

THE SWORD

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World Silver for Mepstead



President's Report pp4-5

World Championship Report pp6-11

Interview with Marcus Mepstead pp12-13

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PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Our International Relations (IR) team continues to make its contribution to the future of fencing and I am always pleased and proud to see GBR playing its part. These professional and committed individuals - from GBR and around the world - work quietly away, often behind the scenes and there's no doubt that without such people the sport of fencing would no longer be able to flourish.

In previous issues I have often made reference to the vital contribution made by all our volunteers but on this occasion I'd like to shine a spotlight on our four long-serving FIE post-holders - Peter Jacobs, Steve Higginson, Clare Halsted and Janet Huggins.



Steve Higginson, Janet Huggins, Peter Jacobs & Clare Halsted

Peter Jacobs is our longest-serving FIE post-holder. His current role is on the Legal Commission and includes responsibility for maintaining and updating the FIE statutes, establishing disciplinary committees, reviewing the statutes of prospective new federations and dealing with any legal issues that come up within the FIE.

Peter is also a member of the Rules Restructuring Working Group and the Safeguarding Working Group. He regularly acts as Supervisor at FIE World Cups and last season travelled to events in France, Spain and Germany.

With continuous service for 42 years I think it's worth listing Peter's FIE history:

1977 - 1984	Statutes Commission
1984 - 1988	Executive Committee & Statutes Commission
1988 - 1992	Statutes Commission
1992 - 2000	Executive Committee
2000 - 2012	Executive Committee as Treasurer

2012 - present day Legal Commission



Peter Jacobs

The FIE recognised Peter's sterling service by appointing him as a Member of Honour in 2000. Forty-two years and still counting is a remarkable achievement.

Steve Higginson is a stalwart of the Rules Commission and is currently its President. The Rules Commission is largely a reactive commission, reacting to proposals for rule changes and giving an opinion prior to the Congress at which the changes will be voted upon.

In addition Steve's recent activities have included the setting up of the new Rules Restructuring Working Group for which he has arranged and chaired a number of meetings both in the UK and Switzerland. Steve reports that the Technical and Organisation sections are now complete and he is currently working on the Materials section.

A fluent French speaker, Steve is often asked for translation services, not only for the output from his own commission but also for other ad hoc requests such as data for referee exams. He also acts as an FIE Supervisor at World Cup events with his most recent trip being to the women's foil event in Tauberbischofsheim in May.

Steve was elected to the Rules Commission in 1989 and other than a year



Steve Higginson

off in 2012, has remained in place. Like Peter he has no plans to retire from his FIE role and he also continues at home as the Chair of the BF Rules Committee.

Steve was appointed as an FIE Member of Honour in 2013.

Dr Clare Halsted has served on the FIE Medical Commission since her election in 2004. This commission has a wide range of responsibilities of which safety is always high on the agenda. An example is their recent push for an assessment of ways to decrease the risk of injuries from broken sabre blades, which is now being investigated by the SEMI Commission. Another topic always on their agenda is the complicated issue of gender change. This is reviewed every year, or as and when appropriate, with the FIE currently following the IOC guidelines.

In addition to her Medical Commission activities Clare was appointed as Head of the Anti-Doping Panel in 2018. As such she is responsible for:

- Ensuring that the FIE complies with all WADA standards which has required the expansion of the FIE Anti-Doping Education programme in preparation for the new WADA education standard
- Ongoing liaison with the International Testing Authority to manage the FIE's Anti-Doping testing programme

As always, Clare is a very busy bee:

- She is the lead person for the updating of the Medical Handbook for World Championships
- She is a member of the working group for mask security, ensuring that regulations are updated in order to make mask fittings safer



Clare Halsted

- She is the Medical Commission representative on the Safeguarding working group
- She is the Medical Commission representative on environmental issues following the IOC and UN initiatives regarding the role of International Federations and has recently delivered a session about this to the FIE Commission and Council Meetings in Bucharest
- In June she delivered an Anti-Doping briefing session to a group of FIE Supervisors in order to improve the Anti-Doping processes at World Cup events and she updates the FIE's Anti-Doping Rules along with information on the FIE website.

In addition Clare is frequently appointed as a Medical Delegate at the FIE's major championships and last season found the time to officiate at the 2018 Veterans World Championships in Livorno, Italy and the 2019 Cadet and Junior World Championships in Torun, Poland.

Taking into account her numerous BF activities at home, one might reasonably ask Clare when she finds the time to eat or sleep!

Janet Huggins has been in post on the SEMI Commission since 2008 and - like Clare - is a busy bee with a diverse role.

A major responsibility of this commission is homologation (ratification and approval) of all new equipment including blades, clothing, masks, video refereeing systems and management software. After the equipment has been tested the technical analysis is sent to each member of the SEMI for scrutiny and checking. Members then vote for approval or raise their concerns and the agreed recommendations are forwarded to the FIE Executive Committee for final approval.

In addition to her normal responsibilities Janet serves as the secretary for her commission which includes taking accurate minutes of the meetings and acting as the liaison point for information and communications with other members.

Janet's recent activities include:

- Working with Steve Higginson and his Rules Restructuring Working Group - having contributed to the review of both the Technical and Organisation sections she is now very much involved with the tidying up and indexing of the Material annexes
- Assisting with the updating of the European CEN regulations for sports safety equipment - Janet is part of the shadow committee working alongside representatives from fencing manufacturers and test laboratories
- Involvement with the inspection and approval of the prototypes for new



Janet Huggins

mask safety systems, sabre gloves and foil chest guards soft outer layer

Janet is regularly invited to attend World Championships, either as a SEMI delegate running weapon control and the call room, or in order to run the stand for the FIE's Equipment Donation project. She has recently returned from the Senior World Championships in Budapest and was the FIE Supervisor at events in France and Switzerland.

At home - along with husband Peter - Janet is a tireless worker providing weapon control facilities at numerous BF events. Long may that continue!

As usual much of our IR liaison takes place at the major FIE and EFC events, where there are opportunities to talk to the Presidents and General Secretaries of the other member countries. During the past season I attended:

- the FIE Annual Congress in Paris, as Head of Delegation
- the Junior & Cadet World Championships in Torun
- the European Fencing Confederation (EFC) Congress in Dusseldorf - followed by the European Championships - as Head of Delegation
- the Senior World Championships in Budapest

Georgina Usher, as CEO, attended the FIE and EFC Congresses as GBR's 2nd Delegate.

Georgina is leading the way with one of the FIE's current priorities which is to establish a safeguarding framework for the FIE. Georgina, Clare and Peter are all members of the new FIE Safeguarding working group with responsibility for implementing its policies, procedures and training. Georgina is recognised as an expert in this field and was appointed as one of the two Safeguarding Officers that were put in place for the first time at the 2018 Junior & Cadet World Championship in Torun.

In the UK I attended a number of junior and senior events at both domestic and international level, with my last event of the season being the UK Armed Forces Fencing Centenary weekend. I was

delighted to be invited to this prestigious event and to assist with presenting some of their spectacular trophies at the gala dinner. I was also pleased to be asked to field a President's Team in the triangular



President Philbin presenting the Inter Services Triangular trophy to the Captain of the RAF team Flt Lt Greensides



President Philbin presenting the Master Swordsman trophy to LCpl Sadiq

matches on the following day. (A full report appears later in this issue.)

Finally - and saving the best till last - I have to mention another spectacular result from our men foilists. Having watched Richard Kruse gain his silver medal in last year's World Championships in Wuxi, I had the enormous pleasure of seeing Marcus Mepstead follow suit in this year's World Championships in Budapest. I watched Marcus all day, starting with his spectacular victory in the tableau of 64 when - as 64th seed - he eliminated the no. 1 seed, World no. 1 and reigning World Champion Alessio Foconi from Italy. Marcus went from strength to strength during the day and it was evident that he has made a real breakthrough.

Marcus deserves much praise for his achievement and as before, it was an additional pleasure to receive so many congratulations from other nations who were delighted on Marcus's behalf. In this pre-Olympic year it is a very positive sign to have two consecutive World Championship silver medallists and I am much looking forward to attending the Tokyo Games.

Hilary Philbin
September 2019

INTERNATIONAL NEWS

WORLD CHAMPIONSHIPS 2019 REPORT

Photos: Augusto Bizzi

The 2019 Fencing World Championships took place in Budapest, Hungary 15–23 July. Dubbed “A Kind of Magic”, this amazing event was deemed one of the best ever. The competition started with three days of qualification followed by three days of individual competitions and three more days featuring the team events.



Here, Team Manager, Johnny Davis, Head Sabre Coach, Jon Salfield and Operations, Efficiency & Aspiration Manager, Maxine McCombie provide their reports on the British team's efforts.

Foil & Epee Report by GB Team Manager, Johnny Davis

Women's Foil Individual

GBR had one representative in this event, Kate Beardmore who was coming into these Championships off the back of a good top 32 result at the European Championships in Dusseldorf.

Kate fenced very solidly in her first round winning five of her six fights. She fenced with composure and maturity demonstrating the perfect mental approach to the first round of a World Championships in which the standard of fencers can vary enormously. This gave her a seeding of 10th meaning that she progressed straight into the 64 draw on the second day.

There she was drawn against the experienced Mohamed from Hungary. Kate controlled the fight well until the mid-point where a momentary loss of focus alongside a change of

tactics let Mohamed back into the fight. Once Mohamed took the lead she never relinquished it and won 15-12. Although this could be seen as a missed opportunity, Kate's fencing has matured well over the season and top 64 performances at senior international competitions should now be her consistent minimum standard.



Kate Beardmore stormed through the 1st round

Men's Foil Individual

Day one of this event was a mixed bag of results with James Davis putting in a seemingly unstoppable performance as he destroyed the opposition in his pool to win all six fights. Ben Peggs fenced intelligently and solidly to finish with 5V/1D. However Marcus Mepstead struggled to find his rhythm and timing, finishing with 2V/3D. As a world top 16 fencer Richard Kruse had an automatic bye to the round of 64.

After the performances in the poules, James progressed straight into the 64. Ben only just missed out on automatic qualification but had a bye in the first round of preliminary eliminations and Marcus had to start in the first.



James Davis also went straight through

Marcus firstly drew Kontochristopoulos from Greece and once again struggled to find his natural rhythm but kept calm and patient, grinding out a 15-11 win over an experienced opponent. In his second fight he was drawn again Serri from Slovakia who has caused problems for a number of quality fencers over the last couple of seasons. Once again Marcus stuck to his game plan and remained patient emerging with a 15-10 win which qualified him for the 64.



Marcus Mepstead – Game Face

In the second round of preliminaries, Ben had a tough fight against Chinese Taipei's Ou but adjusted his tactics intelligently during the fight and went through 15-13.



Ben Peggs Celebrates

In the round of 64, Ben was drawn against Giaccon from The Netherlands - a young emerging fencer who finished in the top 16 at the Senior Europeans earlier in the season. Ben unfortunately gave away too much of the initiative in the early stages of the fight and having fallen behind had to chase the fight which suited Giaccon's style. The fight was lost 15-8. Overall, following a shaky start to the season Ben has had a very solid end and should go into next season with increased confidence and self-belief.

James drew Pauty from France, a previous World Cup winner and a

member of the newly crowned French European Championship winning team. James continued where he left off in the qualifying pool and established a strong lead over his opponent. Unfortunately just at the stage where he should have closed out the fight Pauty gained back some critical points. With this renewed confidence the French fencer used his experience to claw back the hits, eventually winning 15-14. James will certainly see this as a missed opportunity at the end of a challenging season but he should also take confidence from his world class performance in the pools and in the majority of his elimination fight.

Richard came straight into the 64 and was drawn against Son from Korea. Son started very strongly, establishing a 3-0 lead but Richard soon found his rhythm and took the lead towards the end of the first period. Son continued to apply consistent pressure with Richard responding in kind and as a result, the lead changed a number of times. In the end it came down to just a couple of unsuccessful actions from Richard which meant he just didn't score the required hits at crucial points in the fight. After a real battle Son emerged victorious 15-12. Son eventually won a bronze medal reflecting his form and quality.



Richard Kruse faced a tough draw

After claiming the Silver in 2018, Richard will be disappointed in this result, but as always, will be looking ahead to the remaining events in the qualification period. After a career spanning over two decades and a succession of podium places in the last two seasons, Richard's focus will undoubtedly now be on his preparation for the first World Cup in Bonn.

Following his difficult qualifying rounds Marcus was seeded 64th meaning he was drawn against the Italy's World Number 1, Foconi. The Italian has been amazingly consistent over the last couple of seasons but Marcus had a good record against him, albeit primarily in 5-hit matches, including a recent win against him at the European Championships in Dusseldorf. Marcus and his coach Dan

Kellner worked hard on a clear game plan in advance of the fight. Marcus executed the plan perfectly, stunning Foconi to open up a 10-2 and then a 12-3 lead, eventually closing out the match 15-9.

This victory over a top seed set the tone for the wider competition. The round of 16 ultimately featured only two of the top 16 ranked fencers in the World.

The big challenge for any fencer after pulling off what is perceived to be a shock result is to be able to hold form and to keep emotions in check for the next fight. In addition, fencers must be in peak physical condition to ensure that they can bring that same level of intensity to subsequent matches.

In the round of 32, Marcus was composed and disciplined against the Czech Republic fencer Choupenitch. Despite falling behind in the middle period of the fight, Marcus stuck to his pre-agreed tactical strategy, winning 15-13.

In the 16 he was drawn against Arslanov. The Russian is one of the most consistent team fencers on the circuit and on the day he was in full flow, using his athleticism and movement to great effect. Once again Marcus stuck to his game plan, as agreed with his coach and despite another physically challenging fight looked very comfortable in closing out the 15-12 victory.

In the 8 Marcus was drawn against another physically imposing athlete in Siess from Poland. The quarterfinal fight at the World Championships can present a major psychological barrier, as the winning fencer knows that they will be guaranteed a medal. Once again, Marcus showed his level of professionalism by preparing physically, tactically and emotionally for the match. Dominating the fight throughout and in total control, he closed out a comfortable 15-9 win. Now he was guaranteed at least a bronze medal.

Marcus's semi-final draw was against Son who had earlier defeated Richard Kruse. The fight that took place is already being referenced in the fencing community as a classic. With both fencers showing total commitment, it was a physically bruising encounter yet with some of the most beautiful and classically executed hits seen at this level. If you haven't seen the section of the fight where Marcus hits Son with a disengage lunge from a static start I would encourage you to watch and learn from it.

Three times in the fight Son was so physically exhausted that he reverted to dropping onto his knees in an attempt to regain some energy. Marcus kept on task and never gave his opponent an inch winning this amazing fight 15-

12. Following the match, Italian Team Manager, Andrea Cipressa told me "we love your beautiful fencer". Well deserved praise indeed from a very respected expert. You can watch the fight here, <https://tinyurl.com/y4b7tlls> (at 44.50).

In the final Marcus was drawn against Lefort from France. After a physically demanding route to this stage, Marcus was noticeably fatigued. Comparatively Lefort started the match with considerable energy and speed, having had a different journey through the knock-out stages. In the 16 his opponent Kim (KOR) was forced to withdraw from the match due to an injury, securing Lefort's place into the next match and a comfortable 15-7 semi-final win against Russian, Zhrebchenko.



Marcus – the hit of the tournament?

The intense physical nature of Marcus's day and in particular the semi-final was clear to see from the start of the gold medal match. Marcus struggled to control the athleticism of Lefort, who was ruthless and focused on capitalising on Marcus's fatigue going on to win 15-6. The final was by no means a walkover and I am confident that Marcus will have taken a lot forwards from this match.

Asked what contributed to his fantastic performance, Marcus thanked the tireless support of his parents, his coach (both current and past), alongside the wider support team that has helped him over the season and especially during the Championships. His performance was a result of a culmination of his technical and tactical abilities alongside a professional approach to all aspects of his preparation both on and off piste.

Men's Epee Individual

GBR had two representatives in this event, Phillip Marsh and Elliott Grover.

Philip finished with 3V/3D in a poule that included eight fights which went to priority. He fenced solidly showing glimpses of the quality that he possesses at this level.

Elliott too had a solid qualifying poule finishing with 3V/3D including a significant win against Bida (RUS), the eventual individual silver medallist and two 5-4 defeats.

Philip had a bye through to the preliminary 128 where he beat Dikov from Bulgaria 15-13. He then went on to a comfortable 15-7 win against Patterson from Cuba, thus qualifying for the 64.



Qualification Hall

There, he was drawn against the world number 5, Park from Korea, one of the strongest male epee fencers on the circuit. Phillip was always behind in the fight but never out of touch. Park used all his experience to keep control of the fight, eventually closing it out 15-10.

In both the Euros and World Championships and throughout the season, Phillip has shown that he is very comfortable at 64 level. With his new training and coaching arrangement in Italy I believe that he can very easily step up a performance level, putting himself in a strong position going into the end of the qualification period.

Elliott had a bye through to the 128 where he lost to Gunput from Mauritius who he had lost 5-4 to in the poule. Elliott could see this as a missed opportunity but he should reflect on solid performances in both his first European and World Championships. With intelligent implementation of the lessons learnt from this season I would expect Elliott to deliver improving results in the remainder of the Olympic Qualifying cycle.

Women's Epee Individual

GBR had two representatives in the Women's Epee individual, Susan Sica and Katrina Taylor Smith.

Susan, off the back of a very strong U23 season had a fantastic first round poule finishing with 5V/0D, giving her direct qualification through to the 64.



Susan Sica Prepares

Katrina also started very strongly and finished her poule with 4V/2D. She was drawn against Andersen (AUS) in the

preliminary 128 and after a tricky middle section of the fight showed great tactical astuteness and confidence to change her tactics and subsequently run out a comfortable win, 15-11.



Katrina Smith Taylor earlier this season

In the preliminary 64 she drew Hoppe Montanaro (CAN). Struggling to find her rhythm in the fight and having to chase her opponent, she didn't really gain a foothold, eventually losing 15-7. Over time, with more experience and patience this is the type of fight that Katrina will convert to the win. Demonstrating significant improvements over this season and with a solid performance both at the European and World Championships, Katrina has clearly shown that she has much to offer at this level.

On the second day of the WE competition Susan drew Gonzalez Sandoval (CUB) in her 64 fight. Fencing with great focus and authority to control the fight from start, Susan successfully closed out the match 15-10.

In the 32 she then drew the world number 9 Kolobova (RUS), a very experienced and seasoned fencer. Susan fenced superbly from the beginning of the fight, pressuring her opponent with a strong technical and tactic game plan, causing both her opponent and her coach serious concerns. In the middle of the fight the Russian began to regain dominance but Susan, using her excellent footwork, forced Kolobova towards the back of the piste. Capitalising on double hit opportunities, Susan traded with her opponent hit for hit. It was only in the last hits that the Russian was able to take the advantage closing out the fight to win 15-13.

Susan has had a great season on both the U23 and Senior circuits, clearly demonstrating her young talent and what she is capable of achieving, showing maturity and a professional approach which will count for a lot as her career develops.

Men's Foil Team

In the 32 GBR drew Belgium, winning 45-32 showing good composure and a clear game plan, with each of the four team members getting to fence. The team drew Korea in the 16, a team who

are potentially going to have a major influence on qualification for Tokyo 2020. GBR started off well opening out a 10-6 lead but the Koreans put in a couple of strong fights and GBR went into the 5th match 20-18 behind. From that stage on, the team were chasing the match, as the Koreans fenced intelligently and efficiently to keep a couple of hits ahead after each fight. Despite a great final push, the team could not regain the lead and ended up losing 45-41.

The 9-16 matches now became the focus. The team reset from their earlier defeat and responded superbly beating Ukraine 45-34, then Egypt 45-35 before just falling short in losing 45-41 to Japan to finish in 10th place.

Whilst this final placing is short of the result hoped for, the objective of qualifying for Tokyo 2020 remains the primary focus and one which the team is committed to achieving. The quality of fencers within this team is evident and both on and off the piste as much as possible is being done to ensure that the team is prepared and focused on the goal ahead.

As both Chef de Mission for the Championships and as Foil Team Manager, I am very proud and pleased with not only Marcus's superb individual result but also that we achieved an increased level of success across all of the weapons.

From a squad of 17, GBR had 10 fencers qualify for the 64 stage, with representatives in each event (Men's and Women's Foil, Epee and Sabre), which is especially pleasing and demonstrates the capabilities and continued development across all 6 weapons. I hope that the experience and results from the Championships in Budapest this year will both inspire our athletes to greater achievements and inspire others to support the work BF is doing, with the help of sponsors and stakeholders to help our GBR fencers be the best they can be.

Whilst BF will do all we can to help athletes at both major Championships and throughout the season, we expect our Senior elite athletes to approach the 2019-20 season with an understanding that we are in a results-driven business when it comes to this level of competition and selection for major Senior Championships.

To any athlete seeking future selection at this level, I would encourage you to review your season, identify areas to work on, communicate in depth with your coaches and support team and commit to a professional and focused plan for the 2019-2020 season as we lead into another exciting Olympic year.

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There is no room for self-handicapping excuses or "if onlys". Please don't look back on your career with any regrets or excuses. Instead be personally accountable for delivering on your training and competition plan which in turn will deliver performance improvement.

I would like to express my thanks to all the fencers and coaches who attended the World Championships and engaged so well. To Jon Salfield and Pat Aiyenuro for all their time, effort and support, to Sonia our amazing Sports Therapist for her exceptional support and professional approach and to the staff at British Fencing, particularly Georgina, Maxine and Kim for all the great work they do behind the scenes, to UK Sport and the National Lottery, to Leon Paul for their continued support and to all those individuals who support the BF Charity.

It took us from 1956 until 2018 to win a World Championships medal for Great Britain and now we have a second one in 2019. Why can't we keep this run continuing?

Sabre Report by Head Coach, Jon Salfield

Following British fencing's successful bid to UK Sport late in 2018, the GB men's sabre team became part of the new UK Sport Aspiration Fund program. Although not directly funding athlete's costs for competitions or training, the fund has given access to a range of benefits to men's sabre and other disciplines throughout the season. Professional physio support at World Cups and major Championships, funding for international training camps and support for competition coaching were the main areas which the GB teams tapped into. The additional support available gave the team a chance to prepare and compete more professionally and to be on the first rung of UK Sport's funding ladder.

The Aspiration fund is largely directed at individuals, disciplines and/or teams considered to have a realistic chance of qualification to the 2020 Tokyo Olympic Games but crucially also to those who can show evidence that they are inspiring communities with their story and are positive role models in their field.

After a long season of competition around the world, the GB Men's and Women's Sabre team's fencing year culminated in an exciting and brilliantly presented World Championships in the beautiful Hungarian capital of Budapest at the end of July. Hungary, one of sabre fencing's spiritual homes, is a nation where fencing is a high-profile sport, as the arena packed with thousands of

spectators throughout the 10 days of competition attested.

Introduced boxing-style onto the coloured and finals piste from the L64 onwards, the athletes were treated to an atmosphere more akin to a football match than a fencing event and the high-tech spectacular presentation of the event set a new benchmark for professionalism and excitement for the fencing World Championships.

Inevitably, as at any championships, there were triumphs mixed with disappointments, but both presented their opportunities for learning and improvement across the squad.



Will Deary

In both men's and women's sabre the stand-out individual fencers were the team's youngest members, Will Deary and Caitlin Maxwell. Will battled through the pool rounds with a disciplined performance, taking five victories from six matches. This gave Will a seeding of 16 and an automatic bye to the top 64 round to be held two days later. Joining Will in the 64 was Curtis Miller, who won three from six in the pools and dispatched his two DE opponents Mandov (BUL) and Tokunan (JAP) in style. James Honeybone was unfortunate not to go direct to the 64, after five wins from six matches in the pool and a seeding of 17. Sadly, James lost out in the second DE round, as did JJ Webb who had taken two pool wins and a good DE victory against Shimamura (JAP), before going down to another Japanese fencer, Kaito Streets.



Caitlin Maxwell

Two days later, the two remaining GB male sabreurs prepared themselves to compete again. Curtis took on Italy's World number 5 Luca Curatoli. Curatoli's

experience on this stage showed through and Curtis couldn't find his rhythm in the middle of the piste, battling hard to the end but losing 15-7.

Will faced the USA's World number 1, Eli Derschwitz in an exciting see-saw match. The British sabreur took an early lead with some strong attacks in the middle 4m and a couple of spectacular parries. Building on a strong position after the minute break, Deary was 11-7 up and in with a chance of producing the shock of the championships. The American suddenly found form and reeled off a series of hits to lead 12-11. Deary rallied and matched his opponent to the end but couldn't turn over the lead and lost 15-13 after one of the best performances of his senior career so far. Although disappointed not to win, Will took a lot of positives from his performance. "For the first time I felt really comfortable against one of the world's best fencers and I think with the experience and lessons gained from this match and the championships in general, I have a growing belief I can mix it with the very best around!"



Curtis Miller

The women's sabre event saw promising performances from a very young team. Aliya Itzkowitz took three wins in her pool, with Maria Chart and Caitlin Maxwell winning four, whilst Kate Daykin managed two victories. Maria progressed to the second DE round, the preliminary 64 but missed out to the very experienced Benitez of Venezuela. Aliya scored a confident win against Srinulad (THA) before going out to former world top 16 fencer Yoon of Korea in the preliminary 64. Kate Daykin was eliminated in the first DE by World Cup medallist Voronina of Ukraine but Caitlin Maxwell had a bye through the first DE, and the youngest fencer in the GB squad then progressed to the 64 with an excellent 15-11 win over Rodriguez of Venezuela.

Again, after a two-day break, the remaining athletes lined up in the magnificent finals arena, and the young

British fencer faced world number 16 Navarro from Spain. Maxwell started well and was just one hit down at the break. The Spanish fencer's top-level experience shone through and after the break she ran out the winner 15-8. After an excellent final junior season, in which Caitlin medalled at two World Cups and the Junior European Championships, this was an encouraging start to Caitlin's senior career.



James Honeybone

Despite just missing out on the 64 Maria Chart was also encouraged by her progress, saying, "Of course we all came here to win but as a group we're improving all the time and these Championships have been inspiring for lots of us. We can see how small the gap is and we're determined to keep progressing and learn from these experiences".

The team events saw the women's sabre team go down in the 32 to a very strong Azerbaijan team, which recently placed 8th at the European Championships. The tight score-line of 45-38 showed once again how narrow the gap between this young team and some of the top performers is.



JJ Webb

In the men's sabre event, GB defeated Colombia comfortably in the 32 before losing out to the eventual gold medallists South Korea in the 16. After the play-off matches, GB placed 14th out of 32 teams. Our tight 45-41 loss to the USA in the 9-16

match was a key moment on the day, as we were aiming for a top 12 finish. We rallied well to defeat a tough Canadian team but injuries to Will Deary and Curtis Miller meant we were literally limping home in the 13-14th place match! Our team has huge potential and we now need to pull together all the elements which make this team potentially so strong and work on controlling the middle 4 metres in key moments in matches.

We were very lucky to have support from UK Sport through the Aspiration fund, which enabled us to have the support of a top-class physio in Sonia Fierro and to prepare with a pre-Championships camp in London with Team Belgium plus a few days extra training in Budapest.

These Championships have been spectacular and a wonderful experience for the athletes. As well as the fencing itself, the team learnt a lot about working as a unit and we left Budapest as a stronger group as a result.

Aspiration and Medal Support Review by Maxine McCombie

Having been awarded both the Aspiration and Medal Support Plan funding from UK Sport, there was the opportunity to maximise the team support, preparation and performance focus of this year's Championship's. As with any funding, there is the inevitable additional pressure on both the National Governing Body (NGB) and the athletes themselves. Yet we are privileged to be in a situation where we have access to external funding to support our team. This funding was prioritised on additional training opportunities, coaching, sports therapy and team management on the ground to ensure that the GBR athletes were able to focus on their preparation and performances throughout these spectacular Championships in Budapest.

Among some genuinely world class fencing, including the well fought silver medal won by Marcus Mepstead, there were several Personal Best results from athletes demonstrating an increasing maturity in performances at this level and significantly GBR had representation in all 6 weapons in the second day of their competition. I am sure that the fencing community will be proud of the achievements of both the athletes and the support teams behind the scenes.

The funding cycles in Olympic sports understandably focus on performances at pinnacle events such as the World Championships and 2019 didn't disappoint. Once again we now are heading into an exciting period in the final months before an Olympic Games with opportunities to be capitalised on and everything to play for.

The wider funding environment continues to move to exploring ways that athletes and sports can give back to the community in return for the financial support they receive, whether this is from National Lottery or the taxpayer. It is no longer only about performance - it is about how athletes can share their epic journeys through calm waters and rough seas to inspire others and have a wider greater social impact. I am delighted that my role includes supporting a group of GBR athletes who whilst dedicated to their performance goals can also reflect on their impact on a world outside of their fencing environment. As we work to engage in social projects and events together we can set a course for both improved performances and as we are reminded by the True Athlete Project, a BF delivery partner, a more compassionate society within sport.

For more information about the Aspiration and Medal Support funding or to know more about the True Athlete Project, please contact Maxine McCombie maxine.mccombie@britishfencing.com.



With thanks to the Organising Committee & Referees

FEATURE

BEHIND THE MASK WITH MARCUS MEPSTEAD

After his brilliance in Budapest we had to talk to Marcus. We found out a little bit more about the man behind the mask and that great result. Here's what he had to say.



Marcus beats Son (KOR) for a place in the final (Augusto Bizzi)

The Sword: Now that you've had time to reflect on your World Championship silver medal winning performance, how do you feel about the result?

I really wish I'd won the gold! No! I feel really proud of my achievements but I am definitely hungry to make the most of that result and do better next year.



Marcus with his silver medal (Augusto Bizzi)

The Sword: Looking forwards, now that you are ranked 17th in the World what are your goals for the coming season?

To continue to enjoy the new challenges that keep coming. It's so great to have done this sport for 20 years now and I'm still making new experiences. I want to break into the top 16 and start pushing towards that World number 1 spot. I want

to qualify for the Olympics and medal at Tokyo 2020. I've got a lot of work to do on my technique, footwork and other parts of my game. So I'm excited to be pursuing that. I'd love to finish this year, putting the sport in a really positive place with a lot going forwards.

The Sword: Tokyo 2020 qualification is very much on everyone's mind. How are you going to balance your focus on the team versus individual route?



From Instagram

I'm always trying to improve the physical elements of my game. I really want to be able to put in winning performances in the individual and then turn up to the team event ready to go again. I don't see it so much as a team versus individual route. I get to keep fighting another day doing what I love every time. I just try and stay grateful and work hard. I really hope we kick off the team qualification strongly for the 2019/2020 season though, so that we keep in the running and get the chance to compete as a team in Tokyo 2020.

The Sword: So let's go back to the beginning. Where did you start fencing and what drew you in?

I started when I was 9 years old. I'd just finished a school football match and was walking home when I saw this after school fencing club going on. It looked a lot of fun and I went home and told my mum I saw all these people fighting with swords. Naturally a little concerned, she came to see what I was talking about and on seeing the sport my mum put both my brother and me in the class. My brother picked it up immediately. Me? Not so much. I had to work hard but I did, pushed on with the good old sibling rivalry and the rest, as they say, is history!

The Sword: At what age did you start thinking you could compete at the highest level and what changes did you make to achieve your goals?

I used to do a lot of sports when I was younger and trying to balance them, my schoolwork and my social life was getting pretty tough. When I was 12 I told my mum I wanted to go to the Olympics and told some of my other sports coaches I couldn't continue with their sports. At that age I didn't realise how much it was going to take to achieve it but that fire inside of me had been lit. The opportunity for London 2012 came and went and I missed out. I battled a lot with my confidence, trying to understand what it was going to take to switch from a good junior to a great senior. I made a lot of mistakes. Sometimes I enjoyed my social life a little too much. Sometimes I worked too hard on things outside of sport but as I got older I knew I needed to make the changes to put the sport at the foreground of where I was going and train harder. Luckily I had started to surround myself with more and more inspirational people within sport and by Rio 2016 I had a few people on my team who really helped me block out negative thoughts and negative people and help me make the big changes that didn't feel like sacrifices. It wasn't until I stepped out to compete in Rio that I really felt like I could compete among the best in the world. That feeling has really driven me over the past two years. Despite funding cuts and limited support, that little flame that started as a 12 year old is getting stronger.

The Sword: You were based in the UK for quite some time but recently decided to move to the USA. Why did you choose that route and how is it going?



Brooklyn Bridge Backdrop (From Instagram)

I'd just lost my support team having been part of British Fencing's most successful period in its history. I was pretty devastated and wasn't really sure I was going to be able to carry on. I'd identified Dan Kellner as a coach I thought could take my technical skills to the next level but wasn't sure if New York was a financial bridge too far. I had four months from identifying Dan to raise enough money to start the move to New York and since then it has been budgeting like a mad man and trying to make or find the resources to make it work. That side has been really difficult. I felt like I'd been made redundant and was not just trying to find a new job but start a new company and become a world leader in the industry within 3 years. What's more, I don't think there's a harder place to be than New York City on a budget! Luckily though, there are some great people within the sport and I have received amazing support that has helped me. That has definitely pushed me through the difficult times and turned this into a positive chapter of my fencing career. So far the move has been really great for my fencing. I'm learning new technical skills all the time and BBFC is a great environment to keep me grounded and help remember why I loved this sport in the first place.



Marcus with Coach Kellner (l) and Dad (Augusto Bizzi)

The Sword: Describe a typical training week for you.

Monday, Wednesday & Friday: 2 hour gym session, 2 hours lesson, footwork, video analysis, 3 hours fencing drills and sparring

Tuesday & Saturday: 2 hours lesson, footwork, video analysis, 3 hours fencing drills and sparring

Thursday & Sunday are off days

I work as a personal trainer in between on training days and on Thursdays and Sundays. Also I always try and keep some time to see my friends in the city or friends visiting so I'm in a good headspace.

The Sword: What sacrifices have you made to achieve at the highest level?

I miss a lot of friend's birthdays and milestone events. I really miss the lazy days where you're doing nothing - just

enjoying the company of your friends and family. I also miss doing stupid stuff - laughing, making memories with my friends. I would say that and relationships are the biggest sacrifice as I'm on the road so much and a little overly blinkered to my sport. Otherwise it doesn't really feel like a sacrifice doing something that brings me a lot of joy.

The Sword: To the future. Clearly Tokyo 2020 is a goal. What about beyond that?

The future will be clearer after Tokyo 2020. I feel like I've spent a lot of time making sure doors are open whatever I choose to do but it's hard to look beyond Tokyo 2020 right now. So much can change following a gold medal!

The Sword: How do you see your role in the inspiration of future GBR fencers?

I'd like to think my results show that British fencers can compete with the best in the World. It's nice for them to see a British World medallist representing GB. I didn't have that growing up. Ultimately I hope people see my passion and love for the sport and it gets them motivated to do whatever it is they love.

The Sword: Obviously you can't achieve what you have on your own. Who has helped you along the journey?

My results have been thanks to a team around me. I might be the one with the sword in my hand but so many people within the fencing community have helped me a long the way. The Leon Paul team have supported me since I was a kid. British Fencing and the British Fencing Charity have helped me continue my sporting career since Rio 2016. Team PDFA has supported me and allowed me to act as a mentor and coach to the next generation, while The Aspiration fund has helped me go to training camps recently.

Of course my parents, friends and family pick me up on the down days and help me celebrate the good ones. Dan Kellner and BBFC have helped develop my skills and passion for the sport. S&C coach Mike Edwards has turned me into an athlete, while Johnny Davis has really supported the men's foil team throughout our qualification.

There are so many people - even the kind words of support and encouragement from the fencing community go along way on this journey.



Marcus with Enzo Lefort and Ben Paul on an advertising shoot (courtesy of Leon Paul)

Quick Fire Questions

1. Favourite movie: *The Hangover*
2. Favourite music: *Motown/Soul*
3. Favourite hobby: *Exploring*



Marcus and Family (from Facebook)

4. Favourite fencing competition: *World Championships 2019*
5. Favourite holiday destination: *Rio de Janeiro*
6. What can you not leave home without? *My wallet*
7. Your dream job (other than international fencer): *The Next David Attenborough*
8. Best part of fencing: *Always learning something new*
9. Your heroes: *Mum and Dad*



Marcus notes exploring as a pastime

10. Favourite post competition meal: *Anything! I'm so hungry post competition!*
11. Top three tips for young athletes who want to improve their fencing performance.
 - (a) Remember what it is that got you into this sport - the thing you loved as a kid. Hold onto that. It will drive you further than you realise.
 - (b) Be the hardest worker. I've seen so many natural talents fall by the wayside because they didn't train hard enough. I'd rather lose having giving it everything than wishing I could have done more.
 - (c) Build that quiet confidence in yourself.

Thanks to Marcus for sharing his time and thoughts with us. We hope you enjoyed reading his answers as much as we did!

FEATURE

GILLIAN DONALDSON, MBE

The 2019 Queen's Birthday Honours included a long-awaited MBE for Gillian Donaldson (née Sheen). We jumped at the chance to have a chat with her about her life, her fencing journey and that magical podium moment. It was a thoroughly enjoyable conversation.

The Sword: Congratulations for being awarded the MBE. You are Great Britain's only fencing Olympic gold medallist. Tell us about that trip to 1956 Olympic Games in Melbourne and what it felt like to hear the national anthem on the podium.

Selection for that Games was the worst part of the journey. I hadn't had much success internationally at that point. I was pretty green in that respect and from memory, there were only seven places available on the British team. The selection committee were in two minds about sending me so it was touch-and-go. In fact, it was a nightmare.....until I heard about my selection.

There had never been an individual women's foil tournament at the Olympics before. However, just before we left for the Games, London hosted Women's World Team Championships. I fenced well which was a great way to prepare.

A month later I was on my way to Melbourne. The trip from London took four days with stops in New York, San Francisco, Hawaii, Fiji and Sydney before the short hop to Melbourne. It really takes you back to how it was then. Everything at the Games was



1948, Gillian Sheen talks to a Hungarian fencer at an international match. Courtesy of Malcolm Fare

much smaller than it is now but the accommodation was amazing and I felt very much at home. Prince Phillip was there as the VIP for the opening ceremony which was in the main stadium.

We had separate accommodation for women with a sentry so we could not mingle with the men! The food hall was amazing. Before competing we stuck to the British food but once finished we sampled food from around the world.

At the competition venue I really felt the crowd were behind me and so were the British team. I fenced so well and I was in my prime. As always with fencing it was all about the timing. It was just my day.

In the finals poule of seven I tied for first place with Romanian, Olga Orban with five victories and one defeat. So there was a barrage for the gold medal. It was pretty nerve-wracking for everyone. I went two up before Olga scored one. We traded the next two hits before I went on to score the winning hit (4-2) to take the title.

It was the most amazing moment to see the Union flag being raised. It was super. Incredibly emotional. I hadn't dreamed of winning. It was amazing. To make the most of being on the other side of the world I'd planned a trip of Australia and New Zealand. An amazing time!

The Sword: You attended two other Games either side of your medal winning performance in Australia. What were the differences between them and Melbourne?

My first Games was in Helsinki which was the first Olympics after the war. Again my preparation could not have been better. We had a GBR versus Denmark match in Denmark which we won. I then went on to take gold at the Danish Championships, receiving a lovely bowl which takes pride of place in my house to this day. We went straight from there to Helsinki but I did not do well at all. The atmosphere was not great. I was young and inexperienced and nearly gave up. However, fencing was too much a part of my life and I kept going.



Sheen, Gillian (1956). Courtesy of Malcolm Fare

It was never easy. We had to pay for everything ourselves so we were limited by our own resources.

My last Games were in Rome in 1960 where I made the semi-finals, just missing out on the finals. I was very depressed but had no excuses.

Looking back, winning in Melbourne meant I lost a bit of my winning mentality. Perhaps I should have quit after the gold but I loved the sport so much.



Gillian with her granddaughters

The Sword: Many GB fencers struggle to balance the sport with life in general. You qualified as a dentist whilst competing internationally. What advice would you give to aspiring international fencers who have to balance their training with studies/work?

Firstly I loved the sport so the will was there. I learned to fence at school and I found the sport a good break from my academic studies. When I graduated I found a job near my club, London Fencing Club (Hannover Square - the old head quarters of the AFA). Every day, after work I'd go straight to the club. I didn't do any other kind of training. My coach was of the philosophy that if you want to be good at fencing, just fence.

I was involved in all aspects, helping out refereeing at events that I wasn't competing in. You have to love it!

Between the 1956 and 1960 Olympic, the lease ran out on that venue and that's when the AFA moved to the De Beaumont Centre which was much more difficult for me to get to.

Leon Bertrand was my coach and he didn't adjust well to the move either. Lessons fell by the wayside and it was time to quit.

The Sword: How hard was it to move from the UK to the USA and did you stay involved in fencing in any capacity?

When the World Championships were in Philadelphia (1958), a client of my father's kindly decided to support my journey. Both myself and Bill Hoskyns went over and were put up in the university accommodation. I made the finals and finished 7th. It was the first time I'd ever been approached to throw a fight. I did not! At that event I was approached by an expat and asked to fence at a Canadian Exhibition event. Edoardo Mangiarotti, the most decorated fencer of all time, was my opponent! He was very gracious and he let me have a few hits.



1956, Sheen Olympic champion with dried flower from her bouquet – from Charles de Beaumont's scrapbook. Courtesy of Malcolm Fare



1956, Sheen (left) attacks Renee Garilhe of France in the Olympic final. Courtesy of Malcolm Fare

I then headed to Buffalo to meet up with my brother who was visiting the US for a year away. I was fortunate enough to be introduced to a dental outfit (George Eastman clinics) that gave me six months work. That also meant I had time to explore some of the country. Whilst there, I met my husband, Bob. I needed to come home and Bob came with me and joined the Eastman Clinic in London. Bob was unhappy in the UK and desperately wanted to go back to the USA to be closer to his family. He went back as I headed to the Rome Olympics but I was in a quandary. I didn't want to move to the States but I wanted to marry Bob. I wasn't in the right place emotionally for those Games!

Eventually we married in 1963 in St John's Wood and then I took the plunge and moved to the USA. It wasn't easy to leave England but that was the way it was.

I did stay involved in fencing and ended up doing a lot of refereeing in the local area. Eventually I turned my hand to coaching but I had to give it up as my family grew.

The Sword: How did you hear about achieving the Queen's award and how did you and your family react?

I was shocked. I was at home when the phone rang. My daughter answered and it was the British Embassy in Washington. I thought it was something to do with my passport. It was not! When asked if I'd accept, of course I said "yes". I couldn't celebrate because I wasn't allowed to tell anybody but we had a nice private celebration. I am thrilled.

Now I'm just waiting for the call and the invitation to the investiture. I'm definitely coming to London for it.

The Sword: Lastly, we've got to ask! What do you think is the greatest thing about our sport?

It's athletic but it's very much a mental game. That's the fun of it but that's why you need experience. You can't mature in fencing until you've been on the circuit and seen the different styles.

The Sword: Thank you for your time.

Gillian is truly exceptional. She gave us more of her time than we could have asked for and was captivating from start to finish. Congratulations to her, once again. We hope you have a fabulous day at your investiture.



1956, Sheen Olympic champion with gold medal. Courtesy of Malcolm Fare

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CLUBS & REGIONS

The Ingredients That Make a Successful Portfolio of Projects and Programmes – Virginia Bailey (British Fencing's Projects & Programme Manager)

Over the last four years BF has worked with a number of partners to deliver our Sport England funded portfolio of Projects and Programmes. I manage the portfolio and believe that there are a number of key ingredients that have led to its continued growth and development, enabling us to push boundaries around creative thinking and delivery, giving young people the best possible exposure to fencing. This article will explore those ingredients in more detail.

Strong, honest and effective partnerships: The foundations of any successful relationship are built on trust, honesty, respect and sticking with each other through the highs and the lows - foundations which the team at BF work towards creating with all its partners. We believe that if we are going to successfully deliver against our objectives, raise the profile of our sport and engage and retain young people who would not normally have the opportunity to try fencing, we must work hand-in-hand with our partners, celebrate the successes and address the challenges with an open and positive mind. Many sports will often take an 'off the shelf approach' to partnership working, with a 'one product fits all' offer but through the partnerships we've forged, we have been able to create bespoke offers for the target groups we are working with. We have been prepared to take risks when shaping an offer, trying new ways of delivery that won't always work but lessons are learnt and have helped us continue to grow and explore ways to engage young people.

For example, our partnership with London Youth has seen continued success in the core offer based around upskilling youth workers and delivery linked to the Bronze Award scheme. It would be easy for us to settle with this but the mutual trust and respect in our partnership has encouraged us to try new approaches to engage a youth market that historically would not think about

a sports offer for its young people but have taken the creative 'sell' of fencing to engage its target audience in the sport. In the last year we have moved away from working with the more traditional youth club that has a strong multi-sport offer and forged new relationships with a number of youth clubs who have a reputation around arts based programmes and developed the Art of Fencing, which saw fencing combined with samba bands, film production and dance, just to name a few.



Art of Fencing Co-Creation

During 2018/19 we have seen an increase in not only the number of young people engaged in our London Youth partnership but crucially we have seen an increase in the retention rate compared to the year before; **70%** retention in 2018/19 compared to **64%** in 2017/18 (based on attendance at a minimum of 60% of sessions)

John Jones, LY Sports Development Officer says, "The partnership with British Fencing continues to go from strength to strength. Not only have we been able to grow the number of young people and community youth organisations taking part, we've also been able to test and learn a new approach, combining fencing with young people's artistic passions. Our shared commitment to pushing boundaries and challenging the status quo very much stands out as a key factor in our strong working relationship and we look

forward to developing this further in 2019/20."

Co-creation with partners and target audience: Closely connected to the partnership approach is our belief in co-creation with our target audiences. The Art of Fencing is a great example of co-creation - an idea based on insight (more on that below), it was imperative that we worked with young people to design, shape and deliver the project. A weekend of merging fencing with creative arts allowed us to understand if what WE thought might be appealing actually would be! Young people were given the opportunity to shape and design their own programme that would see them blend their creative passions with fencing, leading to more young people being physically active AND being introduced to a creative sport. This approach has helped us understand what makes an appealing and attractive programme and equally what else needs to be done to ensure a top quality programme is being delivered. It's as much about understanding the great things that work as well as the things that have been challenging, to ensure we learn from mistakes.

Insight led and continuous monitoring, evaluation and learning: BF's Crowd DNA 'UK Tribes' research carried out in 2014 has proved a valuable tool in understanding the make-up of fencers. UK Tribes is a comprehensive study of 16-24 year olds across the UK. It's designed to delve into emerging trends, identify commonalities and give brands a voice in this challenging but exciting youth audience. At the time of the research there were 5 Planning Segments and within this 25 Individual Tribes.

We see trends from the research mirrored in the type of young people that get involved with our Projects and Programmes. For example our research tells us that there is a significantly higher proportion of young people from the

DEVELOPMENT (continued)

'Alternative' segment who fence (38%), versus the general population (14%). We also know that 'Alternatives' are more likely to start fencing at a university society than any other segment and that within the 'Alternative' segment, the highest proportion of fencers are 'Real Gamers'. Why is this important? The satisfaction rate for those that have signed up to the University Fencing Officer programme reached 92% in the last year and we have also seen a retention rate of 62% across all the universities (previously 52% in 2017/18), as well as a growth in the number of universities joining the programmes (38 students and 14 new institutions).



BUCS LUSL Competiton

Another key resource is the BF Monitoring and Evaluation Tool that allows us to analyse through various demographics, the young people that are engaging with our Projects and Programmes. We discussed earlier in this article how the Art of Fencing came about due to insight gathered from the previous years data set from London Youth. The data told us that 51% of those engaged were female and 74% of those were retained. Coupled with our Crowd DNA insight that told us that females who fence are 'Creatives', the Art of Fencing idea was born. The results at the end of the year showed us that although we

were aiming to engage a high proportion of females, we engaged more males (40% v 54%). However we retained more females than males (52% v 44%)

A St Michael & All Angels Steel Orchestra Youth Worker said, "Through the Art of Fencing our young people learned discipline, focus and the importance of precision. We are a steel pan organisation so the opportunity to combine this with fencing was certainly a new experience and one we welcomed. It was great to see our young people have fun as they tend to take their music making seriously and sometimes forget the joy of just participating."

The final piece to the jigsaw has been to introduce a number of qualitative methods to ensure we can gather the story behind the numbers and understand in more detail why projects have worked and equally, where they struggle and how we can improve them. Using simple techniques such as project diaries for participants to write in, coaches keeping journals about their experiences and informal conversations, all play a huge part in bringing projects to life.

An adaptable Coaching Framework:

Following the introduction and success of the new BF Coaching Framework in 2016, we have been able to take the Core Coach Course and Leadership In Fencing Course to adapt them to meet the needs of the target audience and partners that we are working with. This may vary from new and additional content, (e.g. focusing on engaging women and girls) to adapting the time frame the course is delivered in (e.g. Leadership in Fencing Course has been tested over a day, two half days and 3x 2hr sessions). For example, when delivering Core Coach for Muslim Girls Fence we have added a number of

workshops into the training that have looked at addressing topics such as:

- motivations and barriers that women in the communities we are working in may face
- opportunities to share best practice best, both during the course and beyond
- marketing and communications

We are also working hard to ensure that throughout the two days training, we are constantly getting the women to ask 'what does this mean to me and my community?' and 'what impact will fencing have on the women I work with?'



Youth Group taking part in fencing

A course participant said, "You ladies were marvellous and honestly it was not only a pleasure to have met and worked with you all but an honour. You have amazing enthusiasm for the project and it's infectious. I went away full of energy and wanting to really dedicate myself to this."

As we move through year 3 of our current Sport England funding cycle, we want to continue to delve deeper into our existing partnerships, build on what we have, learn from any mistakes and ultimately get more young people excited and engaged in this brilliant and fascinating sport!

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DEVELOPMENT (continued)

Maintaining and Improving Club Standards – an update on Sport England’s Clubmark Scheme, By Hannah Gavin (British Fencing Development Officer (Clubs & Regions))

Sport England announced in July that their Clubmark programme would cease to continue after November this year. The decision was made after an independent review of the scheme looked into the efficiency and effectiveness of its suitability as a tool to help clubs work towards higher standards. It was found that whilst the resources made available as part of the scheme were of definite use, the actual accreditation programme was seen as potentially too generic and as a result many NGBs were adopting their own product.

What does this mean for British Fencing?

Clubs that currently hold a valid Sport England Clubmark accreditation will remain to do so until it expires. Sport England have assured us that the award will still be acknowledged for the length of its term. Also a toolkit will be made available via the Clubmatters website to these clubs to continually help them maintain and improve the standards that the Clubmark process has inspired.

Any club that is currently in the process of working towards their Clubmark accreditation has until mid-November to complete the course. Final applications were made in August this year. These clubs will continue to utilise the Clubmatters dashboard and portal as normal before the scheme ends.

The Clubmark scheme and Clubmatters website has been a welcomed asset to British Fencing as they have provided a way to give expert and structured information to clubs to help them improve what they do. Not only does the wealth of knowledge available help provide answers to everyday queries and challenges but it has stimulated the aspiration of a high standard of practice. This is something that British Fencing wishes to emulate and continue in the future. Therefore a review of an accreditation award will take place and a decision will be made regarding what this will look like going forward into 2020.

What will be available for clubs moving forward?

Sport England are developing a ‘Health Check’ tool via the Clubmatters website that is currently due to launch in December this year. The tool will complement the resources and products currently available and will be used as a vehicle to continue to promote club development.

The Clubmatters website will still continue to host a catalogue of knowledge that clubs can access today to help them work towards solving any current challenges they face. For those of you not familiar with the portal, the website focuses on four key club-specific areas; Finances, Management, People and Marketing. It also offers a variety of learning tools to help clubs maximise their engagement including workshops, online support and club improvement plans.

Club Finances

This section has in depth coverage of five themes that aim to support a club to manage their finances effectively:

- Managing Money
- Budgeting
- Tax and Sport Clubs
- Generating Income
- Funding Guidance

Club Management

Sustainability is often a difficult problem for clubs. The management section of the website aims to help success through looking at the following topics:

- Club Development
- Club Structures
- Partnerships
- Governance
- Facilities

Club People

As we know people make a club what it is. Clubmatters aims to look at those individuals that make up the community and advises on what else you could be doing to not only reach out further but also maintain the current cohort:

- Members and Participants
- Volunteers
- Coaches

Club Marketing

This section offers ideas and suggestions on how to effectively market your club and to shout about what it has to offer. It brings together three different areas:

- Strategy
- Research
- Options

Moving into a new season provides the perfect opportunity to look at and assess an area of your club. The Clubmark scheme was designed not to criticise clubs on what they don’t do or catch them out but was aimed at helping clubs improve what they currently do. It is safe to say that as a community of clubs we are committed to inspiring and developing fencers whether that’s for competition, recreation or simply fun. A positive change doesn’t have to be something huge. It can be simple. Reviewing, or writing, your club’s constitution (see [here](#)) can be an excellent way of refreshing your group ready for the year ahead.

As ever I am keen to hear both the success stories and current challenges that are being faced by clubs and regions. If you have something you would like to discuss or have any comments on this article or the Clubmatters website please don’t hesitate to get in contact via [e-mail](#).



Refereeing Exam Success in Scotland by Nickie Bailey (Volunteer Workforce Coordinator)

The process for training, qualifying and developing officials - referees in particular - is undergoing exciting new changes. In this, the first of two articles presenting recent developments, the success of the Scottish Fencing refereeing exams at Levels 1 & 2 is used as a case study. The exams were conducted on 1-2 June 2019 at the Scotland LPJS by Jennifer Sancroft, Chair of the newly formed Scottish Fencing Refereeing Advisory Group and Alex Savin. In total 17 refereeing licences were awarded to 15 candidates with some candidates qualifying in multiple weapons over the weekend.

To provide context to this case study it is important to clearly identify the meaning of each of the levels within the domestic qualification system and how they line up with international licences awarded by the EFC and FIE. Levels 1 & 2 are in the purview of the Home Nations and are designed to develop a broad volunteer base to support local events and simultaneously help educate the whole fencing community by keeping them abreast of changes to the rules and their interpretation. Meanwhile, Levels 3 & 4 have been taken into the remit of British Fencing and are indicators that referees are ready to officiate abroad at EFC Under-17 events with a view to obtaining an FIE C licence (in the case of Level 3,) or successfully pass the FIE B exam and begin refereeing World Cups (in the case of Level 4). This clarity in the standard of the qualifications has led to an increasingly professionalised delivery of Level 3 examinations at British Fencing Championships.

It has been recognised by the Home Nations that while there are several highly qualified international-class referees the training of referees at the grassroots level has been somewhat

sporadic in recent years. While there have been notable individuals such as Peter Huggins, Mike Thornton, and Mike Ellis delivering courses and exams with great success it has been noted that more examiners are needed and a clearer learner-focussed framework is required to encourage the development of the next generation of volunteer referees at grassroots events and facilitate their training and development to grow the next generation of high-level national and international referees.

With this in mind, the exams at the Scotland LPJS opted for a new approach to the examination process to facilitate a more supportive environment for the candidates. The standard procedure for Level 1 and Level 2 practical exams has historically been a somewhat aloof process comprising silent observations by the examiners followed by feedback at the end of the day, with the candidates being informed of whether they have passed or failed after receiving feedback. In contrast, the new approach puts a much stronger focus on encouraging candidates to self-evaluate their performance, with the examiners gently guiding the candidates' evaluation through a series of individual and personalised feedback sessions.

When asked to describe the examination process, lead examiner Jennifer Sancroft said, "Participants were supported to referee in poules and then given the opportunity to discuss how they felt things were going with an experienced referee who used open questions to guide the candidate through a reflective process where they identified any areas for improvement or gaps in their knowledge. An open discussion then took place to help the learner improve where needed with a second round of observations completed throughout

a second round of poules and DEs. Feedback from participants supported this style of learning as they felt supported rather than analysed and encouraged rather than assessed."

It was noted by both examiners that this new approach centred on building the candidates' confidence and abilities, fostered a positive atmosphere in the referees' room where candidates were discussing their performance and ways to improve with each other as well as with the examiners. This led to a number of candidates improving over the course of the assessment with the feedback and self-evaluation sessions making the difference between passing and failing the exam in some cases. When asked to evaluate the benefits of this new approach Sancroft replied, "This process is more involved and more engaging and it built a strong sense of camaraderie amongst the new referees. It also provided an opportunity to discuss why candidates were interested in refereeing and what they hoped to do once qualified. This allowed us, as examiners, to begin developing the framework to support this new cohort of Scottish referees."

Overall, this novel and exciting approach to training and examining referees has yielded positive results at its first outing. It follows a very similar method to that being successfully implemented in coach education (the similarities and development of this method in the context of refereeing will be expanded upon in a future article,) and has received positive feedback from all those who have engaged with the process. Hopefully, this will be developed further and contribute to the current growth of and development of a new, fully supported, professional cadre of referees able to support fencing in the UK at all levels, from local youth events to international championships.

We are always looking for stories from youth internationals.

Submit your stories to the editor:

karim.bashir@catchsport.com

University of Kent Find the Winning Recipe – by Ian Stewart (British Fencing Programme Manager)

After multiple university awards, including being named “Club of the Year” for two years in a row, a few teams topping the table and one promoted to the BUCS Premiership with another winning the BUCS Conference Cup, the University of Kent Fencing Club is definitely on the up. British Fencing’s Ian Stewart sits down with the new President, Cian McGaughey, to find out what it is that they are putting in the water in Kent and why the fencers seem to be the ones drinking it!



Cian

Ian: It’s been quite a journey for University of Kent Fencing Club, what are some of the biggest achievements?

Cian: Where to even start... With the women’s 1st team being promoted to the Premiership? Or possibly our Club being selected to be the Universities first ever focus sport? UKC Fencing have had a fantastic year and I’m incredibly proud and honoured to be its next president and develop the club further. We began the year with some tests, challenges and high expectations for being the Club of the Year 2017 and 2018 but I feel and know we surpassed expectations. The 2018/2019 season was the first time we had introduced a seconds team and this was a big step for the development of fencers in the club. We weren’t sure how successful it would be - if less experienced fencers would want to compete and it did start off rocky. Our first two matches saw two agonisingly close defeats and it was incredibly frustrating for the team. However, all it did was bring the team closer together and from thereafter they didn’t lose a game and finished top of the table. That’s just the men’s 2nd team! The men’s 1st team finished Conference Cup winners! A huge achievement and a hard-fought victory. On top of that the women’s 1st were promoted to the premiership! A first for the university in a long time and currently the only one. The women’s 1st

were also national trophy semi-finalists. All the teams this year smashed their leagues and have each had their ups and downs. We owe a lot of our team’s progress to Peter and Jane - two coaches within the club who have helped less experienced fencers like me develop and helped more seasoned ones learn more complex skills.



University of Kent Sparring Session

IS: It sounds like the club has been working hard over the last few years. How does the University feel about your success?

Cian: Our successful BUCS year and being shortlisted for five awards at the team Kent ball and winning two of them really demonstrates how successful our year was! Ryan Penny, the Sports Coordinator at Kent Union said, “Fencing at the University of Kent is the jewel in our crown.” Sport in general is really competitive at Kent with many teams competing at a high level but now with our Women’s 1st team in the Premier Division fencing is up there and being recognised. The Union and the University joined forces to offer a Performance Sport Programme. Loads of teams applied and we were one of the teams selected. Ryan Penny added, “We had many teams apply. However fencing stood out head and shoulders above the rest.” So next year we will benefit from extra funding, marketing and support from the Union and University. We are very excited for next year and have high hopes!

IS: So, what’s next for the club? How will you keep the high standards that you have achieved so far?

Cian: This year, the eyes are on us and

we can feel it. Being selected as the Universities focus sport has given us a lot of resources but also increased the pressure to exceed those expectations set out by the University. We are getting three fantastic

new specialist coaches in - one for each weapon and we are introducing a Women’s 2nd team who will help bridge the gap between novice and intermediate women fencers, preparing them for the premiership. We also aim to continue to build a relationship with our community as well as Mallard Fencing. We are in talks with a local school which is really exciting as well! A big aim for the year is to get our Men’s 1st and Women’s 2nd promoted and to have our Men’s 2nd finish strongly in their new league, as well as our Women’s 1st having a strong finish in their debut in the premiership. We also have some fantastic projects in progress that I can’t wait to release later in the year. It’s nice that fencing, which is usually a sport that can be in the side-lines at other universities, is now a priority for Kent!

IS: What advice or suggestions do you have for other university clubs who want to emulate your success?

Cian: My advice for other university clubs is to take advantage of their local community! Get involved with your local clubs. They may have equipment you can borrow, a venue you can use for a tournament or even a coach for sabre to help develop fencers in your own club. Your local clubs and community are your biggest asset and developing a relationship with them is only going to allow your club to grow! If you want to see more about our club check out our Instagram @UKCFencing and our website www.ukcfencing.co.uk!



Fencing Club winning Club of the Year at Team Kent Ball

DEVELOPMENT (continued)

COACHING

Profile – Rob Cawdron

I joined British Fencing full-time in mid-July working within the Athlete Development Programme. I've been working part-time within Athlete Development since November 2017, helping to shape the direction of the camps and then working with the weapon leads to help them build their teams and get their visions for Epee, Foil and Sabre going. Now that I'm full-time I'm looking forward to getting out into the rest of the community to work with clubs and regions as they develop athletes and coaches.

I've been involved in fencing in one form or another for over 15 years, as competitor, referee, athlete and now administrator. I started fencing foil at a small club in a leisure centre in Halifax, West Yorkshire but I didn't start competing until I went away to university. I found the club at the University of Leicester to be lively and competitive. Pretty soon I was away most Wednesdays and a lot of weekends at competitions. As I came to the end of my university studies I felt I wanted to try something different and made the jump across to sabre, which I carried on when I returned up north, joining up with Stuart Marshall.

Around this time, I started refereeing on the domestic cadet circuit and taking my first tentative steps into coaching, getting my hands on 12 sets of sabre kit and setting up a small network of primary schools in the local area. After 18 months of doing this, I was now refereeing at sabre events on the cadet international circuit, as well as doing domestic championship events. I also had a basic club structure that was working, with half a dozen clubs feeding into a central club that was based in Halifax town centre. At that point, an unexpected offer came out of the blue. Daniel Redshaw and David Kirby got in touch to tell me about a full-time position at Shakespeare's Swords, developing the Under 11 - Under 15 fencers, in preparation for cadet

competition. I decided to take the chance and move down to Stratford-upon-Avon. I was there for 6 years, starting as the development coach for the club, working with the younger fencers but soon branched out, working at Oxford and Worcester Universities as well as my old university; Leicester. At Shakespeare's we went through a period of transition and experimentation, looking hard at our coaching practice and asking "why are we doing it this way?", "could this be done differently or better?", "is this good enough?". After this period, we had reinvigorated parts of the club, in particular our beginners course, making use of research into child development and coaching pedagogy to develop a new look way of introducing fencing to 11 year old children.

In 2016, Daniel Redshaw moved on and I stepped into the Head of Fencing role at the club. It was much more organisational and administrative than I'd been used to but I found it was something that I was enjoying. The coaching team at the club had changed now and I found myself along with David Kirby, leading a team of young coaches, all whom were under 20 years of age. Despite the apparent lack of experience in the club, we continued to grow and continued to innovate our coaching methods. Our young coaches proved themselves more than capable of coaching to international cadet standard. Then in October 2017 a part-time opportunity came to work within the relatively new Athlete Development Programme. I was fortunate enough to get the role and began working in the Athlete Development Team to shape the programme and develop the camps. I learned more in the next 18 months than in any other period of my life to date. Being the lead in a club was very different to simply coaching sessions. I made a good number of mistakes while trying to learn how to manage and lead a club, and learned lessons from some

of those mistakes. At British Fencing, I quite possibly, made even more! Working as part of a governing body, in a publicly funded programme was unlike any other job I'd had up to now and I felt I learned so much about what's important for people and the different challenges people faced in their fencing, coaching and clubs. I learned about what governing bodies can do to help develop ambitious athletes and coaches and how passionate so many people are about talent development.

When the opportunity to move into British Fencing full-time came up and work in talent development everyday it was an easy decision to go for it. Now that I'm getting settled and making a start I'm looking forward to working with all of you who want to give our athletes the best chance of being successful and making the Athlete Development Programme the best it can be. I'm looking forward to seeing you at a competition or ADP camp soon. Come up and have a chat!



Rob Cawdron

Preparation with the End in Mind by Steve Kemp (GBR Programmes and Coaching Development Manager)

In the role I have at British Fencing I do spend a significant time in the car travelling. In my first year at BF I did 30,000 miles! To me this oddly is a benefit of the role as I have lots of time to think and reflect on coaching, the job I do and my journey so far. As I sat in the traffic on a warm July evening my mind focussed on the upcoming season for our younger fencers - Cadet and Juniors, Europeans in Croatia, Worlds in the USA, both less than eight months away. For some of the fencers they will be finding their way in the international circuits. For others they will be looking at qualification for the major championship. And actually it's not just about qualification. It's about that one day of fencing that in the end will determine the success of the season.

It got me thinking about my sport, rugby. Where does this situation happen and being from Oxford it was obvious. Luckily for me, Lynn Evans, my mentor, dear friend, an RFU hall of fame, who has coached world class players and worked with world class coaches, spent a number of years as the Director of Rugby at Oxford University.

The answer! The Oxford Varsity Match is a whole season judged on one game. Not only is the game played at the world famous stadium Twickenham with a crowd around 22,000 (a figure on par with Huddersfield Town last season) it is played in December, a time of year where the weather may have a significant impact on the game.

For the players who come from all around the world, including world cup winners, it is a year of preparation for that special moment to get that winning blue. The consequence of not winning is gut-wrenching and for some there is no second chance. With all the variables and pressures, anyone can have a bad day!

So for a fencer a year of work, of preparation and to have a bad day is also GUT-WRENCHING!!

An example of an Oxford University Year **January – April:**

Election of the captain by 22 players - the coaching staff have no say in who will lead the team. There are only six weeks left of the term for 15 a-side matches. The pressure of missed work from the first term means significant players struggle for matches let alone training.

So there is limited time to observe the potential players that will remain for the following season. The third term is examinations time and off season, so training reduces to skills sessions once a week.

April – September:

At the end of April all players, Blues to the U21s have their plans and start a four month training schedule. From September there are only 10 weeks to the Varsity match taking place and with a packed competition schedule of 1-2 games a week there is no time for preparation work. This is very much a personal responsibility. Players have missed out on selection, the Blue. This because they didn't do the prep work and thought they could make it back up. The great positive of this period is the time available to rest/recovery and do a thorough preparation training regime.

September – December:

About 35 players are invited to attend six days of testing and training before term starts in mid-September. It is a mix of players from undergraduate, with limited senior rugby experience to players with international caps and in the past some senior internationals with Rugby World Cup experience.

26 are selected to go on Tour. It's a time of training, bonding and setting the tone and expectations for the season. This is set by the captain and players - not by the management. It is a fair reflection that the management role model is the culture under-pinned by the history and values of the rugby club.

On the tour all the players have an interview with three people from the coaching group. Strength and weakness are discussed with a six-week action plan put in place. This allows an openness between players and coaches. This does take time but provides clarity and purpose for both parties. It takes place again with a month to go before the big match.

Back in Oxford academic demands start. This means every session has to be as effective and efficient as possible. Training is in the evenings starting at 18.00 with a pre-training briefing outlining what is being covered and the transition points in practice. Coaches have to be time-disciplined or the session becomes inefficient. The players know they have to perform quality practice for the whole session and the "repeat to perfect syndrome" does not happen.

Three key parts of the whole plan are:

1. You know the opposition. They are doing a similar plan. Whilst the final team is only announced 10 days before the match, there is time to analyse the opposition. They will be doing the same! So certain aspects of Oxford's



Steve Kemp

- game plan are held back and therefore untested in full match conditions.
2. The data capture of key performance areas that the coaches believe will lead to success. Examples of key performance areas are:
 - tackle completion rate
 - quality set piece ball (i.e. scrum and lineout)Targets are set with a lower % at the start with a key performance target for the match.
3. The final area is the personal skill sessions. The key core skills are identified and players are expected to do their "homework". This is 40 - 60 minutes of additional work on either a positional requirement or identified weaknesses. These sessions were often done at lunchtime and for some before or after the main session, in smaller bitesize chunks.

The final element is the selection philosophy of the elected captain. At Oxford this philosophy was to always select the strongest team. This with the key performance areas and the individual performance plans helped the players understand where they were in the squad set up, enabling a strong team culture and identity. This consistency allowed the players to relax and display their strengths rather than being concerned about being selected.

So what can be taken away from this unique experience? How does it relate to my thoughts about Junior fencing?

April to July (equivalent to January – April for Oxford Rugby):

For Juniors, a number move to U23/ Seniors. Some have another year or more at Junior level with new cadets coming into the age group. So some are experienced and some are new to the level. These fencers have two roles; team mates to work with and improve and competition as someone they are competing with for that place in the team/squad.

DEVELOPMENT (continued)

Fencers are preparing for exams. So the demands of study have a higher priority. Getting the balance correct to keep the development as a fencer moving forwards is important.

July to September (equivalent to April – September for Oxford Rugby):

This is the time to re-charge and develop as a fencer. The off-season should be used to improve physical and mental foundations and the pre-season should turn to development of technical and tactical improvements. At the 2018 BF Junior Championships it was clear to see a fencer that had put the work in during this period.

September to March (equivalent to September – December for Oxford Rugby):

The domestic season starts. The BRCs and C&J Nationals give an indication of

a fencer's developments, abilities and where they are in the rankings. This is similar to 35 players going on tour. This means improvement plans can be developed and key performance indicators identified.

The start of the Junior World Cup season is similar to reducing the player base to 26 at Oxford. This is the group that have the best chance of making the final selection. However the 9 rugby players keep playing and developing as players pick up injuries and for some of the 9 there are another one or two opportunities depending on their degree course. For the fencers not making junior World Cups, international experience can be gained by attending other international competitions.

Individual programmes and homework - these are strong focus areas for

the coaches working towards the Varsity match. The identification of key performance indicators that show how the fencer is prepared and performing well coming into the main competition can give competitive advantage.

Like rugby at Oxford University, Junior fencers are selected for their "Varsity" match - whether this be major Championship selection or any other target event.

So in conclusion, what is your Varsity match this season and beyond? For some it is the Junior European Championships. For others it is the British Youth Championships. What are the key performance indicators that lead to the likelihood of an optimal performance and hence achieving the result you were working for?

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MoneySabre – by Rob Cawdron (British Fencing Programme Manager – ADP)

Moneyball, the 2003 book (and 2011 film) by award winning author Michael Lewis, is the story of how the Oakland Athletics under General Manager Billy Beane defied expectations, performing consistently at a level that belied their (relatively) modest means and competing, as equals, with the biggest names in baseball. It tells how Beane, alongside assistant General Manager Paul Podesta, pioneered the use of sabermetrics and data analytics to build winning teams year on year. At its heart, it's a story of not accepting conventional wisdom as truth and the search for what others have missed in order to gain the edge.

How does this apply to fencing and what might it look like? As a fencing nation, Britain's situation could be looked at comparatively to the Oakland Athletics'. The traditional powerhouses of Italy, Russia and France, our equivalent of the New York Yankees, the Boston Red Sox and the Los Angeles Dodgers, have bigger budgets, fully funded training sessions and larger populations. So where can we find our edge? How can British fencers, clubs, coaches and national teams upset the odds to be competitive? One of Lewis' themes in his book is how the democratisation of data and information has flattened the traditional hierarchies, giving smaller teams and organisations the opportunity to compete in a way that previously wasn't possible. So if we start to look at the data, what can it tell us?

If we look at sabre, what can we start to learn? Below is the total hits scored by the winners of every individual fight at the 2017 Senior World Championships in Leipzig.

<i>Women's Sabre</i>				<i>Men's Sabre</i>			
Total hits	429			Total hits	462		
1st Attack	186	2nd Attack	98	1st Attack	191	2nd Attack	126
1st Riposte	115	2nd Riposte	12	1st Riposte	84	2nd Riposte	35
1st Counter	10	2nd Counter	8	1st Counter	2	2nd Counter	23
				Line	1		

Each point is coded with a description of the action:

- Attack - action with priority that either begins before the opponent, or is a step-lunge or more after making the opponent miss/parrying
- Riposte - action with priority after making miss/parrying, but must land within a lunge or flunge, anything longer becomes an attack
- Counter - action without priority, where the opponent fails to land their attack;

and a description of the perceived initial action of the fencer off the engage line. What does this mean? For example a fencer who had the intention to attack when the referee said "allez" and scored, would have that touch recorded as a "1st attack". A fencer who intended to step off the line, parry and score with a riposte would go down as "1st riposte". However, if a fencer had attempted to attack, missed and then been forced to defend and score with a parry-riposte would have that touch recorded as a "2nd riposte" - their first action failed (the attack) but their second action succeeded (the riposte). Alternatively, a fencer might look to try and defend as their first action, realise that their opponent had also tried to defend and then jump on the opportunity to start an attack when both fencers pause. This would be a "2nd attack".

What does this information tell us so far? Not a huge amount! The most common scoring action off the engage line in both genders is an attack. Then in the men's game, the second most common is a "2nd attack" and the women's is a "1st riposte". What it does suggest however, is that the most common scoring decision is defensive (1st riposte added to 2nd attack is the biggest total - 210 for men, 213 for women). Perhaps we need some more context. So what do these hits look like when plotted on a piste?

Piste zones

Zone A - Backline to warning line	Zone B - Warning line to engage line	Zone C - Scorer's engage line to centre line	Zone D - Centre line to opponent's engage line	Zone E - Opponent's engage line to warning line	Zone F - Warning line to backline
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Direction of Winner

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Women's Sabre

A - 8	B - 26	C - 94	D - 199	E - 70	F - 55
1st Riposte - 5	1st Riposte - 16	1st Riposte - 69	1st Attack - 151	2nd Attack - 35	1st Attack - 28
1st Counter - 2	2nd Attack - 5	2nd Attack - 11	2nd Attack - 25	1st Attack - 31	2nd Attack - 22
2nd Riposte - 1	1st Counter - 4	1st Attack - 7	1st Riposte - 20	1st Riposte - 3	1st Riposte - 2
	2nd Riposte - 1	2nd Riposte - 5	2nd Riposte - 2	2nd Riposte - 1	1st Counter - 2
		1st Counter - 2	2nd Counter - 1		2nd Riposte - 1

Direction of Winner

→

DEVELOPMENT (continued)

Men's Sabre

A - 13	B - 26	C - 136	D - 214	E - 53	F - 20
2nd riposte - 8	2nd attack - 9	1st Riposte - 83	1st Attack - 153	2nd Attack - 41	2nd Attack - 19
2nd Counter - 3	2nd Counter - 8	1st Attack - 29	2nd Attack - 52	1st Attack - 7	1st Attack - 1
1st Riposte - 1 (Line - 1)	2nd Riposte - 7	2nd Riposte - 12	2nd Riposte - 7	2nd Counter - 4	
	1st Counter - 1	2nd Counter - 6	2nd Counter - 2	2nd Riposte - 1	
	1st Attack - 1	2nd Attack - 5			
		1st Counter - 1			

Direction of Winner

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When plotted on a piste, does this give anymore insight? Some differences between men and women certainly seem to come out, with the vast majority of 1st attacks for men finishing before the opponent's engage line (zone D). Whereas in the women's there are much more attacks from the engage line travelling down the piste, into zones E and F. There's a similar story with 1st ripostes, with almost all of the men's actions taking place on or around the defender's engage line, in zone C. Whereas in the women's game there's a spread much further back beyond the engage line, with some going all the way to the backline. The men's game is very much played between the two engage lines, with the vast majority (75%) of hits happening here. The women's game is similar, with 68% of hits happening between the engage lines but there are many more actions that extend into the opponent's half, with over twice as many points scored in their opponent's warning area as in the men's game.

How might all of this begin to inform training sabre fencers? What do you read from this data?

Does this mean we now have the secrets for British success in sabre fencing? In short, no. This data is, at best, a snapshot. It tells us part of a story from one competition, from one set of fencers. It doesn't tell us the failure rate of these actions, (Yes, 1st attack is the most frequent action scored with but how often is that action attempted with no point scored?) and it doesn't record the balance of the points in the 1st half versus the 2nd (Do fencers attack more or less often in the 1st half or the 2nd?). This data also only analyses senior fencers in one fight at one competition. How different might this look at junior level?

What this hopefully does, is start a conversation - what data do we need to be collecting to be able to meaningfully analyse performance and inform coaching and training of fencers? What does epee look like, or foil?

What data have you been collecting already and how has it informed your training or your coaching?

Do you have something to offer to the podcast?

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DEVELOPMENT (continued)

Coach Behaviours Frameworks

One of the areas of development within the Athlete Development Programme (ADP) is the *Coach Behaviours Framework*. The rationale for this is, coaches along with parents, siblings and peers play important and multifunctional roles in the life of a young fencer.

Research by Jowett 2003 suggested that within the sport domain, the coach-athlete interpersonal relationship can be viewed as the most significant one.

Coaches can be viewed firstly as instructors of the sport and secondly as an adult role model for the young participant. The way in which coach's coach their values and behaviours all influence childrens' enjoyment and continued participation in sports, as well as some learnt behaviours, that will echo beyond the life of the fencers participation in the sport.

The coach-athlete relationship can develop strong bonds that over a period of time encompass physical, psychological and emotional development.

Coaches are in positions of trust and able to assert authority and power over fencers, and in some cases their wider networks. The proper use of this power is vitally important in all coach-fencer relationships and coaches should be aware of the influence that they can have over young fencers and that at times they may find themselves acting as substitute parents.

While the vast majority of coaches are ethical, competent and safe, unfortunately some abuse their power, authority and the trust held in them. It is not always obvious and at times the line between appropriate and inappropriate behaviour is often a matter of intent, perception and context.

Within fencing/sport what is an inappropriate behaviour? These may involve behaviours that 'technically' don't break any rules or laws but are unwanted around the club environment and are not consistent with respectful behaviour towards children.

Sometimes as a community we accept and endorse inappropriate behaviour. This takes place when the behaviour

aligns to our learnt behaviours and therefore it is not recognised as inappropriate. It can also take place when the power of the coach's behaviour has such a strong influence on the other key influencers around the fencer, that it is "normalised".

Some familiar sounding statements, which are in context inappropriate:

- **"No pain. No gain"** - The coach who believes improved performance comes with a tough coaching style which includes unreasonable demands, controlling behaviours, as well as undermining put downs when mistakes are made.
- **"Young people shouldn't referee as they just don't have the experience"** - The coach who verbally abuses the young developing referee who is losing confidence and self-esteem with each outburst piste-side. To make consistent decisions, with a certain, limited amount of information, in a short time frame.
- **"Didn't mean any harm. I was only having a bit of fun."** - The ex-fencer/fencer who recently has taken on the coach role along with the responsibility and power that comes with the role. They do not recognise the boundaries now in place and has behaved inappropriately in the coaching role, over familiarity when demonstrating a skill and language of choice are some examples.
- **"But we won't win and be successful if we play those children"** - Children who are not the best players yet, are made to feel unwanted and the coach does not give them equal coaching and fair playing time.

Children should be able to participate in a sporting environment that is fun, safe, fair and inclusive.

Of course there is also the option to reject the inappropriate behaviours; this by the community/social network highlighting the inappropriateness of the behaviour and encouraging alternative behaviours. When the alternative behaviours are not adopted and inappropriate behaviours are maintained there is often a change in the sporting environment

of the participant or unfortunately the participants stopping participation itself.

Research in the USA shows a 70% dropout in sport at 13 years old - other countries are also highlighting similar impacts.

Coaches need to reflect on their behaviours and be aware of behaviour that could be viewed as negative, inappropriate, unacceptable or poor and that poor practice can become abuse.

Coaches can:

- understand what are appropriate boundaries that enable safe and healthy relationships (Coach Behaviours Frameworks)
- create situations/processes to afford the opportunity to allow appropriate behaviours to flourish and therefore reduce inappropriate behaviours
- understand the NGB/club expectations about behaviour (codes of conduct, guidelines and policies) seeking clarification if unsure
- use positive and age-appropriate language when talking to and in the presence of fencers
- ensure appropriate development activities to the level of the fencer and the stage of the skill development required for the activity
- be more aware of their actual behaviour by reflecting
 - on how they have treated all of their fencers - have they given equal time to all involved and differentiated to meet the needs of the fencers?
 - on their behaviours when stress levels are high (e.g. at competitions)
 - on if they have used poor practice/abuse as a form of discipline
 - on if they have used negatively impactful statements for motivation
- be more aware of their behaviour by observations

Observations can be done by a trusted colleague or by filming yourself whilst coaching. Recently one ADP coach with the fencers' permission wore a microphone and recorded how they spoke, what they said and how they said it. It provided some valuable insight on how they interacted with their fencers and those around the coaching sessions.

DEVELOPMENT (continued)

Example of Coach Behaviours

	Attributes	Knowledge	Behaviours
Someone who is	They are...	They need to...	We are looking for them to...
Approachable	Positive Clear	Understand how to use effective listening and questioning techniques	Contribute to conversations effectively, connecting people to develop teamship
Clear	Conscientious Patient	Understand how to articulate information in different ways	Take time to provide timely information that is broken down into easy non-intimidating understanding chunks
Individual centred	Empathetic Caring	Understand how to build rapport	Connect with people as individuals and is able to bring lifestyle interests into the sessions broader than motivations alone
Structured	Supportive Encouraging	Understand how effective goal setting can support behaviour change	

Participant statement

"We have a plan to get there"

"I can always take part at my level"

"Takes time to understand who I am"

"Is good at explaining what I have to do"

We are always looking for stories from youth internationals.

Submit your stories to the editor:

karim.bashir@catchsport.com

DEVELOPMENT (continued)

Be You. Be Different, The British Fencing Podcast Update

The British Fencing podcast has aired since the beginning of 2019 and is now available on all podcast platforms including Stitcher, Apple Podcasts, Spotify and Google. Here's a round-up of the episodes so far. If you would like to feature on the podcast or have ideas for future episodes, please email media@britishfencing.com.

Episode 1 – Time To Talk

In our first episode, hosts Sean and Sophie talked about mental health. The 7 February 2019 was 'Time to Talk Day'. We interviewed Jo Kowalski of social movement Time to Change, Paul Davis of the Paul Davis Fencing Academy and Team GB sabreur Jonathan 'JJ' Webb for a fascinating insight into mental health in our sport.

The episode gave JJ a chance to talk about his own mental health experiences and how he sought treatment at the Priory. He opened up about how creating a plan helped him to move forward in a positive way. "I think for me, the biggest thing was thinking 'Am I going to be comfortable talking about it?', because that's the biggest issue around mental health - actually discussing it. Being comfortable, whether it's with your friends or more publicly like this."

Episode 2 – Developing the Athletes of the Future

In this episode, Sophie and Sean looked at British Fencing's Athlete Development Programme (ADP), aimed at helping fencers aged 15-23 achieve their potential. Insightful interviews with Steve Kemp, British Fencing's Programmes Manager, Rob Cawdron, ADP Project Officer, athletes Alice Campbell and Danielle Lawson plus ADP sabre lead

coach Jon Salfield brought to light the all-round, holistic approach the programme is taking.

Funded by Sport England, the Programme gives young fencers the skills to create a long and healthy career in sport, bringing forward role model qualities and teamwork, as well as the physicality required to compete for GB.

Episode 3 – Money Money Money

In episode 3, we talked about money! How can a sports club raise funds? How does British Fencing use your membership and funding to grow our sport? Most importantly, what would co-host Sean do if he won the lottery? All your questions were answered in interviews with CEO Georgina Usher, Salle Holyrood club fundraiser Jo Cook and Scottish Fencing athlete Mhairi McLaughlin.

Sophie says, "This was a different episode as Sean managed to interview Georgina whilst they were both abroad at an event. We managed to bring in some practical tips on how to raise funds for a club and Mhairi gave us some great insight into her experience as a young fencer. The episode covers funding from lots of different angles. Money can be a stressful subject. So it was great to really answer some of the mysteries around where the money in fencing comes from and where it is spent."

Episode 4 – Fencing Inspires: The Journey of Marcus Mepstead

In episode 4, Sophie chatted to New York based GBR Olympic foil fencer Marcus Mepstead. "It was a great interview.

As Marcus is based in New York, we recorded over the phone and we had to negotiate the time difference. We talked about lots of sports, travel and the inspiration of other people like Roger Federer and Dame Kelly Holmes."

After the episode aired, Marcus went on to win his silver medal at the World Championships. Listen to this episode to reveal who has inspired Marcus the most, what he has learned from his journey so far and discover his hopes for the future.

Episode 5 – Parents in Sports – A Guide to Enjoying the Journey

Whether you're a parent, a coach, athlete or supporter, the next generation has a role to play in the future of sport. In this episode, Sophie spoke to Gordon MacLelland, founder of Working With Parents in Sport, a company that supports organisations, parents and coaches in working together to provide children with the best possible sporting experiences.

Sophie said, "We talked about creating a positive environment for our young people, giving them the support needed to succeed as people with life skills through sport. As a parent myself I was interested to find out how best to support young people as they discover new skills and challenges. Gordon has a wealth of knowledge and highlighted some of the things coaches can do to create good communication with parents from the start."

We discussed what a good sports environment looks and sounds like, discovered tips on coping with disappointment and heard about how elite athletes inspire the next generation.

Do you have something to offer to the podcast?

Contact: karim.bashir@catchsport.com

to have your say...

ROUND UP

UNITED KINGDOM ARMED FORCES FENCING CENTENARY WEEKEND 30 AUGUST – 1 SEPTEMBER 2019

It is not very often that any fencing organisation can celebrate such a momentous occasion as a centenary. Indeed, the only ones that I can recall were the Epée Club in 2000 and British Fencing in 2002. However, these august institutions have been overshadowed by the Armed Forces whose fencing credentials predate both of the above.

It was in 1919, after the formation of the Royal Air Force, that the Inter Services Fencing Championships were first held at the Royal Tournament. In order to celebrate this date, Commander Mark "Dicky" Barton Royal Navy, the current Chair of the UK Armed Forces Fencing (it used to be called Combined Services Fencing Association before a Rebranding Company was brought into the equation to "modernise" the Armed Forces image!) decided that 2019 would be a year to remember. Not only would they hold the Inter Services Fencing Championships at a prestigious location and invite past and present members of the Royal Navy, Army and Royal Air Force Fencing Associations and Unions with other civilian fencing "glitterati" but they would also host a formal black tie dinner after the fencing had ended. Therefore at the end of August, 120 fencers and invited guests came together at Armoury House, home of the Honourable Artillery Company in the middle of the City of London to celebrate this centenary event. This was then to be followed the next day with a Triangular match between the UK Armed Forces, the UK Armed Forces Veterans and a British Fencing President's Team.

Saturday 30 August saw the well attended Inter Service Fencing Championships starting early with fencers flying in from every corner of the globe. By 6pm the results were through and it was then time for the fight off for the prestigious Master Swordsman and Swordswoman trophies. These wonderful shields have been presented every year since 1919 and used to be awarded at the Royal Tournament in



RAF Centenary

Earls Court in front of Royalty. All the guests had arrived by this stage and witnessed some highly skilled and fast moving bouts ably refereed by Mr Mike Thornton, Mr Adrian Speakman and Ms Hannah Bryars. At 8pm the fencing ended and everyone sat down in the magnificent Honourable Artillery Company Long Room to enjoy a silver service meal of the highest standard. Military conventions were adhered to with consideration being given to the fact that there were three Services present. Hence the Royal Navy gave toasts of the day, Port was slid to the left as in Army messes and the loyal toast was taken standing up to satisfy both the Army and the Royal Air Force!

Commander Barton then proceeded to describe some of the rich history of fencing in the Services and how it was, in all reality, the start of fencing here in Britain. A précis of this history was printed on the Dinner Menu and is printed below. He reeled off a long list of our most prestigious medal winning athletes such as Lord Desborough, Thomas Wand-Tetley, John Moore, Bill Hoskyns and others who had started their fencing career in the Services and had gone on to contribute so much to the sport that we recognise today.

He then handed over to the UK Armed Forces Fencing President, Commodore Matt Clark, who ended his speech with a toast to the continuing future success of Inter Services Fencing and "absent friends". This was warmly applauded. The

gathering then retired to the bar to carry on with fencing stories and to look at a collection of service fencing memorabilia brought together by Commander Barton.

The following morning, a triangular match between the UK Armed Forces A Team, the Armed Forces Veterans and a British Fencing President's Select Team (mainly composing of BVF and Epée Club members!) was held in the Headquarters of the HAC. There was a great sense of camaradie and friendly banter during the proceedings - good to see James Williams on form in the sabre team and keeping Adrian Speakman on his toes as referee! Each team comprised of two men and a lady in FES and the final outcome saw UKAF A Team winning gold, the President's Select Team taking the silver and the UKAF Veterans a close third.

A final group photo for the archives was then held on the steps of Armoury House and Hilary Philbin, President of British Fencing, gave a speech of thanks to the UK Armed Forces Fencing organisers for their hospitality and the organisation that had seen their centenary being celebrated in a truly memorable fashion. Roll on the next hundred years!



Lawrence Burr OBE

FENCING IN THE SERVICES

Sword fighting was a natural part of the life of both the Army and Navy for centuries but fencing within the RN was certainly treated as a distinct activity

by 1733, when a separate master of fencing was appointed at the new Naval Academy. Fencing was at this time seen as part of an officer's training to be a Gentleman.

Throughout the Victorian period, the Services were largely responsible for keeping fencing alive as a sport, with sword displays as well as the development of sword feats, which were performed as part of the entertainment at the military and naval tournaments. One such tournament, the Grand Military Tournament and Assault at Arms, first held at the Royal Agricultural Hall in Islington in 1880, developed into the Royal Tournament and it was out of this event that the Inter-Services Championships was born. A fencing competition was first held at this tournament in 1888, although no results are known. In 1896, separate foil and sabre competitions took place for Army officers and other ranks. In 1904, the competition expanded to include the Royal Navy and épée (although épée was limited to officers). In 1912, the competition was first referred to as the Inter-Services Championship. Following the creation of the RAF from the RNAS and RFC on 1 April 1918, the new service joined the competition in **1919**, when the tournament restarted after the break for the war.

In 1930, officers and other ranks were combined into one competition. In 1939, the Triangular was added, consisting of four weapons: foil, épée, sabre and bayonet. The RAF won that first competition but it was not held again until in 1947, after the Second World War. The first decade of the Triangular was dominated by the RN due to the prowess of the Royal Marines at bayonet fencing, until the weapon was removed from the competition in 1957.

In 1947, the Inter-Services competition expanded to include the women's Services. The Royal Tournament closed in 1999 but the Inter-Services Championships have continued using various venues each year.

Earliest Winners

First Officer Foil Winner 1896
Capt J McCall Maxwell Royal Artillery
First Officer Sabre Winner 1896
Capt W Edgeworth-Johnstone Royal Irish Regt
First Other Ranks Foil and Sabre Winner 1896
St Sgt B Foerester (AGS)
First RN Winner 1904
Foil S/Lt FEB Fielmann RN
First Epée Winner 1904
Major WH Grenfell MP 1st Bucks RVC
First RAF Winners 1921
Sgt Maj H Grainger RAF Sabre and Foil and F/Lt F G Sherriff RAF Epée
First Ladies Foil Champion 1947
S/O Z Taylor WAAF

THE CENTENARY DINNER



LEEDS FENCING CLUB'S 50TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATIONS



This year Leeds Fencing Club was delighted to celebrate its 50th anniversary with a foil and sabre fun fencing event followed by a buffet meal at Northern Ballet. The event was open to present and past members.

Many hours were spent on the telephone and internet trying to locate past members. Eight of the fencing participants were past members and some of them had not fenced for 10 years (since our 40th anniversary event) and they joined the club on a temporary basis.

The fencing began with one seeding round followed by poules to decide the winners and to ensure that everyone got a full afternoon of fencing. The foilists fenced for the Dortmund Trophy and the sabreurs for a new 50th anniversary trophy. It was pleasing that the original chairman, Philip Silver, visited to watch the fencing along with several other past members.

The club was originally called Nelson Fencers, named after Harry Nelson who had been seriously injured in a fencing accident at the time the club was being formed. The club changed its name to Leeds Fencing Club in the late 1980s. Unfortunately I was unable to locate Harry, although he and Sheila, his wife and long time fencer did attend our 40th event.

After a swift shower we reconvened in the event suite of Northern Ballet for a buffet meal. Typically there were more people for the social event than the fencing!

The choice of venue was the result of collaboration between Leeds Fencing Club and Northern Ballet in 2018 when two of our coaches taught the male dancers to fence for their Three Musketeers ballet.

We were welcomed by our Chairman, Nick Stokes, who summarised the history of the club and encouraged everyone to enjoy a thoroughly good evening. David Nixon OBE, Artistic Director, Northern Ballet presented the Dortmund Trophy to Alastair Holdsworth and the 50th Trophy to Ben Laker.

Since then two of our previous members have rejoined the club!

Moya McNamara



ROUND UP (continued)

BIRMINGHAM INTERNATIONAL REPORT – CLAUDIA FOGL

Over the Easter weekend 2019, the Birmingham International Fencing Tournament had a successful second outing at its new home at the University of Birmingham Sports and Fitness Centre. A new sports hall layout gained approval from spectators and fencers alike.

Over 400 fencers competed over two days where the smooth event running was due to work of the DT team (Simon Axon, Richard Burn and Phil Palmer) and referee co-ordinator (Alex Savin). The committee would also like to thank the armourers, (Steve Jackson, Simon Corcoran and Roger Simmonds,) the first aiders, (Richard Burn and Roger Simmonds again,) and Joan Whitehouse, the Welfare Officer.

98 fencers (NIF 222) competed in the men's foil competition which was won by 14-year-old Jamie Cook, meaning that with his dad Keith, the Cooks have completed a rare father-son victory double at the BIFT. Herefordshire's Daniel Robinson finished a creditable 13th.



Men's Foil Podium

Men's foil: 1 - Jamie Cook, 2 - Ethan Ridsdale, 3= - Kamal Minott and Alexander Lloyd

In the women's foil event (51 fencers, NIF 125), the final was a replay of the final of the British National Championships but on this occasion Chloe Dickson beat Teagan Williams-Stewart 15-12.



Women's Foil Podium

Women's foil: 1 - Chloe Dickson, 2 - Teagan Williams-Stewart, 3= - Katie Smith and Seville Babaeva.

Finally on Saturday, 56 men's sabreurs (NIF 56) fenced. Soji Aiyenuro won his 2nd BIFT men's sabre title. There were also fine results for a large number of Shakespeare's Swords fencers including 2nd for Zachary Hamilton and Joe Pocknell in joint 3rd with Brynmor Saunders of Leon Paul.



Men's Sabre Podium

Men's sabre: 1 - Soji Aiyenuro, 2 - Zachary Hamilton, 3= - Brynmor Saunders and Joe Pocknell.

Sunday opened with men's epee and its 102 competitors (NIF 214). Paul Sanchez-Lethem beat Matthew Cooper 15-12 in a closely fought final.



Men's Epee Podium

Men's epee: 1 - Paul Sanchez-Lethem, 2 - Matthew Cooper 3= - Alex Papadopoulos and Elliott Grover.

15-12 was also the winning score in the women's epee final where Francesca Summers beat Maddy Lee after both won their semi-finals 11-10. 58 women's epeeists (NIF 95) competed, with the West Midland's own Alexandra Powell finishing 7th.



Women's Epee Podium

Women's epee: 1 - Francesca Summers, 2 - Maddy Lee, 3= - Lydia Stanier and Sophie Saudo.

In keeping with the theme, the women's sabre final also finished 15-12 with Tamara Carnac of Leon Paul sabre emerging victorious. 37 fencers competed (NIF 39).



Women's Sabre Podium

Women's sabre: 1 - Tamara Carnac, 2 - Laura Gladdish, 3= - Rachel Lasance and Bethany Brierley.

The organisers would like to thank the volunteers who helped set up and put away the competition including a certain armourer's daughter who helped pack up after a long day's fencing and the referees, without whom the competition would not have been possible.

They would also to thank Leon Paul for their sponsorship, kit stand, support and donation of the prizes (which all the winners "ooh-ed" over).

A date for your diaries next year - the BIFT 2020 will be on 11-12 April.

REVIEW

FROM LAST TO FIRST – A PARENT’S GUIDE TO FENCING SUCCESS

By Jon Salfield and Daniela Norris

“It was Mum and Dad’s fault - they were just there!”

“Dad - where is my foil/epee/sabre and why isn’t it working - I told you I needed it ready for this competition”

Mum - why isn’t my coach here watching me - I’ll lose this fight if he/she isn’t here.....”

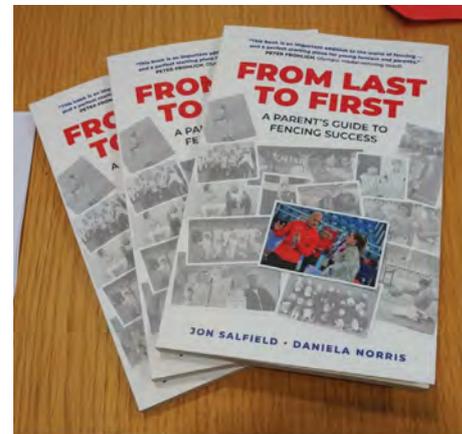
Yes - every parent has heard those phrases repeated time and time again as their child starts at the fencing salle and begins to progress into their first competitions. The parent’s lot is not always a happy one as they try to comprehend a sport that many find totally baffling unless they have been a fencer in the past. Since the 2012 Olympics, British Fencing has pursued its policy of bringing fencing to as many youngsters as possible as part of the UK Sport’s “legacy” to encourage new sports amongst schools and clubs. The “soft” fencing initiative with foam and plastic weapons that can be taught by teachers or sports trainers alike has brought a new wave of parents with no knowledge of fencing into fencing clubs throughout the country and it is for these that this new book is a real boon.

The authors of “Last to First” are a formidable pair. Firstly, Jon Salfield - the charismatic professional international sabre coach with a solid fencing pedigree who has been running Truro Fencing Club for over 20 years and is the lead coach for the GB Sabre Squad and the British Fencing Development Programme. He has always had a passion for the sport and sees the future of fencing innately bound

to the development of its juniors. Then we have Daniela Norris - an intriguing mix of authoress (I reviewed her first book “Recognitions” in this magazine last year), diplomat, political writer but above all a parent of three boys, all of whom fence! She has had experience, not only of the UK system but also of French and Swiss clubs where her children first picked up a sword. She has gone through all the trials and tribulations of being “the support crew” of a motivated fencer, with all the challenges that that brings, and who therefore brings a fresh perspective into this book.

This book is long overdue. Parents and young fencers need to have a real insight from the beginning into this wonderful sport of ours and yet, despite the plethora of manuals and technical tomes written by well meaning professional coaches, there has always been a need for a more sympathetic guide and explanation of how youngsters and their parents should approach fencing. I think that all organisers of junior competitions have experienced problems with the conduct of over enthusiastic yet well meaning parents - some to the extent of being “black carded”. If they had been able to read this book beforehand and maybe shared it with their sons and daughters, we might well see a definite improvement in both behaviour on the piste and see the resilience and self sufficiency required of our young fencers which is strongly advocated here.

The sound and practical advice from both the coach’s viewpoint and that of the



parent is well formulated in the book’s chapters which range across the whole spectrum of equipment, training, skills development, communication, competing and of course some key points on the psychology and the mindset which might help with achieving long term success. At the same time, both Jon and Daniela interspace these with their own personal observations. The book reads easily and is full of useful insights whilst answering those myriad of questions that a parent, who is new to the sport, might have. I certainly wish that my own parents had been able to read this before launching me on the circuit!

Our very own Richard Cohen has added the foreword to the book with the endorsement that “From Last to First is the real deal” - a sentiment that I heartily endorse. Every club should have copies of this publication and give it to new parents and fencers as they enter the salle doors. The fact that 10% of the authors’ royalties also goes to the admirable TFC Gold Foundation is an extra bonus!

Lawrence Burr

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REVIEW

INTO THE FRAME By Jonathan David Collins

It was at Wellington Swords Fencing Club back in 2010 that I first encountered Wheelchair Fencing. The Hungarian club coach, Cefi Felletar, had been keen that we opened up our purpose built Salle to wheelchair competitors, particularly as the young (then!) Piers Gilliver, Caz Walton and Vivian Mills were encouraging us to become more inclusive in our sport. We advertised widely in the local area to see whether any other disabled sportsmen and women might like to take up fencing and even had Dame Mary Glen Haig to attend an Open Day to celebrate wheelchair fencing. This led to Wellington then hosting the National Wheelchair Fencing Championships with the great and the good coming to help out and participate in the event.

With the lead up to the 2012 London Paralympic Games and the final success of our wheelchair athletes, fencing at the Excel Centre was THE place to be. Wheelchair fencing demonstrated that it was a fast and furious duel with all the noise and excitement generated by athletes from every participating country in the world. It is now a constant at the Paralympic Games and is one of the six para sports that have never been out of the Games programme.

With all this in mind, I am delighted that we now have a handbook written by one of our wheelchair athletes who,

encouraged by social media, his parents and his Chichester club members, has produced a well-considered guide to the sport. The book is privately published and yet gives the reader a bird's eye view of what wheelchair fencing is all about - its equipment (the sport wheelchair in particular) and clothing (all differ in some regard from that worn by able-bodied fencers), the rules, regulations and etiquette and more importantly - how to "play". Jonathan Collins gives an entertaining talk through all of these and uses conversations and observations in each chapter entitled "Behind the Mask" from a whole range of UK and International wheelchair fencers to add a flavour of why wheelchair fencing is such a great sport. These, in particular, give a riveting insight into the real challenges - both physical and mental that face these remarkable men and women. Their governing body in the UK is British Disability Fencing (a great website at britishdisabilityfencing.co.uk) with the International Wheelchair and Amputee Sports Federation (IWAS) who now support membership from over 65 countries worldwide.

This is a fascinating publication written with great heart and feeling. Although its format is somewhat simplistic in places and its font size is rather irritating, this is a much-needed book to encourage the growth of wheelchair fencing here



in the UK. I have great admiration for the author and his great team of supporters. Our wheelchair fencers are winning major World and Paralympic medals and have been for some years; so, perhaps this book will go some way to show the journey that they have taken and the work that has taken them to the Paralympic podium. This is a sport that deserves to be lauded more widely than it is at present - Jonathan has done wheelchair fencing a great favour in this regard.

Lawrence Burr

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Submit your stories to the editor:

karim.bashir@catchsport.com

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to have your say...

RESULTS

The up-to-date 2018–2019 Season Latest Results are now listed online and can be accessed using the following link:*



Photo: Augusto Bizzi

Please forward all your suggestions for additional online fencing results to:
chloe.hobden@britishfencing.com



NEW

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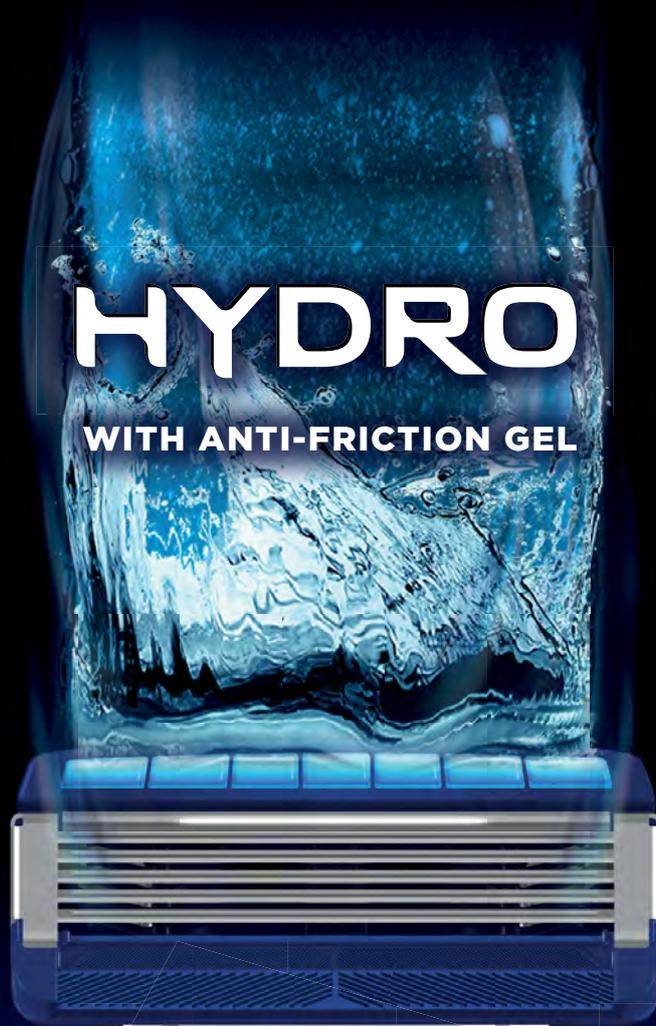


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