

# THE SWORD

BRITISH FENCING MAGAZINE  
JANUARY 2021



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READY FOR 2021.**

**CLUB FOCUS PP8-18**

**HEINZER INTERVIEW PP19-21**

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BF sets its sights on the future.

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# 2021 MESSAGE FROM THE CEO

Georgina Usher



Georgina Usher

As we enter a New Year, I felt it was important to take a moment to reflect on one of the more challenging years in the history of fencing in the UK and look for the positives as we come together to rebuild our future.

Many of us have been forced to adopt new ways to work, new ways to keep in touch with our friends and family and new ways to keep fit and keep involved with the sports that we love.

At BF we too have adapted - to find different ways to continue to support our members, our clubs, our coaches and our partners whilst also advocating and lobbying to Government and funding bodies on behalf of our sport. I'm so grateful for all the efforts of the BF team who, from the moment the first lockdown arrived, responded so creatively to the changing needs of our community.

The variations in restrictions across the country in 2020 created a unique and ever-changing environment to navigate as we continually updated our advice and guidance to members, clubs and activity providers across the UK. The Home Nation Return to Fencing working group came together to ensure that where possible we supported each other and aligned in the guidance provided. Where clubs and activity providers were able to re-start, we are very grateful to all the coaches and volunteer Covid Officers who road-tested the guidance and provided feedback and suggestions.

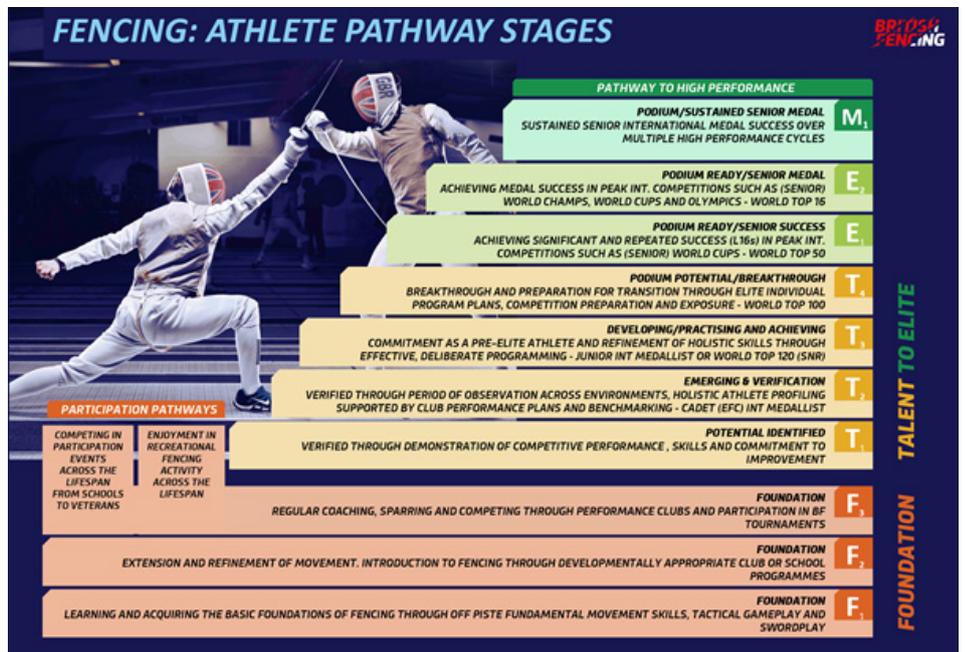
As a result of these activities, we now have a wealth of tested resources, including sets of marketing assets available to support clubs and activity providers across the country as they start to re-open and provide opportunities for people to re-engage with fencing.

Our clubs have told us that future facility access is a significant concern, both availability and cost. We will continue to work with stakeholders across sport to raise this to the attention of Government. If you are concerned about local facility availability and have the time to write to your MP, please do so. Your feedback does make a difference and strengthens our case.

Throughout this time, we have worked closely with our Home Nation Associations and the closer collaborative relationships that have formed will make our sport stronger. One example is the ongoing discussions around aligning performance pathways between BF and Scottish Fencing. Another is the work being done between England Fencing & BF to create a continuous pathway for referee development, from club refereeing to international refereeing.

We have also used this opportunity to create and publish the development framework for future Olympic fencers, based on a significant amount of research and data. The resulting Fencer Pathway will form the foundation of all the work that BF do within the Athlete Development Programme (ADP) which is now responsible for alignment and delivery of all funded programme activity to athletes on a journey to the Olympics.

The primary objective of the ADP 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. To do this we will continually be working on the whole person approach and will continue to develop and challenge ourselves and those we work with to be better - a better



NGB, better coaches, better athletes, thus collectively better people. Our values of honesty, respect and excellence form the foundations of this, as they do for all our work.

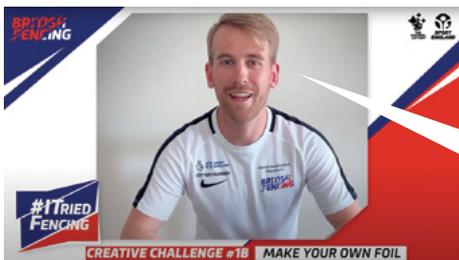
At the time of writing, we await the outcome of our bid for UK Sport funding from April 2021. Whilst we are not eligible for World Class Programme funding at this time, we have applied for 'Progression' investment which will be largely focussed on creating the system and structure for Olympic success in 2032. A significant part of our funding bid is a programme to support the development of a 2032 cohort of fencing coaches who by 2028 will be able to train and support a cohort of Olympic level fencers in the UK.

Feedback from BF's application was extremely positive. However, the ability of UK Sport to invest in more sports will be directly linked to the outcome of the Government's Comprehensive Spending Review which determines the total amount of money that UK Sport receive.

Thanks to support from the National Lottery, we have been able to provide more online learning to our community, particularly in the areas of safeguarding, coaching and athlete development. We see the future of all our people development work (volunteers, officials, coaches and athletes) as a modular, blended learning structure, combining online training, webinars, virtual classrooms and face-to-face opportunities.



We have significantly increased our communication activities, using many different channels (e.g. email, website, Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn etc.) to reach and engage with many different audiences (e.g. current/potential members/clubs/fencers/activity partners). We have created and shared a huge amount of content, from #ITriedFencing and #FitToFence through to our new online Strength and Conditioning sessions for competitive members.



Our online community discussion and consultation events, on a variety of topics have proved to be extremely popular and based on your feedback we'd like to keep these going. They are certainly a more efficient and cost-effective way to come together as a community to share ideas, views and challenges. It's been fantastic to put faces to names and also have the opportunity to explore a topic in more detail - rather than trying to fit in a conversation in between rounds at a fencing competition!

Talking of competitions, at the time of writing we are not envisaging a fast return to 'normal' competition as we are bound by restrictions on numbers particularly for those age 18 and over. We will inevitably need to start small and local, and we will be encouraging organisers to adopt different formats which comply with local restrictions on indoor sport participation.

One of our top priorities this year will be to support our clubs and coaches to restart and rebuild their clubs. As part of the work to encourage people back to club fencing, we have created a new GB League - this is a fun opportunity for club fencers to earn points for competitive sparring at club nights. We hope that - as restrictions lift - clubs will take the opportunity to reach out to other local clubs to host joint league nights, to ensure that we use any spare capacity in the system to provide opportunities for welcoming people back to fencing. There will be points available for every fight you fence, a few more if you

win and some fun opportunities to earn 'booster' points.

Like many National Governing Bodies we remain dependent on our membership income. We are extremely grateful to all those members who have stayed with us during these times and in doing so have helped to ensure that fencing is well placed to recover quickly as restrictions ease.

Serving the membership remains the foundation of what we are and what we do, not just as British Fencing but all the other Home Nation associations as well. Our individual membership model underpins all of our activities and it is vital that as our sport re-opens, we continue to embed the BF/Home Nation membership requirements to remain sustainable over the coming years, so we can continue the work that we do.

In closing, the events of 2020 gave many of us working and participating in sport the opportunity to reflect more deeply on the part that sport plays in our lives and what we want out of that experience in the future for ourselves and others. Above all else we want people, when they participate in fencing to be safe, feel welcomed and have fun.

'Safe' is not just about making sure we are wearing the right equipment and following the hygiene protocols. It is about safeguarding the welfare of all our participants, embedding good safeguarding principles and practice into every aspect of our sporting offer. It's also about making sure our fencers, our volunteers and our coaches are covered by insurance, and that means in our community clubs everyone should be a member.

'Welcomed' means being inclusive, helping people overcome the perceptions that they might have of our sport, so that everyone in fencing feels they can truly 'belong', irrespective of ability, age, gender, sexuality, ethnicity and religion.

Finally 'fun' - a small word that really matters. 2020 for many people has not been fun. So we must work extra hard in 2021 to find as much fun and joy as we possibly can as we return to participating in fencing.

# ATHLETE OF THE YEAR

## Coutya & Gilliver Named IWAS Athletes of the Year 2019

Photos: Yuka Fujita



IWAS Athletes of the Year - Piers & Dimitri

Great Britain was well represented at the recent International Wheelchair and Amputee Sports Federation (IWAS) Wheelchair Fencing Athlete of the Year announcement. Dimitri Coutya and Piers Gilliver topped both of their respective categories to claim four awards between them.

Dimitri built on winning the Category B Men's Epee World title in 2017. After

another great season in 2019, he retained the title to top that category. He also emerged as the leading athlete in Category B Men's Foil. Speaking about the awards Dimitri said, "It is a huge honour to have achieved this award and it is all down to the hard work me, my teammates and my support staff have put in. I couldn't have done it without them. It's good to see the training we are doing is paying off, as we continue to work along the right path

to the ultimate goal which is the Tokyo Games."

2019 was a landmark year for Piers too. He became Great Britain's first Category A wheelchair fencer to claim a World Title. He fought his way to gold in Cheongju, Korea, claiming the Men's Epee title. That meant he topped that category. Not to be outdone by his teammate, Piers also took the Category A Men's Sabre award. Clearly delighted, he said, "The 2019 season has definitely been my best one yet - with the World Championships undoubtedly the highlight. Having narrowly missed out on gold in the previous two Worlds,



Piers Becomes GBR's First Category A World Champion



Dimitri Defends World Title

I was determined to make 2019 my year. So it really means a huge amount to have been able to take home the gold and World Championship title, especially looking forward to the upcoming Tokyo Paralympics. I was thrilled to win both the Epee & Sabre World Series titles and it's also the first time that I have won a medal in both my events at every competition. It's very encouraging for me, not only to succeed in my own individual competitions but also to see the progression of our team across the team events, which are really starting to come together and are showing exciting prospects for the future!"

The awards themselves were delayed due to the global pandemic but it was worth the wait! Congratulations Piers and Dimitri!

# NEW YEAR - NEW OPPORTUNITIES

## Launching the GB League

In anticipation of the restrictions around participating in sport lifting across the country in 2021, BF is delighted to announce a new initiative to encourage members back into affiliated club fencing with the launch of the GB League.

The GB League is a new recreational league which will see members (recreational level and above) earn league points for participating in competitive club fencing in designated league sessions held at affiliated clubs.

The GB League will remove traditional boundaries of age groups and gender as any 5 hit or 15 hit match between two fencers in a league session will earn both fencers one or more league points which in turn will contribute to overall GB League national leader boards in Epee, Foil & Sabre.

The emphasis is on fun - all participating fencers will get a point just for taking part in a match, and more for winning! There will, in time, also be national opportunities to win booster points, such as 'double points' month and reward points for sharing your results on social media. We will be hosting GB League leader boards on the BF website and sharing regularly on social media so fencers will be able to see where they place against fencers from all across the UK. We expect to bring you some exciting news about sponsors and prizes as the year progresses, and eventually (once restrictions are fully lifted and we are back to club fencing across the UK) we will be announcing Annual GB League winners.

Hosting a GB League session is intended to be logistically as simple as running a normal competitive fencing club session - there are no formal requirements for referees/piste layouts/timed bouts and league sessions should be held as part of normal club activity. Whilst some clubs may wish to take the opportunity to use a GB League session for referee development, self-refereeing will be common and clubs

and coaches are expected to focus on maintaining fun, inclusive participation environments.

Hannah Gavin, Development Officer Clubs and Regions, said, "We appreciate that many clubs are adapting to different restrictions and not all will be able to re-start and re-open at the same time. Once clubs are able to offer competitive sparring we'd encourage them to contact us and get involved with the GB League."

To run GB League sessions, clubs will need to register on the BF website. This will give clubs access to GB League asset packs from the BF website, which will include 'how to' session guides and social media promotion templates.



The GB League is powered by Playwaze, a digital activity platform customised for our use. Clubs will use Playwaze to set up their sessions, take entries (and payments if the club chooses to charge an entry fee) and enter results. Fencers will be encouraged to download the Playwaze app and register for the full GB League experience (BF recreational level membership or above required). Registered fencers will be able to see their position on the GB League leader boards on the Playwaze platform as well as the BF website.

The expectation is that as restrictions lift, clubs will take the opportunity to reach out and liaise with other local clubs to host joint league sessions. Recognising that access to local facilities may be a challenge to some, clubs that do have facility access and capacity are encouraged to use GB League sessions to give more local fencers the opportunity to come together and fence. In the future, we will be also looking at including other formats within the GB League for example single and multi-weapon team formats.



Steve Kemp, BF Head of Pathways, said, "Our analysis work on the fencer pathway has shown us that a vital part of fencer development is 'time on task' in relation to competitive sparring and developing tactical appreciation. Providing more opportunities for fencers to experience and practice competitive fencing situations in clubs will support fencers at all levels to prepare for the resumption of domestic and international competition. Whilst we will not be using the GB League for selection, we will certainly be encouraging fencers to use league participation opportunities as part of their training and development plans."

Georgina Usher, BF CEO, added, "One of our top priorities this year is to support our clubs as they restart and rebuild. The new GB League offering forms part of our work to encourage members back into club fencing by creating fun opportunities for club fencers to earn GB league points for competitive sparring at club nights."

Thanks to support from the National Lottery there will be no charges set by BF for participation by BF affiliated clubs and members (recreational level and above) in the GB League in 2021. Clubs may choose to charge a small additional fee for GB League sessions to their members and apply their standard club visitor fees.

Further information and support for clubs on how to get started will be available on the BF website.

If you are interested in sponsoring the GB League or donating prizes please contact [eventsadmin@britishfencing.com](mailto:eventsadmin@britishfencing.com).

# A CLUB WITH LEGACY AT ITS HEART

## Newham Swords Fencing Club Embrace Olympic Spirit

Linda Strachan

*In this issue, we're taking a deeper look at some of our BF affiliated clubs. Each club has shared their story with us to highlight an area of focus, and we meet some of the people that ensure fencing clubs are a great place to be. Take a look at their Club Focus stories to discover how clubs around the UK celebrate their members, create opportunities and deliver wonderful experiences for their communities.*

*Newham Swords Fencing Club is a community club of around seventy young people and adult members who are from various age groups, abilities and ethnic backgrounds. The club has been praised by 1984 Olympic Gold Medallist, Tessa Sanderson (Newham's Sports Academy), Sir Robin Wales, Newham's former Mayor, Newham's Education Department, the Metropolitan Police and the local NHS for its efforts in bringing communities together, improving young people's performance in school, reducing crime and tackling health issues in the Borough.*

*Sir Robin Wales "The club is a shining local example of a sports legacy from the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games....The coaches help to develop confidence, a sense of teamwork, fair play, perseverance, leadership skills and empathy."*

*Despite only running for fifteen years, the club has made remarkable progress and is now one of the top junior foil clubs in the country. It is regularly featured in local and national press and has appeared on programmes such as London Tonight and BBC London.*

*The club was started by and is still run by two British fencing Olympians, Linda Strachan and Pierre Harper. We believe that it embraces the philosophy and spirit of the Olympic movement. So, we asked Linda to tell us their amazing story.*



*It's just 15 years since we started Newham Swords Fencing Club which is based at SportsDock situated in the shadow of the London 2012 Olympic Stadium. In 2005 Newham Council ran a sports festival called the "Olympic Summer of Sport" aimed at introducing different Olympic and Paralympic sports to the young people in the community. Pierre and I were amazed by the popularity for fencing. During the summer over five hundred local children had at least one taster session and such was the success funding was provided for us to start a new club. Newham Council's "Estate Based Programme" aimed at diverting young people away from crime and into sport, provided the backing needed and Newham Swords Fencing Club was born.*

*Clearly founded in the community, our goal was to not only provide an open-door policy to everyone in our incredibly diverse community but also to treat each and every person equally. We believed that whilst teaching fencing was at the core of the club, success would come from helping to develop each club member as a person - to give them self-belief and confidence both in the fencing environment and outside of it.*

*We are proud to have come a long way in a short space of time and we're regularly asked how we have been able to produce*



*so many talented fencers over the years. Who better to answer that than some of the parents of our members? They put our success on:*

- Ability of the coaches to treat everyone equally and make everyone feel that they are important to the club
- Having a 'team' approach to training and at competitions
- Tremendous support at competitions from both the coaches and parents
- Having good, older role models at the club
- Having structured training sessions
- Giving fencers confidence and belief in themselves
- Building a special relationship with fencers over a long period of time
- Teaching fencers important life skills
- The passion shown by Pierre and Linda

*"However hard the training, the fencers always come out smiling and can't wait for the next session. Linda and Pierre have made the club feel like a big family. There is so much support at competitions from all the parents and all the children. It has been amazing for my daughter, Lyla, to experience training at Newham Swords - just being around such fantastic fencers and role models is brilliant. Pierre and Linda put so much time and energy into the training sessions, giving all the young people discipline and confidence and, most importantly, belief in themselves." Carol Waller (Parent)*

*"Newham Swords is a club where boys and girls train together and fight together. Girls and boys have enjoyed equal success and their successes are equally celebrated. In contrast to the messages that society can sometimes send, this encouraging atmosphere and the role models at Newham Swords have helped our daughter, Isabella, become a confident and capable athlete." Anna Manglangit (Parent)*

*"Newham Swords provides an important space in my daughter's life, both for her physical and mental health. Thank you for making her feel so welcome from the first day she joined. She has been encouraged to*

improve at her own pace and this has given her so much confidence. The support from Linda and Pierre has been amazing. Thank you for all you do." Anon (Parent)

Whilst maintaining our philosophy of "building the person as well as the fencer", success on the piste has been a key ingredient for us. We have found that good performances and medals lead to more interest in the club and increases participation. We are proud to have supported thirty-five 'home grown' young club fencers to represent England and GB at cadet, junior and senior level, managed to win every single major national title at cadet, junior, U23 and senior level, taken titles at various age groups at the EYCs, BYCs and various LPJS competitions, and medalled on the World stage. Every single person at the club (including our parents) have played their part in these successes.



- 8 times London Youth Games Champions
- Eastern Region Champions (at U12, U14, U16, U18 and Senior level)
- U13 and U15 English Youth Champions
- U14, U16 and U18 British Youth Champions
- Winners of the Newham National Junior Series and Leon Paul Series
- UK School Games Gold medallists
- GB U17, U20 and U23 Champions
- British Senior Women's Foil Champion (by a fencer aged just 16!)
- Gold at the Paris U15 CEP Marathon (first and only GBR club to achieve this)
- Cadet and Junior Individual and Team Commonwealth Games Gold medallists
- Senior Commonwealth Games Gold medallists (individual and team)
- 2010 Cadet European Silver Team medallists (where two of the club's fencers were part of the GBR team)
- 2013 Junior European Team Bronze medallists (where Kristijan Archer and Amol Rattan were part of the GBR team)
- 2017 Junior World Championships Team Bronze medallists (where Jai Birch and Rajan Rai were part of the GBR team)
- 2019 U11 and U13 Individual Bronze medallists at the Paris CEP Marathon
- Produced fencers who have represented GB at U17, U20, U23 and Senior European

and World Championships, as well as at the World Student Games

- Ended the 2018/19 Season with the GB Number 1 and 2 Ranked fencers (at cadet level) and the GB Number 1 Ranked fencer at Junior Women's Foil
- Finished the 2019/20 season as the number 1 ranked club in the LPJS Ranking List

We are equally proud of the successes our fencers have had off the piste. It is proof that we are not only a club that produces good fencers but well-developed young people who are ready to go out into the World and achieve what they want.

We wanted to finish our article showcasing some of our fantastic members - past and present - as well as providing a Sword exclusive. The Newham Swords Fencing Club "Hall of Fame" is a group of young people who have not only achieved fantastic results in competition, but who have also been able to use the important life skills they learnt during the many years they were at the Club, to help them get to where they are today. We are extremely proud of what all of these fencers (and our younger ones and those not mentioned in this article) have achieved during their time with us, and even more proud of the fact that they have been able to take with them the life skills they have learnt whilst with us. They are all great ambassadors for Newham, the club and British Fencing.

### Alex Savin

One of the first Newham Swords fencers to achieve success on the international stage was Alex Savin whose career bests include winning the 2009 Paris U15 CEP Marathon (not yet been equalled by any other GBR fencer) and winning a silver medal as part of the GBR Men's Foil Team at the 2010 Cadet European Championships. Since leaving Newham Swords, Alex went on to study at Oxford University where he became a lecturer and is now involved



Alex (left) Claimed Cadet Team European Silver in 2010 with teammates, Cheriton, Archer & Tofalides

in the sport as a referee, competition organiser and board member of England Fencing.

"Linda and Pierre introduced me to fencing over fifteen years ago, and their passion and enthusiasm for the sport was truly infectious. Whilst I haven't lived in London for several years now and am no longer a member of Newham Swords, there's no doubt that my involvement in the sport today, in all its forms, is down to the passion of the people who set up the club and worked so hard to make it a success - both on the national and international competitive stage as well as at grassroots level."

### Alice Campbell



GB Cadet and Junior International, Alice Campbell, first joined Newham Swords at the tender age of seven, as part of the "Mini Fence" group. During the eleven years that she has been a member of the club, Alice has won several junior age group competitions and cadet and junior BRCs, as well as taken double gold at the UK School Games, bronze at the National Junior Championships and bronze at the Junior Commonwealth Championships. Alice is now studying a Sports Science degree at the University of East London.

## Alan Lozovik

Alan Lozovik joined Newham Swords at just six years of age. During his twelve years with the club Alan medalled at several junior age group competitions and competed for GBR at numerous U20 World Cups. At the age of 19, Alan left Newham Swords to train for the Royal Navy where the life skills he developed at the club helped him get to where he is today.



Alan with Pierre, Linda & teammate Kartina Feklistova

"I've been with Newham Swords since its inception and for a long time fencing was a very big part of my life. I was an extremely competitive kid when I was very young. The club was a way for me to channel that competitive nature and help me develop as a person. I learnt skills there such as how to stay calm and collected under pressure, passion, commitment and determination to be the best that I can be. Since then, I have joined the Royal Navy and bring those same skills with me to every task and operation. I may have moved on but Newham Swords will remain a part of me. It all started with Linda and Pierre and for that, I thank them."

## Amol Rattan

Amol achieved tremendous success at both home and abroad during his time at Newham Swords. His career bests include



Amol - 2013 Junior Euro Bronze

winning both the National cadet and junior titles, taking double gold at the 2012 Junior Commonwealth Championships, taking seventh place in the individual at the 2013 Junior World Championships and taking a bronze medal as part of the GBR Men's Foil Team at the 2013 Junior European Championships. Amol went on to gain a First Class degree in Business, Mathematics and Statistics at LSE.

"Fencing gave me so much in my life, both on and off the piste and I couldn't have done it without Pierre and Linda. They were with me every step of the way in all the results I achieved. The life skills they taught me I use every day in my life. The discipline, focus and determination they nurtured within me not only proved beneficial on the piste but also in every aspect of my life."

## Georgia Silk

Georgia Silk first joined the club at the age of thirteen. In the five years that she has been with us, she has rapidly improved as shown by her selection for GBR at cadet and junior level for numerous competitions, including the Cadet European Championships. Her best achievements to date include taking gold at both the 2019 FCL and Bristol Cadet BRCs, finishing her 2018/19 season as the number two ranked fencer in Great Britain, winning bronze at the 2020 Invicta Senior Open, taking gold at the 2020 Youth Five Nations Championships and winning the Kent Senior individual title for the fourth year in succession. Georgia is now studying Mathematics at Queen Mary College, in London, whilst continuing her training at Newham Swords.



"My years of training with Linda and Pierre at Newham Swords have definitely prepared me for my adult life. They have instilled in me their motivation which in turn has given me the determination to succeed. Some of the many life skills

which they have taught me include social interaction, confidence and independence."

## Ife Kubler-Agyemang

Along with Alex Savin (who also lived in Manor Park, Newham, whilst training at Newham Swords), Ife was one of the first of our fencers to gain selection for GBR at a Cadet European and World Championships, at the age of just 14. Ife's best results include winning the U12 British Youth Championships, taking gold at several LPJS competitions, gaining selection for GBR at numerous cadet internationals and taking a team bronze at the Junior Commonwealth Championships. When leaving Newham Swords, Ife went onto Bristol University and gained a degree in law, before being accepted for Harvard Law School in 2018.



Ife at Harvard

"Fencing allowed me to develop the skills to work under pressure, outside of my comfort zone and strategically. Being part of Newham Swords meant that I felt armed with a family behind me as I went into the fencing world, which to me was a world dominated by the white, posh and privileged."

## Jai Birch



© #BizziTeam

Jai first joined Newham Swords at the age of eight and remained with us for ten years before leaving to study at university. His best results include winning a number of LPJS competitions, taking gold at the Bristol Junior BRC, being selected to represent GBR and both Cadet and Junior Europeans and Worlds and winning an historic team bronze medal as part of the GB Men's Foil Team at the 2017 Junior World Championships.

### Kamal Minott

Kamal joined us at the age of eight and is one of the most successful fencers Newham Swords has ever produced. His best results (of which there are many) over the ten years he was with us include winning the UK School Games, the British Youth Championships, the National U17 Championships, a number of Junior BRCs, gaining tenth place at the Junior Worlds, taking a team gold medal at the Junior Commonwealths, being selected to represent GB at cadet, junior and senior level and winning the London Senior Foil, the Invicta Senior Open, the Birmingham International and National U23 Championships all in one season!



"Newham Swords has been a vital part of my career and development as a fencer. It was where I learnt discipline, focus, resilience and most importantly how to win. The well-designed training sessions showed me how to better structure my days to obtain optimal results. Within Newham Swords, respect was not given; it was earned. Only the most consistent and hardest workers rose to the top, breeding an infectious championship culture and mentality which made winning become commonplace and expected. The skills which Linda and Pierre helped implement (and continue to implement into their

young athletes) are still with me today and will continue to play a vital role in my success as I go forward in life."

### Kristijan Archer

Kristijan joined us at the age of eleven and achieved phenomenal success both at home and abroad during his 13 years with the club. As a GBR international at cadet, junior level and senior level, his career bests include winning the National Junior Championships, winning a team gold at the Junior Commonwealths, taking a team silver (with club mate, Alex Savin) for GB at the 2010 Cadet Europeans, gaining fifth place at the 2011 Cadet Worlds, taking a team bronze for GB at the 2017 Junior Europeans (with club-mate, Amol Rattan) and winning individual and team gold for Notre Dame at the ACCs. Kristijan now runs his own construction business in Washington DC.



**Kristijan Graduating from Notre Dame with Mum & Dad**

"Pierre and Linda not only improved my craft as a fencer but pushed me to be a better competitor and an even better person. They have created a place where boys and girls grow to become young men and women, providing them with the tools to succeed in fencing and later life. I will always be grateful to them for their assistance in not only helping me qualify for numerous World and European Championships, a handful of international medals, and helping me receive a scholarship to the University of Notre Dame, but also for teaching me to fight my hardest fight against life's toughest opponents as well as lose gracefully, but only after putting all that I had on the line. I do not know where I would be right now without the support of Linda and Pierre and the Newham Swords community, but I do know that it wouldn't be as good as where I am now."

### Rachel Shaw

Rachel is the longest serving member of Newham Swords, having joined us at the age of 9. In the twelve years that Rachel has been with us, she has competed for GBR at various cadet and junior World Cups. Her best results include winning a number of medals at various LPJS and Premier Series competitions, taking bronze at the Cadet Commonwealth Games, taking bronze at the Invicta Senior Open, winning silver at the Leon Paul Senior Open and gaining ninth place at the National U23 Championships. Rachel is now pursuing a career as a personal trainer whilst training at Newham Swords.



**Rachel (centre left) with Pierre, Ciaran Archer, Rachel Shaw, Katrina Feklistova & Kamal Minott**

"Fencing at Newham Swords has changed my life in many ways. Newham Swords, along with Linda and Pierre, have given me a family environment where I have been able to gain confidence, work ethic and the passion to reach my goals. I have taken the lessons I have learnt from them and put it into my work outside of fencing."

### Rajan Rai

Rajan joined us at the age of nine. In his ten years at Newham Swords he achieved a great deal of success at cadet and junior level and represented GBR at Cadet and Junior European and World Championships. His best achievements include winning the British Youth Championships, taking the National Junior Title, ending his 2015/2016 season as the number 1 ranked fencer in Junior Men's Foil and taking a team bronze medal (along with club-mate, Jai Birch) at the 2013 Junior Worlds. Raj went onto to study for a degree at King College and is now involved with coaching young people.

"Training at Newham Swords under the careful eye of both Pierre and Linda, has been one of the most transformative



**Raj Celebrates Junior National Title with Pierre & Linda**

experiences in my life. I have come to realise that the sword is just as mighty as the pen; as fencing has taken me to heights inconceivable to my younger self. Fencing at Newham Swords has equipped me with a transferable skill set that I have applied to both academia and business.”

**Teagan Williams-Stewart**

GBR cadet, junior and senior international, Teagan Williams-Stewart started fencing at Newham Swords at the age of ten. In just seven years, she has won the Eastern Region Senior, England U15, British Youth U18, Youth Five Nations, and National Senior Women’s Foil titles, as well as gold at several senior domestic opens (including the Welsh, Invicta, Leon Paul and London). Teagan has also won all of the various cadet and junior BRC events and finished her cadet career as the number one ranked women’s foilist in Great Britain. Her present ranking at Senior Women’s Foil is four. Teagan’s best achievement to date is gaining a silver medal at the Rome Cadet International, an achievement



**Teagan (centre) with Pierre & Linda - National Champions from the 70s, 90s & 00s**

not yet equalled by any other GB cadet women’s foilist. Teagan is now studying for her A levels on top of training at Newham Swords.

“My time at Newham Swords has been full of knowledge, not only of the sport but my abilities as an athlete. Learning self-discipline on top of fencing is hard to do when you come from a deprived area with not many opportunities or youth facilities. Newham Sword’s belief in me as an athlete, other role models that have competed for Newham Swords before me, and the support of my peers and coaches, has made it easier for me within the sport.”

**Katrina Feklistova**

Katrina Feklistova first joined Newham Swords at the age of eleven, having already had a successful career as an elite gymnast. Katrina’s best results include gaining selection for GB for several cadet and junior world cups, representing GB at the Junior Europeans and Worlds, winning the Newcastle Junior BRC, and gaining an Individual Bronze and Team Gold at the 2014 Junior Commonwealth Games. At the age of 18, Katrina left Newham Swords to study law at Warwick University, gained her law degree, and is now pursuing a successful career in law, in London.



**Katrina Winning the Newcastle BRC**

A remarkable club story - it should come as no surprise that both the club and its coaches have been well decorated. Newham Swords won British Fencing’s Club of the Year Award in 2018/19, Linda received a BEM in 2016 for services to Newham Swords Fencing Club and the local community and in January 2017, Pierre received British Fencing’s Silver Medal in recognition of his excellent work with Newham Swords Fencing Club and to fencing in general.

And the story is far from over as both coaches look forward to continuing working with England and GBR’s talented



**Linda & Pierre Ready for the 1988 Olympics (courtesy of the Newham Recorder)**



**Linda & Pierre Today**

young fencers whilst increasing the numbers who want to follow in their footsteps.

A man of few words Pierre’s sentiments provide a perfect end to this article.

“It would be nice to go full circle and hang up our coaching plastrons once we have produced an Olympic fencer.”

Sadly, we couldn’t print all of the profiles provided by Linda and Pierre. Some of those missing include GBR internationals, Ciaran Archer, Amy Home, Ellie Knox, Emilija Lukaite, Sophie Tsang and Benjamin Udrzal.

# TEAGAN'S TALE

## The Story of a Newham Swords Fencer



Wanting to find out more about what it's like growing up in a London Borough and how influential fencing can be in the hands of dedicated coaches, we spoke to Teagan Williams-Stewart. Here is what she had to say.

### Tell us about where you grew up, what was it like and how you first found fencing?

I grew up in the London borough of Newham. It's a diverse area with loads of cultures to embrace and learn from. You get to meet people from all walks of life, learn languages, cultural dishes and traditions. I have learnt how to interact with people who don't necessarily share the same background and beliefs as me. Overall, I enjoy the diversity of Newham which is reflected in all the local schools.

I found fencing when I was looking for secondary schools. I went to a school where my current coach, Linda Strachan, was teaching physical education. We started speaking and she told me to come along to a club she runs in the borough, called Newham Swords. After a couple of months, I attended the club. When I initially walked into the club I did not feel out of place as there were fencers from all backgrounds and abilities and some were beginners like myself. At the time I loved the uniqueness of the sport as well as the discipline needed to be able to fence and become a good fencer. Before I started fencing, I took part in a wide range of sports including basketball, football and rugby.

### What attracted you to Newham Swords?

Newham Swords has a welcoming and homely feel as you walk into the club. I personally did not feel out of place when I walked in as it is such a diverse club with an understanding of culture and the youth. I've stayed at Newham due to the relationships formed in the last three years with my peers both inside and outside of fencing and Newham Swords has made the fencing experience enjoyable as I know I have a true support system behind me cheering me on whilst I fence. We all train as hard as we can to not only improve our technique and fitness but to make sure we are reaching the best of our abilities. Both my coaches Linda and Pierre are understanding of my commitments outside of fencing, as I am a full-time student. They understand that there are days when I might not be able to train because I have an exam or for other reasons.

### What do Newham do well about attracting and retaining members from all ethnic backgrounds?

Newham Swords does not exactly have to do too much as Linda's work within the community and local school attracts local talent. The news of the club's successes within the UK and overseas is spread by word of mouth to attract others within the borough as well as an intake of fencers travelling hours to get to club. Newham Swords takes into consideration the beliefs and backgrounds of all fencers and respects and learns from them. The club is very inclusive and any sign of prejudice towards someone because of their gender, beliefs, background, race or religion is dealt with immediately. Being able to walk into a space and see people like yourself makes you feel at home.



No Words Necessary

### If you had to stop fencing tomorrow, what skills and disciplines have you learned at Newham that will help you in life?

There are so many disciplines to be learnt from fencing; perseverance, commitment, determination, resilience and surprisingly failure and how to bounce back from failure. I have had moments where I have lost an important fight and feel bad afterwards but thankfully, I have learnt to analyse what happened, learn from it and work on doing better the next time. All of these are skills that can be applied to every aspect of life whether that be sport, education, or a work environment.



Ready?

### What does the fencing future hold for you?

With Covid-19, there is no telling when fencing will return properly. I am keen to get back to normal training and sparring. I am also exploring gaining a coaching qualification. As a Junior until 2022, this year has been uneventful in terms of achievements with lockdowns and restrictions. I am looking forward to moving into Seniors which will be an exciting but challenging time as well as any possible opportunities for overseas training to gain more knowledge of the sport and fencing styles as well as ways to optimize my training. I suppose every fencer's goal is to get to the Olympics and that is no different for me but for now, I am focusing on my A levels and will hopefully move on to University where I will continue to fence.

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# ZFW'S FEMALE FOCUS

## Women Honoured for Fencing Progress

Three young women at north London fencing club ZFW have been honoured for their athletic endeavours with an annual award that recognises development. Yasmin Campbell, Carolina Stutchbury and Amelie Tsang shared this year's Susan Wojciechowska award for progress by women in the sport.



Carolina Stutchbury © ZFW Fencing Club

Stutchbury, aged 14, earned international accolades with a bronze-medal victory in February at the Cadet (Under 17) European Fencing Championships in Porec, Croatia. The Croatia competition was among the last to be held before international fencing was shuttered by Covid-19.



Yasmin Campbell © ZFW Fencing Club

Campbell held the position of Britain's top-ranked Junior (Under 20) foilists. She qualified to represent Great Britain at both the European and World Junior

Championships; the Worlds were scheduled for Salt Lake City, Utah in March and April but did not take place because of the pandemic.



Amelie Tsang © ZFW Fencing Club

Tsang, aged 14, a consistent podium presence at home and abroad, also qualified for the European and World Championships in the Cadet category alongside clubmate Stutchbury.

"This year it was evident that three young fencers from ZFW made significant progress," said ZFW head coach Ziemek Wojciechowski. "Carolina Stutchbury who trains in the US, with her bronze medal at the European Cadet Championships, Yasmin Campbell, with her regular top-16 finishes in World Cups, and Amelie Tsang, with her international and domestic medals. All three are very talented and are also working incredibly hard to achieve further improvement."

Susan Wojciechowska, nee Wrigglesworth, broke new ground when, at the age of 17, she represented Great Britain at the 1972 Summer Olympics in Munich. A national and Commonwealth champion, she also fenced at the Montreal Olympics in 1976 and the 1980 Games in Moscow. Married to ZFW founder Ziemek Wojciechowski, Susan died of cancer in 1996. Ziemek established the award to honour Susan's considerable efforts and achievements, consulting within the fencing community to identify promising women foilists.

Tsang said the award has encouraged her to aim high, noting that Wojciechowska "was one of the youngest British fencers to go to the Olympics. This is a wonderful inspiration for me to continue working hard."



Sue Wojciechowski © ZFW Fencing Club

Campbell, who is now 20 and into the Senior age group, said she felt honoured to be among this year's recipients. "For my results to be recognised shows that I am on the right path for greater success," she said. British Fencing's rising stars are working to remain (safely) active while fencing halls are shut and international competition is stymied.

Stutchbury said, "I have seen so many great fencers get the award and I didn't expect it. It was a real surprise and I am grateful to Ziemek for the recognition of all the hard work." The award comprises a cash prize aimed at supporting training and competition.

Although this year's award winners all fence for ZFW (Stutchbury trains mostly with coach Dimitri Romankov at Epic Fencing Club in Atlanta, Georgia, where she currently resides), the award is not limited to ZFW members. Previous recipients include Teagan Williams-Stewart (2018) and Alice Campbell (2016), both of Newham Swords Fencing Club.

ZFW is run by Olympic Coach Ziemek Wojciechowski with a team of dedicated experts. The club aims to boost the standard of fencing in Britain by providing a centre of excellence for high-performance fencers training for Olympic, international and national teams. It also provides a learning programme with an emphasis on youngsters. ZFW operates from various venues in North London, although the club is currently impacted by Covid-19 restrictions. For further details, including online training, please visit <https://www.zfw-fencing.co.uk>.

# THE FENCING SCHOOL, BATTERSEA



THE SWORD  
Club Focus

## A Coaching Model for Elite & Community Fencing

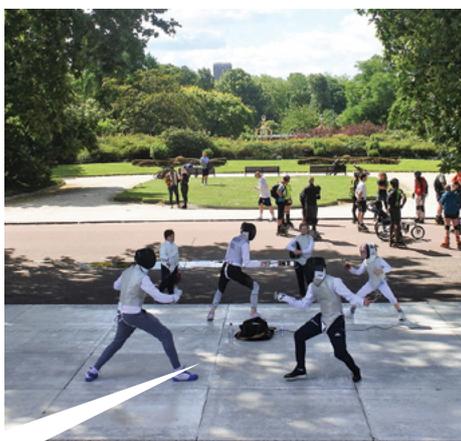
Rupert Davies-Cooke

*This article was written in July 2020.*

Mark Kent is a good friend of mine. I have known him now for over twenty years. A quiet and reserved man, yet passionate about fencing, he came to coaching by chance. "I never saw myself as a coach. The reason I started was I loved the sport and I wanted to understand it profoundly. I studied with Ziemek Wojciechowski in London and László Szepesi in Hungary."

He became a fully qualified Grade 5 coach in 2003 and in 2006 he set up The Fencing School in Battersea where individual lessons, school classes and squad training are held at The Royal Academy of Dance and club evenings at St John Bosco College, with ten pistes for training and sparring in a modern sports hall.

The club started as an Under 13's foil club for Thomas's Battersea and more recently, has grown into something remarkable. We have had England selections every year for the last five years. So we are now on a trajectory to replicate this in cadets. We managed a medal at senior GB Team Champs and have had two students selected at cadet and junior level for the European Championships. Over the past five years Rory Lewis, James Odgers, Ebba Brunnstrom, Bibi Yanicelli, Lyla Waller, Sofia Committeri, Isabella Cruickshank, Milly Walshe, Defne Basak have represented



After Lockdown

England or GB, while this year previous Battersea fencers Dawood Khan and Katie Castillo Bernaus are on the GB cadet squad and Dasha Lee on the Ireland cadet squad. Sloane Yanicelli, was ranked number one in the Leon Paul Junior Series Under 15's and one of our Under 13s came 15th out of 240 after the poules at the Challenge Wratistavia in Poland. Another, Milly Walshe, would have gone this year if not for Covid.

Head Coach Laura Delany and Senior Coach Aleksandra Brès are critical to the club's many successes. Laura was GB Number 1 for 5 years and Aleks a senior national member of the Polish squad. Mark sees it this way. "Over the past eight years I have watched British Foil break fresh ground at European cadet events. We have seen a dramatic change in the development level of British foil fencing, both tactically and technically. Nowadays the Under 13s fence at the same level as the Under 15s used to fence and likewise, the current Under 15s fence at the level that the cadets used to fence. That's why young fencers need the best competitive coaches. Laura and Aleks bring that to the training." With the club's close connections with the Lansdowne Fencing Club, our students get to meet and spar with Olympians and World Veteran champions, who also visit and present medals.

Three years ago, the Club launched a community program to work with local schools through Wandsworth Council and Thomas's Foundation. Half of the students on the beginners' program come through the Wandsworth Sports Department. They begin at seven or eight years old and by the time they turn twelve, they start achieving results at competitions. "We have a lot of spare kit that we have built up over the years. Once the kids move from plastic to metal, we issue them kit on permanent loan and subsidise their membership, which is only 30% of normal rate."

Mark spends three or four months each year in Italy and runs camps in Rome and the Alps for Battersea fencers. Last year he sponsored the accommodation and logistics for Teagan Williams-Stewart of Newham Swords to compete at the Rome U17 ECC event where she achieved the best GB cadet women foil result ever - a silver medal. Knowing all the coaches and especially the head referee, Mark was able to reassure her in the DEs, helping her cope with many Italian problems like power cuts and typical Italian gamesmanship.

Lockdown hasn't stopped the training. Zoom was a godsend. The coaches focused on mental chronometry, proprioception and error observation and ran classes on footwork, target work, theory and decision/reaction games, copying games and speed games. We used audio cues, memory tasks and fruit! For the more technically experienced fencers, we ran logic chain lessons and choice reaction exercises. Now that we are running socially distanced outdoor sessions in Battersea Park, we have kept 70% engagement with our students, with footwork and target sessions against trees and sparring with red and black cards for Social Distance transgressions.

So, what to the future? In 2019 The Club launched PROJECT28, aiming for GB squad selection over the next four years followed by Olympic selection by 2028. We used to send cadets to other clubs because we didn't have the sparring depth for them but since our University section joined, we have begun to develop a viable cadet and junior squad.



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# ELGIN DUELLIST FC EXTENDS PARTICIPATION

## New Qualified Coaches Boost Number in Scotland

### Michael Hawkins - Elgin Duellist Fencing Club

Elgin Duellist Fencing Club, up above Hadrian's Wall, is committed to encouraging as many people in Moray as possible to experience this wonderful ancient art and modern sport.

To our delight, following the award of their coaching certificates, Buckie High and Elgin Academy Secondary School teachers Jon Goulding and Fleur Hamelin-Stewart have taken on the challenge of starting extra-curricular fencing clubs at their respective schools.

The two clubs have already offered an important additional pathway for more young people to try fencing and go on to join EDFC and our thanks go to Active Schools Moray and Moray Council for making this possible. We invited a fencer from each club to show the link and pathway that led them through our fencing door.

Skyler Rainbird, 18, describes her pathway from fencing at Buckie High School's lunchtime club to competing with EDFC:

"Fencing. Probably not the most typical sport, but it has proved a massive boost to my confidence. I first started out with just a love for fencing but never the means to do it. That was until a teacher of mine (Jon Goulding) set up a lunchtime fencing club at school, which I was very eager to join.

I've been told that during these small lunchtime sessions I progressed quickly



After School Club - Oliver (front left) with Club Founder Fleur Hamelin-Stewart (front centre)



## Duellist Fencing Club

from someone who was at first nervous to hold the weapon, despite it being plastic, into someone who could give the school coach a run for his money. After a year of plastic fencing I was finally convinced and decided to join EDFC to do proper metal fencing.

The thought of hitting someone with a metal sword was quite daunting but also thrilling. Slowly but surely I gained confidence and fencing has been the experience of a life time. I doubt I would have the confidence to compete had I not had such a friendly, yet competitive club to go to. Despite me never actually winning anything, I've come very far for someone who has only been fencing properly for a year. But the most important thing to me is that I love fencing and enjoy every second of it. It is one of the most important things to me due to both the people I've met and the fun I have while fencing in my own weird way."

Oliver Harrison, 18, tells how the creation of an after-school fencing club at Elgin Academy has deepened his love of fencing and enabled him to try his hand at coaching.

"I have been fencing with EDFC for over three years and I have made many friends and feel as if I have grown as an individual. So when the opportunity arose to attend Friday's after-school club, founded by Mrs. Hamelin-Stewart (EDFC fencer,) I was very excited to do so.

The club grew quickly, with pupils of all ages attending, and we recently held our first club competition. Entering a club with beginners has been a positive

experience for me as I have been able to see new fencers develop and pass on some (hopefully correct) techniques. Assisting Mrs. Stewart and helping coach has deepened my knowledge of fencing.

The atmosphere is very relaxed and friendly which I believe aids in dissipating any nervousness a new fencer might feel, and I can confidently say I look forward to attending both the EDFC and Academy clubs each week.

When I first began fencing, I did not expect to progress to where I am now, having fenced in several competitions across the country with my favoured weapon, the sabre, which promotes quick-thinking and controlled aggression in one's movement.

I try to encourage most people I know to at least try fencing, as it is not only a way to exercise both your brain and muscles but also lacks some of the more aggressive competition of some team sports. I've even asked my mum twice!"



Skyler Rainbird with Mentor Jon Goulding

# INTERVIEW

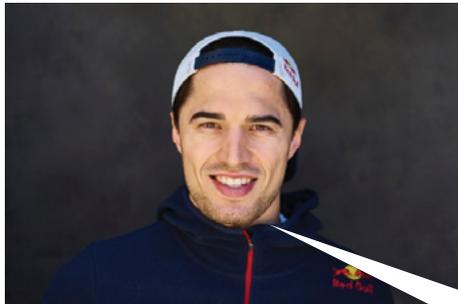
## Keeping it Moving with Epee World Champion Max Heinzer

Igor Chirashnya - Academy of Fencing Masters

In August of last year, our friends at the Academy of Fencing Masters published an interview with Switzerland's Max Heinzer. His unique style and unquestionable talent have led him to six World Cup and four Grand Prix titles - and his story is far from over. Igor and his team have been kind enough to share the interview with us. The English used is not perfect but we have chosen a light edit in order to maintain authenticity.



Thank you so much to Max for taking the time to speak with us!



27.04.18: Hallwyl; RED BULL - Portrait Max Heinzer. © Valeriano Di Domenico

Everyone who follows epee fencing knows Max Heinzer. He is the greatest showman of epee but he's not just putting on a show - he's got the competitive chops underneath to earn his place on the podium.

Max is one of the most high-energy fencers to take on the strip. Whether it is at the World Cup, the World Championships, or the Grand Prix, he is moving and making things happen. No one can miss his signature style. It draws the eye and it draws the crowds - something that we can all agree is important for drawing people to the sport.

What makes him so tremendous is that it is not all show. His flare is pronounced, but it's pronounced in such a way because it is effective for him. What he's doing, it works. More than that, you'll find out in this interview that he is leveraging his natural talent and style to get the result that he is after. It's unusual and it's fascinating for anyone who is a fencer or a fan and hopefully for those who are new to the sport. That same personality that you see with him on the piste, you'll see it here in this interview as well.

**Igor - I see you're biking.**

Max Heinzer - Yes, I just had a really hard training day and now I'm just cooling down. Just easy. I had two hard training sessions today and my legs are "finite". Tired.

**IG - First off all, congratulations! I did not know your wife is expecting the second time.**

MH - She's due in the next few days, so soon the baby is coming. The plan originally was to fence Tokyo. My flight was almost booked back from Tokyo directly the day after competition but now it's no Tokyo and I'm for sure at the birth.

**IG - Now I know the reason Tokyo was postponed. So you can focus on your family!**

MH - Yes.

**Unorthodox fencer**

**IG - The way I see you is that you are the most unorthodox fencer on the circuit.**

MH - Maybe.



Max Heinzer with his wife and son

**IG - Not maybe, it's a hundred percent. Nobody fences the way that you fence. I told someone recently that Max Heinzer reminded me of Jack Sparrow from Pirates of the Caribbean. You have huge movements. You jump. You move like a boxer from side to side. Sometimes you take the position of a sprinter ready to charge. Can you explain your style?**



Max Heinzer is doing his signature jump and back flick © BizziTeam

MH - I go back to the beginning. I started at five years old. The reason was that I always looked at pirate films with my brother. In Switzerland, I was at a little club and there was just foil fencing. Not with the pistol grip but with the French grip. After that, I was very successful with foil in Switzerland and until I was thirteen I did just foil. But in Switzerland, going to international competitions is just supported in epee fencing and I had my ambitions beyond national events. I had to change to epee.

At the beginning I was not really happy to do this change. So I fenced foil but with the epee. It made it a lot of fun for me. Of course I had to change a little bit of my tactics. Not always to detect a parry. I think the style in my heart is that I'm still a little foil fencer. So I have a lot of action, which I had from foil fencing.

I think at one meter seventy-eight (5'10"), I'm not the tallest epee fencer, so that's why I have to be fast. That's why I look as though I'm ready. My athleticism is really important. I always have to move more than my adversary. I try to make him tired. I try to surprise him. Surprise is a big word for me. I use a lot of different hits because I don't want my opponent to read me. I try to read my adversary. I fence with a lot of heart and a lot fun. I don't like the 0-0 or 1-1 matches directed to the priority. Normally, I want to fence for fifteen points, and I want to be an active fencer, not just waiting for the other. Maybe in three or four years when I'm older and not as fast anymore, maybe I have to switch to being a boring defensive fencer. At the moment, my tactic is more forward. The crazy moves, of course maybe sometimes they are just to make the adversary crazy or to try something new. It's my style. [Editor's Note: you can see similar lines in the conversation with Yuval Freilich.]

**IG - It's interesting because when I look, you are one of the fencers who is always in the news because there are a lot of compilations and Reddit is full of discussions about you. Do you think that sometimes you are a little bit more showman than tactician?**

MH - Maybe sometimes if I want to enjoy the match. Maybe it's a little bit too much. When I do a really nice point and it's 8-8, I hear the whole public crying and then I have to keep attention and stay in my concentration. But while the match is on I don't want to be a showman. I just want to win the match. But it's not always easy to stay focused after I've done a really nice point.

I see fencing as a really small sport worldwide. With my style, I know maybe I can have more people looking at me when I fence. I'm not boring. That's also a reason why I don't like boring fencers. Because when it's a boring fencing match on TV and you see fencing for the first time and all you see is 0-0, you will never look again at fencing.

## Jack Sparrow of Modern Fencing



Max Heinzer performing his epic back flick © BizziTeam

**IG - It's not without reason that I compared you to Jack Sparrow from Pirates of the Caribbean because your style is very theatrical. Definitely not boring. Anything but boring. Which I think is very important because it is a very niche sport, and it does need to be promoted. You take almost any other fencer and you can sort of predict what will happen. With your match it is like a rollercoaster. You fence for performance. You have all the titles in the world. Don't you think that sometimes you need to kind of adjust the style for the goal and not the goal for the style?**

MH - I think my first goal is to win the match. I won a lot of matches with nice points. I think on fifteen points there will always be one or two spectacular points because this is my style. If I tried to do a fifteen point match with just boring actions, with normal epee actions, I don't know if I could win.

**IG - What is your favourite match? The one you want to highlight as the one that everybody knows, "This is Max Heinzer's style of fencing."?**

MH - I know the match, but I don't want everyone to watch it! Everyone will know all of my tricks.

**IG - We already know all your tricks. It's compiled.**

MH - I watched some weeks ago at my semi-final match at the Grand Prix 2011 in Bern. I saw, ok my fencing in the last nine years has changed a lot. I think that nine years ago I did many more crazy things than I do now. I think now I'm almost a little bit of a boring fencer.

**IG - Last year's World Championship bronze medal with China - the last touch is anything but boring.**

MH - It was just one touch. I was one thousand percent sure that the Chinese

fencer would do just a straight lunge and I was sure I could do this touch. Of course it's better to win the bronze medal with this touch than with a boring touch. There, it was a little bit for the show. Also for my heart. If you do this point and it works, you can win the medal with this point and I think maybe you'll remember it better also for yourself. (You can watch the full match [here](#).)

**IG - So if I give you a choice - lose a match with fantastic touches or win a match with boring touches.**

MH - Win a match.

**IG - Winning will prevail.**

MH - In competition, yes. In training, no. In training, it's not really hard if I lose matches. I think I lose a lot of training matches because I always try to create new touches. For me, it's not hard if I lose matches in training.

## Team Switzerland



Switzerland - 2018 Men's Epee World Champions © BizziTeam

**IG - Switzerland as a country has had fantastic team success in the last five, six, seven years. How do you think the Swiss team is doing and what do you think your strengths are?**

MH - I think we always had very strong trainers with the two Italians. We had really good tactics for the team competition. I think I'm a better team fencer than individual fencer. That's for sure good for our team. I think in almost each team competition I do really good matches. Better than individual. So I think I can really help my team.

**IG - Why do you think you are a better team fencer?**

MH - I think I'm a little bit cooler in the team. Individual it's really fast. You're out or you're around. In a team, there's more time and the bouts are just three minutes. I know I can give three minutes at one hundred percent and survive. In fights to fifteen points, sometimes I give one hundred percent and I'm tired and I lose the match in the end. Of course there is a lot of motivation for me if the team is behind me. They push me so I have extra motivation and extra power. In individual fencing you are really alone on the piste and maybe I have this extra boost in a team setting. In the European Championships I was two times second, three times third, also in the individual. I also have some good individual results - my World Cup and Grand Prix victories. Not so bad.

**IG - Not at all, not at all. Which match don't you like?**

MH - I like more to speak about matches that I like. I like the final in Vancouver. I think we were nine touches behind Ukraine one year. I fenced in the final and I did the first eleven hits in a row. Eleven single hits in the final of the World Cup. We won against Ukraine. This was one of the best comebacks. In the individual, maybe I can answer your question from before. I was 14-8 down in the semi-final of Tallinn and I won 15-14. I had only thirty seconds time for this comeback. ([Here is a Swiss news report](#) about that match.

I just risked my life. I knew one little fault and I am out. It was already the semi-final of the World Cup, so I knew the bronze medal was mine. So it was easy for me to risk. Each point I scored made my opponent was more afraid of me. I saw this in his eyes. I saw that he is not sure that he will win. I think I scored one back flick, one to foot, one parry - I think I did eight different touches. That's always my goal to do different touches so that the opponent can't read me.

**IG - How much time do you spend learning your opponents? By now you know everybody and you've learned everybody.**

MH - The young new fencers I don't know and I lose a lot to them for the first time. I think the second time when I fence them I don't lose anymore. I look at videos the evening before my matches. I know in this part, I could be better. But I have no time and no energy.

**IG - It looks boring for you?**

MH - It's just that I've fenced now since I was five years old. That's twenty-seven years and in my free time I don't have the desire to look at fencing matches. I like to do something more with the family. I like fishing or searching for mushrooms but I don't want to look at fencing matches!



One of Max's Hobbies

**IG - You want to surprise your opponents but you are a very watched fencer.**

MH - Yes, that is why I have to change always. Because they all look at my actions. They know I do the back flick on the shoulder. So I have to have a similar action that begins the same way but I end it another way. They don't know if I do this or if I do that. But don't think it is easy for me. This is hard. I'd like to be a twenty-year-old version of me and then my opponents won't know me. I think I could win a lot of matches.

**IG - What type of fencer is the most difficult for you to fence?**

MH - This is also too tactical exposing for me. If I tell you, everyone will try to do this against me. (He said laughing!) When I finish my career we can do another interview. Right now I cannot give you all of my tactics.

**IG - Would you change anything with your fencing? How you approach the decisions, how you approach the training?**

MH - Yes, one thing that I would do differently. I was leading 3-0 at the Olympic Games 2012 against Ruben Limardo and I went to the defence, but the three points against Limardo I did in the offense. After that it was five straight for him. I'm sure that if I had come to him with the attack while I was leading, it would have been better for me. It was my day and I was in really good shape and there I made a mistake to go on the defence. That's the

reason maybe sometimes when I'm leading now, I don't like to go to the defence because I prefer to lose the match in the offense than in the defence. This is one match I won't forget. After that, he became the Olympic Champion.

**IG - He became the first Venezuelan to become Olympic champion.**

MH - I was one time speaking with him about this match. When I was leading 3-0 he told me that he was thinking, "Oh my god I will get killed 15-5." He had no idea what to do. So, it was a stupid decision to change my tactics.

**IG - Team tactics are very different to individual ones.**

MH - Team matches need team tactics and I always want to discuss this tactic and if I agree I play one hundred percent with the team tactic. But individually, I think it's my match. If I lose I don't get a bonus from my sponsor. It's my job. I win money with this. In individual matches, I'm my own boss. For team matches, ok the coach is boss, the federation is boss, the whole team is the boss.

**Read the rest of this engaging interview [here](#).**



# COMMUNITY FENCING

## The Role of the Core Coach and Distance Learning

**Marjorie Kuhne - Business Administrator**

Every year, all over the UK, thousands of new participants try out fencing for the first time. Recent years have seen 250,000 unique community fencing experiences, outnumbering a 2014 estimate that the whole of the British market to be explored could reach 100,000 participants. Demand keeps increasing, both from the learning and the teaching side. It is part of my role at British Fencing to handle a constant influx of new enquiries from activity deliverers wanting to offer “a new, different sport”.

Most of these enquiries come from PE teachers, multisport coaching companies, and activity centres. They want to provide something unique and inspiring, out of the traditional sporting choices, and often have heard about the success fencing has had at a certain school or holiday camp. All of this evidences that fencing becomes more and more accessible - financially, geographically, culturally. Tackling barriers that can make fencing inaccessible is the motivation behind much of the work that is currently done by the Commercial and Development teams at British Fencing. This includes reformulation of the BF Coaching Framework and the new coaching education programme, started in 2017. The desired outcome: more training, more widespread, and at higher standards.

This is the context behind the creation of the Core Coach course, which is now the basis of some of the projects conducted by BF (such as Muslim Girls Fence and the partnership with the Scout Association) and the Licensed Partnership Programme. The Core Coach course meets the objectives of most of those PE teachers, multisport coaches and activity deliverers venturing into a new sport. These varied providers are one of the forces driving the popularity and appeal of fencing, turning it into a possible sport alternative for thousands of children of all ages, genders, localities and backgrounds.

Much of the success in attracting new participants lies in the philosophy behind

the Core Coach course. It is about learning fencing by playing games, and the games we all love to play. Core Coaches are trained to develop their own coaching philosophy and explore not only the “What” skills but also the “How” and the “Why”. Moves and rules are made simple in the form of games and the playfulness of sword fighting is embraced as an educational tool.

Hundreds of new Core Coaches have been formed since the course was launched and introduced to our Coaching Framework. This growing coaching workforce not only opens the doors of the fencing world to new participants but also provides unique experiences that can change perceptions of physical activity and someone’s own capabilities. An interesting phenomenon happens when we facilitate such experiences: a demystification of fencing. We get to see it through whatever lenses we want and realise that it suits the abilities, interests, and stories of so many of us. Sword fighting, after all, has been in popular culture and in our childhood memories for many generations. Core Coaches are the ones that show it can be real.

While the World still looks for ways to adapt and transform every aspect of life that has been disrupted by the coronavirus pandemic, one of such adaptations was already at hand: online learning. A rising trend that was only accelerated and incorporated by all sorts of education providers, and whose almost immediate adoption shows that the World could be evolving towards its widespread use becoming the norm. Not without the relevant discussions the topic entails, such as - again - accessibility (what are the social and technological barriers separating students to the best e-learning experience?), suitability for certain desired learning outcomes and the rise of hybrid models, to mention a few.

BF has put in place in record time its online alternative to support the projects and businesses that benefit from the Core Coach course. We opted for a hybrid model, mixing distance learning for the theoretical



Marjorie

aspects of the course and a face-to-face final assessment, where candidates, in the presence of a BF Coach Developer and their peers, can experience the learning environment that is a characteristic of BF’s coach education programme. The online alternative is mostly recommended for candidates with prior knowledge in delivering sessions and the two original full face-to-face versions (1 or 2-days long) of the course will still be offered.

Divided into three stages of completion, the online Core Coach course is also an opportunity for those wanting to achieve a non-accredited CPD (continuing professional development) training, as the first of these three stages can be completed as a stand-alone course. It is suitable for anyone new to fencing and looking to understand the “How” skills of coaching fencing and a good supporting tool to work with the content of our Explore Fencing games app. More information on this stand-alone course is being prepared for the next months, to open up more pathways for those curious about the sport of fencing and exploring its vast possibilities in education and community sports.



# DOES “TALENT NEED TRAUMA”?

## And What is Trauma for an Elite Athlete?

**Rob Cawdron - Project Officer - Pathways Development**

In 2012 an article was published with the eye-catching title “The Rocky Road the Top, Why Talent Needs Trauma”.<sup>1</sup> It came at a time when a focus of talent development systems was on being a steamroller for athletes on talent pathways, flattening obstacles in front of them and allowing them to focus entirely on their sport. This article challenged that paradigm and suggested that far from making athletes more likely to be successful internationally, it meant that they came through without developing the psychological skills necessary to be a senior elite athlete. The article suggested that for some athletes, experiencing a kind of “trauma” was not just useful, it was necessary. The article’s publication and in particular its use of the word “trauma” sparked a debate that is still ongoing, about the nature of trauma that was required for growth, and whether “trauma” is an appropriate word to use. In this article, we are going to take a deeper look into that debate, pulling out any practical lessons for coaches and athletes.

In order to be able to make practical meaning of the research, this article is going to explore two specific topics. Firstly, what is meant by the word “trauma” and secondly, what role trauma plays in the development process.

To start then, let’s get to grips with the word “trauma”. It is an emotive word and right now it is right in the public eye, with the stories that can be seen in a multitude of sports, putting scrutiny on talent development practices like never before. It is not surprising then that the phrase “talent needs trauma” has itself come under fire for justifying bad or abusive practices in sport. The word has also received attention from people interpreting it as referring to traumatic experiences in life such as bereavement or family separation. This area was highlighted in

2016’s Great British Medalists Project<sup>2</sup> as a potential area for further investigation.

In light of this criticism, and the implications of the word “trauma”, the authors of the original 2012 study have published a series of new studies to give more depth and provide a clearer definition of trauma. In 2017, an article was published which aimed to do exactly this.<sup>3</sup> The study in this article explored athletes’ experiences throughout their career and examined their experiences of “trauma”. For us, there are two key conclusions that come out of the study:-

1. The word trauma was used by athletes to describe their experiences, rather than them being an outside diagnosis and;
2. These experiences were overwhelmingly described as “sports-based”.

This second conclusion is of vital importance for our understanding. The types of experience that athletes experienced as being those that they felt they grew from were those such as; non-selection for squads, time off through injury, changing clubs/coaches and poor performance at key competitions. Many of these experiences will be familiar to coaches and athletes and a majority of athletes can expect to experience at least one of these over the course of their career. We now have our answer to the first of the two questions posed earlier; “what do we mean by trauma?” Meaning we can move onto answering the second.

That second question is “what role do these experiences play in an athlete’s development?” To understand this, we want to return to the study from 2017.<sup>4</sup> The question can be boiled down to two basic positions; does the experience serve as a catalyst for the athlete, giving them skills

they did not previously know they had, or is it more of a proving ground for skills that an athlete has already learned?

Somewhat intuitively, the study suggests that it is the latter and that rather than rising like a phoenix from the ashes with new psychological skills from a challenging experience, it is what an athlete brings with them to an experience that allows them to grow and develop from it.

All of this brings us to our final part of this discussion, which is taking the lessons from this body of work and putting them to practical use. Keeping in mind the two key lessons from earlier - that the experiences in question are sports-based, and that what matters is what the athlete brings to these experiences, as much as the experiences themselves - will be important.

As alluded to earlier, the experiences that athletes described as moments which they could grow from are ones that are common to many athletes and perhaps just as important, they are predictable. This means that coaches and athletes can prepare for these very events, ensuring that when they happen, an athlete is prepared for them.

To close this article; what are the conversations that can happen between athletes and coaches to prepare them for these experiences, giving them the tools and confidence to grow from one to the next? What about if you aren’t selected for this international? What’s your plan B? When moving away to University, what challenges might you expect to encounter and what’s your plan for them?

Take the time to think these through and use each one as a blueprint for the next one of its kind.

Good luck!

1. “The Rocky Road to the Top, Why Talent Needs Trauma”, Collins and MacNamara, 2012

2. “Great British Medalists Project: A review of current knowledge on the development of the world’s best sporting talent”, Rees, Hardy, Gullich, Abernethy, Cote, Woodman, Montgomery, Laing, Warr, 2016

3. “Exploring Traumas in the Development of Talent: What are they, what do they do, and what do they require”, Savage, Collins, Cruickshank, 2017

4. “Exploring Traumas in the Development of Talent: What are they, what do they do, and what do they require”, Savage, Collins, Cruickshank, 2017

# WORKING TOGETHER

## Update from Head of Commercial

James Craig

*There is no doubt this has been an unusual year. Here is an update on how some of our partners have navigated 2020.*

### Crown Hills Community College

In 2019 specialist sports college, Crown Hills Community College joined BF's family of partners as an Official Training Partner. As an inner-city Leicestershire based secondary state school with 1,400 pupils, Crown Hills, (like all schools,) has certainly been affected by the pandemic. The local lockdowns over the summer term in Leicester hampered the school's fencing plans. The return to the academic year was focused on risk mitigation in case any positive cases were confirmed and the school needed to enact a home learning programme.

Just before lockdown Crown Hills was flying high with fencing. They even entered two teams into the British Schools Team Championships - one boys and one girls - within just nine months of having started as beginners. The girls team beat Millfield school on their way to a bronze medal place. (A full story and video of that inspiring journey is currently being produced.)

To see them achieve such success in year one is fantastic and there is a strong foundation to build on over the next four years. Furthermore, it is important to note that Crown Hills is not just thriving with metal fencing. They have taken the learning outcomes of the Primary School Resource Pack and injected them into the PE curriculum for years 7 and 8. In four years from now each pupil at the school will have experienced and been exposed to fencing within and outside of curriculum time. This shows a huge commitment to fencing as a core sport for their sports academy, as well as a school-wide engagement tool for pupils learning in curriculum.

Speaking at the British School Teams Championship 2020, Doug Keast, Director of Sport and Assistant Principal of Crown Hills

Community College, notes the experience of the event and working with BF so far,

"The meetings we have with British Fencing about our wider plans are always those types of meetings that everybody enjoys - as it is all "can-do" and very positive - and we have agreed outcomes which we are working towards. I know it takes layers and layers of different people working together in a coordinated fashion for this to take place and it's always true of any good sport at a good level. When you scratch below the surface, there are just loads of different layers going on, which all play their part.

"From the word go this morning, getting up, leaving Leicester at 6.30am to getting here, it's a big ask and it's a big experience for our students. Getting them to look above the parapet type of thing and really express themselves in this arena, against schools from across the whole of the country and in the independent sector...That is a great experience for us to be involved at this level and it is something we are going to build on..."

At the time of writing; Crown Hills want to get back to fencing as quickly as possible. BF has some exciting launch events around Tokyo 2021, to work with them on in the New Year and will be helping them to deliver the Primary School Resource Pack to their 12 feeder primary schools and other interested primaries in the local area over the 2020-21 academic year.



### Center Parcs

The majority of people know Center Parcs as the popular activities, spa and forest get-away break destination. It is a well-known brand that has done significant work (and continues to do so,) on a daily and weekly basis, to ensure that guests can look forward to their breaks during the pandemic. When we met with them in September, it was great to hear that fencing had partially

returned to their activities schedule. We are pleased to confirm that Center Parcs will be renewing their agreement for a third year and increasing their number of licensed trainers. Work to ensure that all six of their venues in the UK and Ireland have a licensed trainer is underway and BF is pleased to have had the opportunity to discuss partnership marketing opportunities over the next few months. It was great to hear them reciprocate BF's feelings on how fencing can be used more widely as a fun engagement tool for their guests, whilst also raising the profile of the sport. A senior manager at Center Parcs shared that the Explore Fencing app was "...looking fresh..." and they look forward to optimising the app for their delivery needs, to ensure quality assurance is upheld and that staff are supported in their delivery of sessions in the future.

### Little Musketeers

Like many school sport providers right now the environment is challenging, as external suppliers are often not able to access school premises to provide curricular and extra-curricular activity. BF is helping Little Musketeers by trialling a new at-home fencing product which they offer for £175. I have had the opportunity to trial the product with my family, which has been great. It has brought more purposeful play. We've been getting active and I've been able to bond with both of my children together whilst learning new skills.

Little Musketeers is also in the process of exclusively launching new software in the UK called Curtanna. The programme has had a significant endorsement from a leading Cognitive Developmental Neuroscientist, Adele Diamond (University of British Columbia, Canada) and she states that "Curtanna challenges all the critical executive functions.... including self-control, focused attention, working memory and creative problem-solving in a way that's fun for kids. They clearly derive great joy from Curtanna. They help and encourage one another, and a supportive community develops. Those emotional and social benefits of Curtanna work to support the executive function benefits of the program." BF looks forward to supporting

the rollout wherever it can in the UK education sector in the months and years ahead.

### LudoSport UK

Another of our Official Training Partners, LudoSport UK, joined us in 2019.

The response by LudoSport CEO, Nicola Heaney and her team has been admirable. The government's measures that were placed on many local community activity providers across the UK, were challenging. Our partners recognise the importance of maintaining regular activity levels for a multitude of reasons that most of us can relate to, including the social, physical and mental benefits. LudoSport UK has focused on adding value to their membership base and getting their programmes back up and running whilst being realistic about the situation. They have used BF's online **risk assessment resources** to support their plans for a return to fencing and are ready to go whenever restrictions lift.

Until venues reopen, new and existing people interested in LightSaber combat should check out LudoSport's YouTube channel '**LudoSport Evolve**' and watch the trailer for an online course that they have starting at £129.00. It includes 20 sections,

129 lectures and a total of over two hours of quality content to learn from.

### Kingswood Inspiring Learning and PGL Travel Ltd

It was unfortunate to hear that both Kingswood and PGL have had to significantly reduce and in some cases close UK operations during the pandemic. Between these two organisations, BF know that over 150,000 young people try fencing each year. That is a significant number and we are keen to help in any way that we can going forwards. It is hoped that BF can play its part in enabling them to return to delivering fencing as a popular have-a-go activity again. We were happy to release the free-to-download Explore Fencing games app for fans and coaches. One part of the app is for coaches to access. The other side is for anyone who would like to try some fencing-related games they can play anywhere with no equipment needed. BF hopes that teachers who were disappointed that they couldn't do fencing on their school's trip to an activity centre can download the app. Playgrounds and classrooms up and down the UK can then enjoy a lot of swordplay fun. This experience is all about confirming that fencing is an activity that really challenges pupils' self-efficacy and self-perception about being 'sporty' or 'not-sporty'.

### Train with Premier

As the commercial training arm to Premier Education, our partnership with Train with Premier allows them to deliver part of the Core Coach course internally to their franchisee network. This training is only valid in their organisation, is not transferrable and was proving popular within their franchisee network across England before the pandemic. Premier has done fantastic work online, keeping children and schools active during the first national lockdown. Their risk assessments and guidance for franchisees to go back to schools to deliver safe sport has been encouraging and has led the way for other organisations.

Premier Education has gone through organisational change too which means that we have more direct access to their franchisee network. BF looks forward to more franchisees taking up the Primary School Resource Pack to make sure they can continue to provide fencing-related services to their schools. We encourage them to also connect with local clubs to ensure a smooth participant journey from 'have a go' to club level fencing.

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# #THEGREATINDOORS

## Keeping Scouts Fencing Through Lockdown

Virginia Bailey - Head of Participation



In late March 2020, when the Covid-19 pandemic put a stop to all forms of sport and activity across the UK, one of the many organisations hit hard by lockdown was the Scout Association. With over 500,000 young people across the country pre-pandemic benefiting from a range of activities delivered by volunteers on a weekly basis in Scout huts across the country, we wanted to ensure that during lockdown Scouts and their leaders would have the opportunity to stay engaged with fencing through online delivery.

Following consultation with several Scout leaders who over the years have gained the fencing bug, we discussed what would be the most suitable way to support the leaders during this challenging time. We wanted to ensure that we could provide support that was not a “flash in the pan” approach, but that would build a longer-term resource and support mechanism that had the flexibility to be of use both during and post pandemic. With this in mind we bought together three different fencing brains; Rob Bruniges, BF Coach Developer with years of experience upskilling Scout leaders through BF’s Core Coach course, Lucy Johnson, stunt women by trade, international fencer, coach and the holder of a brilliantly creative mind, and finally, Ben Peggs, GBR fencer, coach and former Scout.

Over the coming days, the team set about creating a six-week programme, made up of over 30 interactive fun videos. Filmed in their front rooms, gardens and kitchen, the videos covered the basics of fencing, with a series of supporting games to bring the skills to life and add an element of competition and challenge to them. Early on in the process Rob said, “It’s fantastic to be able to continue the work we do with the Scouts. Instead of face-to-face delivery, we are doing it remotely. Bringing Lucy and Ben into the programme has made the experience even more enjoyable and it’s been really exciting to see the project come to fruition.”

As well as learning to fence, the young Scouts were also provided with a series of creative activities such as making their own swords, lunge pads, salles and fencing outfits.

Working with Rob, Ben and Lucy is really exciting. They have all bought something different to the table and together have created a brilliant resource that we hope will appeal to a range of Scouts, both from a sporting and creative perspective.

Another important element of the project was to ensure that the Scouts were rewarded for their commitment and dedication to the programme and with the knowledge that the BF Bronze Award is popular amongst Scouts, we wanted to provide a similar incentive to encourage them to get involved. We designed a badge and certificate that has been made available to all those Scouts involved in the programme.

During the role out of the project we have all felt the pressure during lockdown and what is incredible to see is the continued determination and drive from Scout leaders across the country to continue to provide opportunities for the young people they work with. We hope that this resource will provide an opportunity for them to try something different and play a part in keeping groups connected.

Seven months after the project was launched, over 150 Scout leaders had signed up to the free resource and the videos have been viewed over 1000 times. As lockdown began to ease, we started to support Scout groups with a multi-delivery approach, using both online and face-to-face interactions to keep Scouts involved and engaged in our brilliant sport.

If you would like more information on this project, or would like to connect with a Scout group, please contact [virigina.bailey@britishfencing.com](mailto:virigina.bailey@britishfencing.com)



# LOCKDOWN CONNECTIONS

## Through Muslim Girls Fence

### Virginia Bailey - Head of Participation



Lockdown came as a shock to all of us. For the majority of the population we had to immediately change our day-to-day routines, adapt and figure out ways that would allow us to juggle family and work life within an instant. For sports coaches across the country, they too had to adapt very quickly to a world of coaching online. When it came to Muslim Girls Fence, this was no different. We immediately began working with our partners across the country to ensure where possible, delivery of Muslim Girls Fence was able to continue in line with Government lockdown rules. At the forefront of delivery, our aim was to keep communities connected and provide the opportunity for the women involved in the project to stay active throughout the uncertain times.

Within 17 days of lockdown being announced, the first online session was up and running in Bradford. 100 days on and over 60 fencing sessions and 13 creative workshops had taken place across London, Birmingham and Bradford. We knew that if we were going to maintain connections with communities, provide a space for togetherness, physical activity and creativity during this time, then the coaches were absolutely key to this.

There were however a number of challenges that we needed to overcome:

- Like millions of people across the country, many of the women we work

with were now at home with their families 24/7. It was therefore important to ensure coaches could adapt to provide family friendly sessions as well as the usual women only sessions.

- With people being thrust into using technology as the main way to stay connected, we were aware that not everyone would be familiar or comfortable with using Zoom and it could pose a major barrier to women engaging online. The combination of a video in two languages instructing people on how to set up the tech plus proactive support calls, overcame this early on.
- With people's daily routines being immediately impacted, timings of sessions needed to be changed to ensure as many women as possible could continue to be involved. One of the positives of delivering sessions virtually meant that women were not bound by physical locations, but could join in any session, based on timings.
- Ensuring that both coaches and participants are safeguarded during online delivery, BF provided guidance and advice through its dedicated Covid-19 webpage, as well as the BF Safeguarding Manager attending several of the weekly Coaches meetings. Template risk assessments were provided, which included how to safeguard sessions online.

The online sessions gave the women time out for themselves, with one participant saying "Alhumdillillah it's been great attending your sessions not only benefitting physically but also been good for mental wellbeing. Gives me little time out for myself. Love seeing friendly faces and getting to know new sisters in the

process." Whilst others enjoyed it as an opportunity to get their children involved, "salaam and jazakillah khair for a great session. Always wanted to do fencing. So nice to do it with my little one. Keep up the good work".

The drive, commitment and dedication from the coaches during lockdown has been incredible. We have learnt a huge amount about each of them. We have seen a connection form between the group, that we truly believe will continue to grow way beyond the pandemic. We have learnt a lot about the project from the coaches, understanding what we are doing well and more importantly what we could do better. On community projects like Muslim Girls Fence, we often focus most of our attention on the participants and not the coaches, but what lockdown taught us was the importance of supporting, listening and getting to really know our coaches.

It is now more than ever crucially important that the work of Muslim Girls Fence continues during these uncertain times. A piece of research commissioned by Sport England at the beginning of lockdown to look at physical activity levels and behaviours during this time, worryingly, but not unsurprisingly stated, "below the surface, we see familiar inequalities replicated, even exacerbated. The whole population has been affected, but not affected equally". Covid-19 has highlighted that demographic groups and audiences, including women and some BAME communities, are finding it even more difficult than ever to be active. We must continue to support and grow the project so that we can attempt to play a part in reversing these inequalities that many communities face.

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

**Submit your stories to the editor:**

**[karim.bashir@catchsport.com](mailto:karim.bashir@catchsport.com)**

# ATHLETE WELLBEING

## Eating Disorders - Busting the Myths

### Steve Kemp - Head of Pathways

The primary objective of the ADP is to produce athletes that are resilient, independent and high performing with a true sense of sense value, that in turn inspires other to achieve success. To do this we are continually working on the “whole person” approach.

Sport and fencing are subsets of society and therefore societal issues will be reflected within sport and therefore fencing. A recent BBC Panorama programme (Nov 2020) highlighted the issue of eating disorders in elite sport.

The research into elite athletes and adolescent elite athletes suggests, “The prevalence of EDs is higher in athletes than in controls, higher in female athletes than in male athletes, and more common among those competing in leanness-dependent and weight-dependent sports than in other sports. A collaborative effort among coaches, athletic trainers, parents, physicians and athletes is optimal for recognising, preventing, and treating EDs in athletes.” (Sundgot-Borgen, Klungland Torstveit, 2004)

Everyone in fencing has a role to play in the recognition of eating disorders as with other potential issues such as anxiety. It is important that those involved in the Pathway Programme are aware of the risk factors, warning signs and ultimately to create a culture for openness to share concerns regarding potential issues, such as eating disorders.

Often misunderstood, many people have mistaken beliefs about eating disorders, dieting and body image. Some common misconceptions about eating disorders are:

**Myth: Eating disorders are a lifestyle choice, not a serious illness**

The truth is that eating disorders are serious mental illnesses; they are not a lifestyle choice or a diet gone ‘too far’ and people can’t ‘just stop’ their eating disorder. People with eating disorders require treatment for both mental and



physical health, addressing the underlying psychological issues and the impact on physical health.

**Myth: Eating disorders are a cry for attention or a person ‘going through a phase’**

An eating disorder is not a phase and it will not be resolved without treatment and support. People with eating disorders are not seeking attention. In fact, due to the nature of these illnesses a person with an eating disorder may go to great lengths to hide, disguise or deny their behaviour, or may not recognise that there is anything wrong.

**Myth: Eating disorders are about vanity**

The association between body dissatisfaction and eating disorders can lead people to mistakenly believe that eating disorders are about vanity. In truth, no one can be blamed for developing an eating disorder. There are genetic and personality vulnerabilities as well as social and environmental triggers. Eating disorders are not just about food or weight, vanity, will power or control. They are fuelled by distress, anxiety, stress and cultural pressures.

**Myth: Families, particularly parents, are to blame for eating disorders**

A common misconception is that family members can cause eating disorders through their interactions with a person at risk. While there are environmental triggers which may impact on the development and maintenance of an eating disorder, there is no evidence that a particular parenting style causes eating disorders.

**Myth: Dieting is a normal part of life**

While moderate changes in diet and exercise have been shown to be safe, significant mental and physical

consequences may occur with extreme or unhealthy dieting practices. Eating disorders invariably occur in people who have engaged in dieting or disordered eating. Dieting is also associated with other health concerns including depression, anxiety, nutritional and metabolic problems and contrary to expectation, with an increase in weight.

**Myth: Eating disorders only affect white, middle class females, particularly adolescent girls**

Adolescent females are one group with a high risk but eating disorders are not limited to any one group. People from all age groups and cultural or socio-economic backgrounds experience eating disorders. Eating disorders affect both men and women.

Whether you are a coach, parent or fencer, we all have a responsibility as people. By developing a greater understanding of areas such as eating disorders, we will be better placed to lookout for others and ourselves.

**Did you know?**  
Disordered eating is used to describe a range of irregular eating behaviours that may or may not warrant a diagnosis of a specific eating disorder.

# DIARY OF A FENCER

## Letting Down My En Garde

Joanna Alexandra Norland



Joanna

"Of course you can't beat me. I've been fencing half my life," my 14-year-old son, Alistair, consoled me, after yet another lopsided bout. "The question is, can you beat YOU? At the end of your lesson, can you thrash the fencer you were when you began?"

How did I find myself cast in this generationally reversed version of *The Karate Kid*, receiving age-young wisdom from a sabre-slashing sensei, thirty-five years my junior? Chalk it up to Covid-19.

At the onset of lockdown, Alistair struggled with the social isolation of distance learning, made worse by the sudden halt to fencing club training and competitions.

For years, he'd been training three times a week and slinging his fencing bag into the car boot on weekends for road trips to competitions that took us around the M25 and beyond. The camaraderie of the fencing club was balm for many an awkward Latin declension, and the prospect of holiday fencing camps got him through the slog of year-end exams.

When Covid-19 hit, and clubs shut down, coaches responded resourcefully with WhatsApp challenges, Hudl video critiques and training-by-Zoom. Bridge activities kept Alistair in shape, but were no substitute for the fun, variety and adrenaline rush of in-person training.

What could I do to perk up a kid facing a dreary line-up of distance learning modules

with no reprieve? On a hunch, I invited Alistair to teach me his sport.

Before I had time to rethink and recant, he tossed me his outgrown kit, marked out a piste in our car park, and presented himself, masked and armed.

What had I agreed to?!

To be fair, my introductory lessons were relatively gentle. Al taught me to lunge at a back garden tree, which endured my assaults with forbearance and never once lunged back.

Footwork was a good substitute for the gym, and lunging at a wall to spear a falling glove had the fun of a summer carnival game.

Things got more complicated when Alistair talked me through the rules of priority. I was baffled, but figured that I would work them out on the go.

But then, a few days later, Alistair proposed an actual bout. "Me against the tree?" I asked hopefully. Nope. Against him.

"I'm a runner, not a warrior," I warned him. "A flight-over-fight kind of girl. Don't expect too much." Set your expectations low and you get what you expect.

Alistair charged. I froze. He smashed his sword against my helmet. I screamed. A whack to my arm had me checking my padded jacket for blood stains. Suddenly, fencing was scary. My coach wielded his criticism as incisively as his weapon.

"Blade work, mum! Like I showed you. Figure out what your opponent is trying to do - and NEVER play his game. Attack! Attack!! Defending alone doesn't get you points!"

By week two, I was thoroughly piste-off. One more fight, and I'd tell him I quit. The resolution must have boosted my adrenaline because - "Touché!" exclaimed Alistair. "It's your point! See what happens when you attack!?"

"It was a one-off," I thought. "I'm not naturally aggressive!" That's when I

realised that quitting was not an option. After all, how many times had I cheered and challenged my son to overcome his own natural set points? From first sleepovers to scholarship exams, I had reiterated that to claim new vistas, you must conquer yourself, and that as you stretch, life's possibilities extend. Yet the whole time, I'd been preaching discomfort from a cozy pulpit. The predictable routines and demands of my professional life are all carefully tailored to my tastes and talents. My challenges, however numerous and complex, are variations on familiar themes. Let's face it. If everything you do feels natural, you've carved out a highly artificial - and claustrophobic - mini-verse, shutting out most of the cosmos.

So, I refitted my helmet, took up my sword and ... lost, 15-3. Which was a whole lot better than my usual 15-zip. Because every point was a victory of will and maternal commitment over instinct. And the next evening, I did it again.

As lockdown eased and Alistair's club re-opened, I willingly ceded my position on the piste to other, worthier adversaries - with fresh appreciation for their spirit and skill.

My fencing bruises are now healing but my lessons from lockdown have left their mark. I have made sparks fly from clashing blades, gleaming orange in the setting sun. I have witnessed my son at his most vigorous and able, as an athlete - and at his most encouraging and astute, as a coach.

And I'm pretty sure that Jo-at-the-end-of-lockdown could thrash pre-lockdown-Jo's butt - both on the piste, and off.



Norland Family Bout

# DIARY OF A FENCER

Ben Andrews



**(Note: This diary covers a period of time during which Covid-19 restrictions varied. Ben followed the relevant guidance at all times.)**

I have been fortunate to have been able to work from home all the way through lockdown - something I first did after returning from the European Championships in Porec, Croatia.

After flying back via Slovenia and Germany to avoid the escalating situation in Italy, I agreed to work from home for two weeks as a precautionary measure. At the time I couldn't have guessed the effect or scale of disruption the spread of the virus would have in the coming days/weeks, to my fencing and all our lives.

On the way to the European Championships things had already started to change. Landing at Italy's Marco Polo Airport, we were greeted by masked medics (which was not normal back then!) taking passengers' temperatures on arrival. Turning on our phones, several text messages told us we had to make our own way closer to the Croatian border as transfers had been cancelled.

Rising infection rates and region lockdowns in Italy were soon pushed to the back of my mind as the focus was on the competition over the next few days. I am pleased now

that I was able to keep my focus and reached the quarterfinals of the Junior event.

Back in the UK and out of self-isolation, I was back at work and training towards the World Championships in Salt Lake City, USA, determined to deliver an equally strong performance in the biggest competition of the year. Flights, hotels and holiday off work were all booked with the Championships only a few weeks away. Everything was planned and in place.

Then things moved very quickly and at work. The whole company was asked to work remotely for the foreseeable future, which I am still doing to this day. The threat of not being able to compete at the World Championships became a reality when the competition was cancelled and travel to America banned.

During the restrictions, without the daily commute I have an extra two hours each day to train, study for financial exams or watch 'The Last Dance' on Netflix.

Prior to lockdown I would typically have three sparring sessions, three fencing lessons, and two strength and conditioning sessions each week. My routine has now changed to three sparring sessions, one fencing lesson and five strength and conditioning sessions a week. The extra time I had each day was an opportunity to add a mix of running, stretching and mobility most mornings.

At the beginning of the lockdown I continued training just as hard from the comfort of my own kitchen or living room. I reassessed my goals from the cancelled World Championships and focused on the 20/21 season. Oana, Olga and Chris (ADP Coaches) provided virtual fencing and fitness sessions while we were in the lockdown period. These online sessions and support were extremely valuable when I returned to sparring in September. Although my timing was a bit out of sync, my footwork was as good, if not better than before the lockdown. So a huge thanks to all the ADP Coaches.

I knew not being able to spar and train with other athletes would impact my fencing. Therefore I focussed on fitness as an area that I could improve on during lockdown. I reached out to George Morris who is currently my Strength and Conditioning coach. George and I have been working together since March and I have seen vast improvements that I am able to translate to the fencing environment. Having a coach who is also a successful fencer who knows the demands of the sport at an international level allows me to trust the programming and sessions that George pushes me through.

Personally, I have been able to stay highly motivated throughout lockdown. I enjoy having structure to my day and building routines. So still being able to work and train fuelled me to work harder (albeit from my living room and over video calls).

Away from fencing, I spent some time in Cornwall over the summer with friends and family swimming and going out on the boat. I always leave enough time to get out on Dartmoor to walk the dog and I never miss the Formula 1.

Looking forward to 2021; I will be completing my final year as a Junior before moving up to challenge the big boys on the Under 23 and Senior circuits. Hopefully the season will restart in 2021 with the possibility of going to another major Championship before I leave the age group.

**If you are interested in keeping up to date with Ben's journey then follow him on Instagram and Twitter - @benandrewsGBR.**

# WELSH FENCING HONOURS

## Lyndon Martin Made Honorary Life Member

### Michael Clemitson, Whitchurch Fencing Club

At the Welsh Fencing AGM in November, Lyndon Martin was made an Honorary Life Member, in recognition of his contribution to fencing in Wales, both as a competitor, and as a coach.

Mark Ridsdale, Welsh Fencing Chair, explained, "Lyndon has been in fencing ever since I've known him, and long before. These days he is one of our most experienced coaches, but before that, and before I knew him, he was an active competitor." This year's AGM was conducted via "Zoom" because of the Social Distancing regulations, but Mark added that Welsh Fencing hoped to make an actual presentation in person, when circumstances permitted.

Lyndon's fencing career has spanned 54 years. He took up fencing in 1966, prompted by the late Wynford Seymour of Swansea Fencing Club, whom he had met whilst working at the Port Talbot steelworks. After fencing for some years at Swansea, Lyndon 'moved' to Cardiff Fencing Club around 1970, fencing both there, and in the old Excalibur club, in the 60s & 70s.

An able fencer, noted for his quick accurate attacks, Lyndon was soon taking part in several high-profile matches. His career as a senior international Welsh fencer spanned some 15 years. A member of the



Wales epee team in their match against Denmark in Copenhagen in 1972/3, Lyndon was one of the group of Welsh fencers who regularly attended many events at home, and outside Wales, in those years. He was highly placed in the Epee Club Cup in 1978, and again in 1979, and secured 4<sup>th</sup> place in the Bristol Open of 1977/8.

Malcolm Fare, former editor of The Sword, and founder of the National Fencing Museum, Hanley Swan, recalls meeting Lyndon, along with Bob Turner, Alf Pearce and other Welsh notables, as they searched together for accommodation in Dieppe in 1973, having overlooked the fact that this was the eve of Bastille Day, a national holiday in France - eventually securing the last bedroom in the last hotel in Dieppe on that occasion. Lyndon had success again in Dieppe, taking 3<sup>rd</sup> place in their 1978/9 epee competition.

One of the highlights of his fencing career was as a member of the successful Welsh Epee team, who secured the silver medal at the Commonwealth Fencing Championships in Ottawa in 1974.

Lyndon fenced competitively through the 70s, 80s and into the 90s, a Welsh Champion, thrice winning the Emrys Lloyd Challenge Plate for Foil (1974, 76 & 89), and also the John Warburn Cup for Epee (1984, 87 & 88).

More recently his main activity has been in coaching, which, as a Level 3 Coach,

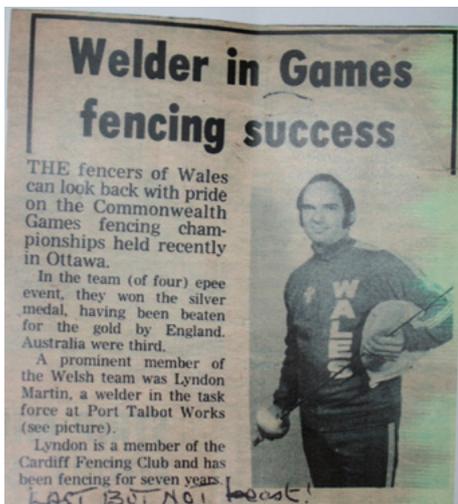
he does expertly & energetically at all levels. His coaching career has spanned 30 years, having first qualified in 1990, turning to coaching full time in 2002/3. For many years this was at Cardiff FC, where he successfully coached at least one former winner of the Kingston Cup and the Pearce Cup to success in both of those epee events. Since then he has been at Whitchurch FC, where he is their resident Head Coach. He also coaches regularly at Celtic Sword FC, and on occasions at Russell Swords as well.

Throughout his career Lyndon has been solidly supportive of fencing, and Welsh Fencing, thinking nothing of driving or travelling long distances to attend events far afield, either as a competitor or coach, or merely as a spectator - whether the Hereford & Worcester Open, or the Triangular in Largs in Ayrshire. He has consistently been an active presence at the regular coaching days & other sessions run by Welsh Fencing, and is well known for speaking up, in thanking the organisers of smaller events for their hard work in arranging the competition in question.

Welsh Fencing's membership records were transferred to BFA for administrative reasons in 2005, and all fencers were allocated "BFA numbers". Until then, each Welsh fencer had a "WAFU number". Lyndon was WAFU member No 4 (Gordon Kingston No 1, Alf Pearce No 5, Bob Turner No 13). That is how long Lyndon has been fencing ...



Taking a Break from Coaching



# HONOURS AWARDS 2021

## It's Time for Your Nominations

The British Fencing Honours Committee invites British Fencing members to nominate individuals for British Fencing awards. The process for so doing is now open.

The Honours Committee is responsible for making recommendations to the British Fencing Board for British Fencing awards. Responsibility for recommendations for Queen's or State Honours remains with British Fencing's Nominations Committee.

This system focuses entirely on the membership with all nominations coming directly from members. The criteria for nominations are laid down on the British Fencing website under "About Us - Committees Zone - Honours Committee", [here](#).

In response to the effects that the pandemic has had on fencing this year, nominations will also be welcomed for members who have shown particular prowess in rising to the challenge of keeping clubs and their members engaged across all age ranges during the year.

The Committee acts as the selectors with the object of recommending awards in a wide range of categories, whilst ensuring that there is consistency in award levels and criteria. Nominations are considered in June and announced at the British Fencing AGM in October.

British Fencing members aged 18 and over can make nominations to the Honours Committee. The composition

of the Committee is published annually on the British Fencing website along with a list of previous successful nominees.

To make a nomination please complete the form available on the BF website and/or social media platforms. When you have completed your nomination please email the form to [headoffice@britishfencing.com](mailto:headoffice@britishfencing.com) with 'BF Honours' as the subject heading.

For the 2021 awards, please note that your nomination must arrive at Head Office **no later than 28th May, 2021**.

Lawrence Burr OBE  
Secretary  
British Fencing Honours Committee



# WINNING AT EPEE

## Techniques for the Shorter Fencer - Author: Robin Catling

Lawrence Burr



Lawrence Burr

I always felt that at 6' 3" (86 cm for our younger readers!) I was a born épéist with an advantage denied to many others in my club and amongst my fellow competitors. A long reach, slim figure and speed were all I needed to succeed... such is the arrogance of youth. Then, one weekend in the summer of 1968, I entered a three-man team competition in London and was matched against a slightly older fencer called Ian Spofforth. At that time, Ian was the third tallest man in Britain standing at 7'3" in his socks. (I learnt later that for a bet he had walked across the Thames under Westminster Bridge at low tide!) When he came on guard, all I could see was his weapon stretching into the void and a target area that seemed to consist mainly of his kneecaps. All my technique went out of the window and, after vainly trying to pick off his wrist and feet, went down heavily. Afterwards, I had to go back to my coach at Salle Boston - Zsolt Vadaszffy - and work out how to win against an opponent taller than myself. It was a salutary lesson.

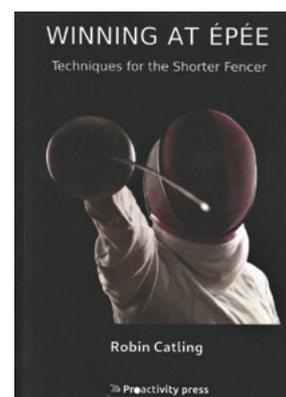
Robin Catling has provided the answer, though albeit somewhat too late for me. He has published a fascinating, easy to read guide aimed specifically at the more vertically challenged épéists amongst us, who have become frustrated at being constantly faced opposite a taller fencer, regardless of age or gender. Although this book is certainly not one of those detailed technical manuals that aims at providing an easy route to the Olympics, it does provide an easy to assimilate series of chapters that allows anyone to put together a tool

box of winning moves, both physical and psychological, to ensure that height is no barrier to winning at épée.

Robin is a qualified three-weapon coach in West Devon with a number of books to his credit. (Spoiler Alert - I will be reviewing his latest book on Competition Fencing in the next edition of The Sword). He openly admits to being one of the vertically challenged at 5'7" (and a smidgeon) and you really get the feeling that his interest in writing this book was borne out of that same frustration that many of his pupils were confronting both in club sparring sessions and at Open competitions. As he points out, épée is so much more attractive to taller fencers owing to its lack of priority or right of way rules. With the whole body as a target therefore, almost anything goes. This leads to a belief that the taller the fencer - particularly those in their fitter years - the harder it is to win against them. As he says, "unlike David facing Goliath, we can't just play to a different set of rules and throw missiles from afar".

With that in mind, Robin goes about describing how a rethink of our approach to the whole game is required. Regardless of a fencer's height, weight, age, IQ or general fitness, there are strategies, tactics, exercises and drills which - once employed - can rebalance the fight and turn the odds in your favour. So this is really good news for junior fencers and those faced with opponents ranging from the club's "Jolly Green Giant" to those tall, lean teenagers with an irritating flicking habit from out of distance in your first round.

This book has a number of secrets hidden between its covers. Firstly it is so easy to assimilate. Each chapter is short (two or three pages at most), incisive and witty and easy to read in a few minutes but each covering an aspect of why fencers of unequal stature might have issues in fencing épée. Secondly, it provides practical answers in an understandable format and allows the reader to suddenly leap out of their bath and cry "Eureka - why didn't I think of that?!". Lastly, it is a template for winning. The shorter fencer can now



grasp the tools necessary to see off a taller opponent; these range from dictating the fight by knowing when and how to close up into that "danger zone" or zone of unilateral vulnerability, the use of tempo, second intention and controlling the opponent's blade whilst finally, it provides some drills and lessons to work at with the reader's coach or even a taller friend - although they may not remain one if you keep on beating them with these new found skills!

I really like the chapter regarding psychology. Many British Fencing members will have been following the work of our Head of Pathways, Steve Kemp and the ADP coaches in developing a change in competitive fencers' mental attitude and psychological development; moving from being a technical fencer to becoming a successful athlete. Robin encourages this way forward and pushes us all to go outside our comfort zone and believe in one's own skills and capabilities. In so doing, this allows us to level the odds and achieve the will to win more than the fencer at the other end of the piste, regardless of his/her build or reputation.

As the current Men's European Épée Champion Yuval Freilich (5'6" tall) said when asked about the subject of height, "The question of how tall someone is shouldn't make a difference. You fence against someone taller or someone shorter or someone stronger or someone weaker or someone whatever it is, you come to the bout saying, "I can win". It is a question of just the mindset." This book gives just that. It is a rallying cry for the shorter épéist... heed it well!

"Winning at Epee - Techniques for the Shorter Fencer" published in paperback by Proactivity Press. Available from Amazon and booksellers at £5.99. Kindle edition £2.99.

# BOOK REVIEW

## Marked Cards by Emmanuel Olympitis

Lawrence Burr OBE

The New Year is here and, despite the almost constant news coverage of how the pandemic and Brexit have changed our lives forever, books still remain a constant source of escapism for us all. So, what better answer is there to bring a bit of joy into your life than by reading an entertaining lighthearted memoir of a man whose life has hardly been out of the gossip columns and financial press in London and New York for over thirty years. A suave tycoon who became the youngest director of a merchant bank in the City of London at the age of 28, who mixed with the glitterati and Hollywood stars of New York and London during the exhilarating days of the 70s and 80s, who dated some of the world's most beautiful women and played hard and fast at the poker and blackjack tables winning and losing fortunes whilst still managing to come out on top.

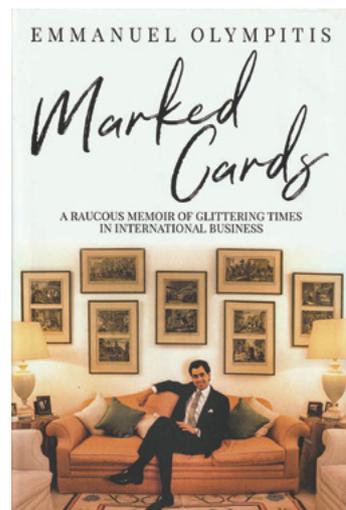
But what has this to do with fencing, I hear you cry? The man, the author of "Marked Cards" is Emmanuel Olympitis who, along with his younger brother Niki, graced the world of fencing in the sixties and seventies. I have to hold my hand up at this stage to admit that Emmanuel, [Manoli to his friends,] and I know each other well as we were sent off to Kings School Canterbury as boarders in 1961 at the same time. It turned out that as both of us loathed the idea of those cold cross-country runs so beloved by school physical training masters, we searched around for an activity that would keep us indoors for as long as possible. Kings had a very active fencing club at the time run by Maurice Milner with Alf Mallard as the professional coach. So that seemed to be the perfect answer!

Over the following years, together with six others, our KSC teams swept up all the junior and senior fencing trophies at all three disciplines in the south east of England. Emmanuel then led Kings to victory in the 1966 Public Schools Championships and won medals in the épée and the foil in the Pearson Cup. He was then selected to represent GB in the squad at the World Youth Championships.

By 1967 he was fencing internationally which carried on during his time at University College London. He credits his fencing and the ability to think many moves ahead matched with speed, fitness and "exceptional reflexes" as being winning attributes that have affected his life and the necessary decision making processes that helped to make him such a canny investment banker in the years to follow. Niki also followed a fencing path being captain of fencing at Kings and then, after a break, winning a team silver at the Commonwealth Games at the age of 40. He became non fencing captain of the England Team for some years after and was a member of The Epée Club.

This is Emmanuel's second book, his first one being a successful novel entitled "By Victories Undone", which obviously gave him a taste for following it with something a little out of the ordinary. Here we have an eclectic mix of anecdotes tracing his career set against a background of the political, social and financial turmoil of the time both in the UK and the USA. His address list of his friends and companions read like a veritable Who's Who, with his name almost never absent from Nigel Dempster's gossip columns (for those younger readers who have no idea who Nigel was, ask your parents!). Names such as Tessa Dahl, Ira von Furstenberg, Valerie Perrine, Barbra Streisand, Mick Jagger, David Bowie, Princess Grace of Monaco, Clint Eastwood and a host of others populate the pages, all interspaced with entertaining anecdotes and shrewd observations. This is certainly not a "Kiss and Tell" book as Emmanuel is far too much of a gentleman fencer to stoop to that! All through this book, he looks upon his life as being privileged, but born out of hard work and the ability to see those "fencing" moves well in advance and to stay on top of the game. His roles in banking saw him with the big names in the City such as Aitken Hume International, Johnson and Higgins Ltd and Pacific Media plc and he continues to work, though maybe less frenetically, to this day.

If this all sounds a little too far from the world of fencing, it is time to mention that with such a lifestyle comes a degree of philanthropic responsibility. Emmanuel



never shied away from that and, as an example, his book describes how he and Niki established an organisation called "Armchair Athletes" to raise funds for those GB athletes taking part in the minority sports in the 1992 winter and summer Olympics. In those days, the lack of government assistance and commercial sponsorship (before the National Lottery stepped in) hampered sports such as rowing, boxing and, of course, fencing. To this end, they both hosted a large launch party at the Lansdowne Club with a host of national sports figures and an ecstatic national press coverage which raised thousands although not as much as they had hoped. Similar events have sprung up over the years, although it has always seemed to be the likes of Emmanuel and Niki who step forward to fill the funding void. This is especially true since UK Sport pulled the plug on so many minority sports after the 2016 Olympic Games. In more recent years, Emmanuel has turned his attention to his "alma mater" at King's School Canterbury and has been instrumental in the setting up of a fencing "Centre of Excellence" there that now attracts students from all over the world.

This book is fun. Throughout its pages, the author spotlights a world that few of us have ever seen. It romps through the hedonistic "Swinging Sixties" into the Thatcher and Cameron years with a light engaging touch. Fencing is a constant thread through it all and maybe it really was that which produced the man in the book we see today.

"Marked Cards" is published in hardback by Quartet Books and is available through Amazon and other leading booksellers priced at £16.00.

# RESULTS



The up-to-date 2020-2021 season latest results are now listed online and can be [accessed here](#)

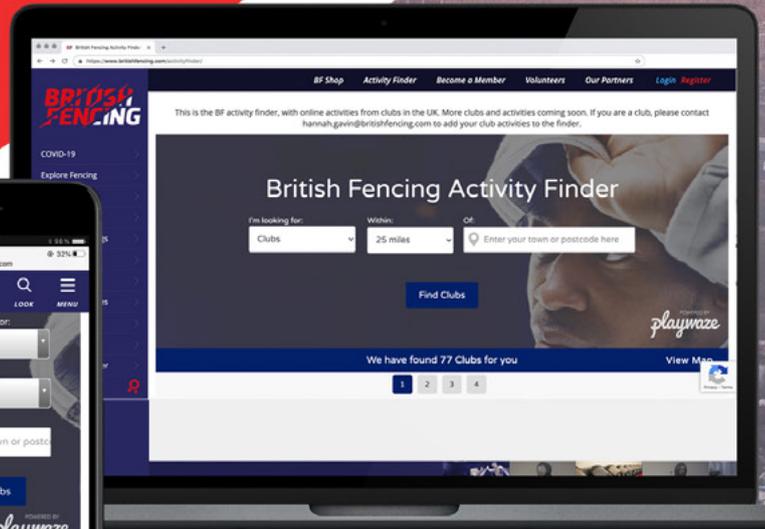
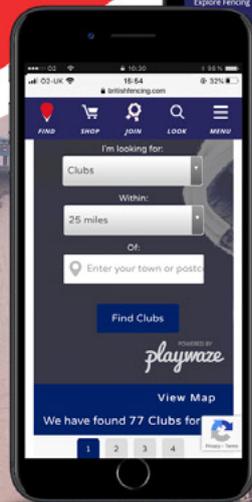
Please forward all your suggestions for additional online fencing results to: [events@britishfencing.com](mailto:events@britishfencing.com)



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