

THE SWORD

BRITISH FENCING MAGAZINE
OCTOBER 2020



ADP INSIGHT EDITION PP7-21
THE PATHWAY MODEL P7
DIARY OF A FENCER PP28-29

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Marcus Winning 2019 World Silver
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Next deadline: 2nd November 2020

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Hilary Philbin



The past year has been a year like no other. Covid-19 has brought about the cancellation of the international season since March, including the Junior and Cadet World Champs in Salt Lake City, Grand Prix and World Cup events, the European and other zonal Championships and - most notably - the postponement of the Olympic Games and Paralympic Games which should have taken place in July and August this summer.

There has undoubtedly been a devastating impact on our competitive fencers and their coaches, who have had their careers interrupted and their ambitions put on hold - none more so than those who had hoped to compete at the 2020 Junior and Cadet World Championships or the Tokyo Games. As a former competitor I know how much this will mean to them, and how much time, effort and energy will already have been invested.

The impact on all our coaches has been severe, in particular our full-time professionals for whom fencing is their livelihood and where their future remains

uncertain. It is therefore essential that we get our clubs up and running as soon as possible.

The sudden enforced closure of all clubs in March shocked and surprised many. During the closure I know that CEO Georgina Usher and her team at BF Head Office put in a massive amount of work to establish guidance and rules that will enable clubs to re-open safely. Clubs were able to re-open on 25 July, and it was pleasing to see the speed with which some of our larger competitive clubs were able to adopt and implement these measures. However, I'm aware that for many smaller clubs, providing a service to their local communities, it will take much longer. Hopefully these clubs will be able to source additional volunteers to help implement the new requirements.

This situation has brought about huge and unexpected change in so many areas - affecting fencers, coaches, clubs, officials, referees and so on. Every one of us now needs to help protect fencing's future, remaining positive and doing what we can to keep the clubs open.

International Relations is not unaffected. The annual meeting of all FIE post-holders, scheduled for Bucharest in June, did not take place, and plans for the 4-yearly Elective Congresses were postponed. Normally held just after the end of each Olympic cycle, the European (EFC) Elective Congress planned for Sochi in September has been postponed until 2021, although their Ordinary Congress is going ahead online this September as scheduled. The

FIE Congresses, both Elective and Ordinary, were planned for Moscow in November and are also likely to be postponed until 2021. These changes in the elective cycle have a noticeable impact on IR activity.

Internationally the most significant change is of course the postponement of the Olympic and Paralympic Games. As a previous organiser, my heart goes out to the Tokyo team who had to make that sad decision in such difficult circumstances. I'm sure that they have the full sympathy of the many UK fencers who were involved in the London 2012 organisation, as it could just as easily have happened to us - or to any other Games.

I have always looked back on London 2012 with both pleasure and pride, but now also with relief. In the absence of this season's major events I am including some photos of London 2012 to remind us of our good fortune. I am sure that you will all join me in wishing Tokyo 2020 the best of luck and sending good wishes for a successful outcome next year.



Press Taster Day ahead of 2012



Hilary with some of the 2012 team © FIE

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS REPORT

Hilary Philbin - President

At the start of the season I was Head of Delegation at the FIE Annual Congress in Lausanne, Switzerland, in November 2019, where I was accompanied by Georgina Usher as 2nd Delegate. Other BF delegates included Janet Huggins, plus Steve Higginson and Peter Jacobs as FIE Members of Honour.

I was pleased to participate in the organisation of the Wheelchair Fencing World Championships in Seoul, South Korea, in September 2019 as a member of the Directoire Technique. My congratulations go to our World Champions Dmitri Coutya and Piers Gilliver, along with their support teams, for their great achievements.

In the early part of the season I participated in two international 'Good Governance' workshops, the first of which was hosted by the Swedish Fencing Federation in Stockholm in September 2019, and the

second by the Italian Fencing Federation in Turin in February 2020. Sadly the third such workshop, which I had arranged to host in the UK in March 2020, had to be postponed at the eleventh hour due to the pandemic.

Steve Higginson, Janet Huggins and Peter Jacobs acted as FIE Supervisor at a number of World Cup foil and epee events - Steve in Tauberbischofsheim, Paris and Dijon, Janet

in Tallinn, Estonia and Leszno, Poland, and Peter in Bucharest and Budapest.

Our 6 FIE post-holders continue to make their contribution to the wider fencing world (their updates are below), as do our post-holders on EFC Commissions - Tom Cadman (Legal), Mary Cohen (Medical) and Peter Huggins (SEMI). Thanks are due to all of them.



Delegates from the 2019 FIE Annual Congress © FIE

UPDATES FROM OUR FIE POST-HOLDERS

Clare Halsted - Medical Commission

The Medical Commission (MedCom) priorities up to February 2020 were to update the Medical Handbook for FIE events, with Clare leading this process, and introducing an efficient, comprehensive medical data collection and analysis system.

In early March - with the increasing impact of Covid-19 - MedCom advised immediate suspension of all FIE competitions and cancellation or postponement of the Junior & Cadet World Championships, followed in May by advice to cancel the Veterans World Championships. The priority was then to produce safety guidelines for return to international competitions, with the first version published at the beginning of June. Clare has proposed an FIE research study on droplet and aerosol spread during fencing bouts, and this is under consideration.

As the FIE Anti-Doping lead Clare has been working on revising the FIE rules to comply

with WADA changes, updating the FIE's education programme for January 2021 to comply with the new WADA standard, and liaising with International Testing Agency colleagues throughout the year regarding the FIE testing programme.

Steve Higginson - Rules Commission

As the 4-yearly elective Congress was due this year (although now postponed), there was no concerted activity in the Rules Commission dealing with the Commission's normal business of the proposal and perusal of changes to the Rules.

One ongoing activity involving a sub-committee of the Rules Commission, together with two members of the SEMI commission (one of whom is Janet Huggins), is a project to restructure the Materials section of the Rules. This has been hindered by Covid-19 and the inability to hold meetings, but work is progressing - albeit slowly.

Steve, as Chair of the Rules Commission, was consulted over the impact on the Rules of the measures to be observed at FIE competitions as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Janet Huggins - SEMI Commission (Signalisation, Electrical, Material & Installations)

The SEMI Commission oversees the checking of fencers' equipment at FIE events in Weapon Control and the Call Room. Following Covid-19 the Commission has prepared new systems allowing for the appropriate social distancing and the use of PPE when competitions restart. This will ensure the safety of the athletes and those carrying out checks.

SEMI are responsible for approving all new equipment such as blades, clothing, scoring



Dmitri Coutya on top of World podium © Yuka Fujita

apparatus, video refereeing systems, etc. During the Covid-19 crisis Commission members have continued to carry out this work via email.

Janet is continuing to assist the Rules Commission with the task of restructuring the FIE Material Rules.

Peter Jacobs - Legal Commission

Noteworthy amongst the few proposals that the Legal Commission took to the November 2019 FIE Congress were:

- the (repeated) demand that the gender balance on the commissions should be improved to 70%-30% minimum, which was approved at the third attempt, and

- that coaches and other persons wishing to be permitted onto the field of play at official FIE competitions must have FIE licences, in order to reinforce the disciplinary and safeguarding procedures of the FIE.

In addition Peter and other Commission members had put in a lot of work ensuring that the statutes of FIE candidate countries complied with FIE requirements, which led to this congress confirming the membership of 4 new federations.

Since then the Commission has reviewed an FIE Guidelines and Risk Mitigation Strategy for federations and organisers in the context of Covid-19, and a legal

waiver regarding Covid-19 for FIE officials attending FIE events.

Caryl Oliver - Veterans Council

The Veterans Council spent the majority of time from November to March working on a re-write of the Rules and Regulations for the Veteran World Championships - an event complicated by having 24 individual and 6 team competitions. This work was completed in early March and submitted to the FIE for endorsement.

From March onwards all activity was pandemic-related as we gauged the impact of the spreading virus on the staging of the Veteran World Championships in Porec in October. The Council was initially keen to retain the Veteran World Championships, and had several Zoom meetings in order to prepare a detailed report on the possibility of the event going ahead as scheduled. Finally, however, the Council agreed with the FIE Medical and other Commissions that it could not reasonably offer the event. Cancellation was announced in July, and Porec was given priority to stage the World Championships in 2022. The 2021 Championships are scheduled for the USA and, while this is more than a year away, Council Members are being watchful.

Georgina Usher - Women in Fencing Council

The focus of the Women in Fencing Council up to November 2019 was on making the final change to the FIE Statutes in respect to minimum 30% gender representation across FIE Commissions, this having already been brought in for the Executive Committee, the Councils and Committees.

Georgina has also been working with the FIE on Safeguarding education to support the implementation of the FIE Safeguarding Policy.



Piers Gilliver claims World title © Yuka Fujita



Piers & Dmitri celebrating World medal haul (C) Yuka Fujita

ATHLETE DEVELOPMENT THE PATHWAY MODEL A STRATEGIC OVERVIEW

Georgina Usher - CEO

After UK Sport's decision in 2016 to end Fencing's World Class Programme funding, the Board of BF reviewed our strategy around delivering success at the highest levels of our sport.

Our restated mission remains much the same today - **to deliver a sustainable and inclusive 6W athlete development system that enables every (talented) athlete to access a high-quality pathway that fulfils their potential - as people and performers.**

Our primary objective is to produce athletes that are resilient, independent and high performing with a true sense of self value that in turn inspires others to achieve success.

In doing this we take a 'whole person' approach because we believe that 'better people make better athletes'.

As part of this work, we performed a comprehensive reworking of the pathway development models underpinning fencing's performance pathway. Our objective was to create one updated pathway model. Whilst funding was uncertain the intention was to ensure that we had a model on which to base future development activities in fencing.

The requirements of the pathway model were that it:

1. Supports development in all 6 weapons, from a participation base to Olympic success
2. Be a credible, evidence-based model that reflects the needs of fencing and athletes within fencing

3. Builds on the knowledge gained to date, including research from the World Class Programme 'What it takes to win' model
4. Allows athletes to move down as well as up, as lifestyle decisions over a long career impact ability to commit and perform
5. Incorporates all required aspects of athlete development - behaviour, culture, technical, tactical, psychological, strength and conditioning etc.
6. Forms the basis of future athlete and performance coach development work
7. Exists independently of funding bodies yet aligns with their pathway models and principles

The following pages set out a summary of the pathway model, including:

- The FTEM Framework
- The Pathway Context
- The Pathway Stages
- The Pathway Stage Components
- The Weapons Framework

This is the model that BF will use to underpin our development programmes and form the basis of any funding application to allow us to deliver the pathway system and structures.

The BF Athlete Development Programme

As we move into the Paris 2024 Olympic cycle the BF Athlete Development Programme (ADP) will be the overarching single programme responsible for bringing the pathway model to life and supporting identified athletes across all 6 weapons progressing on a development journey to Olympic Success.

Fencing is a sport where Olympic athletes take a comparatively long time to develop and athletes often leave the sport due to external lifestyle factors. Recognising this, we are deliberately creating a

programme that focusses on 'Talent Development' (improving the quality of the environment for as many as is practical on the assumption that superstars will come through), rather than 'Talent ID' (spotting a few potential superstars early and giving them the best resources).

For a brief introduction to the ADP please go to page 21.

What are we doing now?

Like most NGBs, BF has little or no available direct income stream to support the ADP. We recognise that we will need to access funding from other sources. Work is being undertaken to apply for funding from various sources (including UK Sport and Sport England) to provide funding for the various stages of the pathway. This funding will be a critical element in defining what the ADP can deliver to pathway athletes in the next Olympic cycle.

With some funding streams, there will be associated constraints on delivery and accessibility. Examples being Sport England Talent Funding to deliver training camps which necessarily are located in England over other Home Countries. Also, the Diploma in Sporting Excellence is only accessible to athletes age 16-18 in state school education in England.

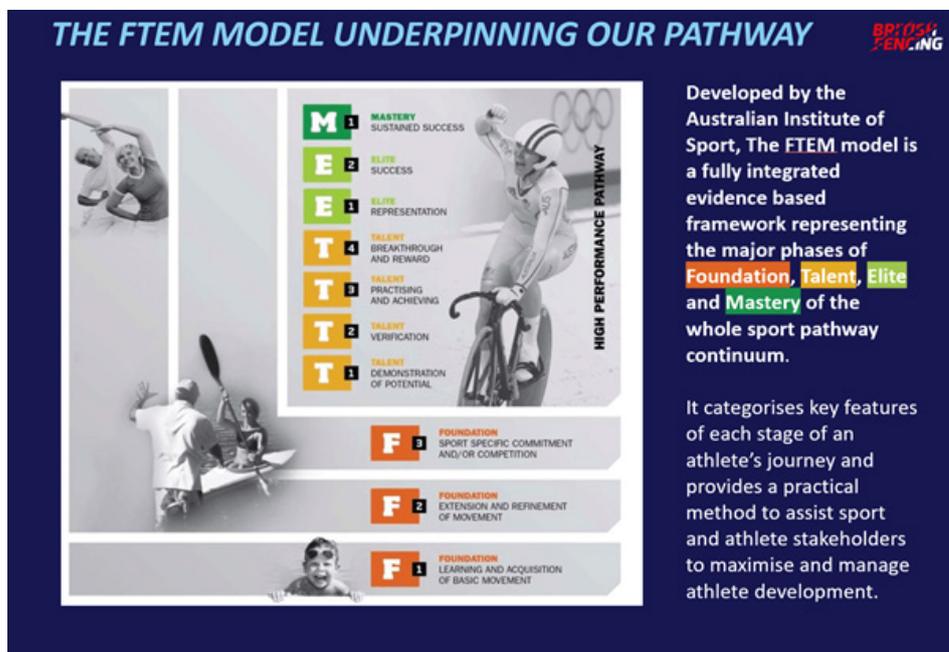
Led by Johnny Davis, BF's Olympic Team Manager, work has already started on understanding how the Athlete Development Programme can meet the needs of Senior athletes targeting the Olympics using the new pathway model as the framework.

Johnny will also work with the ADP Coaches in dealing with the impact of Covid-19 on the senior international season and supporting those fencers still on the qualification journey to Tokyo as they prepare for the remaining qualification competitions.

THE FTEM FRAMEWORK

Developed by the Australian Institute of Sport, FTEM is a fully integrated evidence-based framework representing the major phases of Foundation, Talent, Elite and Mastery of the whole sport pathway continuum.

It categorises key features of each stage of an athlete's journey and provides a practical method to assist sport and athlete stakeholders to maximise and manage athlete development.



What are the benefits of FTEM?

The FTEM Framework:

- Integrates general and specialised phases of development for participants within the active lifestyle, sport participation and sport excellence pathways - thus improving knowledge, alignment and retention within the whole sport system
- Provides an increased number (10) of developmental phases in order to better understand athlete transition - enabling us to better identify and deliver the right support at the right time
- Avoids chronological and training prescriptions - and can therefore be adapted to the needs of fencing
- More optimally establishes a continuum between participation and elite - making the transition more accessible for more people and even allowing athletes to move back and forth between performance and participation
- Allows full inclusion of many developmental support drivers at the sport and system levels - supporting our desire for a holistic approach to athlete development. Using FTEM as the basis, it is possible for us to categorise key features of a fencer within each of these pathways and therefore manage the expectations of fencers throughout their fencing journey.

Use of this framework results in an enhanced understanding of fencer pathways which will help us to improve the experiences of more participants, at more levels of the pathway, more often. This will help us retain more fencers, building the pipeline and ultimately deliver better performances.

Why have we used FTEM as a framework for our Pathway?

For those involved in talent programmes, sporting excellence is the ambition. For the majority involved in talent programmes it is the defining place where the ambition is never realised. 96% of participants across sport do not 'graduate' from talent programmes. Often these athletes are lost to the sport when lifestyle and performance mean that they are unable to maintain a constant upward trajectory. In fencing we cannot afford this 'kick-out' model of athlete development particularly as it takes so many years (8-12 years minimum) to develop as an elite fencer. Therefore, we have chosen to use a framework that provides a more flexible and inclusive alternative for developing pathways through fencing, allowing for linear and non-linear progression and for athletes to develop at different rates unconstrained by age.

THE PATHWAY CONTEXT

Funding and delivery models for the lower ends of performance pathways in sport varies across Home Nations.

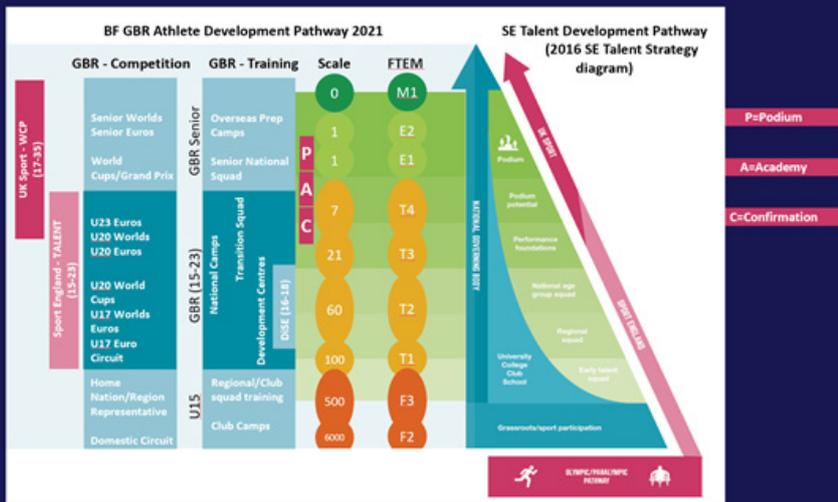
We have chosen to define our pathway model independently from funding and funding strategies. This provides the opportunity to define how athletes should progress through the sport without the constraints and requirements imposed

on the model by successive funding strategies.

Our objective is therefore to deliver "One connected pathway, one connected programme, supported by multiple income/funding streams accessible to GBR athletes (irrespective of Home Nation) - DiSE, Sport England Talent, charity donations, patrons, sponsorship, UK Sport".

In order to apply for funding, we need to demonstrate how our athlete pathway sits in the context of Sport England/Home Nation and UK Sport Athlete Development Pathways. The diagram below demonstrates how the main elements of the pathway map to Sport England's Talent Pathway, DiSE and UK Sport Confirmation, Academy and Podium funding opportunities.

FENCING: ATHLETE PATHWAY CONTEXT



One connected pathway, one connected programme, supported by multiple income/funding streams

DISE, Sport England Talent, Charity donations, Patrons, Sponsorship, UK Sport (Aspiration, MSP etc)

- British Fencing (BF) receives Sport England Talent investment. This investment is used to deliver programme activities (such as camps) in England to those athletes aged 15 and over on the Athlete Development Programme.
- Scottish Fencing (SF) receive separate investment from sportscotland to deliver activities in Scotland to meet the needs of Scottish athletes including those in the performance pathway that cannot travel to England to participate in programme activities.
- Remaining Home Nations do not have performance pathway programmes and athletes & coaches can access the BF Athlete Development Programme - although they may not be eligible to the same Sport England grants and subsidies available to English athletes.

Working with Home Nation Fencing Associations

Eligibility to join BF's Athlete Development Programme (ADP) is not restricted by Home Nation affiliation. However, the scope within the programme to provide

development opportunities can be impacted by funding restrictions.

This is particularly noticeable in the lower stages of the pathway:

Eligibility for UK Sport funding is not impacted by an athlete's Home Nation.

PATHWAY STAGES

The Athlete Pathway Stages are based on the **FTEM Framework**.

The Performance Pathway Stages are those from T1 to M1 which describe the journey from Pre-Elite (T1 to T3) to Breakthrough Elite (T4) to Elite (E1, E2) and ultimately to Mastery (M1).

T1 - Potential Identified - Verified through demonstration of competitive performance, skills and commitment to improvement - Domestic Ranked (Cadet/Junior/Senior) Top 15

T2 - Emerging and Verification - Verified through a period of observation across environments, holistic athlete profiling supported by club performance plans and benchmarking - Cadet International Medallist

T3 - Developing/Practising and Achieving - Commitment as a Pre-Elite Athlete and refinement of holistic skills through effective, deliberate programming - Junior International Medallist or Senior World Ranked 120

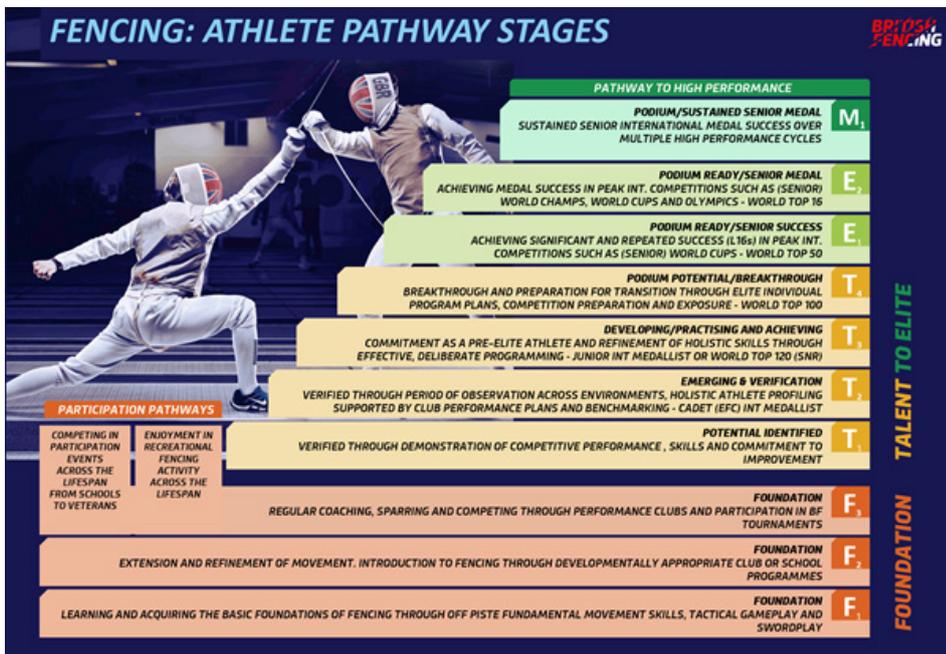
T4 - Podium Potential/Breakthrough - Breakthrough and preparation for

transition through Elite Individual Program Plans, Competition Preparation and Exposure - Senior World Ranked Top 100

E1 - Podium Ready/Senior Success - Achieving significant and repeated success in peak international competitions such as Senior Grand Prix/World Cups - Senior World Ranked Top 50

E2 - Podium Ready/Senior Medal - Achieving medal success in peak international competitions such as Olympics, Senior World Champs, Grand Prix/World Cups - Senior World Ranked Top 16

M1 - Podium/Sustained Medal - Sustained Senior International Medal Success over multiple High Performance Cycles.



Each stage is defined using a number of **Pathway Stage Components** to describe the expectations of an athlete in that stage.

1. Behaviour & Commitment
2. Adaptability & Decision Making
3. (Ability to) Control and Dominate Distance
4. Technical Excellence
5. Ability to tolerate mental and physical load
6. Performance/Results
7. Training Environments
8. Support (Coaches, Sport Science & Medicine (SS&M), Parents)
9. Competition Targets
10. Programmes

For a full description of two of these components see the following pages.

It is important to note that in aligning athletes to stages:

- no single component defines a stage
- performances/results are not standalone stage entry or exit criteria
- as an athlete moves through the pathway stages the expectation is that they build on the skills, experience and knowledge of previous stages
- the typical purpose of any funded pathway programme is to support athletes to move up the pathway to E2/M1

- we would expect athletes to move down as well as up. For example, a T3 Junior athlete who moves to university may temporarily move down to T2 as the impact on their lifestyle and training commitments change. Some athletes may choose to make a significant commitment to a T4 lifestyle for a defined period and will either succeed (moving to E1) or drop back (to T3).

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

Submit your stories to the editor:

karim.bashir@catchsport.com

Level 2 Fencing Coach required for Saffron Walden Swords Fencing Club

Saffron Walden Swords fencing Club is based on the North Essex/Cambridge border and meets every Saturday morning during term time from 9.30 -12.30. The club has been running since 2009 and has fifty members and an expanding youth membership. We are about one hour and ten minutes' drive from London or 45 minutes by train from Tottenham Hale station.

The club has a strong team of volunteers that assist with managing the club, but as our current coach and chair stepping down, we are seeking a new permanent level 2 coach from October 2020. This position is for the main club coach who would provide coaching for individual and group lessons from 8 to Adult and contribute to the planning of short and long term planning and strategy for the club. A two weapon coach (Foil/Sabre) would be ideal; however Foil only coaching would also be acceptable. Start date, pay and travel expenses can be discussed.

If this opportunity would suit you then please contact club chair David Aronsohn for further details at aronment@yahoo.co.uk. Or call the mobile on 07733 174 996.



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FENCING ATHLETE PATHWAY – E2



ACHIEVING MEDAL SUCCESS IN PEAK INTERNATIONAL COMPETITIONS SUCH AS SENIOR WORLD CHAMPIONSHIPS, SENIOR WORLD CUPS/GPS & OLYMPICS

E2



ELITE ATHLETE

Achieves a podium performance at (Senior) FIE World Cup, Grand Prix, World Championships or Olympic Games. 'Professional' Athlete Lifestyle. Dedicated to driving excellence in day to day practice in world class environments and FIE Senior Circuit competition to maintain and hone skills and execution. Leading development of own goal focussed programme requirements integrating leading edge technical, tactical, physical, physiological and psychological components. World Class focus on preparation (eg performance analysis and tactical planning) and consistency in delivering quality competitive performances. Ability to execute consistent and accurate performance skills for relevant disciplines. Ability to manage and prioritise sport and vocational commitments to maintain a sport-life balance and lifestyle activities supporting psychological and physical wellbeing. Preparing for a life after sport, including formalised coaching/mentoring opportunities.

PROGRAMMES

BF PODIUM PROGRAMME



COMPETITION TARGETS

SENIOR WORLD CHAMPIONSHIPS, SENIOR WORLD CUPS/GRAND PRIX, OLYMPICS



TRAINING ENVIRONMENTS

PERFORMANCE CLUBS*, PODIUM SESSIONS, INTERNATIONAL PREPARATION CAMPS**, S&C FACILITIES

ADAPTABILITY & DECISION MAKING



Maintain and update pre-emptive fight strategies to beat every athlete in World Top 32 - includes 3+ alternative tactical scenarios based on online and offline analysis of opponent and own strengths & weakness. Ability to execute strategy during fight and anticipate when to switch tactics, selecting and executing successful actions under pressure. Ability to plan and adapt in fight to referee interpretation. Ability to innovate and manage risk under pressure.



PERFORMANCE RESULTS

FIE World Ranking (Senior top 16), 77% DE wins against top 64 World Ranked opponents and consistent/average top 8% finishing position at FIE events



ATHLETE BEHAVIOUR & COMMITMENT

Level 5 leadership – Executive 'Building enduring greatness through paradoxical combination of personal humility and professional will.' Experienced 'CEO' – Role modelling high performance values and culture. Driving, tracking and managing own goal focussed programme and managing those that support it to ensure needs are met. Leading the difficult conversations and comfortable to give and receive +ve and -ve feedback. Managing detailed 4 year financial plans. Demonstrating excellence, commitment to self improvement and professionalism in all areas. Seeking out opportunities for innovation and self-reinvention through changing support team members, cultivating relationships with overseas clubs/coaches and relocation abroad.

CONTROL AND DOMINATE DISTANCE



Ability to creatively evaluate, innovate and adapt to control & dominate distance to effectively execute a successful action at the right time (tempo) at World Class level in high pressure complex competitive situations.



TECHNICAL EXCELLENCE

Ability to utilise a wide range of weapon specific actions against World Class opponents and have a select 3-4 actions (Super Skills) with high proficiency/ efficiency/ %age success rate against World Top 16. Excellent understanding of the FIE rules. Ability to plan for and adapt technique to interpretation of different senior circuit referees.



ABILITY TO TOLERATE LOAD (MENTAL & PHYSICAL)

Adherence to adequate training load 2 x quality training per day (10-12 session/wk, 25-35 hrs/wk). Psychologically robust, with sound motor function and maximum fitness to tolerate increasing load in training and competition (i.e. ability to maintain performance over 120-180 mins). Mentally resilient under stress. Actively managing training and competition load to allow for longevity of career.



SUPPORT (COACHES, S&C, BF TEAM, PARENTS)

Supporting sporting efforts and role modelling BF values and positive sportsmanship. Showing respect to athlete, leadership personnel, coaches, and officials. Promoting athlete autonomy and problem solving. Enabling high performing collaborative partnership between athletes, coaches, clubs and BF. Commitment to supporting athlete to lead and manage relationships and feedback to all support staff in a constructive manner to drive performance. For professional support staff, commitment to own ongoing personal development in elite medal winning space, ability to research, critically review and innovate to gain competitive advantage. Anti-Doping and safeguarding training and qualifications mandatory. Ability to provide insightful feedback via athlete-led approach.

FENCING ATHLETE PATHWAY – T1



VERIFIED THROUGH DEMONSTRATION OF COMPETITIVE PERFORMANCE, SKILLS AND COMMITMENT TO IMPROVEMENT

T1



PRE-ELITE ATHLETE

Commitment to performance focused fencing practice. Prioritising fencing over other sport practice. Dedicated to sport specific practice and progressive competition to refine skills and execution. Defining and exploring individualised holistic training programme (supported by performance coach and club). Identifying and establishing discipline specific skills integrating basic technical, tactical, physical, physiological and psychological components. Understanding what it takes to be prepared and competitive at key competitions, exploring performance analysis and tactical planning. Learning to identify opportunities to improve their own development. Developing ability to execute consistent and accurate performance skills for relevant disciplines. Developing a realistic approach to dual career planning. Good balance of sport and vocational commitments with lifestyle activities supporting psychological and physical wellbeing. **15-20 hours/week across 8-10 sessions**

PROGRAMMES

BF ADP PROGRAMME. PART OF SCHOOL SPORT PERFORMANCE PROGRAMME/SCHOLARSHIP SCHEME.



COMPETITION TARGETS

NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIPS, INTERNATIONAL NOMINATED EVENTS (EFCs, WORLD CUPS)



TRAINING ENVIRONMENTS

PERFORMANCE CLUB, ADP SESSIONS, DOMESTIC CAMPS, S&C FACILITIES



ADAPTABILITY & DECISION MAKING

Developing the ability to plan with coach a pre-emptive fight strategy including alternative tactical scenarios, based on analysis of opponent and own strengths & weakness. Ability to execute strategy during fight and recognise when to switch tactics. Signs of innovative gameplay and ability to take calculated risk. Ability to understand referee interpretation and impact on tactical decisions.



PERFORMANCE RESULTS

Medalling at BRCs and/or National Champs (U17/20/23/Snr), winning DE fights at nominated EFC U17 or top tier European Domestic level.



ATHLETE BEHAVIOUR & COMMITMENT

Level 0 Leadership – Demonstrating Potential ‘to make productive contributions through talent, knowledge, skills and good work habits’.
Committed Apprentice – growth mindset, taking responsibility for own programme (self-resilience). Demonstrating day to day approach/adherence to training plan. Developing professional approach to competition preparation. Commitment to self improvement. and Capability to receive feedback. Developing professionalism in all areas. Regularly tracking and monitoring own progress in training and competition. Defined short to medium term ambitions. Basic understanding of financial planning. Ability to understand and follow a performance plan to achieve defined goals.



CONTROL AND DOMINATE DISTANCE

Able to demonstrate basic level of control & ability to use distance for advantage. Appreciation of how world top fencers control & dominate distance. Correct application of own working distance. Great timing.



TECHNICAL EXCELLENCE

Good co-ordination and confident to make attacks using a range of footwork. Developing ability to perform a wide range of weapon specific actions and have a select few attacks with high %age success rate against top domestic opponents. Basic understanding of FIE rules and the need to adapt to interpretation of the referee. Able to referee in club - L1 qual.



ABILITY TO TOLERATE LOAD (MENTAL & PHYSICAL)

Adherence to adequate training load 2 x quality training per day (8-10 sessions per week, 15-20 hours per week). Psychologically robust, with sound motor function and baseline fitness to tolerate increasing load in training and competition (i.e. ability to maintain performance over 120-180 mins). Active development of mental resilience.



SUPPORT (COACHES, SSEM, BF TEAM, PARENTS)

Supporting sporting efforts and role modelling BF values and positive sportsmanship. Showing respect to athlete, leadership personnel, coaches, and officials. Promoting athlete autonomy and problem solving, allowing athletes to develop ‘self coaching skills’ and a collaborative partnership between athletes, coaches, clubs and BF to develop. Commitment to supporting athlete to share feedback in a constructive manner to drive performance. For professional support staff, commitment to own ongoing personal development in performance athlete space and maintaining up to date knowledge and qualifications. Anti-Doping and safeguarding training and qualifications mandatory. Personal coaches must be a minimum of Level 2 on the BF Coach Register (or their Federation equivalent), with a satisfactory disciplinary and safeguarding record. Ability to provide feedback to athlete in a constructive manner.

There are 10 Pathway Stage Components as follows:

1. Behaviour & Commitment
2. Adaptability & Decision Making
3. (Ability to) Control and Dominate Distance
4. Technical Excellence
5. Ability to tolerate mental and physical load
6. Performance/Results
7. Training Environments
8. Support (Coaches, SS&M, Parents)
9. Competition Targets
10. Programmes

Components 1-6 derive originally from the 2012-16 UK Sport "What it Takes to Win" model for world class performance which has been further adapted and refined. These performance components are joined by the other stage components (7-10) to provide a holistic pathway stage description.

'What It Takes To Win' in world class fencing is defined as the ability to score more hits than the opponent (first to 15 or most hits scored within 3 x 3min rounds) and win six consecutive direct elimination fights (against world class opponents in world class competition).

This goal is broken down into Performance Components (e.g. technical, tactical, behavioural etc) which include quantitative performance measures (e.g. average % finish, world ranking, win/loss ratio for fights won/lost by 1 hit, strength & conditioning measures) which feed into the Pathway Stages Descriptions. Using the Weapon Framework these components and measures are further defined for each stage and adapted by discipline where appropriate.

For athletes moving into pathway stage T4 and beyond, each of these performance components will include performance standards required to be eligible for entry to UK Sport funded programme elements of the Athlete Development Programme (ADP).

Individual Component Descriptions

1. BEHAVIOUR & COMMITMENT

Underpinned by the leadership models and behaviour frameworks, an athlete

is expected to be professional and accountable - not only in their pursuit of performance but also in how they inspire others and ultimately become the Olympian that they and others can be proud of. Teamwork is as important as individual results and the ability to develop self-awareness and leadership skills. Over time a world class fencer will be supported to develop the ability to manage their support team to deliver on their goals preparing for a long-term career at world class level.

Commitment is not just turning up to training and competition. It's about all aspects of the athlete lifestyle and giving 100%. It's about turning up to a competition ready and prepared with equipment that works. All pathway athletes are expected to demonstrate:

'Professionalism in your approach to everything'

'Accountability for your actions'

T1 stage athletes are expected to demonstrate 'coachability' and 'hunger for success'. Coachability includes the ability to follow instructions (e.g. read and respond to programme emails in a timely fashion) and be accountable for following personal plans (e.g. Strength & Conditioning (S&C), nutrition). Without these elements, the positive impact of any programme will be limited and result in a poor experience for athletes.

Measures include:

- Existence and regular maintenance of an Individual Athlete Profile
- Number of red cards due to equipment failure

2. ADAPTABILITY & DECISION MAKING

The ability to create and execute excellent tactical game plans. World class athletes should be able to read an opponent, create game plans in advance, adapt on the piste and be able to make winning decisions and adapt during competitive matches and under pressure. They should also be able to win one touch matches when it matters.

T1 stage athletes should be demonstrating that they are 'game intelligent and innovative'.

This can be demonstrated through other games which have tactical and strategic elements.

It is expected that T1 stage athletes will be taking an interest and show a basic understanding of the tactics adopted by the World Top 16 (in their weapon) to win.

Measures include:

- Number/quality of tactical game plans in place for target competition opponents
- Win/Loss ratio of fights won or lost by 1 point at target competitions

3. CONTROL & DOMINATE DISTANCE

The ability to create time and space to execute winning moves. World class fencing requires exceptional judgement and control of timing and distance.

T1 stage athletes are expected to demonstrate 'great timing and ability to use distance for advantage' and have some ability to use their body to create space and distance with a similar level opponent where necessary. Like 'game intelligence' this can be demonstrated in other activities, not just fencing.

4. TECHNICAL EXCELLENCE

The ability to deliver consistently excellent technical skills (blade-work and footwork). Has a world class level of technique to enhance their personal style which includes:

- Balanced and agile footwork
- Successful in attack - fights with a successfully offensive style complemented by dependable defense

To win at world class level athletes need the ability to execute an attack and with the recent changes in rules, this is even more important.

T1 stage athletes are expected to have 'good coordination' plus the basic ability to control their hands and feet to allow for development as a performance athlete.

We are also expecting athletes that are 'confident to make attacks using a range of footwork'.

This does not necessarily mean that we expect T1 athletes to always be successful in attack but athletes that only develop their defensive gameplay will not be able to progress. (T1 Foilists and Epeeists are expected to be as comfortable fleching as they are lunging).

5. PERFORMANCE/RESULTS

The ability to consistently perform under pressure - is able to maintain performance standards under competitive stress.

Measures include:

- Average % finishing position at world class (or developmentally appropriate T1/T2) competitions
- % DE victories against world class (or developmentally appropriate T1/T2) opposition
- World Ranking (Senior)

6. ABILITY TO TOLERATE MENTAL AND PHYSICAL LOAD

Robust and ready to perform. Required level of fitness (mentally & physically) to perform optimally at the end of multiple world class 15 hit matches and team matches for three consecutive days of competition.

In a sport which at the highest levels involves subjective refereeing, world class athletes must develop the mental resilience to cope with this.

T1 stage athletes are expected to have a basic level of physical fitness and mental resilience.

Measures

More information will be published on the specific tests that all athletes are expected to do on a regular basis to monitor their physical readiness. T1 athletes should have a basic level of anaerobic and aerobic fitness.

7. TRAINING ENVIRONMENTS

To progress through the pathway athletes are expected to access appropriate training environments that support their pathway stage level.

Training environments at all levels need high quality coaching AND appropriate level sparring.

At the top level of the pathway, these environments include elite performance clubs with other E1/E2 stage athletes, National training sessions, International training and preparation camps (with other medal winning athletes/nations) and other high quality training environments such as S&C facilities.

It may be necessary for athletes to relocate abroad for a period to access the right training environment.

Not all T1 stage athletes can access performance clubs and may be participating in community fencing. To progress to T2 stage these athletes will be expected to change (or enhance) their training environment.

8. SUPPORT (COACHES, SS&M, PARENTS)

Athletes on the programme need the right level of support from those around them to progress.

At the highest level an athlete's support team (coaches, physios, nutritionists, parents/guardians/partners) must:

- Enable a high performing collaborative partnership between athletes, coaches, clubs and BF
- Commit to supporting the athlete to lead and manage relationships and feedback to all support staff in a constructive manner to drive performance
- For professional support staff supporting T4 and above - demonstrate a commitment to own ongoing personal development in elite medal winning space, ability to research, critically review and innovate to gain competitive advantage.

At all levels, it is expected that members of the support team:

- Support sporting efforts and role modelling of BF values and positive sportsmanship
- Show respect to the athlete, leadership personnel, coaches and officials.

At entry level (T1) we expect everyone (personal coaches, parents/guardians etc) to:

- Promote athlete autonomy and problem solving, allowing athletes to develop 'self-coaching skills' and a collaborative partnership between athletes, coaches, clubs and BF to develop
- Commitment to supporting the athlete to share constructively to drive performance
- Undertake the UKAD online **Coach Clean**
- For professional support staff - show commitment to their ongoing personal development in the performance athlete space and maintaining up to date knowledge and qualifications
- For fencing coaches - be on the BF Coach Register (minimum Level 2 with a development plan to Level 4) with a satisfactory disciplinary and safeguarding record

- For Parents/Guardians of U18s - to attend an ADP induction session which will focus on athlete wellbeing

Measures include:

- Existence of Coaching Development Plan
- Qualification Level
- CPD undertaken

9. COMPETITION TARGETS

These are a list of the competitions that an athlete is targeting to deliver their personal best performances.

At E1/E2 the expectation is that an athlete will be targeting the Olympics within that cycle.

At T4 an athlete may be up to one cycle out from Olympic qualification. Therefore targets will include the Senior European and World Championships, Senior World Cups and Senior Grand Prix's.

Competition targets are expected to be defined alongside the Results component.

10. PROGRAMMES

The BF Athlete Development Programme is responsible for delivering funded/ subsidised services and development opportunities to identified pathway athletes.

All identified pathway athletes stage T2 and above are expected to join the BF Athlete Development Programme.

Subject to Sport England funding there may be opportunities for T1 athletes to join the programme and participate in related activities. At the E1/E2 level, (subject to UK Sport funding) it is expected that athletes will be engaging with the Podium Programme element of the Athlete Development Programme.

At the T2-T3 stage athletes (age 16-18 undergoing state education in England) are normally expected to apply for DiSE.

At all stages athletes are expected to apply for any appropriate sport scholarship opportunities that exist in their chosen place of education.

The Weapons Framework is a body of research, frameworks and tools designed to inform the expected progression of athletes through the pathway stages. It includes:

- Fencer Athlete Competitor Profiles (FAC Profiles)
- Athlete Behaviour Framework
- Biopsychosocial Framework
- The GB Style
- Leadership & Relationship Models

The Weapons Framework is designed to inform the individual athlete profile work and is intended to support those athletes and their support teams in creating their performance (training and competition) plans.

Every athlete on the ADP is expected to create and manage their own individualised performance plans which will be reviewed on a regular basis in light of the pathway stages and appropriate Weapon Framework content.

THE FENCER, ATHLETE, COMPETITOR (FAC) PROFILES

The FAC Profiles are a set of age and ability determined profiles which help athletes navigate their journeys through (up, down and within) the Pathway Stages and inform their development priorities.

The starting point for these journeys is based on understanding fencing and being able to fence - being a 'fencer'. As a fencer develops, training load can be increased to improve athletic ability - being an 'athlete'. The final aspect of a journey is the move into being a 'competitor', focussing on the work and preparation required to achieve success at the highest level.

Transitions from one age group to another will typically involve re-assessing against these profiles - for example an U20 with an U20 'competitor' profile is likely to re-profile as a 'fencer' or 'athlete' on their move to Seniors.

The profiles are intended to provide more detail on the Pathway Components including physical requirements, growth and development considerations, environmental drivers and lifestyle.

Example - Pathway Stage: T1, Component: Attitude and Commitment, Profile: 'Fencer'. Expectation: Demonstrate a commitment to a fencing specific training/competition programme, including:

- Willingness to look for and seek to make improvements in weak areas of technique/tactical play/physical readiness/mental preparation
- Commitment to regular goal-oriented training and competition at an appropriate level
- Demonstrating an awareness of goal-setting and mental skills
- Demonstrating an awareness of the need for holistic training in achieving high performance training
- Demonstrate a desire to seek out information and understand the sport - seek positive role models

ATHLETE BEHAVIOUR FRAMEWORK

As GBR athletes represent themselves, their sport and their country it is important at all times to promote a positive image consistent with socially expected behaviours. It is also recognised that there are underlying sociological and psychological factors that may contribute

to athlete behaviour both positively and negatively.

As athletes progress on their development journey, poor decisions and mistakes happen. The Athlete Behaviour Framework has been created to act as a guide to inform and support athletes in making positive choices which in turn supports their development as a performance athlete.

It is noted that misconduct among professional athletes is not uncommon across sport and often publicised by the media. This negative publicity is particularly damaging to the public image of the athlete but also the reputation of the associated sport, sponsors and potential sponsors.

In addition, athletes tell us that the behaviour of their teammates matters and can have an impact (both positive and negative) on their performance, whether at squad training or World Championships. Creating and implementing a framework for expected common behaviours makes it more likely that we can create positive performance environments for all athletes in the GBR squad.

Most athletes as they develop will, with the support of those around them demonstrate these behaviours and their underpinning values on and off piste. But we recognise that not all athletes will know and understand what is expected in all situations and the associated risks involved. It is important that support is provided to help the athlete navigate situations and make positive choices (and of course avoid potential misconduct). It provides prevention rather than a deterrent approach.

Value Definition	Actions
Honesty: Providing and receiving constructive feedback while acknowledging it might feel uncomfortable to receive and/or give.	Engage in self-reflection
	Participate in peer-review among fencers
	Am honest and precise in the evaluation of my performance
	Take credit when something is done right
	Acknowledge when something has gone wrong
	Display honesty and precision in assessing daily, weekly, season-based progress
	Self-review video post-training and post-competition
	Discuss with my coach if I am/or am thinking of receiving input from elsewhere
	Have honest conversations around commitment and potential

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Value Definition	Actions
Respect: Value others' perspectives and treat people as they would like to be treated.	Take all opinions on board
	Understand my views may be different to others and do not impose my views
	Ask other coaches/referees/fencers for their feedback and listen
	Respect individual differences
	Discuss with my coach if I'd like to work with/take lessons from other coaches before taking action
	Am never abusive to other athletes, coaches or referees
	Turn up in time for training
	Shake hands (where appropriate)
	Greet others on the piste at every bout
	Tidy up after myself
Value Definition	Actions
Accountability: I do what I say I will do and I take responsibility for the outcome.	Own up to mistakes/take credit where credit is due
	Precisely evaluate actions and outcomes
	Fail and learn from the experience
	Agree on goals for training session and season
	Recognise the outcomes of actions
	Take ownership of time management, equipment, preparation for events
	Commit to a training and competition programme
Value Definition	Actions
Teamwork: Sharing skills and capabilities. Work as a unit and complement each other.	Support other fencers at competitions - even when eliminated or competing against each other for selection
	Support teammates and stay to watch their matches - even in other weapons
	Stay in kit to help other fencers warm-up/spar
	Help other fencers succeed by providing advice and help
	Know my limitations and when to ask for help
	Share learning and knowledge
	Understand how I can best support each member of my team during matches and let them know how they can help me
Value Definition	Actions
Excellence: ... is a standard that uses British Fencing values as a measuring tool for how well growth and development of coaches, athletes and staff is encouraged and exercised.	Am Respectful - demonstrated to every individual
	Focus on processes, seeking to be the best version of myself through incremental improvement
	Match behaviour with values
	Have ownership - take responsibility for my actions
	Learn quickly - from mistakes
	Speak with a consistency of purpose, honestly and kindly
	Display a positive attitude & commitment to development
	Make the most of every moment
	Flexibility - Be willing to do things differently

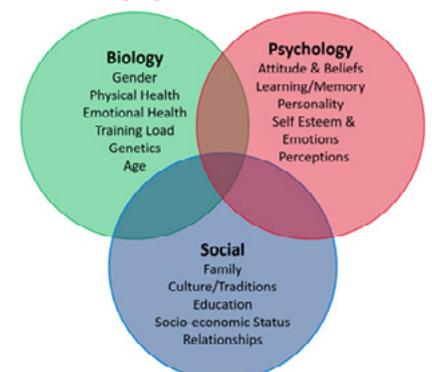
Whilst this behaviour framework is athlete focussed, a coach's behaviour framework has been in place since 2018. This is designed to support the coaches in creating the training and competition environment where athletes can demonstrate the behaviours. For example, running sessions with fencers where they can gain an understanding of how best to support team members and state how they like

to be supported. These insights allow appropriate support to be given.

BIOPSYCHOSOCIAL FRAMEWORK

The Biopsychosocial Framework is a model that looks at the interconnection between sociological, biological and psychological elements in human development. These integrating factors will impact on athletes moving up and down the performance pathway. This is coupled with transitions (age groups and/or performance groups)

Basic Biopsychosocial Framework



and key life events meaning that athletes will experience ups and downs in their progress, often recognised as non-linearity in development.

Looking beyond technical, tactical, physical and mental development in the athletes and referencing these domains and transitions, will assist in planning the programmes to support athletes with different levels and types of support - recognising when natural dips occur and reducing their depth and duration.

Examples of how this is reflected within the weapons framework include:

- Growth spurts can cause timing and distance issues as the fencer recalibrates their body. Moving from junior to senior levels, athletes should be fully grown and neural limitations of growth spurts should be insignificant
- Recognising when physical optimisation starts to become more central to training, increasing a specific athletes leg power to understand certain fencing actions
- GCSEs and A-levels can be obstacles to large training loads at specific times
- Athletes start to move away from home and have to take care of nutrition, cleaning, laundry etc.

THE GB STYLE

The GB Style provides a technical and tactical framework for coaches to support their athletes as they build their skills and move through the pathway stages.

It sets out what a GBR fencer is expected to be able to do from a technical and tactical perspective. It also creates a common reference point and terminology for coaches and athletes when they come together to train or compete.

The technical and tactical framework is built around the fundamental '3 P's: **Perceive, Predict and Provoke**'. These define a framework of space/distance and time:

- **Perceive** - Keep out of critical distance - Ensure the opponent commits to a decision first and that you're prepared to react
- **Predict** - Pre-meditated setting of distance - Ensure your action happens at the moment of the opponent's predicted reaction (not too early nor too late)
- **Provoke** - Maintain or reach critical distance - Start before your opponent with provocation and commit to your final action after their reaction

Based on the 3 P's each weapon has its own defined GB style. This is reviewed on a regular basis by the weapon coaches on the Athlete Development Programme.

LEADERSHIP & RELATIONSHIP MODELS

Leadership is a critical aspect of a successful Olympic fencer. Why? World class fencing is a long-term dual-career option and once fencers reach the top ten in the World, they can stay there into their 30s and beyond.

For athletes to be successful and resilient over multiple Olympic cycles they need to develop the management and leadership skills that help them get the best out of themselves and those around them in order to achieve their goals.

Successful Olympic athletes will also be role models and leaders for the next generation.

In a similar way to top tennis players, top fencers will need to be surrounded by a team of experts who support them to be at their best. But unlike tennis, an athlete does not earn money from winning fencing tournaments. So most successful fencers need to combine fencing with other professional activities. Managing career progression and the relationships between those that make up the athlete support team is vital.

LEVEL 5 LEADERSHIP

Jim Collins's Classification of Leadership sets out the characteristics and traits of leadership. Based on extensive research the resulting model captures what differentiates between 'good' and 'great'. As developing leaders move through the model they acquire and build on the competencies of the previous level. This classification of leadership has been mapped to the Pathway Stages and expected development incorporated into the Athlete Behaviour pathway component.



Recommended reading: *From Good to Great*, Jim Collins

STUDENT TO CEO RELATIONSHIP MODEL

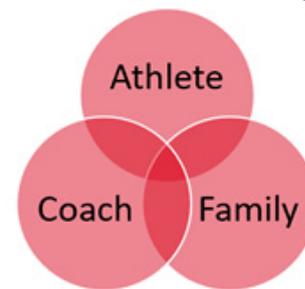
The Student to CEO relationship model describes a progression in the relationships between athletes and other individuals (or groups of individuals) that make up their support team. Managing relationships

is one of the most important differentials for long term success, not just in sport. Yet athletes are often themselves 'over-managed' - by parents, coaches, federations - which will prevent them from developing the skills they will need to be truly successful. Movement through these phases do not necessarily map 1-to-1 to Pathway Stages as they will be highly dependent on age and emotional development of the athlete.

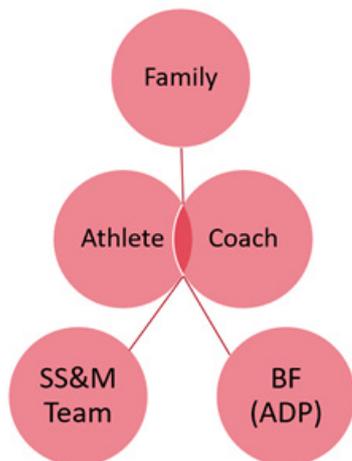
1. The Student

When starting the journey as an athlete, the family and the coach are typically the major influence and make the majority of decisions with regards to fencing. The athlete is told when to go to training, what they are learning and what competitions to do.

Athletes are expected to have already moved past this stage by the time they have joined the ADP.



THE STUDENT



THE APPRENTICE

2. The Apprentice

At this stage, there is a commitment to performance improvement and additional relationships need to be established and managed. Existing relationships develop as the athlete and their coach become more of a partnership, with the family moving into a more supportive role. Additional relationships form. For example with Sports Science and Medicine professionals (e.g. Strength & Conditioning experts, Sport Psychologists). As training and international competition increases, athletes learn to take responsibility and accountability for creating and managing their performance plan, supported by their coach.

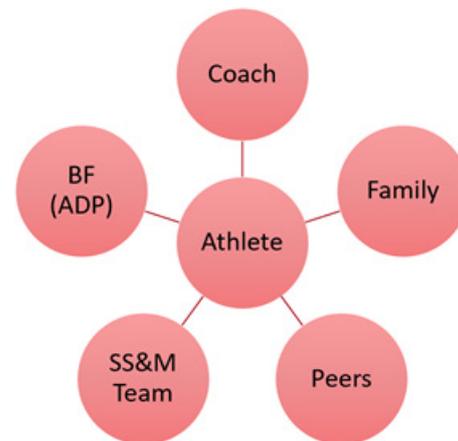
This is the point where many athletes join the ADP for the first time.

3. The Entrepreneur

This is a key stage in an athlete's career, likely to coincide with moving away from home or going to university. The coach has now moved into a supportive role, as the athlete becomes the driving force in managing their programme. This might also be a time when the athlete changes coaches or moves clubs. It is likely that the athlete will be competing in their final Junior years or looking to make the transition from Junior to Senior level.

This stage is where the athlete learns to build and manage a team and identifying who and what they need around them for future success. It is important that the athlete is clear about what they need and can articulate that to members of their team.

Like a 'real life' entrepreneur, the athlete will not always make the best decisions but being given the opportunity to make mistakes and learn from them quickly will be an important part of their development journey.



THE ENTREPRENEUR



THE CEO

4. The CEO

The experiences in the entrepreneur stage have taught the athlete how to successfully manage a team and understand what they need around them to support their goals. The athlete now has leadership responsibility for this team, providing overall vision and direction whilst allowing independent relationships to develop between team members and engendering trust to deliver.

Everyone is clear about the overarching goals, what their role is in helping achieve these goals and how they work with the wider team.

ADP EVOLUTION

Where We Are Now

Forming part of the overall BF Strategy, our mission is to deliver a sustainable and inclusive six weapon athlete development system that enables every (talented) athlete to access a high quality pathway that fulfils their potential as people and performers.

We do this through our Athlete Development Programme which **exists to support athletes in achieving Olympic success and inspiring others.**

Our primary objective is to produce athletes that are resilient, independent and high performing with a true sense of self value that in turn inspires others to achieve success.

We take a 'whole person' approach because we believe that **'better people make better athletes'**.

Our Values

These apply to everyone that participates in the programme - athletes, coaches and staff. They consist of the core BF values (Honesty, Respect and Excellence) plus an additional two (Accountability and Teamwork).

By signing up to the programme athletes are signing up to these values. They will underpin how we all behave and work - as individuals, teams and squads. They are the bedrock of our GBR fencing culture.

HONESTY - Providing and receiving constructive feedback while acknowledging it might feel uncomfortable to receive and/or give.

RESPECT - Value others' perspectives and treat people as they would like to be treated.

EXCELLENCE - A standard that uses BF values as a measuring tool for how well growth and development of coaches, athletes and staff is encouraged and exercised.

ACCOUNTABILITY - I do what I say I will do and I take responsibility for the outcome.

TEAMWORK - Sharing skills and capabilities. Working as a unit and complementing each other.

Based on our values we are developing behaviour frameworks (for staff, coaches and athletes) to help guide how we live our values. For example, through:

- Earning Trust through Integrity and Professionalism (Honesty, Respect, Accountability)
- Displaying Team Spirit (Teamwork, Respect)
- Challenging and Innovating to Excel (Excellence)

These behaviour frameworks will be reviewed annually with programme participants. Some of these behaviour commitments which appear in our Athlete Agreement will apply to every athlete participating in a programme.

The Pathway Model (What the programme is underpinned by)

Our programme is based on a defined pathway of athlete development (see above). This pathway is underpinned by development models - some sport specific (e.g. FTEM - Foundation, Talent, Elite, Mastery) and some more general (e.g. leadership).

What does the Programme deliver?

The Programme brings together education and development opportunities (such as camps, courses and competitions) which are intended to accelerate athlete development to Olympic success.

The Programme also ensures alignment between a number of other smaller funded projects and programmes (such as DiSE, Sport England Talent, UK Sport Medal Support Plan) to create the right opportunity for the right athlete at the right time.

Who can join?

Entry and ongoing participation in the Programme are based on a number of

factors including attitude, commitment, proficiency and performance standards and trajectories. Not all athletes selected to represent GBR will be on the Programme and spaces may be limited by funding availability.

Typically, the earliest age that an athlete will be considered for inclusion will be 15. At these early stages, participation in the Programme is less about results and more about athletes understanding and developing the vital capabilities (such as mental and physical resilience, self-awareness, responsibility, becoming a role model) for future life as a performance athlete.

What about funding?

To represent your country at international level an athlete will have to have the commitment and means to travel internationally.

BF does not generate enough income from membership fees to subsidise athletes representing GBR. We are a small sport and the membership fee would become prohibitive for many of our members if they had to subsidise the elite pathway in this way.

Instead, BF works to access government and charity funding where it is available and use this to subsidise Programme delivery. In some cases we are able to support applications for grants and funding for individual named athletes.

We believe that any funding to support our GBR ambitions is a privilege, not a right.

All funding (whether from government or charities) comes with responsibilities and accountabilities to those organisations (normally laid out in contracts between BF and the organisation). We therefore expect all those athletes in direct receipt of funding or participating in subsidised development opportunities to understand and deliver on their associated responsibilities and commitments.

To find out more about the ADP and how to join click [here](#).

COMMUNITY DISCUSSION EVENTS

Keeping the Positive Change from a Strange Six Months Hannah Gavin - Development Officer - Clubs & Regions

It is safe to say that we have all been tested over the last six months but now is potentially the time to reflect on the positives. 'Keep the change' has been a popular hashtag and sentiment on social media recently encouraging people to express what positive changes COVID-19 and a lockdown lifestyle has had on them. Whether it is a better work life balance due to our jobs having to invade our personal spaces or a better appreciation and re-discovery of what's right on our doorstep, here at BF we have been reviewing what good things have come out of a strange time.

Working with community clubs stretched up and down the length and breadth of the UK has always been an attractive part of my role as Development Officer. A chance to go out on the road and see all different kinds of fencing practice is a great way to understand what the needs and requirements of our BF clubs are. As lockdown hit, I was posed with the problem of how to reach our clubs at a time when arguably they needed us most. Like many other people in their working lives, I had to make a change.

The advancements and innovations of digital platforms used to host meetings and interactions have grown exponentially over the last few years. This is thanks, in



Hannah Gavin

part, to social media platforms becoming more and more popular in the commercial working world. Platforms such as LinkedIn and others. Virtual discussions, online training courses and webinars had already started to become a regular part of sport at a governing body level and the benefits were beginning to be shared at a club and grassroots level.

In May 2020 BF hosted its first series of Virtual Community Discussion Events with the intention of inviting members to raise issues, discuss topics and share ideas and for BF to ascertain what difficulties our clubs were facing. The discussions were open to all BF members and we encouraged all clubs to take part. Many of those elements discussed were to be taken to BF's 'Return to Fencing Working Group' at the time. The group had been set up specifically to coordinate and make recommendations on BF's 'Return to Fencing' plan.

The sessions proved more popular than we had initially anticipated and we quickly developed what was on offer to branch out to varied members of our community - Welfare Officers, Coaches and University clubs all being part of the program. As well as specified groups we also utilised the forum to open up conversations around certain topic areas such as the Black Lives Matter Listening Event held in June. During May - July there were ten separate discussion events which over 350 individual BF members subscribed to. We were able to consult with members that ranged from everyday volunteers to those involved in our club committees plus our coaches and as a result ensured that we were providing valued and helpful feedback.

The biggest benefit of the sessions was the opportunity not only for BF to network with its members but also for members to converse and feed off one another. It was great, for example, to see that a club in the Southern region could offer support to one in the West Midlands who had been facing a similar issue. This response showed BF that its members were willing and



wanting to engage, proved further by the positive and praiseworthy feedback we had received.

The uptake of these events has undoubtedly been a huge success and is a 'change' that we want to keep. Our ambition is to build upon what has been started, to create a useful asset for both our clubs and members. We are working to regularly update timetabled Community Discussion Events and expand to cover a whole host of topics and themes. We also intend to evolve conversations by inviting guest partners and speakers as well as various members of the BF team to come and engage with our membership. All current information is displayed on our website (search 'Community Discussion Events'). From there you can find out how to sign up for an upcoming session and see what's on the agenda.

Think about your experience so far in 2020 within fencing but also outside of it. Consider what positive changes you may have had to make and examine if they are ones that you should work to keep.

If you have any ideas of topics or want to know more about anything discussed in this article please e-mail me at hannah.gavin@britishfencing.com.



TRUE ATHLETE PROJECT

ADP Update

Sam Parfitt - Founder

As the struggle with coronavirus continues there couldn't be a more important time for us to consider the impact fencing has on individuals and society.

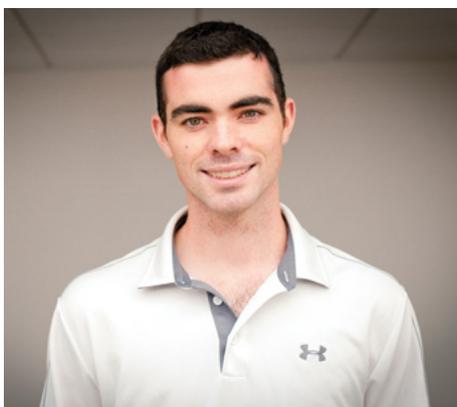
The current situation perfectly illustrates why a whole-person, socially conscious approach to fencing is so critical. An approach which takes into account what really matters and which aims to provide positive experiences that nurture life-long growth through sport. An approach which fosters connection, compassion, wellbeing, safety, resilience, strength and hope.

Yet, at such a difficult time, this powerful ally of ours - sport - has in large part been taken away.

Thankfully though, last month the ADP team managed to orchestrate a virtual training camp which showcased coaches' new-found Zoom abilities!

Coming back together was so powerful. I couldn't have been more impressed with how athletes worked diligently and made the most of the time, energy and care provided by the coaching team.

Within the TAP sessions, we explored our personal "values" and reflected on how sport can strengthen those values, as well as present challenges around how we live up to them. We discussed the notion of a "self-sufficient" athlete and how to leverage the resources around you for success. We learnt about "equanimity" (the idea of being balanced in the midst of difficulty) - an unusual but powerful topic to explore within a sporting context and given the current crisis. We looked at how mindfulness can help us to question the stories we tell ourselves, especially in terms of our training potential. And at one point over 100 fencers and coaches were on one zoom call meditating with one another which we think is probably a "first" in British sport!



Sam Parfitt © David Andrews

In order to continue to strengthen the TAP-BF partnership, we decided we needed to understand more about fencers' experiences. So, we sent a survey to all ADP fencers and 146 fencers responded (73 males and 73 females). We are very grateful to all those who took the time to help us



to help them and provide such rich data to analyse.

The survey asked fencers about their experiences of lockdown, their hopes and fears on their return to fencing, the qualities of their relationships with ADP coaches, their overall wellbeing, self-efficacy and social trust. We also revisited questions from one year ago exploring the perception of what makes a great athlete, the extent to which fencers practice mindfulness and perceived barriers to wellbeing.

Here are some of the generalised findings:

Experiences of Lockdown:

- During lockdown, physical wellbeing was statistically significantly correlated with mental wellbeing (the better your physical wellbeing, the better your mental wellbeing)
- During lockdown, fencers experienced better physical wellbeing than mental wellbeing
- During lockdown, fencers missed social interactions most, followed by fencing training

"[I'm missing] Talking to my friends, especially the ones I'm not that close to."

- During lockdown, fencers were most proud of their improved fitness
- Returning from lockdown, fencers are most worried about losing fencing ability

- Returning from lockdown, fencers are most looking forward to getting back to training

"[I'm most looking forward to] seeing my friends and in the nicest way possible, hitting people."

Coach-Athlete Relationships:

- Nine different aspects of coach-athlete relationships were statistically significantly correlated with one another. (For example, if you feel close

with your coach and feel like they make an effort to get to know you, then you're probably also going to feel at ease around them and prepared to give your best.)

- Positive coach-athlete relationships were also correlated with higher wellbeing
- Fencers reported feeling comfortable with their peers at camps
- When asked what fencers would like coaches to know about them in order to provide them with a great experience at camps, they said they would like their

that a new theme emerged, with 17.83% responses mentioning coronavirus

- When describing their ultimate vision of an athlete, fewer responses focused on physical attributes or outcomes and more responses focused on mental attributes. Interestingly, we had a new response theme emerge, with 16 responses mentioning "inspiring others/being a role model", whereas last year no responses mentioned this

(9/9), every wellbeing item (4/4) and social trust. Interestingly and despite these lower scores, females scored higher than males on self-efficacy (agreeing that they can achieve most goals they set themselves).

This difference between genders supports what has been identified recently within British Fencing. At the last ADP camp, Georgina Usher (CEO) and Johnny Davis (Olympic Team Manager) led sessions on the needs of women in performance fencing and the broader topic of discrimination in sport.

The TAP work will continue to be needed and provide support where needed, including in this area. There is clearly still work that all of us can do to make sure meaningful positive experiences of fencing are inclusive to all but we are buoyed by coaches' desires to look at our research and plan each moment of camp with such thought and care.

To read a recent article in the Sunday Telegraph referencing BF's work with TAP, [click here](#).

Finally, [The True Athlete Project](#) is now recruiting mentees for its global athlete mentoring programme. If you're a committed young athlete, aged 15-24, you can [apply here](#) by October 31st.

Best wishes to all.



coaches to be sensitive about their physical and mental health due to the current situation. This question elicited many different answers, showing how many different needs there are to cater for

- Coach-athlete relationship scores were also statistically significantly correlated with the level of trust of others in your fencing community

- Self-efficacy was statistically significantly correlated with physical and mental wellbeing during lockdown
- Trust of others in the fencing community was considerably lower than all other scores, which is worth considering in greater detail

Female athletes had lower scores on every coach-athlete relationship item

Wellbeing, Self-Efficacy and Trust in Others:

- Weapon groups were statistically significantly correlated with two items: anxiety and life satisfaction
- The number of athletes practising mindfulness for their wellbeing and/or performance increased from 25.5% one year ago to 50.37% today
- The perceived barriers to wellbeing were similar to one year ago, except



COACHING CORNER

Where next for coaching?

Rob Cawdron - Project Officer - Pathways Development

[This article was written at the end of July 2020.]

British Fencing has just published its return to fencing guidelines, permitting the return of indoor fencing for the first time in what feels like years. Writing today, it feels very difficult to predict what will happen between today and when this article will finally be published. Will we see a continuation in the declining infection rate, coupled with the gradual re-opening of society? Will competitive sport be back for amateur sports such as ours? Or will we be experiencing a renewed surge of cases, with lockdowns back in place and infection rates rising again? Thankfully, I don't have the job of trying to predict what will happen with the spread of COVID-19. Instead, I'm taking this moment to look back on 4 months of lockdown fencing activity and looking forward to fencing's gradual return and asking, what will these four months have meant for coaching?

As training venues closed and competitions were cancelled the ways that we all engaged with fencing and with each other changed. Coaches adapted. With no competition to aim for the new goal of "connection" became the driver for so much of the activity. Speaking with coaches during this period, I've been in the privileged position of being able to hear the different and innovative approaches that have been taken to achieve this goal and while the specific activities being done have varied quite considerably, there have been three key trends that have run through all of the conversations, namely:

- Looking to deliver a more personalised experience for athletes
- Running activity that focused on connecting beyond fencing
- Embracing technology

These three trends are connected, with coaches, spurred on by a need to keep athletes engaged and willing to come back once lockdown has lifted, embracing the shift to virtual activity and the realisation of what can be achieved by communicating virtually, leading to more personalised feedback and interaction between coaches and athletes.

It is vital then, that as we do start to be able to get back to training, the lessons learned and skills developed from having to adapt to a virtual training environment are added to a coach's toolbox and become part of what is considered normal coaching practice. The potential for what this might look like are many and varied. Athletes who move away from home to, for example go to university can now realistically consider continuing to work with a coach they have worked with for many years. The ability to film training or competition and send it back to a coach for feedback has always been possible. What we have now learned is that it is possible to do this almost instantaneously - providing feedback in the moment to an athlete at training or competition, giving athletes the opportunity to adapt and change immediately.

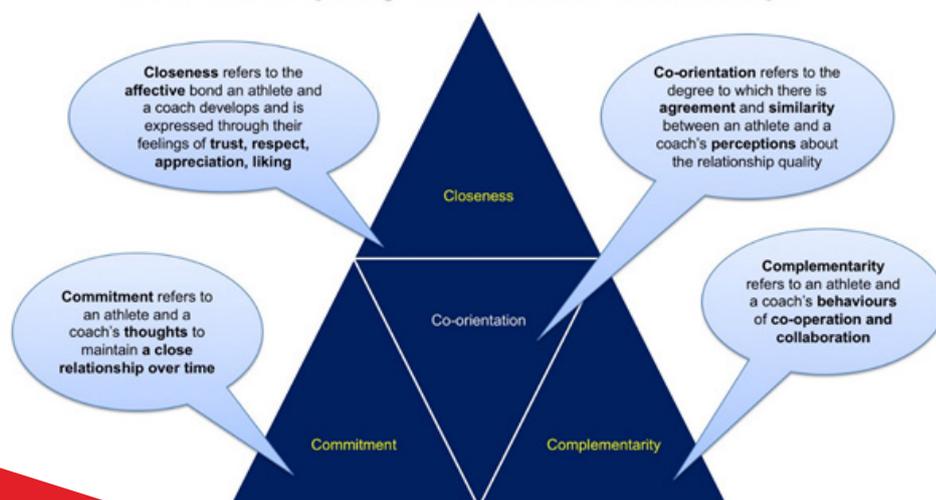
As we all start to take tentative steps to try to get back to something that feels like normal, we will recognise that feeling of wanting to connect again with other

people. This is something we can and should, be embracing as people return to or join fencing clubs. We know that people are here for fencing but what we've also learned from these last few months is that the sport is not the only thing we value and that when we can't do the sport, we still look for that connection. The coaches and clubs who embrace the connection are going to have the best chance of thriving beyond COVID-19. So, let's look at how we can add this into what we do every day. How can we run our activities or our clubs so that they give us the best chance to connect?

Professor Sophia Jowett of Loughborough University has spent her career studying the coach-athlete relationship and has mapped out what the hallmarks of successful relationships are and how coaches can work to develop these more effectively. She calls her model the "3+1Cs". You can find a diagram demonstrating it below. It provides a good template for how coaches can look to build their connection with athletes. How would you seek to build connections with athletes?

Taking all of the lessons above, how do they fit together into a picture for what coaching will look like in the future? How have you had to change your coaching over the lockdown period and what difference will that make to your coaching as we start to come back to being together in person?

The 3+1Cs of quality coach-athlete relationships



THE EXPLORE FENCING APP

James Craig - Head of Commercial

Back in 2015, BF did a full review of our products and services. We looked at what we offered and who we offered it to. We looked at how fencing was perceived, both by fencers and non-fencers. What sparks an interest in fencing? How can you learn more if you've watched fencing at the Olympics and want to have a go? Where is the quick-start, easy to jump in, feet first, ask-questions-later experience?

The main finding was that people perceived fencing as inaccessible. Why? There were plenty of people trying the sport for the first time through one of the many organisations BF train to deliver fencing programmes. Over 250,000 new fencers would return from their activity holiday or school session having loved their experience but unsure of the "what next" to carry on their enthusiasm. Beginners

who watched the Olympics and wanted to try fencing had no idea where to start. There was no fuel to feed that initial spark of interest. As we headed towards Rio 2016 there was no easy access to fencing.

It wasn't just non-fencers who were struggling to access more of our sport. In 2016, with our fledgling partner programme emerging, BF learned that a significant number of community coaches did not feel supported after they had done a BF-run course. Coaches left courses with no ideas, games or content to guide them with their delivery. You had the certificate but what next? Where were the resources to help deliver new and exciting sessions and keep people interested? We needed an easy to use, accessible, mobile-friendly way to deliver fencing in a fun way. We needed an app for people to explore fencing.

In 2017 BF launched its new coaching framework: A Coach's Journey. In this new era of coach education, BF seized the opportunity to fully embrace games-based theory. We looked at how gamification could change the face of coaching and undertook a project to standardise what a community fencing game looked like. The output of this project became the structure of the Explore Fencing app's game content and user journey.

Launched in July 2020, the free Explore Fencing app has two areas. The open games area is for everyone. It includes a description of each game, a 'how to play' guide and videos, alongside pop-ups that offer progressions, top tips and fun facts. BF works with its partners and stakeholders to encourage people to download the app after they have had a great first fencing experience or if they have had a moment of inspiration and want to explore fencing further. No more searching YouTube to try fencing for the first time. With a free download, beginners are instantaneously greeted by GBR fencers who introduce them to the basic moves and signpost users to more resources to support their interest in fencing.

School teachers can also download the app as a great resource for the classroom. The

'Step Lunge' game is a fantastic energiser and doesn't require any equipment. The app is a free and easy way for teachers to test the waters and see if students want to learn more about fencing, which starts new conversations for BF as well as its clubs and coaches.

The Coach Access area of the app contains more structured lesson plans and can be tailored to individual coaches and partners, to provide a bespoke library of content. This area supports BF's Core Coaches and licensed trainers' network. With approximately a thousand Core Coaches trained a year, we can now supply them with interactive Core Coach games in the app, bringing their printed course manual to life. The app supports the onward delivery of fencing after completing a coaching course and reduces the inevitable 'deviation margin' - the gap between what is remembered on a course and what actually happens in delivery.

The interactive videos can also be tailored for a 'white label' experience for organisations' coaches. For example, BF's partner Centre Parcs is eager to utilise this function to provide tailored messages to their workforce and we are excited to develop these through our partnership.

The Coach Access side of the app will also deliver the new Primary School Resource Pack (PSRP) that features 36 lesson plans and has two clear primary intents; building and exploring resilience from the start and challenging the notion of 'sporty' versus 'non-sporty' by exploring pupils' self-efficacy. Each lesson plan has clear learning objectives which form part of the implementation tactics for the PSRP. The content also aligns to the British Fencing Achievement Awards structure of MiniSwords and Go/Fence. This enables our licensed deliverers to evidence the impact of learning new skills through the PSRP by awarding certificates to learners.

The game changer for the BF team is the process of game creation. BF has limited resources and staff often work



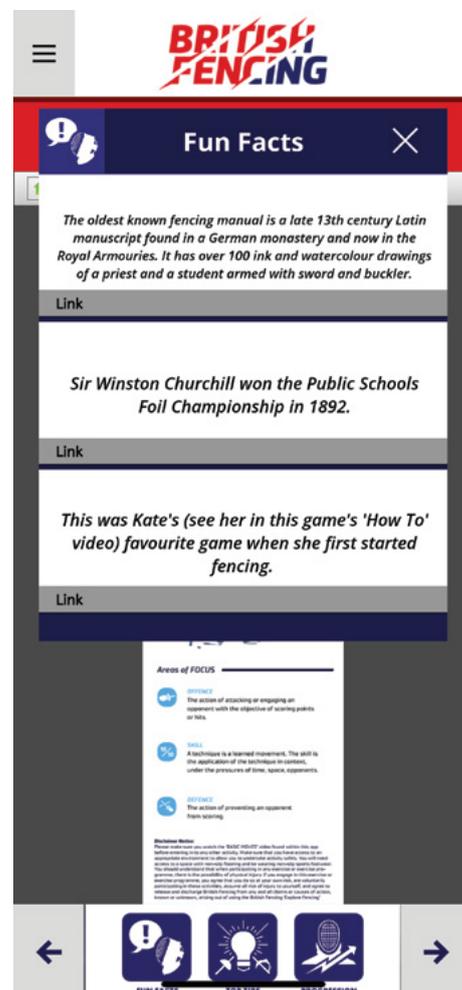
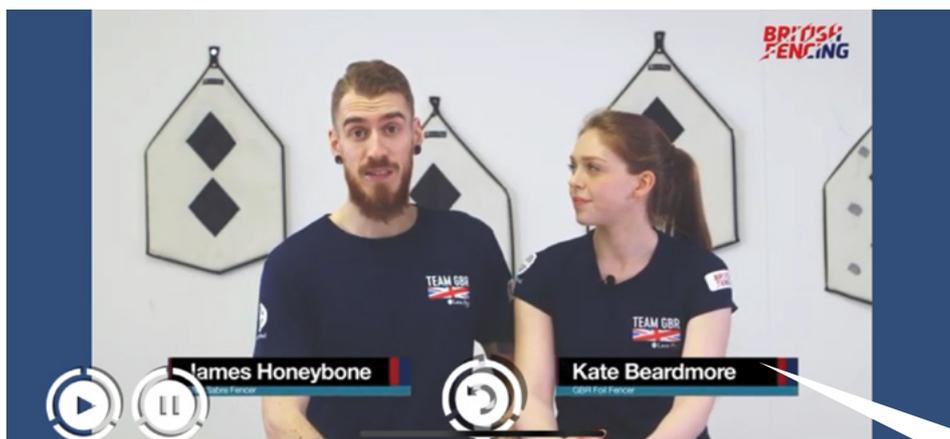
at capacity across multiple projects and work programmes. Games are all managed from a backend dashboard so as games are standardised, they can be added easily. BF can adapt to requests from users and consistently adapt the app to make it relevant to partners' audiences and BF's own growing fencing community. Ultimately, we have created a new digital convergence point where BF coaches and participants can further engage with the National Governing Body of fencing.

In the future BF hopes to deliver the achievement awards content through the app as well as other resources that support fencers and coaches. If you have any ideas, or if you are a Core Coach and would like access to the Coach Access side of the app, please send an email to [marjorie.kuhne@](mailto:marjorie.kuhne@britishfencing.com)

britishfencing.com with the title 'Explore Fencing App' stating your full name, location and date of training.

BF's strategic mission is, "To inspire and enable people to start, stay and succeed in fencing". This app is a tangible tool to engage people who are just starting their fencing journey as a coach and participant. Our work isn't done but with this free, fun app, fencing just became a whole lot more accessible.

Please go to <https://www.britishfencing.com/explore-fencing-app/> and download the free Explore Fencing app, available on iOS and Android devices.



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DIARY OF A FENCER

Sophia Potter - Women's Sabre

This whole episode started for me on 25 February - the day after my birthday - as we were due to fly out from London Gatwick to Venice Marco Polo on route to Porec, Croatia to take part in the European Championships 2020.

Travelling with three other GBR fencers I was being told not to travel to Venice. We were not to go anywhere near an affected country and Italy had three outbreaks. If we were to take the intended route, we would have had to quarantine for 14 days once we had returned to the UK.

This is where it all began for me. This is when I was made aware of Covid-19, only it didn't have that name then!

When lockdown was announced on the 24 March I was still at university and had a term still to go until the end of the academic year - the final deadline for all my work. I had, up until this point and having returned from Croatia, been able to get to the Leon Paul Fencing Centre in Hendon with little disruption three times a week. However, that last week and before lockdown, things were becoming increasingly difficult and I then had to stop training at the Centre completely. Training continued at my Halls albeit somewhat limited. I still managed to complete S&C training, using one of my flatmates' weights to maintain fitness. After a few weeks of living like this, when Government guidelines allowed us to move, I decided to go back home, knowing I could do more there.

Having returned, training was moved online to video training sessions via Zoom. I trained in the garden because indoor space was at a premium for the whole family. I had made myself a target by attaching a fencing mask to an ironing board to practice hitting techniques and the drive was my workout area for all my footwork etc. Not an ideal set up but a must! Even though we were, strictly speaking in lockdown, my university course continued albeit online. This meant that I still had assignments, online lectures and projects to complete with deadlines creeping up on me. With my deadlines getting ever

closer, I took two weeks off training to focus entirely on all university work. Having completed the year, I went straight back to training. In the initial period and up until last week (mid-August), my training routine consisted of three fencing sessions a week (on three different days) with my coach Jon Salfield, focusing on the warm up, footwork and blade action. For the other two days I would focus on S&C and gym work, following a program set by my S&C coach Jon-Paul Nevin purely designed for lockdown fitness.

I have also made sure I was part of the fencing community online, that has been made available by a number of different providers - with guest speakers and online coaching. That was amazing.

To add to my daily/weekly training plan I have also taken up cycling to improve and develop leg muscle strength and overall stamina.

In addition, my week consisted of (and still does) a wellbeing session with my TAP (True Athlete Project) mentor Anna Turney (2 x Paralympic Alpine Skier and TEDx speaker), and quite recently we had the chance to meet up for the first time since lockdown began! These sessions are invaluable, to be able to liaise with my mentor in such strange and challenging times is priceless.

I have also taken the time to practice mindfulness plus attending an online ADP camp - where my mindfulness came in very handy. I used mindfulness when we did a mindfulness wall sit. The goal was to improve our time, trying to find ways to push through the thoughts that tell us to give up. I found focusing on my breathing and counting helped. However, this wasn't about blocking out the pain and thoughts but rather to acknowledge them. ADP camps take place every two months but lockdown had put a stop to those until July. Hopefully we will be able to get together again soon.

Still, whilst in lockdown, any free time I have had I have used it to analysis previous competition bouts by utilizing online video footage. In the main I'm looking at tactics, preparations, distance and strategy from both male and female sabreurs.

I have also used the lockdown period to look at planning constructively. My coach and I usually design a plan for the season but this time it is a very different plan - one that is forever moving as we don't know when the season will start. Having moved up to the next level of fencing into Seniors and U23, it's the start of the next phase of my fencing. I'm looking at constantly developing the annual season plan with possible competition dates to prepare for and camps to take part in which is keeping me focused. This has given me a continued purpose.

This time has also made me think. The rapid effect of the pandemic caused the sudden cessation of almost all sports activities and most definitely competitive sport, which may have prompted some people to relax. However, the uncertainty of this made me consider that when social distancing was relaxed and some form of normality returned, I still needed to be "top of my game" or as near as possible - ready for either the next national or international challenge but with the uncertainty continuing. So, I haven't stopped training at all. I have just kept on going.

Quite recently there was a welcome return to indoor training with Shakespeare's Swords in Stratford-upon-Avon. Last week was my first session back to sparring since March and I must say it was strange but so long overdue! It's all very well doing online sessions and I really enjoyed them but I had so missed sparring. I found the most difficult part of the training session was having to wear a surgical mask underneath my fencing mask. It's so hot and stuffy! But I suppose it's the "new normal". Social distancing isn't a problem though.

I'm so looking forward to getting back to normal in September and back to Leon Paul - providing we aren't put into another lockdown!

I have found this strange period in my life quite an interesting phase - one that has enabled me to continue with the sport I love, albeit with restrictions. I have managed both my training and my education - which are equally important - effectively through hard work and perseverance.

DIARY OF A FENCER

Billy Shepherd - Men's Epee



After the initial shock of fencing salles and gyms closing at the onset of the Corona Virus restrictions, then leaving university to move back home, I tried to make the most of lockdown.

For the first month or so I decided this was the best time to have a rest from fencing. Having competed in three junior internationals in the past month and a half I felt drained. I saw lockdown as a great opportunity to rest and recalibrate.

At the start of lockdown I began to think about how I could improve myself as an athlete. I decided I wanted to lose a bit of weight, as reducing the mass I have will reduce the energy I need to move on piste. I was hoping that this would improve my agility when I was fencing. I got in touch with my university's nutritionist, Jodie Redgrave and she looked at my diet to see where I could improve. Learning about my diet and nutrition has given me a really good insight into the science behind it and how beneficial it is towards training and recovery.

Lockdown gave me more time to do things that I don't usually get to do when I am studying and training. This meant I had more time to read and learn about things other than my degree and sport. As well as watching a lot of Netflix I have been reading psychology books, such as the *Chimp Paradox* by Steve Peters and *Thinking Fast and Slow* by Daniel Kahneman. Reading these has helped me understand more about human psychology and how applicable it is to everyday life. Learning about this has

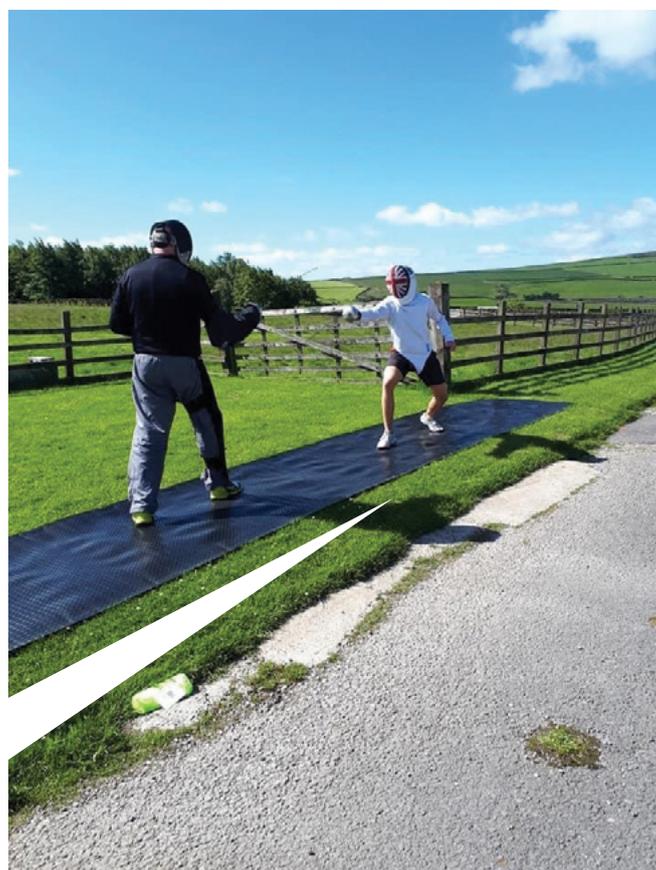
also helped me review my own mindset in competitions and helped me identify where I can improve myself so I can perform better when we return to competing.

I study Biology at the University of Nottingham and, despite lockdown, I still had three essays due at the start of April, two pieces of coursework due in for May and a bunch of exams in June. This really helped me keep focussed at the start of lockdown, as I'm the type of person who enjoys having a goal and something to work towards. Therefore I got into a routine, where I started studying at 9am, doing some exercise in the early afternoon and then doing a bit more work in the late afternoon and evening. Keeping this routine kept me productive (and sane) in lockdown and helped me keep on top of my university work.

During lockdown I did keep my fitness up. I really struggle not doing some form of exercise every day but instead of training to become a better fencer, I focused on training for myself. I took up running and followed a home workout program, set by my S&C coach. Doing this mentally gave me a break from fencing, which in the long run has helped me stay motivated and enjoying the sport.

After my little respite from fencing I started to miss it again. So, later into lockdown I joined British Fencing's ADP coaches Olga Campofreda and Oana Puiu on their Zoom fitness sessions. In them we did plyometric training, footwork, target practice and core workouts. We were also joined by Otet Mircea, a personal trainer in Romania, who did some fun (and painful) workouts. Doing these alongside my home workouts and running helped me slowly integrate fencing back into my training and helped reignite my motivation to get back training for fencing properly.

Currently, with the gyms open I have been training there frequently, trying to regain the strength training I have lost from lockdown. I have done a couple of sparring sessions at Skipton Fencing Club and had two lessons with my coach, Jim Lockyer. The hall where we normally train has not reopened yet. So, we are training on rubber mats in a club mates garden. It is very close to a public footpath and we have had some interesting looks from walkers passing by.



OBITUARIES

Professor Herbert Thomas Bracewell (Bert) Scottish National Fencing Coach 1966-1992



Bert Bracewell © Richard Winpenny

Bert was born prematurely in West Ham, London, on 2 January 1936, weighing 2lbs 9ozs. His young mother, Maud, wrapped him in cotton wool, washed him in olive oil and fed him with a pipette, while his father, also Bert, kept the house warm. Against the odds, Bert survived, thrived and went on to become one of Britain's pre-eminent fencing masters.

During the Second World War, Bert's family moved to Finchingfield, Essex. Returning to London after the war, he would go every week to the Majestic Cinema in South Woodford and it was there where his passion for fencing began when, aged 17, Bert saw the swashbuckler Scaramouche. Outside, he saw an advertisement offering beginners classes at the Latista Fencing Club with Professor Alf Simmonds. He was captivated.

As a young boy, Bert had regularly counted the planes out and back as they flew their missions. So, it was no surprise when he completed his National Service with the Royal Air Force. The only fencer during his training at RAF Kirkham, he was mentored by a Physical Training Instructor who told him, "You have a superb attack but no defence!".

At his duty station RAF Waterbeach, Station Commander, Group Captain Chacksfield, then President of the RAF Fencing Union included him in a fencing team for the RAF Championships and at their second attempt, they won. Bert was introduced to épée by another physical training instructor, French fencer, André Williams,

who entered Bert in the Fighter Command Épée competition. Following some sage advice, Bert came third and was awarded Fighter Command Colours.

Upon leaving the RAF, Bert returned to the Latista Fencing Club and as Club Secretary, ran three club leaders' courses. When eventually he took the exams himself, he passed top in foil and épée and second in sabre. He was urged by his examiners Dame Mary-Glen Haig, Charles de Beaumont and Professor Bob Anderson to consider coaching, something that played on his mind for several years. When eventually he did turn to coaching, he had just been selected to train with an Olympic squad which he turned down. In later years, when asked if he regretted that, he simply smiled and responded that his beloved wife, Joan, was his Olympic Gold.

In 1962 he set up his own club, Cyrano, where he produced the first British World U-20s finalist, Mike Breckin. He was due to sit his final exam for his Masters' diploma when he was recommended by the Maître d'Armes to the Scottish Amateur Fencing Union (SAFU), Johnny Fethers, for the role of Scottish national coach.

They were well known to each other; he had been runner-up to Maître Johnny

Fethers in the British Professional Championships in the 1960s four times. Bert went on to represent Great Britain at the World Masters five times and at all three weapons. At the Stuttgart World Fencing Masters Championships in 1986 with Ziemowit Wojciechowski, Ziemowit lost a fight in an early round. Bert, even though a fellow competitor, offered to give him a lesson. It worked, and Ziemowit went on to win. Ziemowit recalled that it was "an amazing lesson that brought the best back out in me" further noting that he still remembers most of things he did with Bert in that lesson.

In 1966, SAFU, by arrangement with the Scottish Education Department, appointed Bert as first and only national coach. The following year he passed all the weapon exams at one sitting to become a full master and professor of the British Academy of Fencing.

He was charged with growing the sport in Scotland and to develop fencing in local authority schools. As a result, he established accredited coaching schemes, Schools Grading Awards and introduced the successful week-long fencing tournament for all Scottish schools. He worked extensively with the Education Department, local councils and SportScotland winning





The Famous Coaching Jacket

their support and financial backing, having a profound influence on sport beyond the fencing world. He was a member of the Scottish National Coaches Association, working with coaches from major sports such as football, cricket, judo, tennis and athletics including Frank Dick, Jon Anderson (of Gladiator's fame) and Andy Roxburgh. His system that developed coaches, increased participation and delivered elite success, due to his unique ability to achieve exceptional results at both elite and grass roots, was the envy of many. He encouraged a collaborative approach between coaches and administrators, happy to push others forward while he stood in the background subsuming his own interests to deliver the best results for Scotland. Respected throughout Scotland, he was known widely as simply Bert or The Prof. He was pivotal in establishing the Edinburgh Schools Fencing Association at Meadowbank Sports Centre, which became one of the most successful clubs in the country, producing Scottish and British champions and members of British teams. Bert also coached fencers who were in Scotland at school and university and enjoyed seeing them succeeding internationally.

At national level, in one year alone Scots held five of the eight possible British age group titles. He also trained the Scotland fencing team for the 1970 home Commonwealth Games and Bert had mixed emotions when his former pupil, Mike Breckin, won Gold for England.

A long-time advocate of inclusion in sport, in 1968, the Scottish Paraplegic Fencers Association approached Bert to help prepare them for the Edinburgh Commonwealth Games. Bert founded the Lothian Fencing Club - the first mixed

ability fencing club in Scotland. Over the years he would continue to work with wheelchair fencers preparing them for national and international competitions and Paralympics. His commitment to inclusion culminated at the Barcelona Olympics and Paralympics in 1992, as he retired as National Coach, with three of the four Scottish Fencing Olympians having been educated in the state system, including his own daughter, Julia and his Paralympian, Jack Bradley, winning a bronze medal.

After his retirement as national coach, Bert continued to coach and welcomed fencers from around the world to his salle, a range of converted outbuildings at his home outside Edinburgh which was available to anyone who wanted to train at all hours.

Inspired by Stewart Granger in Scaramouche, he developed his knowledge of stage-fighting through friend and mentor, Professor Bob Anderson, fight director for the Star Wars and the Pirates of the Caribbean series. His students at The Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama in Glasgow and Queen Margaret College in Edinburgh benefitted from his fencing and stage fighting classes and he encouraged them to take coaching exams to ensure they could always earn a living. His "you could earn fifty quid for that" became a well-known catchphrase for his students. Bert also trained stage fight directors and worked with stunt men on popular TV shows.

In 1981, the BAF, in recognition of his significant contribution to fencing, awarded him their prestigious Gauthier Trophy. This was followed in 2016 by a lifetime achievement award from British Fencing. Bert was humbled by these awards and felt very honoured to be so appreciated.

His role as national fencing coach ended in 1992. Bert continued to produce several Scottish and British champions and coached right up until he and Joan self-isolated with the outbreak of Covid-19. Bert continued to work as he felt so lucky to be one of the small percentage of people who really loved their work.

Bert was well known for his kindness, enthusiasm, humour and encouragement. He gave readily of his time and would even give lessons unspeakably early in the morning to assist fencers in preparing for A grades overseas. No matter a fencer's background, sexual orientation or race, Bert treated them all the same. Whatever your standard, if you asked Bert for help, it would be given. His sunny disposition was unwavering. A well-known German fencing master once said, "With Bert, we never know if he is winning or losing. He is always smiling."

Later in life, he would compete occasionally in Scotland against his pupils. He enjoyed fencing them and said he could not lose if they won. It was because of his teaching - but more often he could predict what they were going to do and used his craftiness to overcome their youth and speed. There was always a twinkle in his eye and he was not beyond teasing his pupils. As he pushed them in sessions, he would laughingly say, "It's only pain!"

When Bert first took up his post as Scottish National Fencing Coach, he asked Prof Bob Anderson, for advice. His work demanded that he would travel extensively and work unsociable hours. Bob's advice was 'see your children grow up'. Bert worked extensively during term-times to ensure he could play French cricket on the East Lothian beaches with his children and enjoy fishing, cricket and hobbies with his family. An avid stamp and cigarette card collector, Bert also painted miniature soldiers and was well known in these specialist communities.

Bert is survived by his wife Joan, children Julia, Karen and Michael and grandchildren Jonty, Amy, Scott, Laura and Josh.

Thanks to Bert's family for providing these words.

Denis Wright 1943-2020

Malcolm Tooley, friend & colleague, Darlington Sword Club

The fencing community in the North East was shocked and saddened by the untimely death of Denis Wright, one of the regions longest standing and most well respected fencers.

Denis died suddenly on 4th September 2020, his 77th Birthday. He is survived by his wife, Margaret and his two daughters, Suzanne and Rachel.

His fencing career spanned over 58 years. Denis started fencing in 1962 when he trained at Bede College, Durham, as a maths teacher. He was a well-liked and valuable committee member of Darlington Sword Club throughout his fencing career and also a qualified fencing coach at Street Swords until the recent lockdown.



Denis Wright

As a keen competition volunteer he was part of the team who organised the Tyneside Open that was a key feature of the British Fencing elite calendar. He was always willing to give his time and expertise to help all, from beginners to experienced fencers.

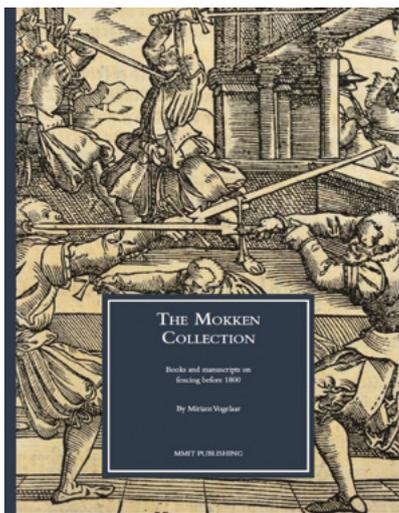
Denis was a committed family man who was always proud to talk about the achievements of his daughters and the love of his wife Margaret. He will be sorely missed by his family and all who knew him as a fencer and Free Mason.

Denis's family are raising money for a local cause close to his heart in his memory. If you would like to contribute please visit, <https://www.justgiving.com/crowdfunding/denis-wright>.

BOOK REVIEW

THE MOKKEN COLLECTION - RARE FENCING BOOKS AND MANUSCRIPTS

Malcolm Fare - Former Editor of The Sword



Over the centuries the history of fencing has been illuminated by the treatises of many distinguished fencing masters. Hunting down these rare works, none published in any great numbers, has become the passion of a small band of collectors, myself included.

One of the latest to join the ranks is Wiebe Mokken, former President of the Dutch Fencing Federation. Although a serious collector for only 20 years, he has the good fortune to have deep pockets and so has had antiquarian book dealers beating a path to his door to offer him the choicest examples of any rare fencing books they come across.

The result of his passion is *The Mokken Collection* - books and manuscripts on fencing before 1800, a beautifully produced and illustrated hardback publication that details 54 treatises meticulously researched by the rare book specialist Miriam Vogelaar. They include the first illustrated fencing book printed in Italy (Manciolino, 1531), the most important work in German (Meyer, 1570), the first book with copperplate engravings to be printed in Denmark (Fabris, 1606), the most sumptuously illustrated fencing book ever produced [on the Spanish school] (Thibault, 1628) and a fine coloured first edition of Angelo's *L'Ecole des Armes* (1763).

This is the first general catalogue to appear on the subject for 125 years and forms a fascinating glimpse into the past of what has changed from an essential means of self-defence to a wonderful sport.

The Mokken Collection by Miriam Vogelaar is published by MMIT Publishing, Amsterdam (miriam.vogelaar@mmit.com), at €75.

BOOK REVIEW

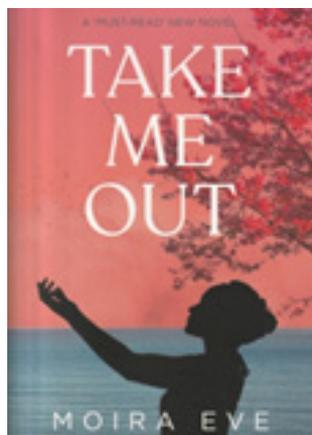
“TAKE ME OUT” BY MOIRA EVE

Lawrence Burr OBE

This year's *Pandemic* has certainly thrown up a wide selection of genres for fencers to choose from. The last edition of *The SWORD* had books about wheelchair fencing mice and a beautiful female fencer making a pact with the devil. This time it is a nonagenarian fencing crime writer with an Olympic medal under her belt, a love of dressage and battling cancer in the only way she knows how - with “steely grit and fighting spirit”. Now that should whet your appetite for the weekends ahead!

So, here we have Olivia Haworth, diagnosed with terminal cancer, looking to put her affairs in order but, inspired by her own vivid imagination and not wanting to die in a lonely hospital bed, sees her end as one that should be worthy of a bestselling crime novelist. She determines to be “taken out” by a contract killer - paid for by herself! Now, throw in a variety of colourful characters with a travelogue of capital cities; mix them together with some love interest between a veteran male fencer and a female Junior team coach and the novel is all set to roll.

Although this is billed as a “Must-Read” new novel, I must admit that the reality of the storyline does somewhat stretch even my credibility. I really could not engage with Olivia, the central character who is billed as a woman on a mission albeit a fatal one. With descriptions such as her appearance being like “a beautiful woman in her most mature years but still managing to look years younger than she was”, whose “blue eyes sparkled with intrigue like a naughty girl pursuing a passion” and when she moved “she lifted her tall, once athletic frame to her not so stable feet”, this 92 year old really does not quite match the story. I do realise that everyone in their more mature years would like to be that person, but her passage through the book is filled with so many overly nuanced descriptive passages such as these, that it does start to become slightly unreal. To add to this, everyone she meets in her final months whilst travelling around the



world seems to be so incredibly helpful, respectful and “friendly” (a word that crops up far too frequently) whilst she travels first class to all her final destinations. The plot appears to give her almost unlimited funds from her crime writings so that she can afford to travel everywhere in this cloud of luxury. But as an aside, I could not stop myself thinking that some readers, faced with real life cancers, might find the story's depiction of how private medicine can extend a patient's life but only if their bank balance is big enough, somewhat unsettling despite it being reality.

Nevertheless, fencing is a central tenet of the first part of the story and so it is great fun to work out whom the characters are modelled upon and even where the locations are. I have spotted some definite similarities to fencers in the current rankings from the BVF and British Fencing! Firstly, there is Olivia's claim as winning “Olympic gold as the first woman to represent England at foil fencing” - definitely shades of Gillian Sheen at the Melbourne Games in 1952 here! Mind you, Olivia is also credited with representing England at the Olympics in Tokyo in the dressage team. So only my wife could comment on that claim!

Then there is the foil coach, Helen, “mentoring the potential future international under eighteen fencers ... before heading to the O2 to watch the

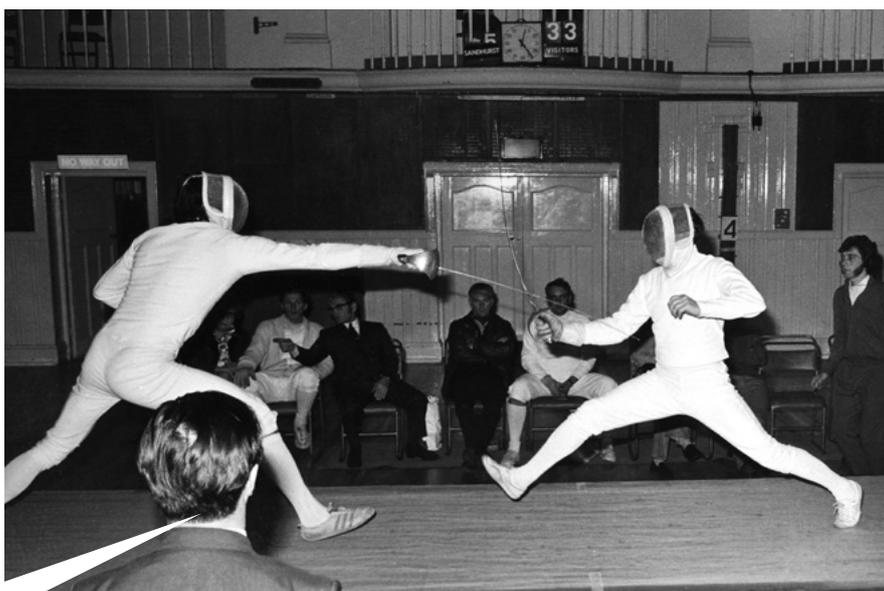
European Fencing Championships” and Dennis, the aging Lothario who is well matched with the beautiful Helen, going down 10 hits to 9 after a fight when they engaged “blade upon blade; metal to metal. A battle of wits, expertise and skill ... two outstanding fencers... nail biting to the end as Helen's beautiful finishing “balestra” once again caught Dennis unawares...”! Lastly Stan, an old veteran fencer in his late seventies who “stood at six feet, stocky built with a slight paunch in the front undergoing a calorie count procedure, which didn't seem to be working.” All of the fencing takes place at a wonderful club called ZEDS off Oxford Circus with its own coffee bar. A challenge maybe to the Leon Paul Centre to up its game! The various locations in the story also seem like a World Cup dream programme; so any answers as to whom they all are on a post card to the Editor, please!

The story twists and turns, then leaps ahead to encompass a rogue racketeer with kind eyes from Long Beach, New York and his love-struck hit squad tracking Olivia across the Mediterranean whilst she continues to relive old memories and distribute largesse wherever she goes. As her time to be taken out draws near, the dialogue takes on an almost Mills and Boon element as the final stages of the plot play out. So does Olivia accomplish her mission, does the contract “take her out”, do her fencing compatriots find true love? Well, you need to buy the paperback to find out whether she carries through with her mission and read whether everyone lives happily ever after. So, if that is how you like your crime novels, then this could be the one for you to ease your lockdown blues.

The authoress is Moira Eve, a British Veterans Association foilist and this is her first publication after a career in management.

“Take Me Out” is available as from 1 September 2020 as a paperback through Foyles, Amazon and Waterstones at £8.99.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR



Peter Hobson (R) with what looks like a perfect countertime action against George Ganchev (L) in the Corble Cup, 1971, when he finished second to Ganchev - his best international result

Dear Sir

Peter Hobson Obituary - The Sword July 2020

May I offer my thanks to you and British Fencing for publishing such a generous obituary for my late husband Peter Hobson? I hope that Peter's many friends and contemporaries, who knew him when he was active in the world of fencing, will have found it an interesting read. Peter achieved so much in his life, both in fencing and in his work as an educator, that I'm very pleased that this has been put on record in The Sword.

Your readers may like to see the full version of the obituary, which is posted on the British Fencing website [here](#). I also attach a couple of photos of Peter for readers to enjoy.

Yours sincerely

Jill Hobson

Thanks for your kind words Jill. It's always great to share such great fencing memories and your photos do just that.

Karim



Peter joining forces with an all-international team (once!) of John Rayden, George Birks and Brian Howes, turning out for the Polytechnic at the Magrini Cup in the late 1970s

RESULTS



The up-to-date 2019-2020 season latest results are now listed online and can be **accessed here**

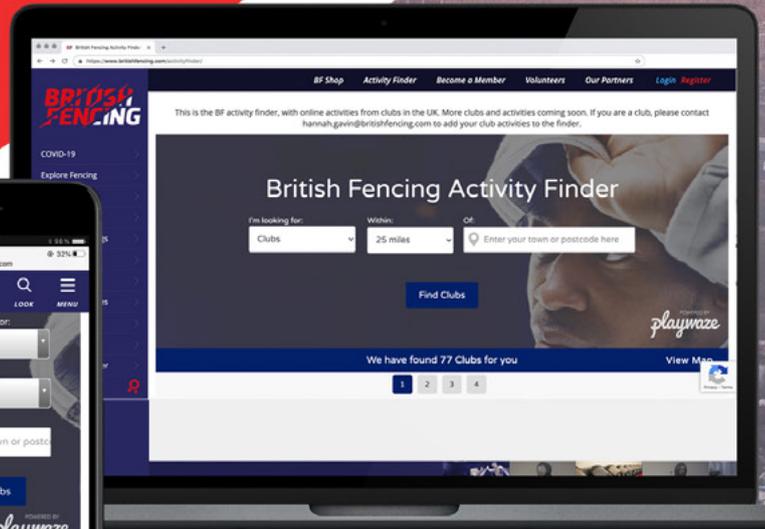
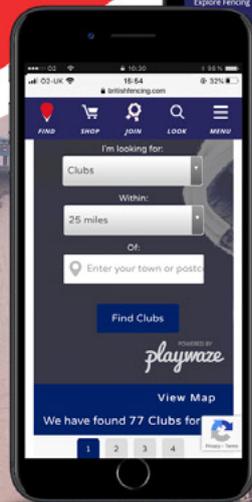
Please forward all your suggestions for additional online fencing results to: **events@britishfencing.com**



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