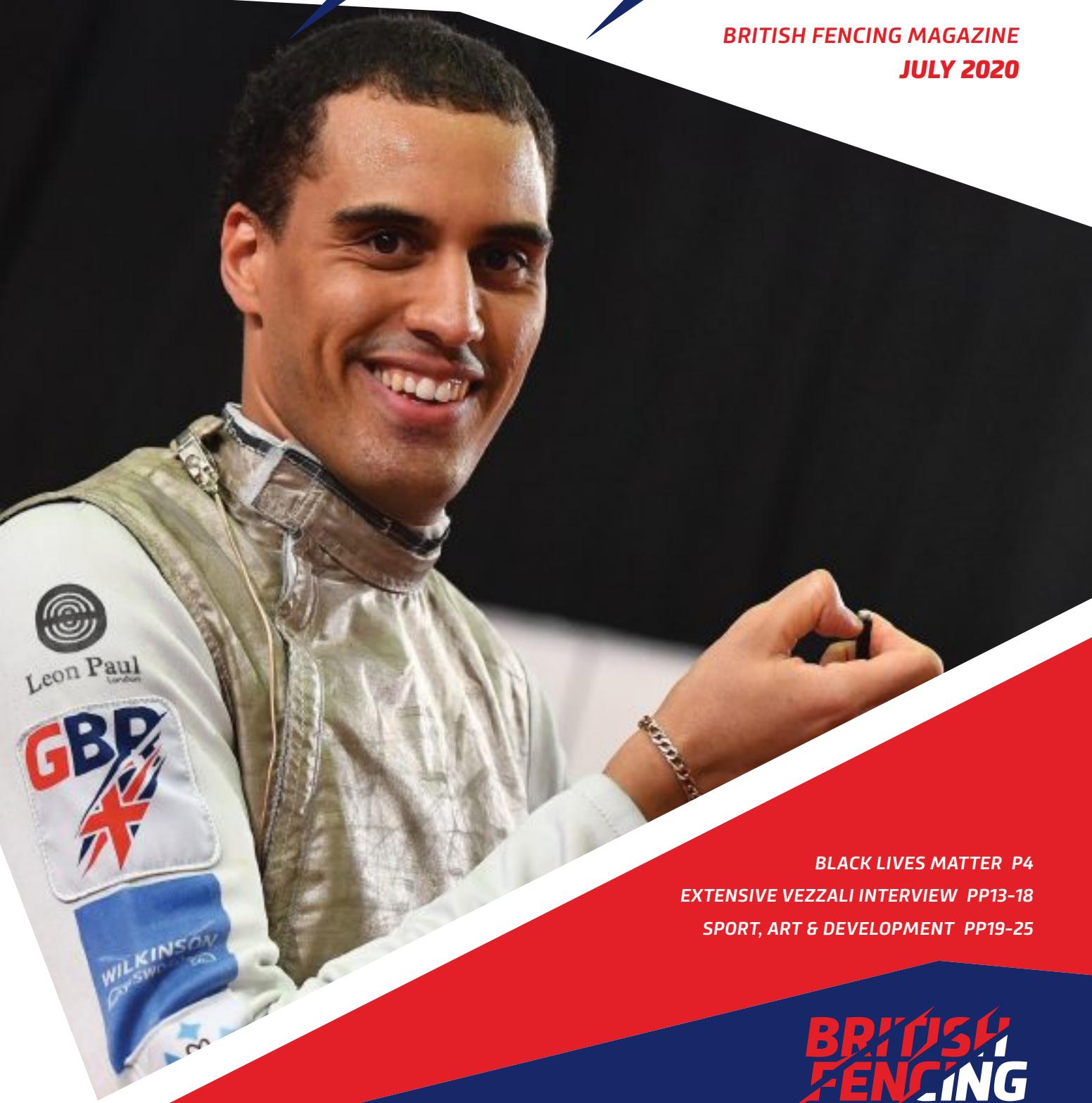


THE SWORD

BRITISH FENCING MAGAZINE
JULY 2020



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EXTENSIVE VEZZALI INTERVIEW PP13-18
SPORT, ART & DEVELOPMENT PP19-25

BRITISH
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Cover photo:

James-Andrew Davis at Tokyo Olympic
Test Event © Augusto Bazzi

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The Sword, a quarterly magazine
founded in 1948, is distributed to all
individual and club members of British
Fencing and its affiliates. It can also be
obtained on subscription - UK £20.

Overseas airmail £26 - direct
from HQ. Contributions are
welcome. Photographs should
include the names of those
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Next deadline: 10th August 2020

BLACK LIVES MATTER

WHAT'S NEXT FOR BF?

Black British Fencers met with CEO with Further Events Scheduled

Recent events have prompted us to think about how we can better support the black community in fencing. A number of black fencers who have represented GBR at the highest level have also reached out with their thoughts, suggestions and desire to be involved in shaping a better future.

A group of athletes met with Georgina Usher, CEO of BF to share their experiences in fencing and discuss ideas around how to improve equality, diversity and inclusion.

As a result of the meeting a number of areas were identified where action can be taken to support the black community in fencing. The three areas identified and discussed in the meeting were Education, Celebration and Support.

Education - We discussed opportunities to educate the wider fencing community on the issues facing the black community and how BF's workforce education programmes can be improved to cover the issues that the black community face. One specific example was training international team managers to better support athletes when they encounter racism when travelling abroad as part of the GBR team.

Celebration - We discussed how it is important to celebrate our black community members and what they achieve in fencing, whether this is as an athlete, official (e.g. referee, team manager) or Board director. This can be done through the website (the athletes



Janet Campbell - Senior Independent Non-Executive Director

that are featured on the Home Page, articles in Latest News, Social Media or The Sword. There are also opportunities to feature clubs and BF projects and programmes where significant numbers of young black people are involved. Engaging in Black History Month can help both celebrate the black community contribution to fencing and can also be used to support wider education.

Support - We discussed what more we can do to support the black community whether they are existing or future fencers. For existing young black athletes



Yasmin Campbell winning Sue Wojciechowska award for claiming bronze at the European Cadet Championships

representing GBR, a mentoring programme linking them up with successful senior black athletes. For future fencers, reflect on the imagery that we use to brand and how we promote the sport to appeal more to young black people.

These areas and actions identified will form the basis of an action plan for BF.

As part of a wider consultation process BF will also be hosting a series of 'listening events' to give the opportunity to other members of the black fencing community to share their experiences, thoughts and views directly with senior leadership in BF including Georgina Usher (CEO) and Janet Campbell (Senior Independent Board Director).

Over time it is the intention for BF to extend these listening events to other areas where a better understanding of the personal experiences of members of our community will enable us to improve the work that we do. To that end we have also provided an option to register for a wider BAME listening event for BAME members that would like to contribute ideas, views and share their experiences with us.

This listening and developing of a better understanding will be a vital first step as we explore how BF can take meaningful action in this space.



*Ayesha Fihosy at St Maur World Cup 2017
(Photo: #BiziTeam)*

INTERVIEW

Johnny Davis



Johnny Davis

The Be You. Be Different. podcast from BF includes a new series of interviews hosted by CEO Georgina Usher. Here is the first part of her interview with Johnny Davis, two time Olympian and the current British Fencing Olympic Team Manager. He describes his early years, discovering fencing and how he developed a love for the sport as he started out on his fencing journey...

Johnny Davis:

Hello, Georgina. Thank you for the invitation. I'm looking forward to having a chat.

Georgina Usher:

Thank you very much, Johnny, for giving us your time today. I've got a lot of questions which I have collected from various members of our community. Our first question is when did you first develop an interest in fencing and where, and when did you start?

Johnny Davis:

I was one of those young boys who was lucky enough just to do lots of sports. My memories of being that age, (I'm talking kind of 10, 11) was just endlessly riding bikes, falling out of trees and playing football and various things. By chance my dad was transferred from what was a dormitory town in Northern Ireland, a place called Dungannon to Belfast and the school that I ended up going to had fencing, which was a complete chance. So the chances of me ending up having had the fantastic and really enjoyable journey I've had in fencing was a complete chance! I saw fencing at



Davis (centre) with 1988 Olympic team, (l to r) Pierre Harper, Tony Bartlett, Donnie McKenzie & Bill Gosbee

school when I was in my first year of senior school, age 11, 12. I don't know, there was just something about it. I thought, "This is really interesting". There's just something about the noise and the movement. It just looked really fascinating.

Georgina Usher:

And thinking back to those times, if you think about your experience and your earliest memories, what are your overriding memories about fencing?

Johnny Davis:

I just did this for me. You were given the opportunity to run around with a piece of metal in your hand and attack people and then learn how to defend yourself. It's very visceral and it's very real and very pure. Obviously, you know, it's moved on from the days when we did try to kill each other, but I just love the purity of the combat. You know, this is a combat sport which is guarded by rules for all the right reasons. We treat each other with respect, but we're also allowed to inhabit a space where we can 'go back'. I really believe in the nature of us as beings. That we are built to run and jump and do all that stuff. And I think maybe I've missed a part of development where I still have some vision of fighting

the beast to provide for the family. It brings all of that to surface for me in a really, really good way.

Georgina Usher:

So if you think back, you started out as a young schoolkid in Belfast and how old were you?

Johnny Davis:

Well I was lucky enough to be good at a couple of sports. I had football trials and running and I was captain of hockey team and various bits and pieces. That whole debate about whether you should focus early or should you try lots of things? Well actually it was when I entered my first fencing competition, probably when I was about 13 or 14 and actually won that. That meant rather than having to wait until you were 17 or 18, to go to compete for England with a rugby team, with a hockey team, you could actually go and fence in London. So at 13, I was able to go on a trip to London and that's another part of this whole journey of fencing. I've travelled the world and it's just phenomenal meeting people. And that was a big attraction. I thought, "Oh,

this is alright. You can turn up, you win the competition, you get a nice plaque and you get to go fence in London. Okay. That's alright. That'll do me for a starting point."

Georgina Usher:

So without commenting on your age there, Johnny, I think it's worth saying for our younger listeners that a number of years ago, making that journey to London as a 13 year old must have been quite something for both you and your family?

Johnny Davis:

Yes it was. I was really lucky. I had a mum and a dad who kind of just treated me with a lot of trust and let me make my own mistakes, you know, growing up in Belfast. In those days, again for our younger listeners, it was a pretty dark place. There

was a lot of trouble going on and you learned to be very streetwise. My school was right in the centre of Belfast. There were a lot of bombings and things going on. So actually you grew up really quickly. And there was something about that first trip to London. You went with the older boys and there's all the stuff that school kids do with each other and the banter and the various things.

The Master in Charge just let us get on with it. That was a wonderful sense of freedom. If I jump forward three or four years, I remember going to my parents when I was 16 or 17 when the Eastern block was happening. They said, "Well, what are you doing for the summer?" "I'm going to go to Hungary." "What are you going to Hungary for?" "I'm going to go fence for three weeks." "How are you getting

there?" "I don't know. I'll probably get a train to London and come back in three weeks." And, you know, I went and did that. There was no phone. I don't know if I had any money. How did I do that? I don't really remember. So that was the start of a journey. In the bigger picture of what we do, this is phenomenal. You get a chance to travel, meet people, learn about yourself, learn about other people whilst competing in this amazing sport of course.

Listen to the whole interview to hear about Johnny's views on the sport's past and present [here](#).

FENCER'S FRONTLINE PROTECTION

Campbell-Hill Innovates at Pace in Covid-19 Crisis

Last year Mat Campbell-Hill was helping Great Britain's Wheelchair Fencing team to a World Championship men's epee bronze medal. Sadly for him the postponement of Tokyo 2020 by a year forced him into retirement. For most athletes the end of a successful international career is so difficult that they tend to disappear from the radar whilst getting used to a new way of doing things. That was not the case for Campbell-Hill!

He has designed, developed and begun distribution of an innovative solution that, in conjunction with Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), not only provides valuable enhanced safety to medics putting Covid-19 patients on ventilators but can also allow family members to spend time safely with their most vulnerable loved ones in hospital.

By profession Campbell-Hill is a senior fellow in novel medical technologies at the University of Birmingham as well as being a founding member of the Medical Technologies Advisory Committee of the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE). During his ten years in the industry, he has assessed over 300 devices for their suitability in a medical environment. When a chance meeting on Twitter put him in contact with an anaesthetist looking for something to provide practical and efficient protection for him and his colleagues when intubating infected patients, AerosolShield was born.

Without meaning to get too gruesome, part of the previous paragraph needs some explanation in order for most readers to fully understand the value of the invention. Afterall, we believe our readership is not limited to medical professionals!

Infected patients at their most ill may need help breathing. A ventilator is the solution as it does the breathing for the most sick. In order to put a patient on a ventilator a tube needs to be passed down the patient's

throat and into the lungs - a process called intubation. This process is a highly risky one when the patient has Covid-19 given that the virus lives within the mucus and heavily contaminate the equipment used in this procedure, adding a significant risk of exposure to any nearby staff. What about PPE? Well, putting aside the news that we've all seen about the limited supplies nationwide, level 3 PPE (the level required for working with the most sick patients) takes between 3 and 5 minutes to put on. We'll let you draw your own conclusions into what could happen in that time in an emergency.

AerosolShield, in very simple terms, is a mini-HazMat tent that can be placed over a patient's head and chest whilst allowing medical practitioners the access to do their jobs. It is a single-patient use disposable items that can be bought for as little as £35 and has orders coming in from around the globe. Campbell-Hill's goal is to provide 10,000 to the NHS free of charge - that is the total estimated number of patients who are expected to require ventilation as a result of Covid-19.

"We knew that a lot of people were trying to invest and help by creating stuff in their backyards, but they were doing

so without the correct knowledge of materials and processes required of a safe, effective medical product. They don't know the requirements, but our team do and we wanted to help in a way that wouldn't cause increased pressure to the system with substandard products," said Campbell-Hill.

Determined to make the product not-for-profit he added, ".... so a friend of mine, Jenna, went away and set up a GoFundMe. That was launched on Sunday 12 April. We are now at very nearly £35,000."

The funding campaign has some big-name backers too including England Football goalkeeper, Ben Foster.

Helping Mat and the team are fellow Truro and GB fencers Yvonne and Maria Chart. Yvonne (BSc. Materials Science and Engineering, Northwestern University, USA; Foil GB) and Maria (currently studying Mechanical Engineering at Columbia University, New York; Sabre GB) set to work on examining the maximum tolerances of the AerosolShield containment by oversaturating it with luminescent aerosol over an extended period. Working from home during lockdown, they designed an observational study using many household items. Their paper is now complete and awaiting publication.

As we continue to deal with Covid-19, it's not only fantastic to hear about this



AerosolShield



Mat Campbell-Hill

amazing contribution from one of our own but it's also possible for us to continue to help in a small way by making a donation of our own.

Donations towards the target of 10,000 AerosolShields for the NHS can be made [here](#). More information about the product can be found [here](#).

Do you have a regional/club story you want to share?

Submit your stories to the editor:

karim.bashir@catchsport.com

FENCER IS NEW MASTERMIND CHAMPION

**Malcolm Fare - Former Sword Editor & Curator of
The Fencing Museum**

Dave McBryan, who started fencing epee at Edinburgh University and has fenced for Ireland, was a clear winner in the 6-way final of this year's Mastermind challenge. In the semi-finals he chose Olympic Fencing as his specialist subject and scored an impressive 11 correct answers out of 12 questions in the 2 minutes allowed. These were the questions:

1. Britain's first Olympic individual fencing champion was a 26-year-old dental surgeon from London, who won gold in the women's individual foil event in the 1956 Games. What was her name?
2. Which London venue hosted all the fencing events at the 2012 Olympics?
3. In 1920 the Italian fencer Nedo Nadi won a record five out of the six individual and team golds available. At which event did he not compete at those Games?
4. In the fence-off to decide the 1932 individual women's foil gold medal, the British competitor lost after she sportingly acknowledged two touches against her that the judges had failed to notice. What was her name?
5. Women's fencing was introduced to the Olympics in 1924 and the Danish winner of the individual foil event became the first female Olympic fencing champion. What was her name?
6. Luan Jujie won gold for China in the women's individual foil in 1984, but represented a different country at the 2000 and 2008 Games. Which country?
7. Who won a bronze medal in the men's individual sabre in 1984 and was chosen as the American flag bearer at the closing ceremony of the 92 Games. What was his name?
8. A convention centre in Chiba City was chosen to host all 12 fencing events at the 2020 Tokyo Olympics. What is its name?
9. Which British left-handed fencer won a silver medal in the team epee in 1960 and again in the individual event 4 years later?
10. The 1964 women's foil individual gold medallist had been born deaf and received written instructions from her coaches when she began fencing. What was her name?
11. At London 2012 Ruben Limardo Gascon became the first South American fencing champion when he won gold in the men's individual epee. Which country did he represent?
12. At the 2016 Rio Olympics the Russian fencer who won the women's individual sabre competition collected a second gold medal in the team event. What's her name?

How many can you get right
in 2 minutes?

Malcolm Fare

Answers on page 27

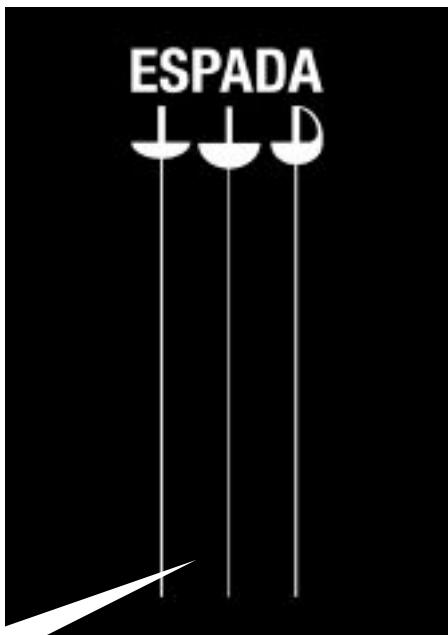


Image courtesy of the BBC

CLUB SPOTLIGHT

The History of Espada

Brian Speight



In 1960 an Adult Education Fencing class was offered in nearby Poole Guild Hall. The instructor was Captain Philimore who left and was replaced by Tony Gilham - who was also helping to establish Espada FC in Bournemouth with John & Diana Townsend, Alec Ovington and others.

Tony arranged for both clubs to join Hampshire Fencing Union enabling fencers to participate in county competitions. So, from 1961 onwards Espada competed against other Hampshire clubs. As a result of meeting at competitions, fencers in Bournemouth and Poole started visiting each other's clubs. The Espada venue was the Cottonwood Hotel, on the East Cliff.

Poole Fencing Club was formed from the adult class but managed and coached by Espada members. When the Poole club closed its members joined Espada including John Payne, Dennis Ward, Pauline Monk and Jim Champion.

I joined the club in May 1971 but my first encounter with fencing started at school in North West London in the mid-fifties when a chance conversation with a teacher during a lunch break gave me a lifelong sporting career. He asked me if I would like some lessons. They say teachers can inspire a child - here is a great example of that.

Beginner foil lessons followed further inspired by Gillian Sheen MBE Olympic gold in 1956. When I left school I joined Harrow Fencing Club with a friend. It was another step forward and I even purchased my foil from a sports shop in Wembley! Life moved on - working in London and getting married before moving to Bournemouth and a new fencing experience at Espada FC.

Bert Pelling became my coach - a former national Epee champion and two times Olympic fencer. What gratitude I owe Bert for his time, experience and patience. I fenced foil first but under Bert's guidance took up Epee. Bert's son, a silver medallist at the Rome Olympic Games in 1960 fenced in the club on occasions.

With the club's support I enjoyed going up to the old AFA HQ in west London for epee competitions. Often forming a three-man Epee team with John Payne and Dennis Ward - between us we held our own. Over the years we have had our share of national champions from BYC winners to nationals and Vets including just a couple of years ago with Graham Reid who was Vets national foil champion.

At least once a year former president and IOC member Dame Mary Glen Haig came to Bournemouth for a conference staying for a few days. She would always visit Espada spending the evening talking with fencers and sharing experiences. It was always a pleasure. I felt privileged to attend the celebration of Mary's life in 2015.

Espada grew moving temporarily to Poole Power Station social club, secured by Dennis Ward who worked there. Eventually we found a local Scout hut on the outskirts of town. Slowly we built up our level of coaches and kit.

Competitions were always a key element of the club's culture and for twenty years the club ran the Espada Cup competition. This was an invitational foil event for mixed pairs and held over a weekend it provided great fencing experience with a plate competition for the lower half of the tableau. Eventually it became more difficult to attract fencers with the high level of fencing which was the hallmark of this

event. So a decision was made to bring it to a close but we introduced other events to replace it.

We also hold annual club championships covering all weapons and age groups with trophies awarded at our AGM including those for outstanding service. We also hold friendly matches with local clubs. My colleagues and I always try to support our fencers at competitions especially juniors. It makes all the difference for a fencer to turn around and see their coach standing at the end of the piste.

The club has a management team which I chair and volunteers assigned to various departments including publicity, welfare, finance, IT, general and of course our coaches which stands at eight including one professional. We regularly meet to discuss club matters. Our objective is to provide an enjoyable and rewarding fencing experience for all who enter our salle. We all recognise that fencers, like anyone else, have a choice as to how they spend their leisure time and money. We appreciate they have chosen to spend it with us! We have a club constitution and within it a key priority is the physical and moral wellbeing of all fencers especially the juniors. As part of this philosophy we have strong discipline within the club.

All club nights begin with a general warm-up followed by a step class and announcements or recognition of medals won from the previous weekend's competitions. I like everyone to know what is going on and acknowledge achievements. We finish our union with a full salute. It looks good and reminds everyone that although we all fence at different levels and for different reasons, for one moment we come together as one - it's a special moment!

Twenty years ago I took the view that we needed to move into a more prestigious venue to get more visibility. Recently built, the Bournemouth Littledown Sports Centre



Back in good health

suited our requirements and we moved our Thursday night to Friday. Having booked one badminton court for a couple of weeks to see if we liked it, soon one court became two, then three, and not long after we booked four - half the main hall. We were growing and could be seen.

The club was now positioned on both sides of town with a growing membership but short on storage. I conceived the idea of a large cage on wheels which could be locked. Following our successful bid for Lottery money for this project we commissioned a local engineering company to make it. It holds our kit securely but opens up to provide space for hanging jackets, masks and weapons etc. The extra lottery money was used to pay for additional 'guest' coaching and new kit. In total, we applied for and received nearly £17,000 twice.

From an attendance high of nearly 100 fencers per week twenty-five years ago by the start of the new millennium our attendance began to drop. We could almost guarantee 40 fencers a week on Friday but slowly we lost fencers and income and had to cut back on our court hire.

Some students from the international language schools fence and over the years I think we have welcomed all of them - enjoying hearing their story, where they fence, how they started and ambitions.

One-time national wheelchair fencing coaches, Peter Gale and John Townsend have accommodated our disabled fencers with specially acquired kit.

At regular intervals we promote the sport to the wider community working in a wide range of youth, adult, corporate, recreational and special needs initiatives. This has attracted visits from local dignitaries.

We embraced digital marketing some years ago and now have had various member newsletters and of course made more use of Zoom during the current COVID-19 crisis. Like all UK clubs we shall take British Fencing's guidance on re-opening.

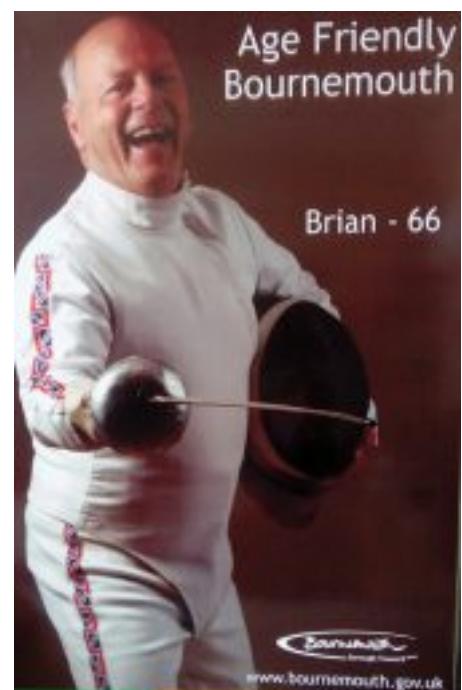
Dr Stephanie Cook MBE came to Espada for a couple of years when working at Poole Hospital. She went on to win the inaugural Women's Modern Pentathlon event at the Sydney 2000 Olympics. I had tears in my eyes when I saw her stand on top of the podium. I always enjoy seeing the Union flag raised and listening to the

national anthem at the Olympics and to see it for a friend of mine - a defining moment in my life.

There are times at Espada when we become more than a fencing club. I am thinking about occasions when members have gone through very difficult experiences, bereavement, ill health, accidents. In those circumstances the club reaches out far beyond the piste, acting almost as an extended family, a pillar, a support, a place of trust, listening and empathetic. I have letters from parents who have appreciated the Espada response during their dark days when all meaning is lost and nothing matters.

An interesting story emerged in 2008 with a great opportunity to promote the sport through Bournemouth Council's desire to encourage fitness in older people. They ran an advert in the local press inviting people over 60 who led active lifestyles to apply. My daughters encouraged me to enter, I did and won! I was invited to a photo shoot in my fencing kit. The result was a large picture of me with narrative appearing in the council's A4 size magazine circulated to every house in the town.

Great publicity for local fencing from which we had enquires. My image was also placed



Brian as Poster Boy for Age Friendly Bournemouth

on large posters at bus stops, advertising hoardings and even across the backs of buses. I could not believe it - to suddenly find myself driving behind a bus with my fencing image staring back at me. This was strange and as you may imagine I was the butt of many jokes - something to do about looking like the back of a bus!

In the last few years, we have been building Espada membership both juniors and seniors. We are back to three badminton courts and a healthy mix of new and experienced fencers some of whom have become qualified referees but we need to develop our coaches and give them more support. We are of course all volunteers giving our time to manage Espada as best we can. With a heritage of more than 60 years the club is solid including the finances. As a club we fully support both county and regional activities, with referees, kit and of course fencers at all levels and ages. I enjoy seeing our teenagers develop and over the last 5 years we have sent fencers to the British Fencing's Diploma in Sporting Excellence programme.

There is so much more I could write about the club and my involvement but I think



this gives an impression of Espada FC and me. I have been fortunate and to think it all started as a result of an informal chance conversation with a schoolteacher in the playground. How lucky was I to be given this amazing opportunity and experience? Thank you Sir /Mr Jenkins. Thank you Espada, Thank you fencing!



A great club story spanning decades filled with passion, dedication and spirit - Espada Fencing Club is a true example of what can be achieved with hard-working volunteers.

"With a heritage of more than 60 years the club is solid including the finances. As a club we fully support both county and regional activities, with referees, kit and of course fencers at all levels and ages."

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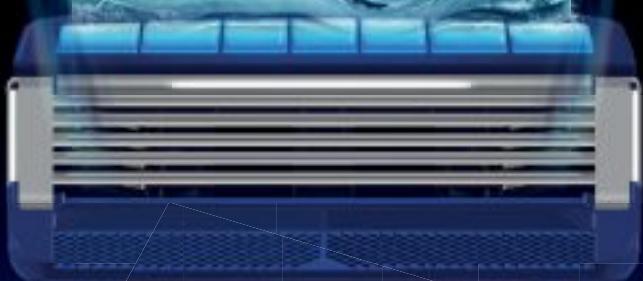
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VALENTINA VEZZALI

Six-time Olympic Champion in Foil, Female Empowerment and Forward Thinking

Igor Chirashnya - Academy of Fencing Masters (Photos: #BazziTeam)

Getting to the top doesn't happen in isolation. Though we are all feeling the isolation right now, for fencers we know that it takes a community to create a champion. During our in-depth interview with fencing dynamo Valentina Vezzali, we dived deep into what it means to get to the top of the fencing world.

Valentina Vezzali is a champion's champion - with six Olympic gold medals, one silver and two bronze beginning in Atlanta in 1996, she is undoubtedly one of the most accomplished fencers in modern history. She was the first foilist ever to win individual gold at three consecutive Olympics in 2000, 2004, and 2008. Beyond the Olympics, she holds sixteen gold medals at the World Fencing Championships and thirteen gold medals at the European Championships. Beyond fencing she is a twice published author and served as a member of the Italian Parliament.

What comes from this interview is the importance of inclusion, of the possibilities when we pursue women's empowerment. Vezzali is so special not just because of her skills on the strip but also because of her vision for what fencing and the world beyond fencing can be if we commit to making change. A fundamental part of her story is her burning desire and her unbeatable willpower. She is driven to push her own limits, whether in fencing or in any area of her life. These are the qualities that you need to have to succeed. Don't settle for the status quo, always strive to do better! It's a theme that we see again and again in her words.



Six Times Olympic Champion from Jesi -
Valentina Vezzali

A special thank you to Riccardo Calvi for helping us with the translation to and from Italian.

Valentina Vezzali in Her Own Words

Irina - Hello, Valentina and Riccardo! It is so nice seeing you, what a big honour! How are you doing in such an unprecedented time?

Valentina - First of all, we need to be positive. It is a difficult period for everyone, not only for me and for athletes. It is also a difficult time because we have to keep the kids inside. Tell me how you are doing?

IR - For the last 2 months we have been in lockdown. Within a very short time we moved all of our training online.

VV - In Italy, all of our sport centres did the same as you did in the United States. All physical activities went online, with athletes following the direction of their coaches. I have done a lot of calls with all the fencing clubs in Italy, talking to them about not giving up and to keep training.

IR - That's fantastic! One of our missions is to keep everyone positive, to stay strong and keep going, to keep training.

VV - Sports has been my entire life. It is important to me. It was important to me before I was an athlete and now as the manager of the Italian Fencing Federation and of my sports team. My team is called Fiamme Oro (Gold Flames) and is the police sports team. In Italy the majority of the athletes running sports like the Olympic ones belong to military teams, (there is a protocol signed with the National Olympic Committee,) as these support them to train. I work to bring the positive message that sports should keep going. We need to believe in a better future. You are the only one to set your limits.

Igor - Valentina, I've watched you for many years and I'm fascinated by the many aspects of your life and your fencing. Your courage to keep going as you were the most veteran fencer on the circuit, even as



Coach Giulio Tomassini and Valentina Vezzali

so many young and talented fencers were coming up.

VV - In my career, ever since I was a child, I have always put a challenging objective out there for me to reach. One of my greatest beliefs in life is that we must be the ones to decide what to do in our careers, in our lives. Without others telling us where to stop and when to stop. As long as you have that fire inside yourself, you can go ahead. There is nothing that can stop you. When you have decided for yourself, you have the power to choose when you give up. This applies also when you decide to quit your career as an athlete or to "hang the foil on the nail" as we used to say in Italy. Don't let others tell you what to do.

IG - Valentina, what a great motivational speech!

VV - My belief in my life is that with every beginning there is an end, and that with every ending there is a new beginning. I was fortunate to be born in a small town in the centre of Italy called Jesi. It suddenly became a centre of fencing not only in Italy, but worldwide.

The town that Ezio Triccoli built

VV - This was all thanks to coach Ezio Triccoli. He was an Italian soldier during World War II and was a prisoner in a British war camp in South Africa. In that camp they did sports and Ezio Triccoli learned fencing there. He learned to fence using a wooden stick. Then when he returned to Italy in

1947, he founded a fencing school in Jesi. He had his first Italian champion in 1957. From 1976 on, an athlete from Jesi has attended every Olympic Games. From 1984 on, an athlete from Jesi won at every Olympic Games. We have Olympic Champions such as Giovanna Trillini, Elisa Di Francisca, and Stefano Cerioni as well as me. When you realize that Jesi is a town of only forty thousand people, this is truly a record!

One of the primary skills that coach Triccoli had is to work with every athlete following his/her own character and drive. He was convinced that with the right technique and leveraging their own personal characteristics, they can win a title. The athlete who has huge talent will reach to win at the Olympic Games but even those athletes who have a strong ability but don't have the greatest talent can still win other titles. Maybe not Olympic titles, which are the biggest of all, but other great titles. These were the main characteristics of Mr. Triccoli, who was able to shape the athletes according to their specific characteristics.

Focus on timing and pulse

IG - You said that your coach found unique characteristics in his fencers and developed them. You had a very unique and charismatic style of fencing. Did your coach develop it with you, or is it you who developed this style yourself?

VV - Ezio Triccoli worked a lot on technique and distance with me. First with very short distances and then with time increasing the distances more and more. During this training, he would ask me to count the steps and to pay a lot of attention to timing and pulse. The right steps, at the right timing with the right pulse. It was very important for us to focus our attention on these aspects of technique, counting every action and finding the right timing and distance. This was the major focus of coach Triccoli and I worked with him a lot on these elements.

After him, I worked with coach Giulio Tomassini, who also coached Stefano Cerioni, Arianna Errigo, Elisa Di Francisca, Margherita Granbassi and Andrea Baldini. Giulio came to Jesi when he was eighteen

years old and learned from Triccoli. Giulio is a bit different. I worked with Triccoli until I was fifteen years old and it was mostly on my technique. With Giulio, I worked both on technique and on tactical fencing.

He taught me to be unpredictable to my opponent. They thought I was doing a specific thing at a specific time, while in truth I was preparing something else. I was unpredictable for them.

A very important part of my fencing growth was the presence of Giovanna Trillini, who is four years older than me. I was a child when I was training with her, always losing 5:0, 5:0, 5:0. Every time I went home at night, I was totally desperate because I was always losing to her. My father always said to me "Don't worry, because tomorrow you will get closer to her by one point. Maybe a day after that you will get another point closer to her. Until one day you will beat her." Indeed that happened.



London 2012 Opening Ceremony

IG - Did she become your friend, or was she always an opponent?

VV - She is a great friend of mine. She is coach of the Italian Federation. She is also the coach of Alice Volpi. For me, she will always be a reference point. I believe that if I am what I am and had my career, it is also because of Giovanna Trillini. She will always be a friend for me and there is a great respect between us. I have a great respect for her and I believe that she has a great respect for me.

IG - I think there is no person in the world that does not have a great respect for you! If I asked you for one quality that makes Valentina Vezzali be Valentina Vezzali, what would it be?

VV - I am very determined and I am very stubborn! If I have an objective, I'll do whatever is needed to reach that objective. I used to train for six to seven hours per day. All the way to the last day of my career, I was the first to get into the venue and the last to leave it. I believe it was a reference point for many fencers in Italy and in the world. I believe I did everything I could to help fencing to grow in Italy.

Last match in Rio

IG - Valentina, the last day of your fencing career was the Team World Championship in Rio, right?

VV - This was a very special day for me. Before the competition there was a party for me. It was a very beautiful day. All of the world's fencers in the venue stood up and jumped in line together with me. Usually the day before competitions with my national team (Errigo, Di Francisca, Baldini) we had a tradition. The night before, we would practice our special Italian team greeting. We would all stay together and sing this song to be sung the day after in front of our opponents.

I had the opportunity to be in many fencing dream teams in Italy, but when Arianna Errigo and Elisa Di Francisca joined the team, they changed the rules () and in addition to our songs we started to dance. It was a challenge for me! The last song and dance we prepared for the finals in that championship really touched my heart because it was a sort of thanks for my career, for what I did. It was the greatest way to say goodbye. We didn't win. We got Silver. For me it was still a victory because for me it was all I could do for my sport. This was how I completed my journey as an athlete. There was another journey in front of me and I was certain that my teammates would be able to carry on and get great results without me.



Vezzali & her boys

IG - They definitely did! I watched this match in real time and the commentators were talking about you all the time. It had the feeling of a big farewell party.

VV - I must admit that it is difficult to fence when you know that this is absolutely your last competition.

IG - When did you decide that this would be your last match?

VV - After the London Olympic Games when I got the bronze medal in an all-Italian podium. It was a challenging competition for me. I wanted to have a second child. I started to think about the World Championships in Rio being my last competition.

A nation's call

Then in December of 2012, I received a call from a political party. They asked me to put my experience to work for the good of the nation and I answered "yes", so I started this political journey while I was still an athlete.

I strongly believe in a sense of ownership and a sense of belonging to Italy. Italy gave me a lot and I couldn't refuse because I was feeling this strong call from my country. As I said before, I am determined, and I am stubborn. I continued to do fencing and I became a politician at the same time.

In all of this, there came another great challenge. My coach, Giulio Tomassini, started training in France. I could only train with him at national fencing camps. It was a very difficult period for me because I was living in Rome far from my family in Jesi (Ancona about 300km from Rome). I was training and I was engaged in political activities that I constantly needed to follow or events to attend. My children were very young. Pietro, the first one, was not even ten and Andrea, the second, was tiny. But I didn't give up!

In this difficult period, I still won three World Championships in the team event and an individual bronze medal in the Fencing World Championship in 2013 in Kazan. Everything that I did, I would do it again! I believe that in our life we should push for our goals. We should always go ahead and have to be aware that we can win or lose but it is important that we've tried with all of our strength. Of course, we all compete to win but sometimes it does not go as we wish and we need to accept it, with the awareness that we've done all that's needed to succeed.



Rio 2016 World Championships - Vezzali with her team

It was a pity that the Olympic Games in Rio didn't include the women's foil team event. I was solidly in the Italian national team. At that time Arianna Errigo and Elisa Di Francesca were two very strong, young and unmarried fencers who were great competitors for the Olympics. If the foil team event had been part of the Games, I am sure I would have participated in my sixth Olympics.

Under pressure

IG - The more you fenced and got results, the more people knew you. They learned your techniques and studied your videos. Did you feel more pressure because of that?

VV - I always concentrated on my own limits and wanted to go beyond my limits. For me, the great role and the fundamental role was coach Tomassini. When I trained with him, he pushed me to do the most challenging actions in the most natural way. Thanks to his training in a match I was able to run difficult actions in a very natural way. Because of that, when I was competing I was actually enjoying it.

One of my favourite anecdotes that I remember is when in a World Championship match I was fencing against an opponent and suddenly I scored. Then my opponent changed her actions but I scored again. Again she changed and I still scored. So she looked at her coach with a distressed facial expression meaning "what should I do?" And her coach, opened his arms saying "I don't know what you can do. It is like she is reading your mind!".

The great thing in my coach was that we knew that everybody would be studying the details of my fencing. They would be aware of everything that was happening around me. He always prepared me to be unpredictable and natural in the most difficult situations. When I talked with the other Italian athletes he trained, they all said the same: his main quality was making you do the most difficult things in a most natural way. The lessons with him were just very enjoyable.

Valentina Vezzali's favourites

IG - Who is the most interesting fencer for you now?

VZ - Elisa Di Francisca. She has a great technique and timing. She is different from me because she is very tall and she uses her height very beautifully. When you fence against her, you don't think she will be able to touch you and yet she does. Arianna Errigo also has great timing. She is very unpredictable. Her attacks are great. Alice Volpi is good too. Inna Deriglazova is also a great fencer and for me right now she is probably the best in the world. She is fencing very quietly and efficiently.

I have to say that Lee Keifer is very good too even though she did not get good results in the Olympic Games or in the World Championships. I think that she just needs to believe more that she can do it and she will be able to do it.

Ysaora Thibus is interesting and is a good fencer too. She works with Cerioni, who for me is a great coach and also coaches Imboden, who himself is very good.

So, my women are - Di Francesca, Errigo, Deriglazova, Volpi, Thibus and Keifer. Men



Lee Kiefer (left) versus Valentina Vezzali (ITA) during the quarter-finals of the 2014 World Championship

Introducing the new website



www.allstaruhmann.com

A dark background featuring two fencers in a competition. In the foreground, a fencer in a white uniform is shown in mid-swing. In the background, another fencer is blurred. Overlaid on this scene are three electronic devices displaying the Allstar-Uhlmann UK website. A laptop screen shows the homepage with a search bar, a menu with categories like Shop All, Coaching, Clothing, Footwear, etc., and a large image of a fencer. An iPhone screen shows a product page for a fencing foil with a "When it counts" slogan. A second iPhone screen shows a different product page for a fencing foil with a similar slogan. The website design is modern, with a blue header and footer.

Email sales@allstaruhmann.com Call 01753 517 636

Visit 514 Ipswich Road, Slough, SL1 4EP

- the Italian fencers of course, Garozzo, Foconi, Cassara, Avola, Tomaso Marini, who is a junior and the men's foil fencers from the USA. They are the best.

IG - For our readers to hear that you praise American fencers so high is a great thing. It is going to promote the blog! (laughing)

VV - But it is true! You can look at the results. When I was young at the end of the 1990's, the United States started to show results for the first time. I remember Iris Zimmerman. Now in every weapon, the United States fencing is great, especially sabre. I think Mariel Zagunis is an idol in the USA. She won at many Olympic Games and did a lot for fencing in the world, not only for the United States.

IG - I wrote a book about that; how American fencing changed a lot in the last 20 years. It is very fascinating to hear your perspective on American fencing now!

Changing politics

IR - Can you tell us more about your political career?

VV - For me, being a politician means that you serve your country. It is a means to give something back to your country. It's not just another job. I am no longer a politician today but in a way I continue to participate in politics differently as the manager of the Italian Fencing Federation. I work to build the culture of sports in Italy. In the United States, the culture of sport is much higher than it is in Italy. For example, in Italy when you are young and you want to do sports at competition level you can be penalized for that because teachers believe it might interfere with your education. That's wrong! I want to integrate sports into education, similarly to the brilliant way that the United States does it.

IG - In the United States, sports in school and in the universities is good but professional sports is only for things like basketball, football, and hockey. In amateur sports like fencing, there isn't support that Italy has. The government here doesn't give military jobs as a means to sponsor professional athletes.

VV - When I was a member of parliament, I struggled to get sport in schools from the age of six. At that age today, there is no sport in Italian schools. In Italy, there is an inequality among sports because it costs a lot of money. If you don't have this money, you can't do sports as a young kid. In the schools, our sports programs are not that

good. Outside of schools, sport is run on a volunteer basis.

One thing that works here is that our government, together with the National Olympic Committee, funds sport programs (mainly Olympic disciplines) through the military groups so that they can develop. So if you practice an Olympic discipline and you are an athlete of national interest, you have the chance to get into a military group to get a salary and pursue your career. Unless you fund it on your own or find alternatives.

IG - Without that support, you probably wouldn't have been able to compete to the age of forty!

VV - Yes, without the support of Fiamme Oro, I probably would not have been able to continue that long indeed! Again, thanks to the military support, we can do sports. But on the other side, we cannot follow our education and do sports. We are penalized in the area of academics. In the USA, if you are a high-level athlete, you can go to college and train and study. In Italy, if you are a high-level athlete then you must take a decision between athletics and academics. You cannot do both. Or at least it is truly difficult. This is a very important difference between Italy and the United States.

One of the exceptions is Daniele Garozzo (individual foil gold medallist at the Rio Olympics), who is studying to become a medical doctor. In Italy, we call this a "white fly" (as a meaning of something very rare). He is very powerful and very talented but even with that he is far from the completion of his studies on time.

Nowadays, I have to admit, that it is a bit easier since there are online courses, online coaching and tutoring. In my time we had none of this. It was the traditional way of studying, mostly with lessons that you had to attend physically. Nevertheless, even today when you train for six or seven hours a day, it is difficult to combine high level training and academic studies in Italy being on time with exams, despite these online possibilities.

BREAKING NEWS: Valentina Vezzali for FIS President!

IG - So for a professional athlete in Italy, the natural career path after retirement is to continue in sports?

VV - Yes. Most often when you quit your career, you continue as a sport coach or

a manager. For me, this was this way too. I will give you some breaking news for your blog. I am also a "white fly" as the only woman in my fencing federation in a leadership position. My objective is to become the first woman to become president of the Italian Fencing Federation. In Italy, it is very difficult as the Fencing Federation is dominated by men. But I love challenges! (laughing)

IG - In our blog we will write in big letters "Breaking News - VALENTINA VEZZALI IS RUNNING TO BECOME THE ITALIAN FENCING FEDERATION PRESIDENT!"

VV - (laughing) No, you cannot write this! I am superstitious! But you know what? You actually can write this, it's ok. Since I was a little girl, I said to my father every night, "I want to win an Olympic gold medal." Despite superstition, I won! (laughing)

IG - (laughing too) You know, there are one billion kids in the world who say they want to win at the Olympic Games but only one wins.

VV - (continues to laugh) You need to say this every day! When I started competing as a child, when I won 5:1 instead of 5:0, I would start crying because the opponent succeeded in scoring a touch against me. I remember in one of the youth fencing competitions, I finished third. When they took a picture of the podium, I was crying. After several years I met the girl who took the gold she told me "You ruined my picture because you were the only one who was crying on the podium!" This was always part of my character.

Empowering women

IR - You are such a strong female role model. For your country and far beyond. Can you describe how your work in politics and beyond advanced women's rights and equality? Did you succeed in influencing the way you wanted to move this agenda, which you said is very important to you?

VV - First of all, let me say I am against "pink" quotas (as a way to say that in this or that position there should not be a fixed number of women). I am against the idea of fixed numbers. It should be

normal that women are part of the political life, of leadership teams, and at the top of companies. I work a lot to promote women's presence and gender equality, in politics and also in the high levels of sports management. Things are moving slightly in Italy in this area. I believe in the power of women. We have evidence that when women do reach the top level of companies or the top leadership roles, things really do get better.

IG - Why is that? What do women do differently? Well, in our company the boss is a woman. (laughing)

VV - Since the Olympics in Beijing, we have seen the difference between medals for men and women. We have also seen this in industry. The main differences between men and women are that women are multitaskers; they are able to manage time in a day in a much better way than men with family and work. In Italy they say "behind every successful man there is a woman".

IG - Amen to that!

IG - Valentina, thank you so much for such an interesting discussion and for the opportunity to get to know you as a person. I hope that this interview will help many people to keep positive and optimistic and to get more motivation and understanding. As we always finish our blog, can you please say a few final words to the fencing community around the world?

VZ - I just want to give my best wishes to all the athletes in the World that dream of going to the Olympic Games. I hope that the Olympics will happen next year in Tokyo. I want to give my warm regards to cadets and juniors that dream of getting to the big competition but especially I want to send a message to the youngest fencers. To the little ones that are likely to enter this fantastic world of fencing.

Fencing is a sport of goals and values because it really teaches you values in life, such as respect for the opponent and for the rules, determination and sacrifices. I hope that the world will restart soon and I hope that soon we will return to our normal. It is so great to shake hands and to hug each other and I believe we will return back to that. I am optimistic!

Valentina was so generous with her time and detail. It is published with her approval on this blog.

AFM cannot thank Valentina Vezzali enough for her insight and her forward thinking. As a champion and a powerful woman, we can all be inspired by her. Thank you so much Valentina!

The Academy of Fencing Master have been producing high-level content in their blogs with feature interviews like this one with Valentina Vezzali. They have kindly given The Sword permission to use their content and we thank them for that. We will be unable to publish everything they produce and therefore recommend signing up to their newsletter here, <https://academyoffencingmasters.com/blog/>



Final Salute in Rio, World Championship in Rio 2016,
Women's Team Foil

A MARRIAGE OF SPORT & ART

Making the Connect through Muslim Girls Fence

Virginia Bailey - Head of Participation

The “marriage of sport and art”, one of the great visions of Pierre De Coubertin for the Olympic Games and something which for fencing, is possibly more relevant and meaningful than for any other sport.

Over the last five years of delivering our portfolio of Projects and Programmes, no other project has really encompassed the creative element of the sport more than Muslim Girls Fence. Yes, our work with London Youth and our universities very much tap into the creative side of the sport as well but Muslim Girls Fence is as much about creating a space for women to express themselves physically, as it is creatively. When we started the project, the creative workshops felt as if they stood alone. There was little connect. In the school setting, the girls would spend an hour in a creative workshop with the Maslaha team and then move into a space to fence. We didn't connect the two. We didn't encourage the coach to sit in on the workshop and listen to the conversations, hear the girls expressing their everyday challenges, concerns and stresses as to what it is like being a young Muslim women growing up in London or Birmingham. We just thought the two would connect. We began to realise that if we wanted to really get the most out of fencing and the creative side of this wonderful sport we needed to make sure that the physical and creative aspects of the sport were intertwined.

To try to get to this point our focus over the last 18 months has been on ensuring that we can immerse new coaches in the whole experience that Muslim Girls Fence provides for the women and girls involved. Over the years we have worked with and upskilled a range of women involved in the project; from traditional fencing coaches to community leaders and sports coaches who have never heard of fencing before, let alone coached it! The most important factor in all of this isn't how good a fencer you are but that you are willing and keen to embrace a project that goes beyond the physical aspect of the sport. We have taken the Core Coach course and ensured that during the two days, we thread through the creative elements of the project, so that there is a clear and thorough understanding of the importance of both the physical and

creative elements of the project. From ensuring that the team from Maslaha are present and actively engaged over the two days and providing opportunities for the women on the course to share their own experiences, to ensuring the women leave being able to use fencing as a tool to get others active and hooked on the sport. Each and every one of these elements is what makes the experience relevant to the project.

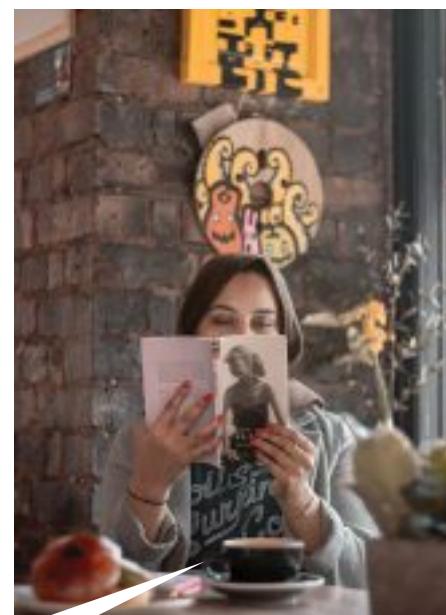
But what does this look like in the sessions? In our schools sessions when discussing the connect between fencing and poetry one of the girls said, “I feel like it kind of reflected on fencing because it was meant to be breaking stereotypes, having fun, not caring what others thought and poetry is like the same. You don't care what people think. You just write down whatever you're thinking.” In the documentary film “Nobody's Metaphor” coach and fencer, Lucy Johnson is often seen involved and engaged in the workshops but more importantly taking the key messages that are discussed and threading them into fencing sessions, such as “I want you to start imagining you are like the ladies we looked at weeks ago. All those amazing women.... strong influential, powerful women, who wouldn't take no for an answer, who wouldn't let someone wave a sword in their face. They'd take up that hit and push someone down the piste.” Whether it's poetry, film or photography, the natural connect between fencing and the arts is unmissable.

One of the most powerful creative outputs to come out of the project to date is the photography project that took place in Birmingham, with our partners the Impact Hub. Over a number of months the women worked with a photographer to put together the exhibition “Can You See Me?”. The exhibition aimed to reinstate Muslim women as their own storytellers at a time where they often find themselves spoken for as opposed to spoken to. The project has been warmly received in Birmingham, as well as featuring in Sport England's launch of its “Sport For All” research earlier this year. However, one of the biggest successes of this project has been how the world of sport and art have



come together to support and showcase the women involved, using them as positive role models across Birmingham. Through our work with the Birmingham Local Delivery Pilot, Active Partnerships, we have worked in partnership with the Birmingham Community Leisure Trust to install the exhibition at Ladywood Leisure Centre. They've gone beyond just providing a space on a wall. They have worked with us to ensure that the project has a home. The women have a place to go, be active and come together with other women from the local community and importantly for the sport, they have a place to continue to fence.

So, has this worked? Have we managed to “wed sport and art”? Well, we are definitely going in the right direction. There is always so much more to do, more to improve on and more to learn and develop. However, what we are confident about is that if we can continue to tap into the creative side of the sport in turn we can engage many more women in fencing.



WHEN IS IT OK TO GET HIT?

Deciding What is Acceptable

Rob Cawdron - Projects Officer-Pathways Development

Allow me to begin with a quote from Shane Warne, the great Australian spin bowler with over 700 Test Match wickets and the second highest wicket taker in the history of cricket:

"I hate singles. I don't mind going for runs. I've been hit for the most sixes in the history of the game. What I hated was singles."

When examining our fencing, often we talk about what our best actions are, how we want to score our points and what our strengths are. How often however, do we take the time to look at it from the opposite perspective - what ways will we and won't we accept being hit by our opponent? This exercise can be just as useful as analysing how we want to score because it recognises that we are facing a live opponent and they **will** score points against us.

No one goes through a competition winning 15-0, 15-0, 15-0. So when planning a fight, we need to be clear what points we will accept being scored against us and this decision should be informed by our plan for how we want to win the fight. Going back to Warne's quote, he knows that if a batsman is hitting him for sixes, he's taking a risk and at some point, his luck may run out. However if a batsman is consistently scoring singles, he will be unable to build pressure on them, which in turn reduces his chances of getting them out.

How do we decide what an acceptable way to be scored upon is? A good rule of thumb is that if I have made my opponent work harder than me for a hit, this could be a good point for me in the long run. I coached sabre at Shakespeare's Swords Fencing Club and one of our key tenants when defending was to make the opponent push you all the way to the end of the piste whenever they're attacking. Make them have to build an attack that spans the entire length of the piste, rather than going for the last ditch counter-attack halfway down the piste. We knew that in sabre, the odds were against us in defence. Even before the 2016 timing change, a good day

on defence was if the attacking fencer only landed 60% of their attacks. However we believed that if our opponent had to push an attack to the end of the piste every single time, it made them more likely to try and rush the attack. In turn this made them more likely to make a mistake and that maybe over the course of a match we could begin to tilt those odds more in our favour.

By framing this as a question of mistakes that we as a club would and would not accept, it gave the athletes a framework to work within. They were free to experiment and find what worked for them, knowing that if they got hit, the question that followed was about what they were trying to do when they got hit, not about them getting hit in the first place.

The example above has talked specifically about defence in sabre but it is just as applicable to other areas of the game or either of the other weapons. Just as you would expect to know how you want to score points in a variety of situations, apply the same thinking to how you would and

wouldn't want points to be scored against you.

The benefits of this extend into the psychological side of the game too. We've all been in a position when an opponent gets on a bit of a roll and we can feel the panic building as they score point after point. This isn't going to plan. However, if we've taken the time to think about how our opponent might score their points and what we'll accept, we can evaluate an opponent's points against us with a cool head - just as we would evaluate a point we scored ourselves. They scored a point. Ok, how? Did I expect that I might lose a point in this way? Does losing this point suit my overall plan for how I'm hoping to score my own points and win this fight? If the answer is yes to that final question it can keep us focused on our plan. If the answer is no, that's useful too because now we can reflect on why not and what we need to do differently next time.

By thinking in this way you can begin to build a larger and more complete picture of how a fight will pan out. Good luck!

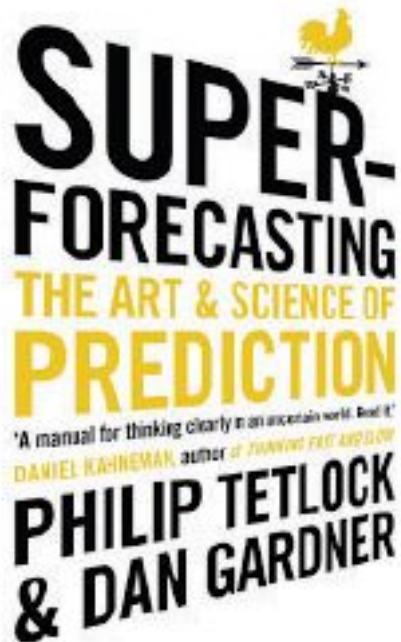


Shane Warne

MEASURING

Let's Get Serious About It

Rob Cawdron - Projects Officer (Pathways Development)



"In the past year I have been struck again and again by how important measurement is to improving the human condition. You can achieve amazing progress if you set a clear goal and find a measure that will drive progress toward that goal - in a feedback loop." Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, Annual Letter 2013.

In the April edition of the Sword, I talked about how Anson Dorrance of University of North Carolina uses score keeping and rankings to track performance in training to make it feel more "real". In this issue, I would like to take that thinking a step further and look at the principle of measuring itself.

Sport has become awash with data in recent years, with data analytics companies that specialise in measuring and reporting on sport adding a level of depth to watching sporting performance. The detail that can be gone into in high profile sports such as football is staggering. It feels like almost anything that can be counted is being counted. Is this however the same as measuring? I would argue that no, it isn't.

The quote that this article opens with talks about measuring in the context of setting a clear goal and working towards it, using it to create a feedback loop and then tracking

progress towards that goal. The key challenge then is not just to measure but to find the right thing or things to measure and to be accurate in how we measure them.

Philip Tetlock's book "Superforecasting" tells the story of the Good Judgement Project, which was run as part of a tournament funded by the US government to try and understand how accurate people were at anticipating future events. He describes how difficult it was to actually measure forecasts that were made, especially by TV pundits, because there was no precision in them. They made statements such as "there is a high probability we will enter a recession" but how high and by when? Statements like this can't be measured against because they are not precise enough. If I am running a fencing club, I can say "I want my club to have more members" but unless I get more specific, how will I know if I succeed? A better statement might be "I want to increase my club's membership by 50% by March 31st 2021". Now, I've got that clear goal described earlier and I can begin to work out how to get there. Maybe I would decide that I'm going to do this by getting more new people into the club through running more beginners' courses or through better marketing. A warning though, watch out for snakes!

The Cobra Effect is named after a story from India when it was under British rule. The British government in the city of Delhi became concerned by the large number of cobras in the city and so started paying a bounty for every dead cobra that was brought to them. The consequence was many snakes killed for the reward. A great success then? Not quite. It later transpired that enterprising people had begun breeding cobras for the specific purpose of killing them and collecting the bounty. The government realised what was happening and scrapped the scheme. What happened to all the cobras that had been bred for the reward? They were released into the city and the cobra population went up! This story is an example of Goodhart's Law, which states that, "when a measure becomes a target, it ceases to become a good measure". If

we take that back to my fencing club, I have concluded that I need more people on beginners' courses. So I take a leaf from the government of Delhi and I pay people £5 if they start my beginners' course and £20 if they finish. Suddenly, I have a massively oversubscribed course and I'm well on my way to my goal! Except we can all see how this will go. My beginners' course will end and I will likely find myself with very few carrying on. Although I have had a successful beginners' course, I am likely no closer to my actual goal. I have performed a bait and switch without realising it, substituting my actual goal, for a measure, on the assumption that by achieving the measure I will achieve the goal.

This is the challenge then for sport, setting the clear goals that we want to achieve, making them specific, working out our measures for how we'll know we're on track but not letting achieving the measures become a substitute for achieving the goal. How do you set clear goals and what are the measures that you use to track them? How do you stop yourself getting caught up in the measures and remain focused on the goal?

"Superforecasting" by Philip Tetlock is available from [Amazon.co.uk](https://www.amazon.co.uk) in paperback for £7.72



RETURN TO FENCING

Helping Young Fencers Reconnect

ADP Team

Take a moment to time travel. It's early March 2020. Our young fencer is woken, bleary-eyed by their parents. The fencing kit is packed and our fencer slings it into the back of the car alongside their heavy rucksack filled with folders and books.

As the car turns towards school they think about the upcoming day. There will be some lessons they enjoy, a favourite teacher that inspires and once again they'll spend a large portion of the day learning, eating, joking and growing up with their friends.

Plus, it's fencing day. Their routine of weekly training. There's the footwork session, followed by an intense lesson from their coach. In sparring, their best friend transforms to foe before the ease of friendship returns at the final salute. For some the preparation for a major Championship is a major focus in their daily routines.

Then, as if out of nowhere, lockdown. Seemingly overnight our young fencer goes from seeing their friends, having day to day human contact, experiencing the (mostly) positive interactions that they learn and develop from, to being in lockdown with their parents for almost three months!

What is this? In this 'lockdown', new routines are established. No bag to pack. No car to jump into with a slice of toast in hand. Guided Home Learning is being used for the first time and parents are in charge of home-schooling whilst working online themselves. In reality, the routine is hard to establish.

For fencers moving into being teenagers, this is supposed to be a phase of their emerging self. This is the time when rules are there to be challenged, the time they are striving for more freedom - and now they are locked up!

For fencers near the end of their teenage years, what about exams? They have spent nearly two years preparing for that intense, short period of time - the scrutiny of their learning. This is their "rite of passage" and part of the transition from school to the next phase of their life. Now they are locked down.

Nobody can visit friends and family. Loved ones are now being described as a 'threat' to the fencer and the fencer is potentially a 'threat' to them.

The news never stops. The volume is turned up whenever there is another announcement. Parents talk with strained voices. There is a high level of social media reporting of the pandemic, graphic portrayal of suffering, massive loss of life in countries where the fencer was hoping to travel to compete one day and the worldwide spread isn't stopping.

Then there is the secondary level of reporting. Reporters talk of wider impacts and a generation falling behind, missing out on a future because of the blow to their education and attainment. All this is directly witnessed by our young fencers and they hear and see how it impacts on their parents. In some cases this contributes to an increased feeling of vulnerability, increased levels of anxiety and reported self-harm and there is an overall impact on young fencers' mental health and wellbeing.

Let's move ahead to the present, 100 days into lockdown. Within the context of the experiences laid out above, it is perhaps easier to see why routines are hard to establish. We may understand why there are mood swings, irrational behaviours, increased tiredness. We may be able to see how the new schooling method can lead to "Zoom fatigue" and loss of concentration.

What has been lost is that typical day with its structure, routine, friendships, opportunity and freedom.

With this in mind, as society is moving out of lockdown, what can coaches do?

Coaching, like teaching, is relationship based. So we must give consideration to

using a relationship-based approach to return to club and competitive fencing.

Relationships - We can't expect all the fencers to return joyfully. There is an opportunity to reach out and reduce the possible discomfort of returning to fencing. There are new protocols for running fencing which may help alleviate some potential discomfort.

Community - Fencing clubs are places of friendship and connections. The listening and compassion clubs can provide will help re-establish the local fencing community.

Open Learning and Development - All of our fencers and those looking to make international competition may feel like they have lost time in their development and even gone backwards. It is important to show them how the potential gaps are being addressed.

Metacognition - In their lockdown environments, fencers have been learning in different ways, for example in online sessions. Some of these larger group sessions have been well received. There is also the need of the individual. The learning and development in the club should be catered to individuals for them to reskill and re-build confidence.

Space - Give time and emotional space to the fencer to rediscover their 'fencer self' and to find their way. There will be a desire by coaches, parents and fencers to get back to fencing and to attain previous performance levels as soon as possible. It is important to recognise those fencers needing a little longer to get back to where they were.

And now let's look to the future. Lockdown has created an environment that no one has experienced before. Assuming that fencers will just return and carry on is in part wishful thinking. BF's work with the True Athlete Project on mindfulness and compassion has placed fencing in a good position to support young fencers' re-engagement to club and competitive fencing. The next challenge is to be mindful of what is going on in the heads of our young fencers and design a thoughtful process of re-engagement back to fencing.

COACHING CORNER

Lessons from Other High-Performance Environments

Steve Kemp - GBR Programmes & Coaching Development Manager

The high-performance environment is a fundamental building block for any organisation and the creation and maintenance of this environment is a challenge for any leadership team.

Sport and high-performance environments are often linked together supporting the elite sportsperson to achieve their success, which normally requires, the delivery of a winning performance at a specific time. Where else beyond the sports sector is the importance of a winning performance at a specific time? Examples include the medical operating theatre undertaking a complex procedure and the West End theatre delivering a show.

Once such organisation, where the high-performance environment is created is The Juilliard School, located in New York City. It is one of the best performing arts schools in the world. Juilliard alumni have won more than 150 awards including Grammys, Oscars and the Pulitzer Prize.

There have been four key areas that the school focuses on to keep the environment at the highest level:

1. Don't leave emotions at the door

At Juilliard they believe that students should not be encouraged to leave their emotions at the door of the studio but encouraged to bring them into the room and figure out how to recognise, deal with and use them. The various emotions don't go away. So the students are better served learning about their emotions, their emotional states and about channelling their emotions into their development and how their emotions can help their future performance.

In the past sport has discouraged emotions and instead pushed laser focus,

hiding emotions and the fixation on the outcome only. GBR Hockey Coach, Danny Kerry recently highlighted his inability to appreciate the winning of the gold medal at the 2016 Rio Olympics and in not knowing what to do after the match. He sat in his room looking at what made the performance work, with an eye on Tokyo 2020.

2. Having good eyes

The eye for the finer detail is what separates the good from the great coaches, something which the Juilliard places emphasis on. Constant feedback should be given but only the identification of the problem or barrier should be identified and not the solution. This encourages self-reflection and requires the performer to analyse their own performance and take responsibility for their learning rather than being overloaded with information by the coach.

How often does the coach provide the problem and immediately a solution, denying the learning and development opportunity for the athletes - denying the opportunity to practice, develop and refine the ability to self-analyse and then to develop higher levels of self-awareness and self-organisation required for a higher-level performance?

3. Do not teach from fear

One of the teaching philosophies at the Juilliard is 'not teaching from fear'. The individual is unable to comprehend more than a few options when they are stimulated by fear. If you're teaching people from fear, they're ultimately doing it for you. Fear takes away responsibility and potentially infantilises them. The dancer cannot turn to their teacher in the middle of

a show and ask how to land from a difficult jump. So allow them to take responsibility.

There is a question of the presence of the coach piste-side and a need to encourage the coach to really self-reflect on their impact. Are their actions inadvertently causing a reliance on themselves, the coach? What are the unintended consequences when there is an over-reliance of the coach? The fear of letting the coach down is one! The potential impact of that fear, the fencer playing safe, not deciding to attempt those slightly higher risk actions to win a point, or a match. These are the very decisions and actions the fencer will need to take and be able to perform to progress to the next level in competition.

4. Recalibrating students and resetting goals

Juilliard is unique in the respect that the performer's goal is to be accepted into the school - that is the achievement. Once they have made it, it can be difficult to re-focus. The performer has moved from being the best in their previous institution to becoming just one among many incredibly talented dancers. The school looks to reset goals and describes this as the performer writing their own sentence, which has a positive impact on the creation of new targets.

In fencing one goal is being selected for a major Championship. After being selected and the goal has been achieved, they could go into the competition under prepared. They might have neglected to fully prepare for the higher-level performance required by that specific competition and if they underperform, quite often they will identify other reasons for their underperformance.

On reflection, where do you see areas that you feel you do well and areas you could look to improve in your coaching environment? Chinese philosopher Confucius says, "When three people work together, you can always find a teacher from the other two". To give your reflection a stronger validity you could ask for input from others, your fencers, other coaches.



CUTTING LOOSE

Setting up Brixton Sabre

Ceri Thomas

Two years ago, a bunch of fencers set out to create South London's only sabre club. Somehow it worked...

"Well, we could always start our own sabre club."

Marc Le Pere said that after our last Tuesday night session at Streatham Fencing Club in the summer of 2018. After a six-month experiment running a sabre night, the committee was cancelling it to concentrate on the core Thursday night session. Which left the half dozen sabreurs who regularly fenced on Tuesdays feeling a bit... well, lost.

That said, my first reaction to Marc's comment was still a knee-jerk, "Don't be so flipping stupid. We're not the kind of people who start fencing clubs!"

Marc is nothing if not persistent, though and drew up a list of the essentials a new club would need. Since most of us had our own kit, it was surprisingly short: a venue, access to electric boxes/spools, a coach. Hmm, maybe this wasn't such a stupid idea after all...

Marc approached Brixton Fencing and arranged for us to use some of their underused space at Brixton Recreation Centre on a Tuesday night. They fenced on lanes in the crown green bowling area - a carpeted space perfect for fencing and just across the road from the Tube stop, making it ridiculously easy to get to. Brixton Fencing also offered us the use of their electric boxes. Now all we needed was a coach.

Enter Paolo Gattavari, a former Italian under-20 sabreur studying in London for a PhD. He was the perfect coach for us - enthusiastic, talented and committed to building a club that felt like a 'club', a place where everyone felt welcome and had a stake in what was going on, regardless of how much or how little time they'd been fencing. A place where everyone would happily fence anyone else in the room. Somewhere that suited competitive fencers as much as it did



those who just wanted to hit someone with a sword once a week and then go to the pub.

And so, after a summer spent setting up a website and designing a logo (Marc's background in advertising paid off on both of those), not to mention sorting out insurance and legal bits and bobs (having another member, Sophie DeVooght, who had just started working for British Fencing helped), we opened as Brixton Sabre on 11 September 2018. There were just four of us and Paolo there that first night. Whisper it, but I thought that we'd be lucky to make it to Christmas.

But we did. And we grew. In that first term we blitzed local papers and forums with info about 'South London's Only Sabre Fencing Club'. We had British number one, James Honeybone visit for a Q&A and a footwork session (thanks to Sophie for that) and we picked up new fencers. Some just dropped in, paying fees for a night but others liked what they saw and stuck around. Almost everyone came to the pub with us afterwards. After all, we wanted to be a club, not just a training group...

We drew up plans for a beginner's course. Shrewd buys from ebay and fencing forums, and the kindness of the wider fencing community (Lyn Robinson from

Wales donated some idle kit, for example, while Andrew Thornley from Manchester gifted us a bunch of his family's old masks and lames) meant that by Christmas we had - just about - enough communal equipment.

After another local PR blitz, not to mention "try-before-you-buy" nights and special concession rates, five beginners signed up in January 2019. We couldn't believe our luck - club treasurer Omar Karmi had budgeted for two or three. We set out as we meant to go on - every session started with us all warming up together, beginners and experienced fencers alike. And as the 8-week course went on and they graduated from footwork sessions, to exercises with steam sabres and finally to electric fencing, we all fenced together.

On their last day we held a graduation ceremony, handed out certificates and everyone went out for a drink. And all five signed up as full members when the next term began.

At the start of 2020, Brixton Sabre was thriving. Our Tuesday night sessions regularly boasted a dozen senior fencers on three pistes and our beginners course saw Paolo teaching the basics to more than ten newcomers, ranging from twentysomething couples to retirees.



Sabre in South London



Touché

Then Covid shut us down. We immediately put everyone's memberships on hold, promising that memberships would resume with no time lost when we finally started up again. We also promised the beginners that they could start the entire course again if they wanted to for no charge.

In the meantime, Paolo offered to run video sessions over Zoom. We all cleared what spaces we had at home (from garages and spare rooms to corridors and gardens) and gathered, virtually, on a Tuesday night to do footwork. An additional bladework class soon followed on a Thursday.

Those evenings, together with chats on our WhatsApp group and jokes spread across social media have kept Brixton Sabre together. We may not be fencing each other at the moment but we're definitely still the club we set out to be. It seems I was wrong two years ago. We are exactly the kind of people who can start up a fencing club.



Would you know what to do in a real-life threatening emergency?

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RETURN TO FENCING

Post COVID-19: Face Mask vs Face Shield

Dr. Lindsay Bottoms and Professor Nigel Culkin



Dr Lindsay Bottoms

Sporting National Governing Bodies are exploring ways to enable a return to training and competition at both elite and grass roots level. In the case of British Fencing, this debate is taking place within the Return to Fencing Working Group; the purpose of which is to coordinate, make recommendations and oversee delivery of the BF Return to Fencing plan. However, with no vaccine available maintaining social distance, whilst undertaking competitive sport poses a real and unique challenge.

As anyone reading The Sword will know, when playing sport breathing is faster and harder than at rest. In the current crisis this increases the transmission potential rate as measured by the effective reproductive rate (R). So, all sport has the potential to increase infection rates. As such, National Governing Bodies face the dilemma of promoting sport resumption,

whilst protecting their community with some considering the use of face masks. In the case of horseracing, which returned in June, the *British Horseracing Authority* issued protocols which stipulated that jockeys and stalls handlers would have to wear face masks.

We know that wearing a surgical face mask can increase the resistance to air flow. Exercise invariably leads to faster and harder breaths, placing further strain on air flows. At low to moderate intensity that effort will feel slightly harder than normal but you can still walk comfortably. The challenge of a face mask appears to be more during heavy exercise such as fencing, taking in air at rates of 40 - 100 litres per minute. A mask will make it harder to inhale the quantity of air needed to perform at the highest levels.

When we do heavy exercise, our muscles produce lactic acid which causes that burning sensation as it's converted to carbon dioxide and then exhaled. But what happens if the carbon dioxide is trapped by a face mask? Well, as you move from moderate to heavy exercise you may in fact be re-breathing carbon dioxide. In this case, it can lead to adverse consequences; reducing cognitive function and increasing breathing rate.

There may also be less oxygen in the recycled air which could imitate exercising at higher altitudes! It is therefore important we gain a better understanding of the limitations to heavy exercise with a face mask. The need is growing, given the story reported on an Australian News Channel of two teen boys dying within a week of each other during compulsory physical education examinations while wearing face masks in China.

Leon Paul Testing

Soon after lockdown commenced, Leon Paul approached us at the University of Hertfordshire with this exact dilemma and

to test whether a face shield would be safer - in terms of gases being inhaled - compared to a cloth face mask. To ensure no risk of virus transmission could take place the testing was undertaken on one of the authors (a 65Kg female) at home on a treadmill. Essentially, Lindsay ran on the treadmill at 10 kph for 3 minutes to reflect the intensity (heart rate was approximately 150 bpm) and duration of a poule fight. This was done in full FIE fencing kit, with and without a cloth face mask under a fencing mask; and, on another occasion with a face shield designed by Leon Paul. We must remember that the concentration of oxygen in the atmosphere is around 21% at sea level. When running on the treadmill with only the fencing mask the concentration of oxygen was around 20%. This would be equivalent to exercising at 600m above sea level (e.g. Barcelona). However, wearing a cloth face mask under the fencing mask reduced the oxygen level to around 17%, the equivalent of exercising at 1500m (e.g. Mexico City). Any further decreases in oxygen concentration will have a large impact on the physiological responses to exercise, leading to altitude sickness effects such as, dizziness or headache. However, with carbon dioxide there are



Professor Nigel Culkin

negligible levels in atmospheric air; and, when exercising with only the fencing mask this remains below 1%. With the cloth face mask, the carbon dioxide values trebles to 3%. When testing the face shield, the carbon dioxide levels were less than 2% and the oxygen levels were 18%. The design of the face shield has been further enhanced following results of the testing, which should reduce these values further. It should be noted that the face shield is not a medical device and this testing was purely looking at the oxygen and carbon dioxide levels. All these values are acceptable as it only becomes a problem when the value reaches around 5%. We should also note that the UK Health and Safety Executive (the government agency responsible for regulation and enforcement of workplace safety) advises that employees should not be exposed to 1.5% of carbon dioxide for more than 15 minutes.

What are the parameters for facemask use?

As we know fencing has a technical and tactical element as well as a physical one. In terms of training with a facemask, as long as the intensity of training is of a low to moderate intensity there does not appear to be a health risk to using



Testing Equipment

a facemask under the fencing mask. Next you should ask, what does low and moderate intensity look like? Well, if you can hold a conversation easily when training then you are doing low to moderate intensity exercise. So, having a technical/tactical fencing lesson, where

you can easily talk, you should be safe to wear a facemask and may be part of the return to fencing programme. However, we do not recommend wearing a facemask for any sparring or, competitions until research has demonstrated that it is safe to do so.

Answers to the Mastermind questions on page 8.

Q1: Britain's first Olympic individual fencing champion was a 26-year-old dental surgeon from London, who won gold in the women's individual foil event in the 1956 Games. What was her name?

A: Gillian Sheen

Q2: Which London venue hosted all the fencing events at the 2012 Olympics?

A: Excel Centre

Q3: In 1920 the Italian fencer Nedo Nadi won a record five out of the six individual and team golds available. At which event did he not compete at those Games?

A: Individual epee

Q4: In the fence-off to decide the 1932 individual women's foil gold medal, the British competitor lost after she sportingly acknowledged two touches against her that the judges had failed to notice. What was her name?

A: Judy Guinness

Q5: Women's fencing was introduced to the Olympics in 1924 and the Danish winner of the individual foil event became the first female Olympic fencing champion. What was her name?

A: Ellen Osier

Q6: Luan Jujie won gold for China in the women's individual foil in 1984, but represented a different country at the 2000 and 2008 Games. Which country?

A: Canada

Q7: Who won a bronze medal in the men's individual sabre in 1984 and was chosen as the American flag bearer at the closing ceremony of the 92 Games. What was his name?

A: Peter Westbrook

Q8: A convention centre in Chiba City was chosen to host all 12 fencing events at the 2020 Tokyo Olympics. What is its name?

A: Makuhari Messe

Q9: Which British left-handed fencer won a silver medal in the team epee in 1960 and again in the individual event 4 years later?

A: Bill Hoskyns

Q10: The 1964 women's foil individual gold medallist had been born deaf and received written instructions from her coaches when she began fencing. What was her name?

A: Ildiko Ujlaky-Rejto

Q11: At London 2012 Ruben Limardo Gascon became the first South American fencing champion when he won gold in the men's individual epee. Which country did he represent?

A: Venezuela

Q12: At the 2016 Rio Olympics the Russian fencer who won the women's individual sabre competition collected a second gold medal in the team event. What's her name?

A: Yana Egorian

PODCAST REVIEW

Fencing Podcasts Available Today

Sophie DeVooght - Media & Communications Officer

We're all meeting, talking and interacting online a lot during lockdown. There is an abundance of digital content to consume, through videos, webinars and streaming services. If you're looking for something more fencing specific, here's a round up of some of the best podcasts to listen to, in lockdown and beyond.

Fenced In

Ben Peggs and Christopher Molland

The Fenced In podcast is, in essence sports and fencing framed in a light, conversational piece. The show is hosted by two GB international fencers, Ben Peggs and Christopher Molland, who have the added dynamic of being coach and student. They share their experience as well as their tried and tested ideas of how to continue

to improve in this technical sport that we all remain so passionate about, through lockdown and beyond.

With nearly 30 years of knowledge between them, Chris and Ben discuss how to train and how to improve both their mental and physical fitness in such a way as to maximise their full potential. The duo explores the newest and continually evolving side of our sport that is 'quarantine training', sharing their experience from their own homes and exploring the many ways that fencers and athletes in other sports can make the most of training during this global pandemic. Discussing anything and everything – from mindfulness in the living room to point control in the garden, the show also features a much in demand 'ask us anything' segment where listeners have the opportunity to ask the questions they want the answers to.

The show has been in popular demand with the international fencing community and those expressing an interest in taking part are spread across a variety of roles: coaches, fencers and training experts of all levels and abilities. With so much knowledge often kept behind closed doors, Ben and Chris have made it their mission to share it by inviting them on to talk about what they have learnt from their respective careers in the sport. Jon Salfield (GB Sabre coach and head of the Truro high performance programme) and Dan Kellner (Olympian and head coach at Brooklyn Bridge Fencing Club) are just a two of those who have been interviewed on the podcast with many more headline acts to follow. Ben and Chris have also teamed up with the popular fencing YouTuber CyrusofChaos to analyse one of Ben's fights as a great demonstration of how to do video analysis, following episode 3 where it was covered.



Tune in for: If you're wanting to make the most out of quarantine, then let's be Fenced In together.

Search for the Fenced In podcast on Apple, Google, Spotify or YouTube to keep up to date with their latest ideas or click here <https://tinyurl.com/y84ydbq>

Tokyo 2020 Fencing Podcast

David Baker and Karim Bashir

In 2015, I set up a Facebook page tracking the Fencing Olympic Qualification standings every week in the run up to the Rio 2016 Games. Whilst designed for the fencers and teams, the page had a fantastic following with other fencers, coaches, and fans – finishing up with 25,000+ followers.

The backbone of the system was a reasonably complicated spreadsheet that automatically calculated the standings for teams and fencers alike once I plugged in the results from each relevant event. Getting the output quickly each week, meant that I could spend more time on content.

In a desire to take it a step further for Tokyo 2020, I reached out to Karim Bashir, in my view one of the best FIE commentators (and Editor of this magazine!). Together we created a podcast to further engage with a fan base that we both knew was there. The result is the Tokyo 2020 Fencing Podcast where we marry the statistics with the stories and more recently guest interviews.



The success and engagement is more than either of us hoped for - especially given that have to do everything remotely. Sometimes we're recording podcasts when we're on different continents on the way back from working at FIE competitions, maybe sharing that experience adds something even more special.

It's sad but necessary for qualification to be temporarily be halted. The minute that it is safe to do so, the World will start to get back to normal - including fencing qualification for Tokyo. You can be sure that Karim and I are ready and waiting to record and distribute the next episode when it does.

Tune in for: all the talk about fencing qualification for Tokyo here, <https://fencingtokyo.buzzsprout.com/>

Be You. Be Different

British Fencing

Discover the world of British Fencing. From grassroots visions to Olympic dreams, we reveal how this sport has a past and future to talk about. The British Fencing podcast includes interviews with athletes, coaches and the people involved in fencing in the UK.

Each episode opens up a different door into the world of UK fencing and explores how



our sport challenges and enhances us as individuals.

The podcast also reaches beyond the fencing world to explore subjects relevant to anyone interested in sport. Discover how our Athlete Development Programme is integrating holistic approaches, explore mental health awareness in sport and learn more about how parents can create a positive environment for their children as they try new things.

Tune in for: interviews with fencers including JJ Webb, Marcus Mepstead and Olympic team manager Johnny Davis. There's also an in-depth episode about British Fencing's work with London Youth, talking about why the football coaches at Cray Wanderers now deliver fencing to their participants.

Listen here: <https://link.cttbl.com/Fencing>

The Fencing Podcast

Sean Walton and Gavin McMenemy

Listen in while Gavin and Sean talk all things fencing-related. With a smattering



of knowledge, plenty of enthusiasm, loads of opinion and a few laughs.

The Fencing Podcast has been broadcasting since 2016 and has dozens of episodes about International fencing.

Tune in for: Interviews, opinions and coverage of the major events in the calendar. This is one of the longest running podcasts on fencing and well worth a listen.

They're on Itunes or you can find the RSS link below.

[Fencing Podcast RSS](#)

The Big Hit

Another production from Sean and Gavin of the Fencing Podcast, they are joined by Kate Daykin to explore the world of Scottish Fencing. Interviews, chats and a great look at Scottish Fencing.

Tune in for: Great interviews. Here is a link to Kate's interview with British Fencing's CEO Georgina Usher
<http://www.thefencingpodcast.com/the-big-hit-podcast>



DIARY OF A FENCER

Ed Scott Payne

Hi. My name is Ed Scott Payne and I am currently on the cadet men's epee squad and have been since I was 13. As I have competed for the last three years on the British cadet squad, I thought I would share an insight into what it is like for a youth athlete on the British team competing internationally. For me at age 13, I was going to take my experiences on my first season and use them to carry me forwards in future years. As many know I was not a tall boy back then and as many who know me today, I still am small now but I have grown in confidence and ability from my first season which has led to great achievement in the latest season with a bronze medal at the Copenhagen Cadet EFC and 7th place at the European Cadet Championships in 2020.

Firstly the competitions themselves - I went to my first international in Klagenfurt, Austria and I had never been to an event



Ed Scott Payne in Action

of such scale and stature before. I was very nervous as many were as it was the first international of the season and I didn't know what to expect. Low and behold little 5ft 5 me came up against a 6ft tall Bulgarian and after beating him 5-4 I gained the confidence and made it through the poules. It was during the poules that I realised the standard was far higher than I had experienced before and I learnt to not underestimate any fencer and I carried this through to the European Championships in Porec last February. Each international trip as a youth athlete is different as you explore different countries and their cultures as well as fencing lots of different nations and learning different tactics and techniques to take forward and help us develop.

I believe however the most important lesson I have learnt is something so basic that it almost seems idiotic to mention. Always check you have YOUR passport. I learnt this the hard way as I was travelling to Budapest and I had managed to bring my mum's passport with me instead of my own! This error led to me missing my flight. Luckily, I got home and back just in time for the last flight out to Budapest



Ed Scott Payne with Coach Kenichi Yamamoto

that night in time for the event the next day.

In truth, I believe the most important thing I have experienced and learnt from being part of the squad is how beneficial and uplifting it is to have a squad surrounding you and supporting you. It is something that has stuck within the British cadet epee squad in particular whilst I have been on the team. As I have mentioned, I was 13 when I first began competing on the squad and the older members of the team and their parents helped me whenever I needed and everyone was always there to support not only myself but everyone. It is the supportive environment amongst the British squad which sets us apart as a national team from the rest. Fast forward 3 years and I hope now I can help the newer and younger members of the team feel as involved and as a part of the team as I did 3 years ago as I enter my last year as a cadet. International events can be daunting for many as pressure varies in different athletes and I want the sense of camaraderie to continue within the British cadet team once I leave the cadet squad.

VIEW FROM THE EDITOR

Karim Bashir



Deep in Thought

These are strange times for us all. Many of us are missing many different aspects of our usual lives. Personally, I miss watching the sport...so much so that I've considered a recreational return for the first time since I retired in 2006! Many of the coaches I know, whilst facing financial uncertainty are deeply missing the interactions that they have with their students. Underlying it all is one common theme. We miss each other - our friends and our fencing family. During lockdown (and at a time when Mental Health week was recognised,) I started thinking about what our federation is doing to support members. What support, guidance (and even a bit of fun) is BF providing for us?

It led me to really look into the recent Operational Update that was sent out as an update for members in May 2020. There's lots in there but having given it a thorough "going over" I thought three topics might be of particular interest if you're a coach, run a club or generally want to know what BF is doing at the moment.

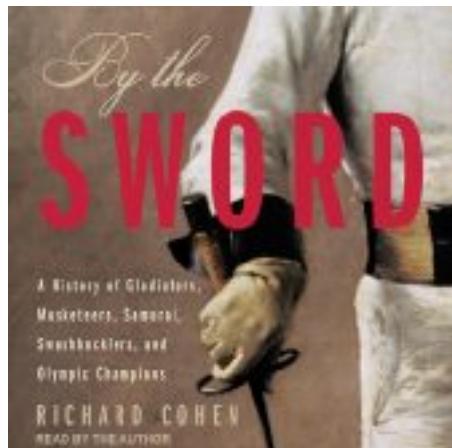
1. Keeping us fencing:
 - clubs and coaches web pages
 - guides to online coaching
 - meaningful partnerships TAP
 - online sessions for the pathway
2. Keeping us informed
 - Home Nations Return to Fencing Workgroup

- Hosting community discussion groups
- Online learning platform for our ADP coaches - what better time to learn - time not wasted
- Advocating for our sport in meetings with other NGBs and official channels to get us back to the piste

3. Keeping us entertained - not to be underestimated

- Releasing Marcus Mepstead to be interviewed by me for the EFC and the amazing live Q&A he did on Zoom which can now be seen on YouTube, [here](#)
- The podcast series - a variety of topics covered which are not only entertaining but really scratch behind the surface of what the BF team are doing and who they are
- (Not mentioned in the Op Update) the continued inspirational social media messages from all of our elite athletes
- The incredible efforts the whole community went to to support or should I say #SalutetheNHS

None of this could happen without the support of BF members. Congratulations and a massive thanks for supporting this work to get us through these strange times and prepare for the "new" normal. Congratulations to all of us, in fact, for providing online coaching sessions, saluting the NHS, inspiring each other, supporting each other and coming together as a community.



Audio Version of By The Sword Released

With over 75,000 printed copies sold worldwide, Tantor Media Inc has brought out an audio edition of Richard Cohen's history of fencing, *By the Sword*, published in 2002 but which remains the best-selling book on our sport. It is read by the author himself who remains an active fencer. Copies can be purchased through either of the following links:

Buy at Amazon here, <https://tinyurl.com/yck22pgj>

Buy at Audible here, <https://tinyurl.com/yd7vhevf>

PETER HOBSON 1932-2020

Richard Cohen

Peter Hobson, for over a quarter of a century one of the most important figures in British fencing, died on 1 April. He was 87.

Although his main contribution was as an official, referee and administrator, he was a fine fencer, in 1961 coming third in the Corble Cup. Then ten years later he came second to George Ganchev. In 1962 he was a member of the Polytechnic squad that won the sabre championship.

By then he was already involved in running the sport. In 1971 he became Chair of the sabre sub-committee, a selector and captain of the team at the World Championships. The following year he was overall team captain for the Munich Olympics - a bitter-sweet appointment given the tragedy of the Israeli killings. In 1973 he was elected vice-chair of the AFA Committee and Chair of the joint weapons sub-committee, positions he held until 1996, and for ten years represented fencing on the British Olympic Committee. In 1979 he became a vice-president of the AFA.

An international referee, he presided over the finals of British national and international competitions as well as at junior and senior World Championships, the Commonwealth Games and other international events. He was a qualified foil and sabre coach. Hugely competent in all these positions, he was at the heart of fencing and helped it to beat more efficiently. And he was far from being just an able lieutenant. Old copies of *The Sword* have him as a frequent contributor, sounding off authoritatively at attempts by the FIE to reform the rules of fencing or on one occasion memorably defending the sabre team against the charges of irresponsibility at a World Championships.

Generally, though, he kept his emotions in check. John Deanfield, a sabre team member between 1970 and 1980, recalls him as "very English - you had to dig under the skin to know what he was feeling. But he was like a big brother to me. Whenever I saw him after a break it was just where we left off the last time - it was lovely."

Peter was born in Stoke Newington, North London, on 19 May 1932. At the age of six he developed asthma, then scarlet fever



Peter Hobson

and spent six weeks in isolation - one bonus being that his asthma disappeared. After two years in the RAF he enrolled at Shoreditch College (part of London university) to study design and technology. As a teenager he had taken up photography and Shoreditch had a well-equipped darkroom.

He was an avid reader and one novel in particular, *The Fencing Master* by Rafael Sabatini, captivated him. "Like almost every other fencer I come across," he wrote in 1971, "I started to fence with the foil.... At some point in my career someone said, 'To get anywhere in this country you have to fence two weapons.' So I purchased an epee. Three lessons and the junior epee later... I turned to sabre." He learned initially under Professor Alf Simmonds, then Walter "Killer" Nicklen. He became a protégé of Charles de Beaumont, long-time head of the AFA, joining him in public exhibitions where de Beaumont would have at him with a gigantic two-handed sword.

Peter eventually moved to the Regent Street Polytechnic (then the largest club in the country,) and a new coach, the Hungarian émigré Béla Imregi. Armed with Béla's letters of introduction, Peter would visit the illustrious Honved club in Budapest - even attending, to his delight, a class where they had "English joke time".

In 1954, he started teaching at his first school, in north London. Six years later, he

was appointed a housemaster at Brooke House Boys' comprehensive in Hackney. He coached fencing and boxing, organized football and cricket teams and took part in summer camps. And there was his other great passion, photography. His iconic photographs of fencing, many published in *The Sword*, are among the best ever taken of the sport.

At his previous school he had started up a fencing club, his charges notching up a stream of successes. At Brooke House, he successfully introduced pupils directly to sabre and the school's team, the first and only such in a state comprehensive, was soon producing national champions. Next he persuaded Béla Imregi to coach his eager young recruits. Two boys were the first in the country to receive the gold proficiency sabre award, while another was runner-up in the London Schoolboys' Championships. Yet greater achievements followed, all within a four-year span. "I had proved, to my own satisfaction at least, that boys found sabre an easier weapon to come to terms with than foil." He ends his article by naughtily quoting a first-year fencer who by accident saw a foil. "What a funny sword - looks all sort of weedy - what's it for?"

Peter had a number of mannerisms, thus would tilt his chin to the left and slightly raise his head, setting his lips tightly together as if detecting a slightly unpleasant smell. This had the effect of imparting great authority. He went on to be deputy head at Brooke House, then headmaster. One of his pupils was Geoff Thompson, MBE, who was to become a multiple karate medal-winner internationally and 1982 World Champion. He credits Peter with saving him from a life of delinquency. "He was one of those teachers who stood out by the sheer presence of his personality and the way he managed to engage with different boys in different ways," he wrote in a eulogy.

In 1977, to the delight and surprise of Peter's friends, he married a colleague at the school, Jill Wise and they were happily together for nearly 43 years. Besides his chosen sport - and his photography -- his passions, followed lifelong, included music (he was a hi-fi expert) and fast cars. In the summer of 1971 he drove me all the way from London to Vienna (915 miles) —

for the World Championships — in a day. Over the years he owned BSA and Norton motorbikes, and his cars included two Lotus Cortinas and two Audi TTs. Well into middle age, he took up horse riding, despite a deep mistrust of the animal, as it was such a passion of Jill's. He soon discovered that it was a technical sport, like fencing and so appreciated the challenge much more.

In 1982 he moved to be head of the London Nautical School. After five years there he became full-time general secretary of the London area of the Secondary Heads Association and an elected member of ILEA's Education Committee. In 1990, when ILEA was abolished, he chose early

retirement and joined the non-teaching staff of a Barnet school as computer systems manager. He took up fencing again in his late sixties and was teaching in Hemel Hempstead until he was about 80. By then, he and Jill had moved to a house near St. Albans.

For the last eight years, deteriorating health limited his mobility, although he had a talk he gave to local photography clubs, "Fencing, Photography and the Olympics." One wonders whether, while reminiscing about the Opening Ceremony in Munich in 1972, he ever admitted to smuggling in a Minox camera secreted in his blazer pocket, as cameras weren't allowed for participants. In 2015 he had a major

operation and further episodes of ill health followed, culminating in emergency surgery at the end of March this year. Although he came through the operation, he sadly deteriorated rapidly.

With his kind and considerate nature but with the necessary authority and charisma to make him an excellent head teacher and respected sportsman and leader, he was genuinely loved. Words like modesty, fairness, reasonableness, reticence come to mind, together with memories of his dry sense of humour.

MAITRE CHRISTOPHER PENNEY

Denis Cruse

Chris started to fence in his teens in the late 1960s at Stockport Sword Club under Bernard Popland and Adrian Kellett. He quickly found that he had not only a great interest in the sport but also a natural flair and the club asked him to teach other pupils. He competed in County and National competitions amassing a number of gold, silver and bronze medals. On leaving school he went to the University of Wales at Wrexham where his main subject was Physical Education, concentrating on gymnastics, outdoor pursuits in addition to sailing, mountain climbing and all standard sports going on to qualify as a PE teacher. Fencing went on temporary hold whilst at college but he developed an interest in martial arts and soon became leader of the college Kung Foo Club. In his final year at university Chris became a committed Christian and his faith had a profound influence upon his career.

After university Chris found a position on a project with a civil engineering firm in Wales. On completion of that project, during which he did not fence, he decided on a change and moved to Kent where he chose to take up his grandfather's profession of medical herbalist. He completed his qualification and practised for more than a decade at clinics in Kent and London. Following his move to Kent he resumed his fencing. By the mid-1980s, however, he felt the need to change his path again and having been fencing at Gravesend Fencing Club started to coach there. Further coaching appointments followed in schools in Kent and Sussex, which comprised a wide variety - prep,

independent, both day and boarding, as well as maintained schools - and at Salle Paul where he worked with Peter Frolich and the Olympic team, which he enjoyed very much. He took his international diploma in sabre in 1999, one of his proudest fencing achievements. During this time he produced many successful fencers in National Youth Championships and the Public Schools Championships, several of whom were medallists and three were National Champions. He also opened his own clubs variously in Tunbridge Wells and Tonbridge. During this time Chris served the wider fencing community by becoming a committee member of the BAF and was a Regional Coach Educator operating in the South East Region.

Throughout his life his faith had been strong and he first felt the call to ministry in his twenties. He was active in churches in the Church of England wherever he lived and in the 1990s explored the possibility of ordination. Just into the new millennium he undertook training at Wycliffe Hall, Oxford. This was fulfilling but generated some doubts about some of the CoE's ontology and as a consequence he did not become ordained in the Church of England. However, he preached and ministered at many churches and gradually becoming more comfortable amongst the Baptists became a member of Tonbridge Baptist Church. This led to him being appointed Minister to the Baptist Church in Eynsford, Kent, in 2011, a fulfilment of his long felt calling.



Christopher Penney

As his commitment to the church increased Chris reduced his coaching load and by the time of moving to Eynsford was only coaching at Tonbridge School, where he latterly surprised the club by arriving in a Caterham 7, in which there was hardly enough room for both himself and his kit! A little while after an operation for a heart condition he considered that retirement was a wise step and moved to a cottage in north Wales which he had been renovating for some years and joined the Baptist community in the area. He had been there only a short time when pancreatic cancer was diagnosed.

He met his wife, Abigail, at university. She survives him.

EILEEN PITMAN MBE 1926-2020

Dominic Pitman

Eileen was born in Hove, East Sussex and was the youngest of sibling. The family had moved south from London during the Great War in which William, her father had served from day one. Injuries suffered during his service would plague him for the rest of his life and kept him out of the second World War which Eileen remembered very clearly.

The family moved from Hove to Brighton through the second World War. In these years Eileen often recalled taking cover from dropping bombs and Doodlebugs while walking to and from school.

An active intelligent student, Eileen joined the Brownies and went on to become a Pack Leader in the Girl Guides. She excelled at school and went on to secretarial school before joining the Regent Oil Company in Brighton as a pool secretary where she spent many happy years. She had a fond memory of being given a turkey each Christmas as a Christmas bonus.

In her youth Eileen loved dancing, especially Spanish dance, taking local classes and for a short while teaching the art.

In the early 1950s a friend suggested she joined him at the local fencing club and she went along to Brighton and Hove Fencing club then based in Davigdor Road, Hove. This was to be the first day of a love for fencing which would last for the next 60 years and more.

Eileen was very competitive, fencing in both County and Regional events, winning the Sussex Ladies County Championships on three consecutive occasions, 1962, 1963 and while pregnant with her first son, Justin, in 1964. Recognised for this achievement she was presented with the silver rose bowl cup which still stands on the family windowsill.

A family friend and fellow fencer Peter Townsend remembers meeting Eileen Nicholls as she was then with boyfriend, later husband Brian Pitman at Bisham Abbey in 1955/56 where fencing courses were often held and run by distinguished professors of fencing such as Prof. Bob Anderson who later became a family friend.



Eileen Pitman

Both had fond memories of these courses where they met so many new life-long friends.

Eileen met her future husband Brian at Brighton & Hove Fencing Club. Brian was a navy man based at Ford near Arundel and had been introduced to fencing while in the navy - having to first start with the basic requirement of bayonet fighting. They became strong friends and our future father having left the navy, would travel as many times as possible from Hastings to Brighton on any excuse to meet with Eileen. Back then that trip would take a good two hours each way and there was no staying over. Both became Amateur Coaches - at this time amateurs could not take money for coaching. To do so would remove their amateur status and they would not be able to compete. Eileen would say, "You coach for the love of it."

Brian had tried a few different careers, becoming a policeman for a short while. Yet it was always fencing they both loved and came back to. Brian with Eileen's support moved up the coaching ladder training under Prof. Bill Harmer-Brown with help from Prof. Bob Anderson. Brian was awarded Professor of Fencing in 1970 and became a full time Fencing coach. He would go onto become English National coach being awarded the BAF Gauthier Trophy in 1976. He freely told everyone his success was down to Eileen's support and guidance behind him.

Eileen and Brian Pitman were married 17th March 1962. Three sons were to follow, Justin, Dominic and Rory.

Even with this busy home life Eileen served on the Sussex County Fencing Committee for more than 40 years - well into her 80's, most of which as County Secretary. She also served for many years on the South East Section Committee in various roles.

In 1974 Eileen set up the Portslade Fencing Club and coached at the club into her mid 80's before standing down. She handed the reigns to me and I continue to run the club to this day.

Eileen's philosophy was "fencing for all". Whoever you are, however old, whatever your background, there was always a place at Portslade Fencing Club for you. This was reinforced by all fencers being made to fence everyone else regardless of standard. Further reinforced when necessary by Eileen's sharp tongue & the obligatory Club ladder, with the best starting at the bottom. No one dared step out of line!

In 1977, Eileen with Brian's support started the Silver Jubilee International under sixteen competition at Portslade, which hosted some of the best European under 16's of the time. Many of the competitors going onto international careers. Years later still under the stewardship of Eileen, the competition would become the Sussex Open.

In 2002 Brian Pitman passed away leaving a vacuum in Eileen's life never to be filled again. They had shared everything.

The British Academy of Fencing awarded Eileen Honorary Life membership in 2004 for her long service to fencing. She was surprised and honoured to receive this recognition.

In the Queen's Birthday honours 2006 she was awarded the MBE for services to Sport in Sussex. A fitting final act to a very long career of giving to so many students and participants of fencing at all levels for so many years. We will miss her.

RESULTS



The up-to-date 2019-2020 season latest results
are now listed online and can be [accessed here](#)

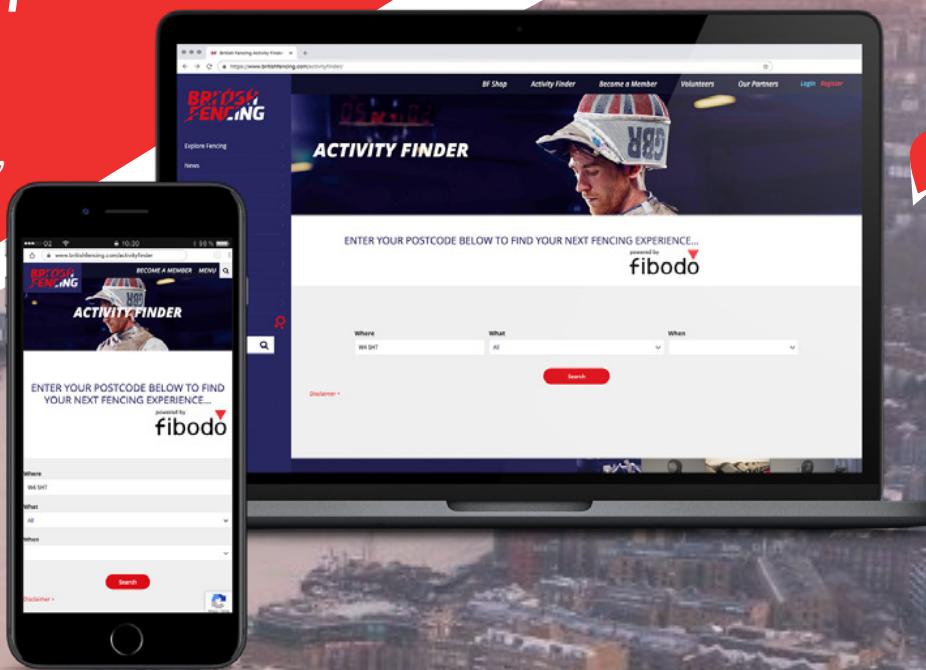
Please forward all your suggestions for additional
online fencing results to: events@britishfencing.com





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