITTEE by Peter Jacobs, Committee Chair

The committee met once in the year, to discuss the November 2005 FIE Congress proposals and to brief the BFA attendees to that Congress.

During the later part of this year much time has been spent in preparing the new, 2006, English-language edition of the FIE Rules. This reflects all the modifications to the Rules as a result of the decisions made at the 2005 Congress and subsequently. It has been updated to show the extended article-numbering system approved by the FIE in October 2005 and will be available for worldwide use.

By the time of publication of this report hard copies will be available for purchase. It will also be available in PDF form on the BFA web site. A document listing any further changes to the Rules will also continue to be maintained on the BFA web site, and the PDF versions will similarly be kept up to date.

FINANCIAL REPORT by Andrew Brannon, Hon. Treasurer

Members will note from the Income & Expenditure account that the Association recorded a surplus of £58k during the year. You will recall that there had been a series of planned deficits, partly at the behest of the Sports Council who wanted to see some of our reserves used to increase participation in the sport. The bold proposals in the last 4 year Plan now appear to be fully justified, as membership now stands at over 10,000 compared with about 5,000 a few years back.

The amount which we received in grant aid from the UK Sports Council for operational activities was increased over the previous year. The UK Sports Council provided a grant of £230,000, and the English Sports Council £50,000; we are grateful to both bodies for this funding.

Included within the UK Sports Council grant is the amount specifically for Elite fencers, much of which is allocated to younger fencers. The amount committed to International Fencing during the year 2005/2006 amounted to about £180,000. The membership income increased yet again and is now over £200,000. This represents a major achievement for the Association.

Along with other sports/volunteer and indeed commercial bodies we have found the cost of liability insurance increased, yet again. Other admin costs have been kept as low as possible, and have been reduced compared with 2005.

Following recommendations from the Investment Advisory Group part of our investments were in index linked Gilts, as shown in the accounts, and overall, I am happy with the current state of the finances of the Association.

PERFORMANCE DIRECTOR'S REPORT by Graham Watts

UK Sport, Olympic Pathway and International Performance Plan 2006-2012:

The Olympic Development Programme functioned very well during the year and provided £180,000 funding for our elite athletes and their support teams. In addition, the TASS scheme has led to several young fencers receiving vital support. However, we had a significant problem with a lack of funding at the Olympic Potential level during the year which restricted development of our leading teams (where some fencers are fully-funded and others receive no direct funding).

Much of the latter part of the year has been taken up with developing a proposal for a British Fencing Olympic Pathway plan for the six years leading up to the London 2012 Olympic Games. This builds upon the association's first corporate plan which covered the period from 2000 to 2008. It is hoped that this will lead to greatly increased funding from UK Sport in 2006/7 onwards.

TASS

We had 29 fencers accepted onto the TASS scheme in 2005/6 as either Scholars or Bursars and a further fencer achieved a 2012 TASS award: the cumulative value of these grants was in excess of £70,000.

The first National TASS training camp took place in Grantham from 15 to 19 December 2005. The Course Director was James Williams and he was supported by Christian Peeters (the coach of the Gold-medal winning Mens Sabre team from Athens) as head coach, together with some leading French fencers for sparring and experience. Other coaching and performance staff included Ziemek Wojciechowski, Ian Williams, Saskia Blair and Jo Bowyer. A master-coaching session for personal coaches was held on Sunday, 18 December. Further TASS training camps will be held in August and December 2006.

Major Championships

The World Championships were held in Leipzig in October 2005. The best individual result came from James Beevers at Men's Foil, achieving a place in the top 16 and narrowly failing to give the British team a 4th successive placing in the top 8 of the world championships. Richard Kruse was one round further back in the L32. The Men's Foil team finished a very creditable 10th and the Women's Sabre team finished 12th.

This was a better World Championships for the Team generally in terms of meeting initial performance targets and personal goals. None of the team was eliminated in the first round of competition (and so far as I can tell this has not happened before, certainly in modern times), which means that every fencer was by definition in the top 80% of the event. 10 of the 14 fencers reached the L64, which again is considerably better than in previous years. However, all but two of these fencers went into the L64 seeded in the bottom half of the draw and many went in with such low seeds that they faced fencers in the world top 10 at this stage. Unsurprisingly, therefore 8 of the 10 were eliminated at this stage. It is disappointing that only the four Men's Foilists finished in the top half of their competition.

The real plus points were the performance of the young fencers in their first world championships (Both Joanna and Neil Hutchison, David Riseley and Alex O'Connell) all of whom did creditably at this first experience. O'Connell, in particular, was a revelation at this level and fenced way above his age.

A major disappointment was that only 4 out of ten fencers IMPROVED upon their results in 2003 and only TWO of the team (not, of course, including the four debutants) achieved PERSONAL BEST results.

The European Championships were held in Zalereagazeg, Hungary in July 2005. Both the Men's foil and Women's Sabre teams finished in 6th place in their respective events and Richard Kruse reached the L16 of the individual event.

Seven British fencers competed at the World University Games in Izmir, Turkey, in August 2005. The individual results were disappointing with no fencers reaching the top 16, despite the fact that our two Olympians (Kruse and Bond-Williams) emerged as very highly seeded from the opening round. The Men's Foil team reached the top 8, finishing 7th after defeat to China.

At the World Junior and Cadet Championships in South Korea in April 2006, only Corinna Lawrence (at cadet Women's Epee) reached the top 8 although Chrstall Nicoll came close in Junior Women's Sabre, finishing 9th overall. At the Junior European Championships held in Tapolca, Hungary in November 2005, the Men's foil team finished 5th; Jamie Kenber and Tom Bennett both placed 9th in their respective events (foil and epee); and the women's and men's sabre and women's foil teams also placed 9th. Tom Bennett, Joanna Hutchison, Jamie Kenber and Corinna Lawrence all won medals at junior world cup events during the year.

Consultation with Athletes

A Conference of all leading fencers was held on 24 September and was well attended. The leading mens foilists were at a training camp in Poland and so a separate event for them was held on 16 September. The outcomes of the working groups at these events have helped to shape the development of policies for 2006.

Elite Training Centre

We established an elite training centre during the year: a salle that is independent of club interests and accessible on a 24 hour, 7-day a week basis.

The centre is a large renovated dance studio at The Factory, a private gymnasium and dance centre in Hornsey Road in North London. The studio has an excellent floor, is light and airy and accommodates four training pistes. It also has a fully equipped, private gymnasium which is perfect for fencers' strength and conditioning needs, a treatment room, sauna and excellent changing facilities.

The centre is already in regular, daily use by the Men's' Foil team and regular sessions have also been set up for sabre and epee.

The centre was officially opened with two international women's' sabre matches against Australia (won 45/31) and China (lost 44/45) on 6th March 2006.

National Coaches and other support

The following National Coaches were appointed for the 2005/2006 season:

- Ziemek Wojciechowski as National Mens Foil Team coach
- Ian Williams as National Sabre Team Coach
- Peter Frohlich as National Sabre Team Coach
- Pierre Harper as National Women's Foil Team Coach
- Bob Meshkov as National Epee Coach

I am very grateful to these coaches and all of the many personal coaches to the fencers in the various British teams for all their help and support during the year.

I am also grateful to Linda Strachan, James Williams and Neil Brown, each of whom has assisted in key areas of international team management and operation during the year and to Nosheen Khan, Kim Robinson, Joanna Hutchison, Chrystall Nicoll and Camille Dattoo who have all helped in the administration of our international programme, together with the many tireless volunteers on our International Committee (chaired by Graham Paul) and the weapon committees.

CHILD PROTECTION by Ismay Cowen, Child Protection Officer

The British Fencing Association is responsible for setting out the policy and procedures for Child Protection including Case Management where necessary. The four Home Countries comply with British Fencing Association policy and are responsible for assisting their Regions/Sections, counties and clubs within their authority to comply.

England and Wales are 'Registered Bodies' with the CRB for disclosure checks for people working within those boundaries. Northern Ireland has registered with the Pre Employment Consultancy Service while Scotland is proceeding with registration with 'Disclosure Scotland'. This means that anyone operating across a national boundary will need disclosures for each country and must contact the appropriate Fencing Association.

British Fencing has updated the Policy and Procedure in line with current legislation, and recognised 'Best Practice'; this is available on line via the British Fencing Website. New Guidance for clubs and competition organisers is also available on line. These are working documents and will be amended in light of experience in use. Constructive comments on how the documents may be improved would be welcomed.

Northern Ireland has always been in the forefront in the area of Child Protection and I congratulate NIFU for their website which reflects this in a very positive way (see <http://www.nifu.co.uk/>).

'Sports Coach UK' offers a variety of workshops to assist coaches and officials achieve the highest standards in both coaching and in operating clubs. Attendance at these will help clubs and organisations demonstrate that Fencing is a 'Safe Sport for All'.

OMBUDSMAN By Gillian Fleming, British Fencing Association Ombudsman

My role as Ombudsman is to consider, investigate and report to the President upon complaints of maladministration by British Fencing. This includes dissatisfaction with the way British Fencing handles the many tasks it performs but generally not the technical, competitive or disciplinary side of fencing. If you do have a complaint about British Fencing, you should try to resolve the matter before you contact me although I am happy to respond to any enquiries about whether I might be able to help. In the last year, I received no complaints.

The new disciplinary procedure has come into effect, following a review by the Disciplinary Committee which took into account comments that I had made about the process following an earlier complaint.

If you think that you might have a complaint to make, I can be contacted by telephone on 01904 640620 or e-mail on gillianfleming@aol.com. Alternatively you can write to me at PO Box 265 York YO10 4ZU.

ENGLAND By John Ramsay, President, England Fencing

The new England came into existence in September 2004; we received our first grant from Sport England in April 2005 and started to receive subscriptions in January of 2006. It has been hard work, but we are gradually getting to where we want to be by 2008. We have kept the subscriptions as low as possible at £5 (musketeers), £10 (juniors) and £20 (adult and clubs) and do not plan any increases for 2007.

Sport England gave us a grant of £50,000 in our first year and indicated we could expect the same in the future. But then Great Britain was awarded the 2012 Olympic Games, and the Government substantially reduced Sport England's budget to give SportUK increased funds. Initially our grant was reduced to zero but restored to £30,000 per annum for two years as our Whole Sport Plan (WSP) met the Sport England criteria, but we were warned that further funding was likely to be dependent upon fencing making spectacular progress. On Sport England's advice we are investing 50% of the grant into one area (in the SW) with the remainder in a parallel project elsewhere in England. We hope this will demonstrate the value of substantial investment.

In April 2005 the BFA set up the new coaching panel, which established the coaching standards and procedures prior to handing over implementation to the Home Countries. In our first year we have made progress, but I appeal to everyone to help and be patient as such projects take time to produce results.

One key point from the WSP is: More fencers – more coaches – more clubs leading to better fencers – better coaches – better clubs. Obviously this cannot be achieved overnight, but we have been giving grants throughout the country. Some examples include a newly qualified coach and teacher given kit to start a new club in the midlands; clubs wanting to expand and start feeder clubs from local schools; a Region with an ambitious development plan. We gave nearly £20,000 in grants last year and plan to continue this.

We have also been giving modest grants to keen, promising young fencers to help them progress. This fund is not aimed at the top internationals who are the BFA's responsibility. In future years England will set aside a sum to support individual fencers on a wider basis, including adults. For coaches we have established the "Brian Pitman Bursary Fund" to assist coaches in starting new clubs and in raising their standards. This is funded from coach examination fees and a grant from England Fencing when possible and needed.

England has taken over from the BFA the annual charge for the use of Upper Heyford and it is now being extensively used. Many young English fencers have attended the 'Tomorrow's Achievers' sessions that go from strength to strength.

England strives to meet Sport England's child protection targets. Whatever your personal views are, they are valuable initiatives and I urge everyone to follow the schemes. Every coach and officer at all levels must get CRB clearance and attend one of the 'Good Practice' and 'Child Protection' courses that are run both by England Fencing and local Sports Councils (see SportsCoachUK website).

'Clubmark' is another key initiative. It is in the final stage of piloting, prior to official authorisation and launch, and will become increasingly important in the future.

Our Junior and Senior Teams have performed excellently, winning overall where they have been involved. All our Juniors who went to India in January 2006 for the Junior Commonwealth, returned with a medal

Finally I would like to thank the officers, the executive, the hundreds of volunteers throughout England and the fencers for their participation and support – without you all we would not have the magnificent sport we enjoy today.

NORTHERN IRELAND by Ian Sneddon, Chair, Northern Ireland

2005/2006 was a very busy and successful season for Northern Ireland Fencing as our fencers chased the points for qualification for the Junior World Championships and Commonwealth Championships.

In the senior rankings NI achieved four fencers in the top ten, Jonathan Willis (epee) and Kate Gardner (foil) both ranked 2nd, Steven Fenwick (sabre) 8th and Ellie Collier (sabre) 10th, with twelve others are in the top forty.

On the Junior Rankings Andrew Fenwick (epee) 3rd, Steven Fenwick (sabre) 5th, Sarah Ellis (sabre) 3rd, Jonathan Bradley (epee) 6th and David Downey (sabre) 8th made the top 10 with 4 more in the top 30. At only 14 years of age Grace O'Connell (sabre) is 8th in the Cadets.

At the British Junior Championships we scored a unique double when within 20 minutes of each other Andrew Fenwick (epee) and Steven Fenwick (sabre) won their titles. Sarah Ellis (sabre) won a silver medal and Grace O'Connell a bronze in the Cadet sabre. Grace O'Connell won the British Youth Under 16 Sabre and Debbie Thompson won silver in the Under 18 Sabre. 3 others achieved a top 16 placing in their events. A small NI team travelled to the first Junior Commonwealth Championships, in India and won 2 silver medals in Women's sabre. But it wasn't just the youngsters having all the success as Richard Cohen retained his World Veteran Sabre title and Fiona Haldane won the gold medal at the Veterans Commonwealth Championships.

The PriceWaterhouseCoopers Junior Series was a resounding success in its first year with over 50 youngsters regularly competing at u/10, u/12 and u/14 age groups. The inaugural event in the series was held in the foyer of Warner Village Cinemas in Belfast to coincide with the premier of Zorro II. The medallists won a free family ticket to the movie and all competitors received discounted entry and Northern Ireland fencing is extremely grateful to the two companies for their support.

All in all a very pleasing year, as the focus of our attention turns to the Commonwealth Championships to be held in Belfast this September... Hope to see you there!

SCOTLAND By Roy Clarke, President, Scottish Fencing

The members put an all-new administration of Scottish Fencing in place in September 2006. As well as being faced with a fair amount of administration simply to get the company properly in order we found we were faced with one of the busiest and most expensive possible fencing seasons with the Junior and senior Commonwealths and playing host to the youth quad.

Preparation and organisation of the Junior Commonwealths was something of a baptism of fire for a relatively inexperienced management team. Nevertheless, with all party members properly CP aware, CP checked, immunised and trained as appropriate we managed to send a full squad and started the competition in style with Christie Waddington taking the first gold medal of the competition in the individual WS. Brother sabreurs James and Harry Moncreiff took individual silver and bronze respectively in MS and Scotland achieved team medals in WS (Gold), MS (silver) and MF, WF and ME (bronze). 8 medals out of a total of 48 is a very creditable performance. The travelling

parents made an invaluable contribution to the management and organisation of this very demanding trip.

The next challenge was the organisation of the youth quadrangular, which we hosted in Edinburgh. There was a great spirit throughout the day, from piping the teams in at the start to a very lively ceilidh in the evening, with some competitive and exciting team fencing in between. A strong England side dominated at both age groups but Scotland managed second place overall.

At the Scotland "B" fixture with Ireland, Irish students and the RAF we managed a convincing win, but at the senior 5 nations we were again up against a very strong England side. Nevertheless our women sabreuses managed an excellent weapon win and the team finished second overall.

Ed Jeffries and Rebecca Carson were selected for the cadet worlds in Korea with Chris Harding and Lisa McKenzie picked as reserves.

Our top senior men foilists – Richard Kruse, Keith Cook and James Rowe are all included in the elite GB group and have their hopes set on Olympic selection. Richard and Keith made up 50% of the team, which achieved a memorable win over China at the St Petersburg GP.

We are now concentrating on building the base in Scotland – with one-tenth the participants that England has it is always a challenge for us to get the momentum going to give a good development and competition environment. However, that is our aim and we hope to maintain a steady growth throughout next season with an improvement in quality of all the products offered to our members. We continue to have the backing of 'Sportscotland', both with financial and other assistance, for which we are most grateful.

We are greatly looking forward to working with the BFA on the delivery of the first UK School Games in Glasgow, which offers a tremendous opportunity to showcase our sport.

WALES by Bob Turner, Chair, Welsh Fencing

The officers of Welsh Fencing have continued to monitor the impact of increased membership fees following the UK modernisation programme and, more recently, the changes to the BF database and the ability to access membership data accurately and quickly. Our relationship with the Sports Council has continued to be a positive and constructive one and it has been possible to carry out a full programme of events with Peter Stewart traveling far and wide in his capacity of National Coach and Development Officer. On top of this demanding schedule, Peter has also been responsible for much of the back room administration so essential to the running of a Governing Body. Turning to the activities of the fencers themselves, one of the most positive and promising aspects has been the continued improvement in both the number and quality of our young, home based talent with competitors such as Jessica Davies and David Gregory. Of those based outside the Principality, Rhys and Jamie Melia were prominent. As the year progressed, attention increasingly turned to the question of selecting a Welsh team to compete in the first ever Junior Commonwealth at all weapons. It was eventually possible to send a good size team to Chennai under the team management of Mark Nelson Griffiths, ably supported by a group of assistants. Whilst the event was undoubtedly a success enjoyed by those who went, it also proved to be the most costly event ever to be supported by Welsh Fencing.

FOIL COMMITTEE by Clare Halsted, Committee Chair

Our international squads continued to encourage us with a selection of top class results, however, we need more depth, greater commitment, better training (quality and quantity) and fitter, faster foilists to build up to 2012.

Richard Kruse held his own in world terms with 16th in the Senior Europeans and an invaluable contribution to the team's excellent 6th place. James Beevers followed this with a terrific performance at the World Championships, 14th (missing out on a L8 place due to some extraordinary refereeing), with the team a creditable 10th, only losing to Russia by one hit. Kruse then collected the best set of World Cup results ever with 4 L16s and 7th in Shanghai lifting him to a World Ranking of 20th. A full men's team was selected for the Universiade, (Aug 05) and did well to come 7th. The senior women though lag far behind as Camille Datoos still struggles with a chronic knee problem and the less-experienced fencers have yet to make their mark. A blitz on footwork and fitness perhaps?

Highlights of the junior season: men's team 5th in J.Europeans beating Austria, Romania and Germany, with Jamie Kenber 9th in the individual; Kenber 6th and 3rd in J. World Cups, ending up 26th in the World Ranking; Daniel Robinson 8th in the Eden Cup, which this year attracted 84 entries from 15 nations. And a few cadets had impressive results too: Catriona Sibert 7th in Slovakia; Marcus Mepstead 12th / 236 in one German marathon; James Davis 11th / 235 in another. As usual our Veterans brought back medals from the Worlds - one silver, Linda Norrie (cat.B) + bronzes for Clare Halsted and Hilary Philbin (cat.A). Congratulations also to the winners of the Ranking Prizes – Tarenn Teller, Wimbledon and James Hoggarth, Swash & Buckle.

After many years of masterminding the WF senior ranking, including converting it from a paper to an electronic version, (yes there was a time before websites!), Dawn Townsend handed the guardianship on to Paul Sibert with our heartfelt thanks for all the hours she dedicated to it. Steve Kershaw's help over the years with international admin for the senior women has also been very much appreciated. Joan Mason has been on the foil scene longer than most and her experience, wisdom, support and keen interest in young fencers has helped the sport to thrive. She has now finally stepped down from the FC – thank you Joan for everything. In spite of his own international commitments, James Beevers nobly stepped into the vacant Junior Men's Captain role, helped by Dave Hanrahan now on the FC. We are indebted to Anne Hanrahan, John Troiano and Paul Sibert who spend ages (and ages!) organising foreign trips; to Linda Strachan for her huge contribution; to Clive Jarman and Alan Gardner for their efficiency with the rankings and everyone else who gives their time freely.

One tricky task we always face is how to minimise the cost to fencers of trips abroad. This year, after much debate, we decided to follow the example set by epee and sabre to reimburse loss of earnings for officials accompanying the squads. We have also set up a more formalised squad structure with designated coaches, working towards a productive training and support system for the best foilists in each age group. The senior men will continue to have UK Sport funding but more of them will have to train full-time if the team is to realise its potential. Now that we have a dedicated training centre and increased international funding we need to put it to best use. 2012 provides the incentive – we have to rise to the challenge.

EPÉE COMMITTEE by John Haynes, Committee Chair

Men and Women epeeists at Senior, Junior and Cadet levels have all been very active during the year; dedicated individuals operating in smaller groups in support of the different squads did most of the work of the committee.

Domestic epee events have continued to attract large numbers and for those who can manage two pool rounds and DE with repechage, the Bill Hoskyns Open has been added as a summer event, while the Milner Barry/Miller Hallet have moved to the end of November.

The highlights of the year have been provided mainly by cadets and juniors. Louise Highton performed well at the Junior Europeans coming 23rd. Two cadets who have made an impression on the Junior international rankings are Corinna Lawrence 28th and Elisa Albini 77th. Corinna also did brilliantly at the Cadet Worlds coming 8th/72. Thomas Bennett finished his final Junior Season ranked 15th in the World having come 2nd/72 at Luxemburg, 5th/62 at Catania and 5th/68 at Burgos. James Thornton finished 72nd in the World and followed his junior season with a win at the Junior Commonwealths and a Senior L64 at Berne.

At senior level we had more stable international squads, which enabled better emphasis on organised training arranged by Andy Pearson, Libby Payne and Bob Meshkov working closely with Graham Watts. The best results have come from Jo Maynard 31/139 at Prague, Jon Willis 29/131 at Berne and 29/86 at Poitiers and Thomas Cadman 25/86 at Poitiers.

SABRE COMMITTEE by Graham Watts, Chair, Sabre Committee

After the highs of last year – Louise Bond-Williams' Last 16 at the Olympic Games and a world championship for Alex O'Connell – this has been back to business as usual for the international performances of British sabre/

The women's' sabre team (Louise, Jo Hutchison, Chystall Nicoll, Jessica Lacheta and Beth Davidson) had a reasonably consistent year, retaining their place in the top 8 at the European Championships and generally in the top 10 of the world rankings, with an excellent top 8 finish in Moscow. However, in many senses it was a standstill year, both in terms of individual results and in the team: encouragingly, once strong nations such as Romania and Azerbaidjan are now well behind us but other emerging nations (the Ukraine, Korea and Japan) have overtaken the British team. A lot needs to be done in order for them to get close to a position whereby qualification for Beijing is a possibility over the next year.

At men's sabre, Chris Buxton has shown great commitment and developed well over the year, during which he has trained in Budapest, and we have begun the process of reintroducing a British men's' sabre team into world fencing. Alex O'Connell and Neil Hutchison both performed well in their first experiences of major senior championships

At the management and administrative level, Paul Greening has continued to manage the men's sabre squad with Ian Williams as our new National Senior Sabre coach, alongside Peter Frohlich who continues to support British fencing from Budapest. Paul has also rapidly climbed back up the international sabre refereeing ladder, alongside David Sach, both of whom have been very active during the year. Barry Flood continues to do an excellent job in overseeing the Coupe du Nord satellite series and

running the Cole Cup. Neil Brown continues to work tirelessly in maintaining an excellent sabre rankings scheme, together with the administration of the sabre club and his work for the boys' cadet team. Beth Davidson has continued to assist me with the running of a senior women's 'B' squad and in filming countless sabre bouts for our database. Finally, it has been good to see the way in which David Sach has coordinated the junior sabre scheme, working collaboratively with the main coaches who are doing a wonderful job in terms of bringing new young sabreurs into the system, particularly Norman Golding, Mike Matthews, David Kirby, Peter Rome, Neil Brown and Ian Williams plus many others.

Finally, after 18 years in the job it is time for me to call it a day in terms of chairing the sabre committee. The role of Performance Director is growing steadily in terms of responsibility and activity as we begin to approach the 2012 Games and I need to focus on this to the exclusion of all else within fencing. It has been a great 18 years, which started whilst I was still a competitive fencer, and I hope that my successor has just as much fun.