

THE SWORD

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FENCING FUNDING PP6-9
PARENTING A FENCER PP16-17
PARIS 2024 OLYMPIC QUALIFICATION PP23-30

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CARDIFF 2024

PP20-21



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Next deadline: 1st July 2024

EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

Karim Bashir

Hello and welcome to the April issue of The Sword magazine - an issue in which we celebrate our community before taking a look ahead to what we can expect to see at the Greatest Show on Earth, Paris 2024.

To whet your appetite, Lawrence Burr kicks things off by reminding us how we can all play our part in celebrating those that have done the most for us, by nominating them for a British Fencing Honour. These awards are awarded once a year so please don't miss out on your opportunity to show your appreciation. Lawrence inspires us with a venture down memory lane in pictures.

The financial crunch continues to play its part in today's landscape so support is as critical as ever. We take a look at how long-time fencing supporter SportsAid has been assisting two fencers make it all the way to New Zealand for the Commonwealth Championships through its Backing The Best programme. We also feature another long term supporter, the Epee Club and their immense financial contribution to support fencers of that weapon.



The referee pathway in the UK has been buoyant over the past few years but it's been a while since we featured this crucial area of our sport. Thanks to Luke Deamer though, we get an insight to his journey to officiating at the Cadet and Junior European Championships. The rewards, the camaraderie and the thrill of working at the top level in the sport. Head of Communications, John Stanley also takes us back a few years as he focuses on David Shalit, arguably the youngest ever referee at an Olympic Games.

The Muslim Girls Fence programme has received plaudits from all corners of the sporting and social stratosphere in the

UK. In this issue we take a look at the impressive impact this growing movement is having.

Looking at both ends of the scale, we include articles about parenting a young fencer and how age is no barrier to enjoying our sport before finally turning our attention to its biggest event, the Olympics.

Our roundup of team qualification for Paris 2024 takes us through the weapon-by-weapon roads to the French capital and perhaps gives us a clue as to who we can expect to see on the podium. The host nation along with Italy have qualified teams in every weapon, but there's plenty to look at from outside of Europe. Speaking of watching it; if you're not lucky enough to be attending in person, there's plenty of ways that you can follow the action. Read on to find out more.

As always, I hope you enjoy the magazine and will be cheering on our senior athletes as they head to Differdange, Luxembourg in their final attempts to qualify for Paris 2024, and then of course Paris itself. Just a few more weeks before it all begins!

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

Submit your stories to the editor:

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THE BRITISH FENCING HONOURS SYSTEM? NEVER HEARD OF IT ...!

Over the many years that I have been fencing (did someone mention the sixties?), it has always astonished me to learn how few fencers realise that British Fencing has been running an Honours system. This system has nothing to do with the national twice yearly distribution of honours that are given by the Government to reward outstanding service and achievement in a given field, although the principle is the same, in that our sport will always attempt to reward those fencers who have made a contribution to fencing that goes over and above what would normally be expected from them or have enhanced British Fencing's reputation with international podium results.



BF AGM Awards 2017 (L to R: Jim Philbin, Ralph Johnson, Brian Speight, Hilary Philbin, Clare Halsted, Peter Baron)

The British Fencing Honours system has been operating since the 1950s when such giants as Charles de Beaumont, Bill Hoskyns, Allan Jay, Gillian Sheen and Professor Leon Bertrand were awarded medals for their contribution in promoting fencing here in the UK. Since then, over 500 other recipients have been honoured in this way. One point of note at this juncture - these Honours are not to be confused with the more recent annual British Fencing Community Awards which are more performance based and judged separately by an independent panel.

So how does the Honours system work? Potential candidates are nominated by British Fencing members to Head Office in the first half of each year after a publicity campaign across social media and The Sword. These are then passed to the Secretary of the British Fencing Honours Committee who ensures that they accord

with the criteria laid down in the British Fencing Committee Terms of Reference. After this, the nominations are collated and brought before the Honours Committee which meets once a year in June. This Committee is composed primarily of Vice Presidents of British Fencing (some of whom have themselves been selected through the Honours system) and other members of the fencing community invited by the President. Their role is "to manage the nomination and recommendation process for all British Fencing awards. They will also make recommendations for other fencing awards within the fencing community, such as the FIE Hall of Fame, and any other appropriate national or international fencing award scheme."

Their recommendations are then passed in July to the Nominations Committee and the British Fencing Board for their agreement. After this, the successful candidates are informed and invited to attend a formal occasion - usually the British Fencing AGM - for the Honour to be presented by the President.

Normally, the Honours are in the form of a gold, silver or bronze medal or an Award of Merit certificate. However, in some cases, the Committee has an option of recommending a special President's Award for outstanding work within the British Fencing community or a Directors' Award to commemorate achievements that do not fit into the above categories.



Janet Huggins, Lawrence Burr, Hilary Philbin, Paul Wedge, Marilyn Wheelband & Gillian Aghajan



Rob Bruniges Receives the 2019 Directors' Award

So, what are the requirements for a nomination? Well, they are fairly broad brush but the nominator should be able to show that their nominee is a British Fencing member who has demonstrably upheld the values of British Fencing i.e. honesty, respect and excellence. Mention of this is to be made in the application and how this has been achieved. If the nominee is involved with an active club, that club must be affiliated to British Fencing and be following minimum British Fencing standards with regards to coaching and membership. Nominations for those contributing to clubs should also relate to clubs that meet current BF Safeguarding and Welfare standards.

Fencing coaches and others paid for their involvement in our sport will only be considered for an award if they have enhanced the world of UK fencing beyond what might reasonably be expected as part of their paid employment, and which, in the case of those paid by a club, also benefits fencers who are not members of that club.

So, what are you waiting for? You know that there is someone out there in your club whose dedication to fencing needs to be recognised. So follow the link below and get writing. You never know - someone may be wanting to recognise you! And by the way - the deadline for this year is **31 May 2024**.

Lawrence Burr OBE
Secretary
The British Fencing Honours Committee

Links to BF Honours Nominations for 2024
<https://www.britishfencing.com/nominations-for-bf-honours-2024/>

BELBOUAB AND CONTRACTOR RECEIVE SPORTSAID'S BACKING THE BEST AWARD

Rose McNally

Two young and talented British cadet foilists have received a SportsAid Backing the Best award for their outstanding potential.

Mohammed Belbouab and Khalam Contractor have received the award from SportsAid because of their outstanding ability and now, thanks to the award, are able to compete in the Commonwealth Championships. The triennial (occasionally quadrennial) competition is taking place in Christchurch, New Zealand in mid-July, only a week or so before the opening ceremony for the Olympic Games in Paris. The past season has seen exceptional results for GBR's cadet and junior athletes on the international circuit, and both athletes have been a part of that story.

Needless to say, a trip to New Zealand for a week is not a cheap undertaking for any athlete. The Backing the Best Award is designed to support young talented

athletes who due to financial constraints may not be able to compete or train in their sport. The scheme was introduced in 2016 after new research conducted by Leeds Beckett University showed that the rising cost of sports had led to athletes dropping out.

Both young athletes will receive a grant of up to £5,000 that will assist with the essential costs of the trip such as travel and accommodation.

Both Mohammed, 14, and Khalam, 16, are coached by former Olympic fencer Linda Strachan at Newham Swords in East London. She and her partner Pierre Harper, also an Olympian, manage the club. Running since 2005, it has a reputation for developing international-level fencers.

Newham Swords is a community club focused on youth athletes, with the support of local government. Many are from mixed

ethnic backgrounds, and the majority are from single parent families or low income backgrounds. The club was referred to by Sir Robin Wales, the Mayor of Newham, as "a shining local example of a sports legacy from the 2012 Olympic Games."

"Both Khalam and Mohammed come from a background where money isn't there," said Strachan. "I've had to turn down selections when I was a fencer because of lack of money. So, we helped them along. They were both selected for the East London Sports and Talent Pathway and with their help we managed to get the boys the grant," said Strachan.

East London Sports and Talent Pathway (ELSTP) aims to diversify the elite talent pools by providing young people from diverse backgrounds with the support needed to reach success within their sport. It also has a focus on increasing access to 'alternative' sports - which includes fencing.

Louis Annan is the head of ELSTP and welcomed the boys onto the pathway in early 2023. The pathway offers many services to young athletes, also working closely with parents, providing them with bespoke support. Funded by Sport England, it is currently helping around 80 young athletes on their journey into high-level competition.



GBR Cadet Men's Foil Team and Coaches



Mohammed with event coach Ben Peggs



Khalam

During this support, Louis learned the financial difficulties both boys' parents were facing. "We worked closely with Sports England, and we sat down with SportsAid and Backing the Best. We managed to get emergency funding so they could go to New Zealand."

"This struck close to my heart. I grew up playing basketball in one of the roughest areas in London. Being a young black boy in a rough area is tough. I didn't have this kind of support. I know my parents did their best for me then, and that is exactly what Mohammed and Khalam's parents are doing for them now. It's heartbreaking when parents tell me they can't afford to send their children to competitions. To get the confirmation that they'd received the award was a nice feeling".

Mohammed began his fencing journey aged just seven, his love for swordplay sparked from watching Pirates of the Caribbean.

"Mohammed is a one-off." Linda Strachan says, "I started coaching him at the age of eight. He's the youngest ever British fencer to be selected for team Great Britain, aged just 12. This is the 20th year we've run the fencing club and we've never seen anybody quite like him."

Sylvie, Mohammed's mum, explains that her husband had become unwell, so the family's main provider was unable to work.

"As a parent, you want to support your child as much as you can, especially when you see that they love the sport, they're good at what they're doing and they're progressing. Sometimes you don't have the money to do that. And it's frustrating as a parent when you can't afford to send your child to competitions. The award was a huge relief for us."

Both athletes have been competing on the EFC circuit this past season. Both Mohammed and Khalam competed in the European Championships in Naples in February 2024. Both were part of the cadet foil team along with Luca Floria and David Kelly, where the GBR team finished a creditable sixth out of 19 teams. Mohammed also attended the World Championships in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia in April 2024.

Mohammed describes his first experience competing in the Euros as a positive one. "I just didn't really know what to expect because I've never been to the European Championships. But once I got there, it was very exciting and a good experience overall. I liked how I was always with my squad and part of a team, rather than being there on my own. We trained together and went out to dinner together with our coaches." For Mohammed the award has made him more motivated than ever.

Khalam is currently balancing life as a full-time student alongside fencing. He is studying Sports Science at college in London. Khalam's journey began at just six years old, when he and his family accidentally stumbled into the world of fencing, having never been aware of it before. The family were lucky enough to live near Newham Swords, who train at the local leisure centre and one day, their father saw a bunch of kids fencing.

"Previously, everything we did was for boys football and basketball. And I thought, 'oh, you know, the boys might really like



Foil team at the European Championships, Naples 2024



Mohammed

this'. So we brought them in for a free trial lesson. And they absolutely loved it." Soon enough, Khalam and his brothers started at the club, where he immediately fell in love with the sport.

Khalam is one of four siblings. His mum, Hoa Contractor, was worried about how Khalam's fencing costs were rising. "When the opportunity of the Commonwealth Championships came up, we couldn't afford another trip abroad, let alone all the way to New Zealand for one week. None of the boys have ever been entered into a competition that far away. It just wasn't going to happen."

"It's what's going to make him be a little bit more grown up where he has to organise all of these things because at some point, I will be stepping away and he will have to deal with all of that himself. But I would like to see him progress naturally into the juniors and then to any competitions he has to do and to perform to the best of his abilities."

"That's what got ELSTP to really help find us the funding. Now Khalam can take part in this once in a lifetime opportunity. One day, it'll be something he'll tell his grandchildren, let alone his children. It's going to mean so much to him."

THE EPEE CLUB PROVIDES MAJOR FUNDING BOOST FOR BRITISH EPEE DEVELOPMENT



The Epée Club Charitable Fund's Trustee, Lawrence Burr, OBE tells us everything about their recent fundraising efforts.

Over the past three years, the Epée Club Charitable Fund has been providing funding for the GBR "Pathway to Paris" strategy, developed as a British Fencing initiative. At a ceremony to be carried out next month, British Fencing will be presented with a cheque for **£25,600.00** from the Epée Club Charitable Fund which encompasses the previous three years budgetary needs for our GBR épéists.

This will have paid for support to thirteen Senior World Cups at Team and Individual levels, two Grand Prix events, three European Team and Individual Championships, one EFC Championships, three team training and coach development camps, attendance at three Epée Club Cups and a variety of training aids. This is a massive boost to the support required for our épéists and helps to raise the bar and ensure that they are equipped with the mental and physical fitness to maximise their potential whilst at the same time being supported by a wider workforce that ensures the provision of the best athlete experience.

In addition, the experience of athletes and coaches being exposed to high-performance environments subsequently permeates down the rankings to encourage and educate promising young épéists in junior and cadet age groups - a win-win for all concerned.

So, how has the Epée Club become involved in all this?

The Epée Club - founded in 1900 - was and has always been seen as an organisation that is at the forefront of innovation and the promotion of new ideas and technology

within British Fencing. Both Foil and Sabre started up similar organisations in years past but these fell away as the more modern system of Weapon Committees was established.

Its current ethos, other than bringing together its invited members in a social environment to fence for various silver Club Cups - always in the open air during the summer in the tradition founded by its original founders! - is to act as a "shadow" organisation to help mentor and fund young épéists. It has used its business contacts and ability to network and lobby for the promotion of épée in the appropriate quarters. It gives an annual award to coaches that have provided an outstanding contribution to British



Eddie Knott Trophy - John Rees

épée fencing and provides a range of trophies to the National Championships. For example, The "Les Armes de France" Shield for the Men's' Epée Championships, the Savage Shield for Men's Epée Team Championships, the London International Milner-Barry Ladies Epée Cup and the Miller Hallett Trophy.

It also runs the prestigious annual competition - the Epée Club Cup - for invited top fencers from across the épée spectrum whilst providing trophies and Art Deco medals for the winners of the Senior Nationals, the Elite Epée Competitions and the British Veterans Association National Championships.

However, after the 2012 London Olympics, it appeared to many club members that épée was becoming sidelined in favour of the other two weapons. Many of our aspiring épéists mentioned that they were becoming increasingly downhearted at the lack of support being given to both individuals and teams representing GBR on the international stage. As a direct result of this, the Club established a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) in 2014 called The Epée Club Charitable Fund. Members were invited to donate into the Fund together with several other generous private donors who were encouraged by the aims of the Fund. Later, a British Epée Development Committee was formed to oversee the distribution of these funds. Annual budgets were then prepared in conjunction with the British Fencing Lead Epée Coordinator within the Athlete Development Programme.

British Fencing followed this by listing the Epée Club as one of its Officially Credited

organisations with Epée Club badges being provided to be worn by all the Teams supported by the CIO. In January 2023, the Epée Club Charitable Fund Trustees further agreed with British Fencing to help fund the GB épéeists at all Senior World Team events until the end of the Paris Olympic qualification cycle. As the President of the Epée Club said at the time, "We are delighted to be a part of British



BVF 2015 Medal for Georgina Usher

build experience and move up the rankings in the team events, coaches to gain experience at the senior levels and learn from the environment and build networks with other international coaches."



President David Partridge presents 2023 Epée Club Cup Winner - Ben Andrews

Fencing's bid to ensure that our athletes are given every opportunity to compete at the Senior World Cups during the Paris Qualification period. Our épéeists deserve the best support that we can give them, and we thank all the donors to the Epée Club Charitable Fund who are making this possible."

Following this positive approach, Ian Lichfield wrote in an article in *The Sword* in October 2023 entitled **Epée: Building Depth** - "Epée in the UK has benefited enormously recently from the support and generous contributions from the Epée Club. Their funding has enabled the senior teams to

The Trustees of The Epée Club Charitable Fund remain convinced that the CIO is a component and essential part of British Fencing's strategy to place our épéeists on the podium at World Class events and confirm that they will continue to help fund our athletes up to and beyond the Paris Olympics later this year.

We continue to thank all those who have continued to support the Charity throughout the past years and encourage anyone else who has a heart to support our épéeists in the future to look at our website and contact the Trustees.

Website: <https://www.epeeclub.org.uk/>

den pollitt

Photography



REFEREES: MY PATH TO THE EUROPEAN CADET AND JUNIOR CHAMPIONSHIPS

Luke Deamer

It's been 12 years since I was last at a Cadet and Junior European Championships. A lot has changed since 2012 when I fenced in Porec. For starters, this year's British athletes are much better than I ever was! Yet this trip reminded me of the big question I was left with after the 2012 Euros - what next?

Back then, as I began to focus more on school and then university, I knew I couldn't keep up the same level of competitive fencing. Post 2013 and after picking up an injury, I was looking for a way to stay in contact with the sport.

I'd already taken my Level 2 referee course with Dave Baker. When my brother went to youth competitions, I used to go with him to referee. I enjoyed refereeing; it meant I could see my fencing friends for an extra day, earn a bit of pocket money, and I felt I was giving something back to the sport.

I didn't set out to focus on refereeing, it just sort of happened. As I developed in knowledge and confidence, I started to referee bigger events like the BYCs, before starting to referee cadet competitions. Without the mentoring system we have now, I learnt many things the hard way. However, the more senior referees really helped guide me in the right direction. Inviting international referees over to British competitions, like Vilem Madr, gave me some great international mentoring as well.



Luke the Epee Ref © EFC

I began to notice refereeing also helped in my working life. Being able to act confident on the piste helped when it came to work presentations and meetings. Being able to de-escalate arguments with fencers / coaches helped when it came to managing people. Fundamentally though, I just enjoyed being with the other referees. There's nothing that brings referees together like the shared experience of refereeing.

Refereeing Internationally

Fast forward a few years and I started refereeing internationally. I was still studying at university, so I had the time to go to competitions on weekends. I continued fencing for fun but refereeing meant I could be back at cadet internationals.

In order to send fencers to internationals, each country has to send a referee for every five fencers. Otherwise, our junior fencers have to pay a fine of €1000. It's not just economics that means we must send referees to these events though. Giving our referees more international experience only improves refereeing in the UK. It helps prepare our fencers for when they go abroad, so they know how certain actions will be called. We've even started to run referee education for our top athletes, so they can understand what international referees are looking for.

After British Fencing put me forward for my foil FIE referee exam in 2017, I could referee at Junior World Cups for the first time. In that first season, it was all about getting your name known for the right reasons, keeping your head down and rising to the fight in the tough matches. Slowly over the next few years, I tried to build up my reputation, getting later rounds and having fun, getting to know my referee colleagues from around the world.

You need two weapons to referee at a Championships, so I spent 2022 and 2023

working on epee as well as foil. As fencers, we tend to just do the one weapon, so it can be odd learning a second one. Nonetheless, after I passed my epee FIE exam in 2023, I could be put forward for my first Championships.

The European Cadet & Junior Championships

That brings me to the 2024 C&J European Championships. I'd refereed other long championship events before, like the US nationals and the Commonwealth Games. I'd refereed other strong events, like satellites and Junior World Cups. But this was my first chance to attend a Zonal competition. Each country can only send one referee, so it was a genuine privilege to be selected.

Despite the rule on referees, I wasn't the only British official out there. My clubmate Sarah Steacy was representing the Republic of Ireland, we had Jon Willis running the DT, and Georgina Usher was running safeguarding for the Junior event. We even had Mary Cohen heading up the medical team for the cadets. Combined with all my refereeing friends from around the world, I felt right at home.

As one of the newer referees at the Euros, I knew I would do a lot of assessing (arm judging). This also meant, alongside my primary weapon, I also refereed a few rounds of epee. For example, for a few days



'On Guard' #BizziTeam



Napoli Podium © EFC

I started on epee, before moving across to the later rounds of foil. Honestly though, it was useful to learn how to make that quick transition between weapons.

Even in my first championships, I got further refereeing than I did as a fencer. It was great to be given the experience of refereeing a bronze medal match and a

semi-final. Refereeing with a video referee also makes life so much easier - you can make tight calls, knowing the fencers can always send you to video. Refereeing for the length of a Championships, surrounded by Master List and Grand Prix referees, also helps you learn and improve.

The adrenaline rush of a close bout. Another shot at the European C&J Championships. A front row seat for the finals, surrounded by friends from around the world - what could be better?

Who knows? Maybe some of this year's athletes might be refereeing here again in a decade's time.



Sarah, Jon, Georgina and Luke



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MUSLIM GIRLS FENCE

AN UPDATE



muslim girls fence

All the way back in 2016, in collaboration with British Fencing and Sport England, Maslaha introduced the Muslim Girls Fence initiative, aimed at encouraging greater involvement of Muslim girls in the sport of fencing. Eight years on, it remains one of the social enterprise's key programmes.

Muslim Girls Fence seeks to harness the transformative potential of the sport, countering misconceptions and elevating the aspirations of young Muslim women who often contend with intersecting forms of discrimination based on both faith and gender. The initiative also aims to dispel the notion of fencing as an exclusive, predominantly white sport, making it more accessible to youths from diverse backgrounds.



"I do think Islamophobia has affected young people's mental health. I think that this is something that is rising sadly, we don't feel safe, or listened to or understood, which kind of makes it worse. That's why it's so nice having this club, we can just be ourselves, say what we want to say without fear of repercussion and have fun with our friends" – MGF participant

Commencing with eight pilot workshops at Frederick Bremer School in Walthamstow from December 2015 to February 2016, the project has expanded into a nationwide engagement programme tailored for young Muslim women throughout the UK.

Besides grappling with the typical challenges of adolescence—such as academic pressures, the pervasive influence of social media, societal beauty standards, and the profound effects of the pandemic, Muslim girls must navigate a terrain characterised by entrenched structural inequities.

Additionally, Muslim youth face heightened levels of scrutiny due to the Prevent policy, a UK government initiative mandating public sector employees to monitor signs of 'radicalisation,' disproportionately targeting Muslim children. Consequently, many Muslim youth feel compelled to self-censor and hesitate to confide in educators or mental health professionals for fear of repercussions, and current mental health services often adopt a generic, one-size-fits-all approach, exacerbating feelings of alienation and perpetuating harm within Muslim communities.

Acknowledging the various barriers Muslim women encounter in sports participation, including dress codes, visibility concerns, non-segregated spaces, and inadequate teacher training, fencing emerges as an exciting avenue for their involvement. The well-known US fencer Ibtihaj Muhammad praised fencing as 'uniquely accommodating' for Muslim women, underscoring how it fosters a sense of belonging and teamwork. Ultimately, it empowers them to challenge stereotypes and demand change.

Senior Project Manager at Maslaha, Allia Fredericks, was kind enough to update *The Sword's* readers on the work that MGF are doing in 2024 and beyond.

One key project has seen fencing become part of the curriculum at Mulberry School for Girls, in Shadwell in East London.

"This long-term relationship with the young people at Mulberry and the youth-led

mental health resources help to reinstate girls as their own storytellers, and to open up a space for Muslim girls to articulate, express and celebrate their identity on their own terms," said Fredericks.

"Alongside equipping young Muslim girls with the tools to express themselves on their own terms is a long-term strategy to bolster their engagement in issues that affect them beyond the workshops, in their school, through sharing these mental health resources co-created with them. We are working to change public imagination seeking to influence and shape public debates and media narratives about Muslim young women and mental health."

The Head of Enrichment at Mulberry School for Girls added, "It's so important for the girls to have a safe space where they can be creative, get physically active and talk about issues affecting them like Islamophobia and sexism. It feels like an important wellbeing intervention. It is powerful that it is called 'Muslim Girls Fence' as it tells our girls they can take up space, fence and that their voices matter as Muslim girls."

This Girl Can

Muslim Girls Fence is now seen among the sports sector, education sector, and the intersection with health, physical and mental wellbeing, as an example of good practice, influencing a culture change nationally in order to share resources and approaches that address systemic inequalities.

MGF was part of the This Girl Can National Enjoyment Gap campaign in February 2023. A staggering 2.4 million fewer women than men 'strongly agree' they enjoy sport and activity; this is what Sports England calls the Enjoyment Gap.

MGF aims to close the enjoyment gap by demonstrating when sports and policy makers centre communities and women and girls' experiences to create inclusive, enjoyable and accessible sports spaces. The campaign focused on the local Birmingham community sessions at the Ladywood Leisure Centre.

Alongside the national This Girl Can campaign, MGF coach Binni from Birmingham and Akeela, Muslim Girls Fence Community Coordinator from Muslim Girls in Doncaster, were part of the launch event and panel to share learning and insights on how to close the 'enjoyment gap' in the West Midlands. The goal is to ensure the expertise of local coaches are shared in a way that will inform future policy decisions and public services in the 'sport for development' sector, and help statutory bodies and funders such as Sports England make future decisions.

Binni Bladez

The MGF community club in Birmingham has become Binni's Bladez, the first officially registered BF fencing club.

In January 2024 Binni, a MGF coach in Birmingham hosted an inclusive community day of swordsports for 80 people alongside By the Sword, a LGBTQ+ fencing club to learn about the modern and historical art of fencing. There have been ongoing successful weekly community fencing sessions in Ladywood Leisure Centre for 60 women from ages 14 - 65 and Summerfield Leisure Centre in Birmingham for 20 women from ages 20 - 60.

In January a portrait of Tasmia Haq, a MGF Birmingham fencer was among the winning photographs of this year's Portrait of Britain from across the West Midlands that 'celebrates the faces of modern Britain' and 'captures the tapestry of life'. Her beautiful photograph was displayed on digital advertising screens located in high streets, shopping centres and transport hubs across the country. See more here <https://www.1854.photography/awards/portrait-of-britain/>.

A First National Competition

In November MGF delivered a celebratory fencing competition in Birmingham to 52 MGF fencers and coaches from across Birmingham, Doncaster, Bradford and London. It was an opportunity to provide training to upskill fencers in coaching and fencing skills, and a chance to socialise and build community, as well as the first time hosting a MGF fencing competition with prizes. At the same time they carried out a photography project with local photographer Sarah Ali, as well as an oral history project with the coaches to celebrate their experiences.

Making Space For Healing Zine

Last year MGF created a youth-led mental health resource with the young people from Mulberry, in a zine format, called 'Making Space for Healing'. It can be downloaded here <https://www.maslaha.org/Project/making-space-for-healing>.

Created by young Muslim girls for other young Muslim girls, 'Making Space for Healing' is a youth-led mental health resource for Muslim girls that offers tailored advice on how to improve wellbeing, in the face of Islamophobia, racism and sexism, which have a profound impact on their mental health. The zine provides them with a space to explore their emotions, offering practical tools on how to manage difficult moments.

Hands Off Our Hijab

In our school sessions in East London MGF participants created a photo campaign called 'Hands off our Hijab'. At the time of the campaign they were not allowed to wear their hijabs in PE and dance classes, so they campaigned for the freedom to wear hijab in these classes, and for sport hijabs/comfortable hijabs to be part of their school uniform for PE and dance. They created a photography project, designed their own campaign zine and designed their own hijabs.

They collected over 100 signatures from students, parents and teachers and presented their campaign to the senior leadership team. As a result, in September 2023, the school introduced a black sports hijab similar to what they designed, as part of the school uniform, demonstrating the power of youth voice in making change.

Maslaha is continuing to campaign for women around the use of the hijab at the upcoming Olympics, which will impact certain athletes (notably French ones).

Other Projects

Maslaha is working on a new over-50's MGF community programme for Muslim women and women of colour in Newham, led by a MGF coach who used to be a participant from Tower Hamlets.

For the first time, they are looking to pilot primary MGF sessions in Year 5 & 6 as part of their transition to secondary school. They also hope to also deliver community sessions with both parents and young people by the end of the school year.



"Going to these sessions means a lot to me because it's a bonding moment with my daughter. I want to be a role model to my daughter, to show her that women can be strong and independent and that they can achieve whatever they want." - Amreena, fencer from Ladywood Leisure Centre



The project has expanded into a nationwide engagement program tailored for young Muslim women throughout the UK

Documenting the process is also important, and there is work towards an upcoming coach photography and oral history project, to create resources for educators, parents and young people around Islamophobia, Prevent, Palestine and education. This is in response to a demand from teachers and parents asking for support and providing alternatives to what is being provided in schools.

Read more at <http://www.muslimgirlsffence.org>

EXCLUSIVE 15% DISCOUNT OFFER ON PGL BREAKS FOR BRITISH FENCING MEMBERS



PGL, British Fencing's official 'Have-A-Go' partner, is encouraging even more young children and families to experience activity adventures (including fencing!), with an exclusive discount offer just for British Fencing members.

With over 65 years of experience, PGL is ideally placed to provide a range of all-inclusive action-packed adventures during school holidays, especially for kids and families. And for the first time, British Fencing members can now enjoy a 15% discount off Kids' Adventure Camps, Family Adventure Breaks and Family Activity Days running at fourteen centres across the UK.



member. Or why not try a PGL Family Activity Day? Experience three exhilarating activities from giant swing to zipwire plus a delicious hot lunch to ensure you are refuelled for an afternoon of adventure - it's a fantastic way to get a taste of the PGL magic ahead of booking a longer break later in the year.



The perfect opportunity for 8-16 year olds to try out over 40 activities, stay away from home, make loads of new friends and express themselves in a safe and supportive environment. Accredited by Ofsted, BAPA and ABTA, you can even pay with childcare vouchers or tax-free childcare to give your kids their best independent holiday yet, with 2, 3, 4 or 7-night breaks available. PGL also offers a choice of 13 TRAILBLAZE! Adventures over the summer holidays, allowing kids to try surfing, streetdance, bushcraft, pony trekking and more on top of the best of PGL multi-activity.



Whether you're travelling as a family or looking for all-inclusive school holiday fun for your kids, PGL offers the opportunity to experience life-enriching adventures for memories that last a lifetime. Which will you choose?

PGL Kids' Adventure Camps

Enjoy PGL Kids' Adventure Camps at a whopping twelve centres across the UK.



Book your next adventure now, using promocode BF24 at <https://adventureholidays.pgl.co.uk> or call 0333 321 2114 and quote this code when you book by 31 August 2024 for travel up until 31 October 2024. Terms and conditions apply.



PGL Family Adventure Breaks

Never mind letting the kids have all the fun - now you can join them! Experience a 2, 3 or 4-night all-inclusive family adventure at Barton Hall, Devon or Caythorpe Court and Lincolnshire running during every school holiday. From abseiling to raft building, zip wire to archery, climbing to giant swing, you'll have the chance to experience a fun-packed programme from dawn until dusk, with something to suit every family



AGE IS JUST A NUMBER

FENCING PAST 90

It's a truism that 'fencing is for everyone'. Like most truisms, it contains a bit of actual truth and a little bit of myth-making. But in the case of Don Coe and Sylvia 'Joy' Fleetham, it's proved to be absolutely the case. Because both these fencers are still actively taking part well over the age of 90.

You're probably aware that fencing is good for you, but participating in the sport can offer a holistic approach to staying active, both physically and mentally, for people at retirement age and far beyond.

Both Coe and Fleetham were profiled by the BBC recently. Fleetham, now 91, only took up the sport aged 63. "If I can do it, anybody can do it. I'm a living example. There is life after 70, 80 or even 90." According to her club, she's still beating opponents a quarter of her age. "How good am I? Excellent. Ask them. They'll tell you." she told them.

Joy has no plans of slowing down and wants to keep proving that age is just a number. Indeed, she seems to really enjoy giving younger fencers at the club a run for their money.

"When I started fencing, my husband said to me 'I think you'll still be fencing while you're 100' and I said 'don't be silly'. It's a hobby that's taken over our lives. I just love it. My whole life revolves around my fencing. Wonderful."

Fleetham got started after she saw an advert in the local paper offering fencing as an adult education course. Two sessions in and she was hooked for life. Her longevity has seen her make multiple media appearances, receive letters from the late Queen and other royals, as well as an invite to a Buckingham Palace garden party. When she turned 90 last year the club threw her a surprise party.

What is it like to fence at 90? Her reply was "as good as when I was 63".

Don Coe, a member and epee coach at the Royal Tunbridge Wells Fencing Club and a member of British Veterans Fencing, is a sprightly 92, and has a similarly holistic take on what the sport has given him. "Fencing... it liberates me. I don't put an age on myself. Age, in fencing, is only an



Don Coe

obstacle if you can't move," he told the BBC last year.

Coe has had an extraordinary life and career which began in 1949 when he first picked up a foil in the army. He remembers buying equipment from Leon Paul himself, when the business was based in Covent Garden, and later joined the Salle Allen Fencing Club, long associated with British Olympian Derek Hawthorne, whose daughter Hilary Philbin - also a fencing Olympian - is now President of BF. He also had a career designing pubs in London, which involved decorating them with a great deal of fencing equipment (also supplied by Leon Paul).

Hajrah Qureshi, an epee fencer at the club, said, "It's an inspiration to be taught by him, and makes me believe that you know when I'm at that age I could be doing as well as him."

"I started when I was in the army when I was 18." said Coe. "I love fencing because it's competitive in a way, but you don't have to be competitive to do it. I look upon it more as an art than a sport. It's more like ballroom dancing."

"I'm better now than when I was fencing when I was younger. Because first of all, I have more wisdom. I have more cunning, and there's an enormous amount of cunning in fencing. I'm not as fast but I'm more accurate."

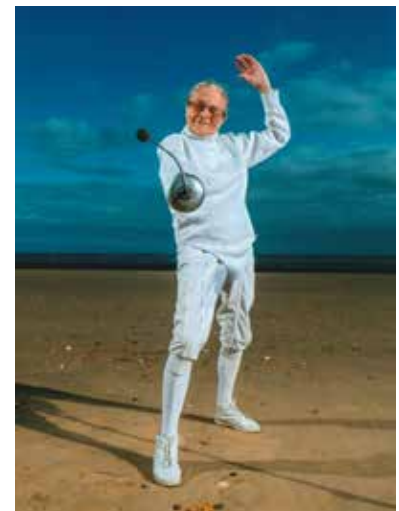
"When I tell people my age, they don't speak for a while and I know why. They just don't believe it. As for aches and pains, I don't get it. My legs are bruised but they never hurt me. I don't care really. I love my life. I'd like to continue to coach for as long as they'll have me, and for as long as I can stand up."

Great Britain also had another nonagenarian fencer who was competing up until a few years ago, the 'father' of veterans fencing, Henry de Silva, who sadly died earlier this year. You can read about his life later in this issue.

While Fleetham and Coe may make headlines, it's well known that regular exercise offers numerous benefits for all individuals over the age of 60. Almost any exercise helps maintain and improve cardiovascular health, reducing the risk of heart disease, stroke, and high blood pressure, lowering the risk of osteoporosis and much more.

Additionally, the strategic nature of fencing keeps the mind sharp and quick decision-making, which can help improve cognitive function and keep the mind sharp. Fencing also involves dynamic movements that work various muscle groups, helping to enhance strength, flexibility, and balance, which are essential for preventing falls. And unlike many other sports, club fencing can be adapted to almost any level of skill and fitness.

If you know of any other fencers active in their 80s or above who might like to be featured in The Sword, please get in touch with the editor.



Sylvia (Photo: James Hardisty)

PARENTING A FENCER

Jim Parker makes a plea to those on the sidelines.

Parenting is difficult enough in the 21st century. Children face an immense series of pressures which the previous generation did not have and barely understand. If you're a fencing parent, your influence on your child's athletic journey is significant - even pivotal. Whether they dream of podiums or simply enjoy the game, your role in shaping their development can never be overstated.

We've all seen 'parents behaving badly' - and often in a fencing environment. The temptation to micromanage, or to overstep the line from parent to coach, is actually natural. After all, part of your job is to provide every advantage for their success. You're also probably fully aware that too much control can stifle their passion and hinder their growth - but it doesn't always stop it happening. It's a difficult line to walk, and it always has been.

It's frustrating if and when your child repeats mistakes, prompting the urge to intervene or nag. Don't try and wish away this frustration. Yet it's crucial to remember the essence of sport. When parental involvement overshadows the joy of just actually fencing, it can burden your child with stress and dampen their love for the sport and what it gives them.

We've all heard the stories of legendary athletes like Tiger Woods and the Williams sisters, whose upbringing was marked by strict discipline. But their particular achievements don't necessarily validate that kind of parenting approach. We don't so often hear about the countless athletes who flourished under more nurturing guidance, even if their stories don't make such good headlines.

It's very easy - indeed, natural - to think "my child is the exception". Every child is unique, and there never has been a one-size-fits-all formula for success. While some thrive under strict regimes, most are likely to blossom in environments that prioritise encouragement over control. Embrace a balanced approach that fosters their passion and you're more likely to watch them soar.

What does your child actually need?

No matter what your parenting 'style' is, there are fundamental needs every child requires, regardless of their athletic aspirations or performance.

At the core of it all lies unconditional love. It's easy for parents to become consumed by their child's athletic journey, but amidst the victories and defeats, it's vital to remember that first and foremost you're a parent. Building a strong, resilient relationship ensures your child knows they are safe and valued, regardless of their performance on the field or court. A robust relationship will ensure a fencer's automatic belief is robust as well.



Make sure you're always helping in the best way

Emotional support is equally crucial. From navigating the pressures of school to overcoming sports-related challenges, your child needs a listening ear and a supportive shoulder. While you can't solve all their problems, being there to lend an empathetic ear goes a long way.

Ensuring proper nutrition is another parental responsibility. While you can't force-feed your child, providing healthy options and leading by example sets the foundation for lifelong habits. Encourage your child to take on cooking responsibilities before they leave for university, empowering them with essential life skills.

Transportation is the most common role you'll be playing, and pivotal one in supporting your child's fencing journey. Until they obtain their own means of travel,



An opposite sign in a kids baseball park in suburban Seattle, USA

your role as chauffeur is indispensable. Try and use the time as wisely as possible when waiting during practices or competitions, whether it's enjoying each other's company, listening to podcasts, or engaging in light-hearted activities, make the most of these moments to bond.

Parenting a teenage athlete may seem daunting but finding common ground during travel time can foster deeper connections. Embrace opportunities to learn from each other, whether it's sharing laughs over comedy or delving into schoolwork. Remember, it's not about understanding every detail; it's about being present and supportive in your child's journey, both on and off the piste. Your child can use the time to tell you all about a subject that they need to revise for an exam. You don't have to understand everything; remember that what they are saying and the sheer act of speaking out loud is useful for the learning process.

I'm sure you'll have your own method of teaching children an appreciation for the value of money. From fuel, equipment, entry fees and (of course) coaching, the costs can quickly add up.

While it's tempting to express frustration over carelessly damaged or disregarded fencing kit, it's vital to avoid placing undue blame on your child for something which

is ultimately a consumable on the journey forward.

Responding with understanding rather than criticism fosters a healthy environment where fear of failure doesn't overshadow growth and development. An unhelpful response from you here can create fear of failure.

Ultimately, navigating the financial landscape of fencing, or indeed any youth sport, requires a delicate balance between support and pressure. By prioritising your child's well-being and fostering a positive relationship with money, you can empower them to thrive both on and off the field.

Nurturing Growth

As a parent, your role in supporting your young athlete extends far beyond the logistical responsibilities of transportation and finances. Understanding what it takes to cultivate the mindset of an elite athlete can empower you to guide your child effectively on their journey to success.

A quick search for the key attributes of elite athletes yields a treasure trove of qualities: self-confidence, passion, dedication, resilience, and more. You may be looking at your teenager and wondering where some of these are hiding, but there is still no sport quite like fencing for pulling the very best out of someone – at any age.

First and foremost you will need to empower your young athlete to take control of their journey. Nagging and constant reminders can quickly extinguish their passion. Instead, gently encourage them to take ownership and responsibility for their training regime. Dedication can easily outlast motivation, so always emphasise the importance of consistency and routine. You can throw a few tricks in here to move this along; don't ask your athlete "are you going to the salle today?". Put the bag in the car and jingle the keys.

Acceptance is another vital aspect of psychological well-being in sports. Whether celebrating victories or navigating setbacks, your child must learn to embrace both success and failure with grace. As a coach in another sport once told me: "It's normal to win, and also normal to lose."

Your acceptance of their results plays a pivotal role in this process, fostering a healthy mindset conducive to growth. 'Growth mindset' is another article in

itself (a quick Google here may be helpful), but broadly, it involves encouraging your child to believe in the power of practice and perseverance. Praise their effort and attitude rather than any innate talent, and constantly plant the seeds of a belief in their ability to improve over time.

Resilience is a cornerstone of athletic (and other) success, and one increasingly discussed in the 21st century. Help your child navigate setbacks, learn from criticism, and embrace challenges with tenacity. Be a source of encouragement and support, guiding them back on track when they falter.

Above all, remember that it's not your job to solve every problem for your child. Allow them the space to learn and grow from their experiences. By fostering independence and resilience, you empower them to navigate the highs and lows of their athletic journey with confidence. Nurturing these off-piste qualities will equip your young fencer with the tools they need to thrive in competition and in life.

Setting the Example

As a parent, your influence of course extends far beyond the sidelines. From fostering optimism to promoting respect and inclusivity, your behaviour sets the tone for their development.

Your attitude shapes your child's mindset. It's crucial to strike a balance between optimism and unrealistic expectations. Create an open dialogue with your athlete to understand their comfort levels and aspirations.

It can't be said often enough, but you nurture your child's self-confidence by being a supportive presence. Especially in a sporting environment, avoid embarrassing them or criticising their performance in public, as this can have long-lasting effects on their self-esteem. Instead, maintain positive body language and expressions, fostering an environment where they feel empowered to take risks and learn from setbacks.

We've all seen so-called 'pushy' parents. You may have even seen them aggressively remonstrating with the referee on a sports ground in a football match of Year 4 students – as I have. Every parent is 'pushy' sometimes, but please, always show respect to everyone involved in your child's athletic journey, including coaches,

judges, and organisers – that includes complaining or gossiping behind people's backs. Trust in the abilities of others and try to address any issues professionally and constructively.

The example you set here will let your fencer navigate the challenges of sports with confidence, resilience, and respect for others. Together, you can create a supportive environment where they can flourish and reach their full potential.

It's crucial to emphasise another more difficult fundamental truth: sports are about far more than just winning medals or making it to an Olympics. While the dream of standing on top of a podium may drive many young athletes, the reality is that only a very, very select few will reach such heights as seniors.

In fencing, it's not uncommon for athletes to hang up their masks for good when they head off to university – even if there's a good fencing club there. Of course, there will be competing priorities that lead them away from the sport. However, by fostering an environment of autonomy and holistic development within the sport itself, we can increase the likelihood of our children continuing fencing long into adulthood.

Even if your child ultimately decides to step away from fencing, let them depart with a legacy of invaluable skills and habits cultivated through their journey. The lessons learned, the triumphs, and the setbacks all contribute to their growth as individuals. You can make sure the journey is a holistic one; if your athlete decides to leave the sport then let them leave with a wonderful legacy; skills and habits for their future. Then all the hard work, successes and disappointments will be worth it.

If there's a summary here, it's pretty simple: it's essential to lead by example. Acknowledge your mistakes and apologise when necessary. Be humble, if you can. It may be a very difficult thing to do, but if you show your child that it's OK, they will respect you, learn from your behaviour and find it far easier to do the same. By demonstrating vulnerability and accountability, you not only earn your child's respect but also impart invaluable lessons on integrity and self-awareness.

FENCING PHOTOS TIPS

Capturing Medalists

John Stanley - Head of Communications

You may have seen a few 'improve your fencing photos' articles here in The Sword over the decades, but this is definitely one everyone can take part in. In fact, you don't need a fancy camera; just a smartphone. And most of it is nothing to do with 'photography' - it's more about people.

If you want to help promote fencing to Britain and the world... take better photographs. However much social media may now be focussed on video, images are the bedrock of promoting sport and communications in general. We are all now exposed to countless images everyday, and we have all - often unknowingly - built up a mental grammar about what makes a good photograph.

There's another issue. Apart from national championships, British Fencing does not have dedicated media representatives attending the vast majority of events where GBR athletes are competing, and relies for the most part on coaches, athletes, parents and supporters for images and information from international events. Of course, we also use the resources of the FIE and fencing photographers as well.

Despite the widespread use of smartphones with incredibly sophisticated cameras, you will still see terrible photos from the fencing world online and on social media channels. But after you have read this article, you won't be adding to that pile. Here we're going to be talking about what happens when athletes win medals.

Individual Medals

A great photograph for reporting a medal win as submitted to BF might show the athlete:

- approximately waist-up
- Close up- with their medal or trophy, in their podium kit- with the event branding in the background- looking at the camera- smiling!

This pic of Amelie Tsang last year illustrates it perfectly. Why each of these elements? Firstly, always assume that the photograph is shown on the smallest



The perfect photo that says 'champion' isn't usually an accident

screen possible - often a smartphone. Even for higher resolution photos on our website or in The Sword, these images are rarely viewed at larger sizes.

For individual athletes, we've found that a pic from the waist up is best for showing all the elements together. (Of course, if it's an international event, we'd like it to clearly show the athlete with a branded British Fencing tracksuit and ideally the GBR patch too.) And people naturally respond well to smiling photos - they're associated with medal success.

Podiums - Best Not

Larger events will feature athletes receiving their medals on a medal podium. Watching your friend, teammate, or child receiving a medal is a perfect bit of theatre and a wonderful part of sport. However, it's not so ideal for communicating to everyone else, and we don't usually prefer or use podium photos as part of British Fencing comms. This is because on podiums people are often widely spaced and some distance away, it's often more difficult to make out faces, and it is much more difficult to get a good resolution image using only a smartphone. (It's a different story if you have a good camera with a long lens.)

This picture of Will Deary on the podium at the 2023 European Games illustrates the problem. Here, the athletes were very



Podiums: Too distant, hard to make out faces

widely spaced in a medal ceremony along the entire length of a finals piste. It may have looked great in the arena and on TV, but it was terrible for photographers. Luckily, the four medallists gathered together for an arms-around each other shot at the end, after the national anthem had played. Perhaps you can guess which shot we used on our website and social media.



Podiums: Better, closer and more atmosphere

You need to be close. If you think you're close enough... take two steps closer. Try to take the photo in the best light in the room (some spots in some halls are often better than others) and of course as sharp as possible. A lot of athletes like to be photographed with their coach, but all the same rules apply.

Try not to photograph athletes against a flat wall unless it has event branding on it, and definitely not a plain or brick wall. We've all seen photos of athletes in white fencing gear against a plain white wall, and it never looks engaging. A photograph

in the middle of the arena with plenty of space in the background 'works' much better and gives a little more context. If there's a banner or other event branding in the background, this adds a sense of place and event to the image: try to include it. When the Olympics comes around, count how many images of all the sports events in the newspapers include the Olympic rings in the background: the answer will be almost all of them, because that is part of the grammar of Olympic photography - you expect to see the rings. Of course, in an event as carefully stage-managed as the Olympics, both the ring locations and the camera positions for the press are carefully chosen with this in mind.

Groups and Teams

For team shots, all the same guidelines apply, except that usually it is best to photograph people at full length rather than from the waist up. Try and get the athletes as close together as possible.

If there is more than one person taking a photograph of a group at the same time (an extremely likely scenario, especially with the dreaded podiums) be very wary. We have all seen group photos with people's eyes looking in multiple directions, which is disarming and off-putting. You might even end up with a photo like this, taken at the veteran world championships a few years ago, where at least three and possibly all four of the athletes are looking in a different direction. You may have



Your photos should not be like this - I hope

attended a wedding where there is likely a professional photographer. He will ask the guests to wait to take photographs while he captures the 'official' portraits, then they will invite the guests to grab a pic. One of the reasons they do this is precisely to avoid situations like this. It's actually completely natural when faced with a small scrum of parents, coaches, friends and possibly 'official' photographers all with their cameras or phones out to look at different people; it seems 'fair'. What will happen, of course, is that everyone walks away with a not very good photo. Instead, always tell the group to look at you and you alone (I like to reinforce this by physically pointing to the camera lens). Then tell everyone else to take their turn after you. You may be making an image that someone will treasure for the rest of their life. It's worth getting it right.

For that matter, if you are the person standing on the podium, be aware of who you are looking at - and don't be afraid to politely ask people to take turns. That way everyone ends up with a great shot.

Other Things You Can Do

During the season there are a great number of fencing events involving our athletes all over the world. You can help us by letting us know of results as soon as they happen. If there is an 'official' photographer or local media representative present, you could ask them where they are publishing their images to, and if it is OK to reuse them - if so, please pass that information on: email media@britishfencing.com.

When Photos Go Right

One of the most successful photos on the British Fencing social media channels in the last six months, with over 150,000 views, is this one of the cadet women's sabre team, here represented by Keira Donnelly-Sallows, Hui Xin Sezille, Maya Sutton, and Tosin Ononaiye. This team has had some serious success over the past season, and



Getting it right makes a massive difference

the photo justifies it. It ticks all the boxes. It's in good light. You can clearly see the athletes and their faces. You can see the venue but it's faded into the background. They're all looking at the camera. But it's not just the 'technical details'. They look like a team. They look unified. They look like they mean business. As someone said to me, "they look like a gang you want to be part of." The athletes make the photograph. The photograph is a record of them and their achievements, a great advert for the sport and a great advert for GBR. And it wasn't taken by a professional - it was taken by a coach with the phone they had in their pocket.

Don't forget, whether you are an athlete, a coach, a parent or a friend, you have the power to do a great deal for the sport and make some beautiful memories for someone too. It's well worth taking the time - and don't forget to send them to British Fencing, as well!

You can now contact us by emailing

thesword@britishfencing.com

CARDIFF 2024

COMMUNITY AND LEGACY STORIES

John Stanley - Head of Communications

Photos: Den Pollitt

In January 2024, British Fencing hosted the Wheelchair Fencing World Cup at the National Centre in Cardiff. This was a massive event in terms of prestige, and the first major international World Cup level event for over a decade. As well as a sporting occasion, it represented multiple communities coming together and a solid legacy for wheelchair fencing in the UK. Additionally, it was the first major para-fencing event to be held in the UK since London 2012, and also marked the first time two British gold medals had been won at a World Cup on home soil on the same day, and indeed, the first British gold medals on home soil at that level since 1981.

Cardiff 2024 became a triumph for fencing, para-sport and the power of partnerships. Thanks to the support of UK Sport, the National Lottery, Sport Wales, Welsh Government along with Disability Sport Wales and Welsh Fencing, Cardiff would see over 180 athletes from 30 countries come together for four days of intense competition at the very highest level. Extra efforts were made to ensure the venue was fully accessible from several entrances, including building a temporary wheelchair ramp into the main arena from the front of the venue. Other innovations included a video released to support spectators of all needs and let visitors know exactly what to expect from the experience, as well as RMA Sport and Leon Paul providing wheelchair repair and new kit as required. The medals were produced from local slate by Valley Mill, a Swansea firm.

A great deal of work was done with inclusive practices in the preparation, informing attendees in advance and giving



them full communications of what they could expect when they arrived. This was done by asking the questions: "what is it they're going to need?" and "what is going to be their experience?". The work done here was praised by Nicci Bailey, the Social Impact Manager at Paralympics GB. "You know, a lot of sports don't do that very much if at all, and I think we've made something that the rest of the sector can follow suit," she said afterwards.



Cardiff 2024 welcomed a huge number of guests including senior representatives from the Welsh Government, as well as UK Sport CEO Sally Munday and Baroness Tanni Grey-Thompson among many other important visitors. It also saw visits from two separate BBC crews and many other local and national press.

BF CEO Georgina Usher was very proud of how things had come together. "Every year I used to come down as a fencer to Cardiff to compete in the Welsh Open. So I could not be more proud that we've managed to bring this incredibly global international event to a place that holds such a special place in not just my fencing life but in the fencing life of many other UK fencers. Disability Sport Wales has been amazing and we couldn't have delivered the event without them, and also UK Sport. It's only been 18 months in the making, and I could not be more impressed with what everyone together the team managed to achieve."

VOLUNTEERS - THE ENGINE ROOM

As with almost all sporting events, the show would not go on without volunteers.

In the end, the event was supported by over 80 of them - known as "Blade Buddies" who assisted in everything from lift operating to video. The piste-side work especially required a focus, strength and attention to detail far greater than normal volunteer roles. Nia Jones, the Volunteer Manager mentioned the wide net that had been cast. "It's not just the local community of the area. It's a local fencing community as well. There's such a diverse range of volunteers for this particular event from hardcore fencers to frequent event volunteers and people who just love getting involved. So there's a really nice mix of two very different communities. These events wouldn't run without the volunteers, especially considering how technical some of it is. Everyone's got in the spirit of things and it's such a great thing to see."

Mallory Ling spent four days with the team. "I fenced at university but haven't done it in a while. I thought this would be a great way to get involved. I was with the venue and transport team and a lot of it has been helping athletes when they're getting off the piste directing them to the correct place in the venue, and a lot of managing the lifts because those are very important getting all the athletes to where they need to go."



"They're long days and they can be pretty tiring but it's great to meet all these different people and talk with other volunteers and get involved. I think it's very important just to get involved in the community and help out because these athletes need this to get their Paralympic qualifications. That couldn't



happen without all the volunteers that are involved.”

Lois is a Welsh volunteer who now lives in Birmingham and had previously played a role at a wheelchair rugby event at the Principality Stadium in 2022. “This opportunity came up and I thought I just love to have a go, really be part of it. I’ve never seen fencing before, so it was kind of really learning on the job. Everybody’s been great, it’s just been really amazing and I’ve absolutely loved it.” she said.

“I have a full-time day job so I take time off work to come and volunteer to kind of use my holiday. For me, it’s my way of trying to give back. I live in Birmingham where I come down from and try and volunteer at events in Wales, which is where I grew up. You meet so many different people and you get to see so many different things. So it’s a really important part for me to be able to do that and try and give back into the Welsh community as much as I can.”

SCHOOLS - INSPIRING THE NEXT GENERATION

Year 5 & 6 students at Llysfaen Primary School in Wales were treated to a fencing session from British Fencing’s Neil Brown, Erin Corcoran, and Nat Lewis as part of the build up to the event. The students got to fence each other and – best of all – their teachers at the session held on 7 December at the school in north Cardiff. Only a handful had ever fenced before – one pupil described the feeling of competition as “how to fence and how to block, and how to play and have fun”.



Students from that school and several others were in attendance at the event, starting on the 11 January, giving young people a taste of a different international sport in the region with the goal of inspiring a new generation.

Nia Jones was also part of the school’s engagement effort. “We really want to try and get the message out there about fencing and how it’s a sport that anyone can engage with. So we’ve gone up to schools, we’ve taught them a bit about the history of not just fencing, but wheelchair fencing, and some of the great British athletes that will be competing here. And we’ve had quite a few schools come along to the event. They’ve watched the athletes compete. They’ve been up to weapons control. They’ve seen what’s going on. They’ve been cheering and making posters for the athletes, and they’re really kind of understanding how everyone’s differences doesn’t mean that they’re any less than anyone else.”

“So they’re seeing all kinds of different people compete, and they’re getting involved and they’re cheering for everyone. And they’ve created an amazing atmosphere.” Fran Whalley, Sabre Lead for British Fencing and a representative for Welsh Fencing in Cardiff, added, “It’s inspiring for the kids that come and watch it. It opens eyes for any parents that might be here. They might know someone who might benefit from this. Events like this can accidentally just bring someone into a room and change their life. Sport has the power to change people’s lives, particularly in the para-fencing space. Who knows who’s been inspired by today, or yesterday or tomorrow?”

LEGACY - THE FRAMES

You can start wheelchair fencing with just a bench, but getting more serious requires one very specialised bit of equipment, the tough metal frames that the athletes are strapped into.

The twenty-two frames needed for the World Cup event have now been distributed to clubs up and down the country. Nine are on long-term loan to clubs; eight are marked for short-term use at clubs with the view to also have them available for BF’s ADP camps and competitions throughout the year; and five have been purchased by partners at universities and the Home Nations.



Rick Rodgers, BF’s Inclusion and Disability Officer, was particularly proud of this legacy. “Because of the World Cup here, we have 22 wheelchair fencing frames purchased that are now going to go out to clubs and communities and organisations around the country to help support more wheelchair users and people who need to sit down to fence, to participate in fencing to the highest level possible.”



“It simply wasn’t going to be possible without this World Cup happening that funding would have come through to have the frames in place. Now we’re putting them into clubs and long term loans so that more people around the country can access the equipment needed to participate in the sport.”

“I always say when you see a track runner, they’re not carrying their own track with them. But wheelchair-using participants from lots of sports have to carry far more kit than their standing counterparts.”

“In fencing you have to have two wheelchairs and a huge fencing frame and that’s a lot of equipment just to sit next to each other and participate in the sport at the highest level. We’ve cut that equipment barrier down massively because of this World Cup here in Cardiff this year.”

DAVID SHALIT: THE YOUNGEST OLYMPIC JUDGE?

John Stanley - Head of Communications

BF was recently contacted by the family of one David Shalit, who believed he was the youngest person ever to judge at an Olympics, when he officiated at the 1948 Games in London, aged just 17. We spoke to Mr Shalit and his daughter Belinda along with fencing historian Malcolm Fare in March 2024 to get the story.



Giuliano Nostini and John Emrys Lloyd fencing at the 1948 Olympics in Wembley. (Photo: Fencing Arms & Artefacts)

The ages of officials at the Olympics have never been recorded, so it is difficult to prove that there wasn't anyone younger. However, David's case is both compelling and fascinating, and an insight into a different world.

The 1948 Olympics, held just after the end of the Second World War, was known as the 'Austerity Games'. There was an element of rolling up the sleeves and making do about many sports, and the fencing event was organised by a group of men, mostly still with wartime officer titles, based at the London Fencing Club, then the centre of the British fencing universe.

"I left school at 17 and joined the London Fencing Club. That was in 1947, and qualified as a judge quite quickly. And then the Olympics. It was quite a shock. Although of course at 17 one has terrific self confidence, so it wasn't an unpleasant shock, just a fact of life." says Shalit, now 93.

The fencing events were held in the Palace Of Engineering in Wembley, a 1920s exhibition venue which survived until the 1970s. Charles de Beaumont, a huge figure in British fencing in the twentieth century was both competing and helping to organise the event. "They assumed we would help. It was the first Olympics since the war. Therefore, the first World Championships. They were quite desperate to find people who were known to be confident." All three weapons were contested in both individual and team, although women only participated in individual foil at the time.

Shalit was not expecting to judge. He had been appointed as Assistant Director of Equipment for the Games. "But the whole thing was riddled with pre-war politics. The Argentinians, particularly, whenever they started losing a match they'd protest. That's how I came into it. There immediately became a shortage of qualified judges. Sure enough, when I arrived the next morning it was: "David where were you? We've been looking for you everywhere," he smiled.

"And I was judging one every day apart from the middle bit when the epee was going on because it was electronic at this point." The inter-country snickering didn't stop. "I remember one Frenchman saying, 'You English know nothing about what you see, but at least you say what you think you see.'"



David Shalit

Shalit was a successful sabre fencer as a young man. He was runner-up to Errol Christies in the 1948 junior sabre championship and the following year in the senior British sabre championship he came second to Roger Tredgold, beating four times British champion Gordon Pilbrow into third place - a remarkable result for an 18-year-old. On 18 June 1949 he came fifth in an international sabre tournament in Antwerp.

At the World Maccabiah Games in Israel, he was in the British team that came first overall, winning the foil and epee team events and coming second at sabre, before serious leg injury curtailed his career. Sabre was a tougher, more bruising event in those days, and Shalit would have likely been on the British team for the 1952 Olympics. "My first Junior was in 1947. And I was black and blue by the time we came to the semifinal. I wore a sweater under my jacket to absorb the slashes."

"The number of people who don't make it because of injury, is the same number of people who are just not good enough."

"An awful lot of people get injured in sport and have their careers cut short. In those days, there was no question of training. I now know I should have done much more to build up the muscles around your joints." The 1952 British team sent Shalit, then in hospital, a 'sorry you couldn't be here' postcard from Helsinki - which sadly got lost in the post.

Shalit was also a contemporary of Gillian Sheen, the only British Olympic fencing gold medal winner, who would fence the bigger and stronger Shalit for tougher practice. "Gill was a lovely person. We had great fun together."

Shalit received a medal for his judging exploits in 1948, and retains good memories of his fencing days, which have shaped his life. "Fencing was the first thing I was good at, it gave me confidence." he smiled.

Thanks to Malcolm Fare for his contributions to this piece.

PARIS 2024

Team Qualification Report

Photos: #BizziTeam

Qualification by ranking for fencing at Paris 2024 is over and we now know the teams that will be competing for the sport's biggest titles in just a few weeks. For a refresher on how qualification works please see pages 14 and 15 of the [January 2023 issue](#) of this magazine.

Men's Epee

How things change in four years. Japan won gold at the Tokyo Games beating Russia in the final as Korea defeated China for the bronze medal. Of those four teams, only Japan booked a place for Paris 2024 after a thrilling race.

Qualification began with a massive surprise that almost no one predicted. The mighty Kazakhstan claimed victory at the Istanbul World Cup beating the Netherlands in the final. Korea were the only 'top' team to feature in the medals, beating Spain to the bronze medal. Hungary, Japan, Argentina and Egypt picked up their zonal spots with Italy, France, Switzerland and the Czech Republic grabbing valuable points. (Top 4: [KAZ](#), [KOR](#), [NED](#), [ESP](#); Zonals: [HUN](#), [JPN](#), [ARG](#), [EGY](#).)

Bumper points were available at the next qualifiers - the zonal championships, worth 1.5 times those of a World Cup. Kazakhstan's ranking gave them a nice run to the semi-finals at the Asian Championships but their victory over Korea at that point proved that they were not a one-hit wonder. Olympic Champions Japan won the final putting them into the top four automatic qualifying places. China's form continued to falter as they fell to Hong



Team France

Kong in the quarterfinals with Hong Kong going on to lose to Korea in the bronze medal match, moving Korea into the Asian quota place.

Hungary returned to form at the European Championships beating a promising looking Swiss team in the final. The result moved Hungary up into the automatic spots and Switzerland into the European quota place ahead of the Netherlands, Spain, Italy and France - in that order!

The biggest news (across all weapons) came at the Pan-American Championships. Favourites, the USA had what can only be described as a moment of madness in defeat at the hands of Colombia in the semi-finals. Shown a black card for a post-match infringement led to a cancellation of any points from the event. Venezuela capitalised by taking the title and moving into the top four, setting them on a path to Paris 2024 through the PanAm quota place at the very least.

Meanwhile, it was no surprise to see Egypt take the African Championships title and move into the top four. Morocco's silver promoted them into the African quota place - a precarious position given that they required Egypt to stay in the top four to retain it. ([KAZ](#), [HUN](#), [JPN](#), [EGY](#); [VEN](#), [KOR](#), [SUI](#), [MAR](#).)

The qualifying position for the teams often looks peculiar after the Zonals but next up was the double points-scoring World Championships and a chance for some balance to be restored. Italy and France righted their own ships by claiming gold and silver and moving from nowhere straight into the automatic places. Venezuela built on their PanAm success by claiming bronze and with it a place in the top four. This benefited Canada who despite going out in the last 16 moved into the PanAm quota spot. Korea claimed fourth, moving them into the Asian quota place. Japan's loss to Germany in the last 16 relegated them from the top four out of qualification. Kazakhstan's sixth place was enough to keep them in the automatic places but Egypt's ninth place

finish relegated them from the top four into the African quota spot ahead of Morocco, who were never able to mount a serious challenge from that point. ([ITA](#), [KAZ](#), [FRA](#), [VEN](#); [HUN](#), [KOR](#), [EGY](#), [CAN](#).)

Four World Cups to go with Berne next on the list where France beat Italy in the final, moving them up to second in the race just behind the Italians. Hungary's bronze medal moved them back into the automatic places. Kazakhstan's loss to Hungary didn't result in demotion from the top four benefiting losing bronze medalists Korea who filled the Asian quota place, while Japan closed the gap in the Asian race though by finishing fifth. Egypt's sixth place gave them an even stronger hold on the African place. With Europe's 'big' three now in the top four, Spain's ninth place finish was enough to earn the EU quota spot. ([ITA](#), [FRA](#), [HUN](#), [KAZ](#); [KOR](#), [VEN](#), [EGY](#), [ESP](#).)



Team Italy

A much-needed win for Japan came at the next qualifier in Vancouver elevating them into the automatic places. Silver for Italy allowed them to build a lead at the top of the qualification rankings. France had a shocker, losing to Ukraine in the last 16 but fought back to ninth place, keeping them second in the rankings. Venezuela beat Hungary in the quarterfinals, relegating them into the European quota place, going on to beat Switzerland for the bronze medal which opened the gap to Canada in the PanAm quota race. Like France, Korea went out in the last 16 (to the Czech Republic) but held onto the Asian quota spot albeit falling further behind Japan and Kazakhstan. Egypt's up and down performances went down again in

Vancouver but their last 16 placing meant they held onto the African quota spot. (ITA, FRA, JPN, KAZ; HUN, VEN, KOR, EGY.)

Japan's form continued at the Heidenheim World Cup with silver, retaining their automatic place. They lost to Hungary in the final, who had returned to form and a place in the top four. France also recovered from Vancouver by completing the podium. Italy suffered in Germany though, falling in the last 16 to self-proclaimed king-makers Ukraine. The Italians fought back to tenth place and maintained their position at the top of the qualification rankings. Kazakhstan's fifth place finish saw them drop out of the top four for the first time during qualification but only into the Asian quota spot. Switzerland lost out in the bronze medal match but moved into the European quota place whilst Egypt did enough to hold on to their zonal quota. Venezuela's form dipped in Germany and despite losing to Austria in the last 32, held onto the PanAm place. (ITA, FRA, HUN, JPN; KAZ, VEN, EGY, SUI.)



Team Hungary

The final qualifier took place in Tbilisi, Georgia and provided an enthralling climax to the race. France won the event beating Italy in the semi-finals and leapfrogging them at the top of the rankings. Despite both losing in the quarterfinals, Hungary and Japan retained their places in the top four. The big story came through the Czech Republic who had not been in a qualifying spot through the race. First they beat Hungary in the last 8 and then Kazakhstan in the semi-finals. They eventually lost to France but the points haul was enough to overtake Switzerland for the European quota place. Another departure in the last 32 for Venezuela did not undo the work they'd put in earlier in qualification and they secured the PanAm place. Egypt's top 16 finish meant they also retained their zonal quota spot. (FRA, ITA, HUN, JPN; KAZ, VEN, CZE, EGY.)

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Team Japan

The individual ranking qualifiers were also confirmed in Tbilisi with the places going to Freilich (ISR), Wang (CHN), Loyola (BEL), Rodriguez (COL), Kim Jaewon (KOR) and Elkord (MAR).

Women's Epee

Estonia pulled off a massive result at the Tokyo Games, securing the countries first Olympic gold medal, with victory in the women's team epee just days after their first ever Olympic medal, through Katrina Lehis's bronze in the individual epee. Bankers for team qualification for Paris, right?

Qualification destination one; Fujairah, where Tokyo silver medalists Italy started as they meant to go on with victory. They beat Tokyo bronze medalists Korea in the final with China and the USA completing the top four. France were fifth taking an early hold on the European quota place with Hong Kong the next best Asian team and Canada the next best from PanAm. With no African team in the top 16 of the World Rankings (a qualification prerequisite) Hungary who finished sixth picked up the spare place. Olympic Champions, Estonia finished ninth but only five points off a qualification position. (ITA, KOR, CHN, USA; FRA, HUN, HKG, CAN.)

On to the Zonals where Korea took the Asian title securing their automatic place. They beat Hong Kong in the finals who



Team Italy

jumped into the top four with China, in bronze now filling the Asian quota place.

The USA won the Pan-American Championships, retaining their place in the top four whilst silver medalists, Canada built their lead in the Pan Am quota race. Meanwhile, Egypt romped to victory at the African Championships, moving into the World's top 16 and thus into the African quota place.

France won the European Championship title and jumped to the top of the rankings. Hungary's silver medal put them level on points with bronze medalists Italy. However, the results left both teams outside the top four and Italy's victory in Fujairah left them holding the European quota place. Estonia finished sixth but now 21 points adrift. (FRA, KOR, USA, HKG; ITA, CAN, EGY, CHN.)



Team Korea

Milan was the turning point for team Poland who won the World title beating Korea in the semi-finals before taking out Italy in the gold medal match. The result moved them straight into the top four to join Korea and Italy. France lost to Switzerland in the quarterfinals but went on to finish fifth and stay in the automatic places. Switzerland lost the bronze medal match to Korea but promoted themselves into the European quota place. Despite losing to Israel in the last 16, the USA held onto the PanAm place whilst Hong Kong quarterfinal finish saw them drop out of the top four but into the Asian quota place. Egypt's top 16 finish was enough for them to retain the African place. Estonia's ninth place left them 29 points adrift and looking in serious trouble. (KOR, FRA, POL, ITA; USA, SUI, HKG, EGY.)

Italy was also the destination for the next qualifier, the Legnano World Cup, where it was Ukraine's time to shine. They won the event to jump into the European quota place with Korea and Poland completing the podium and staying firmly in the automatic places. France and Italy could only manage quarterfinal finishes but remained in the top four. Hong Kong lost the bronze medal match to Poland but built their lead over China in the Asian race who finished sixth. The USA's top 8 finish was enough to hold onto the PanAm place whilst Egypt's top 16 placing was enough for the African spot. Tenth for Estonia surely meant the Olympic Champions were done, nearly 50 points off a qualification spot. (KOR, POL, FRA, ITA; UKR, HKG, USA, EGY.)

Vancouver proved that was possibly not the case as Estonia not only turned up but won the event - still 35 points behind a meaningful place but moving in the right direction, finally! The USA claimed silver pulling away nicely in the PanAm race. Ukraine's bronze medal was enough to keep them in the European quota place. They beat Korea who retained their top automatic spot. Italy and France finished fifth and seventh, respectively, enough to stay in the top four. Both Hong Kong and China went out in the last 16 so the former held onto the Asian quota place. Despite going out in the last 32, Egypt maintained their place in the World's top 16 and their hold on the African quota spot. (KOR, FRA, POL, ITA; UKR, USA, HKG, EGY.)

Italy became the first team to win a second qualifying World Cup when the tour moved on to Barcelona. It moved the Italians into the second automatic spot, a place behind Korea who were the losing finalists. Poland's dip in form led to a round of 16 defeat at the hands of Romania but thirteenth place was enough for them to stay in the top four. As was France's fifth place finish. Ukraine, like Poland, went out



Team Poland

in the last 16 but held on to the European quota - with Estonia also falling at that stage. China's bronze medal closed the gap in the Asian race to five points behind Hong Kong in the Asian race. A strong fourth place finish for the USA secured the PanAm place and eighteenth was enough for Africa to retain the African spot. (KOR, ITA, POL, FRA; UKR, USA, HKG, EGY.)



Team France

So to China for the final qualifier in Nanjing and Italy were at it again. The result saw them topping qualification. However, the story of the day lay with the host nation team. A huge zonal showdown came in the last 16 with China facing Hong Kong and beating them 45-33. They went on to deservedly claim the Asian quota spot with victory over Korea and then Ukraine before clinching silver. Despite beating Ukraine for bronze, Hungary fell some way short of overtaking them for the European quota place. Estonia's ninth place summed up their clearly disappointing campaign. Korea's fifth, France's seventh and Poland's eighth place finishes were enough to keep all of them in the top four. The USA finished sixth and Egypt seventeenth was enough for them to secure their zonal places. (ITA, KOR, POL, FRA; UKR, USA, CHN, EGY.)

The individual ranking qualifiers were Kong (HKG), Kun (HUN), Moellhausen (BRA), Different (EST), Ndolo (KEN) and Yoshimura (JPN).

Men's Foil

France claimed the men's team foil title at the Tokyo Games, beating Russia in the final as the USA completed the podium with victory in the bronze medal match against Japan. Surprisingly it was the second Olympic cycle with a podium that didn't feature Italy.

Qualification for Paris 2024 began with a trip to Mexico and the Acapulco World Cup where the USA topped the podium ahead of Italy, France and Japan - setting the tone for the top four spots from the off. Korea edged Hong Kong for fifth and the provisional Asian quota spot whilst Poland's seventh place and Egypt's eighth moved them into the zonal places. Canada made the last 16 and moved into the PanAm quota. (USA, ITA, FRA, JPN; KOR, POL, EGY, CAN.)

On to the Zonals where the USA ran out easy winners of the Pan-American Championships and held onto the top of the Olympic rankings. Silver medalists Canada comfortably held the PanAm quota place.



Team Japan

Italy won the European Championships to hold onto second in the race for Paris. A silver medal for France meant they kept their automatic place whilst Germany's bronze saw them overtake Poland into the European quota place.

Japan were on fire at the Asian Championships beating Korea and China with Hong Kong fourth. Japan edged into the third automatic place whilst Korea opened their lead in the Asian race.

Egypt's win at the African Championships moved them to within two points of the top four. Whilst the result was no surprise, the Egyptian team were shaping up to be a strong team. (USA, ITA, JPN, FRA; EGY, KOR, CAN, GER.)

The biggest shift in the race for Paris happened at the World Championships in Milan where there was an all-Asian podium for the first time in history. Japan claimed the World title from China and



Team Italy

Hong Kong - a result that left Japan and China in the top four and saw Hong Kong leapfrog Korea into the Asian quota place. The USA and Italy finished fourth and fifth, respectively, and held onto their automatic spots. France's sixth place finish saw them relegated from the top four and into the European spot. Egypt's exit in the top 16 didn't affect their zonal standing and neither did Canada's exit in the 32. Despite being dumped out of provisional qualification Poland's eighth place finish was the best of the chasing pack of European countries. (JPN, USA, ITA, CHN; FRA, HKG, EGY, CAN.)

Next up, the Istanbul World Cup where Italy beat Japan in the final whilst the USA completed the podium with victory over China in the bronze medal match. All four teams remained in the automatic spot but with Italy overtaking the USA. Hong Kong placed fifth, crucially beating Korea in the placings matches, to retain the Asian place. Despite France being taken out in the top 16 by Belgium and then losing to Great Britain, thirteenth was enough for them to hold on to the European place - Poland closed the gap on them by finishing sixth. Top 16 finishes for Egypt and Canada kept them in their zonal places. (JPN, ITA, USA, CHN; HKG, FRA, EGY, CAN.)

France recovered well by winning the next qualifier, the Tokoname World Cup, moving



Team USA

back into the automatic places with victory over Italy in the final. The Italians also stayed in the top four. Hong Kong claimed bronze ahead of Japan but Japan remained top of the rankings and China's top 8 finish kept them ahead of Hong Kong in the Asian race. Fifth placed USA held onto their automatic place, whilst Egypt, eighth and Canada, thirteenth remained in their zonal quota spots. Poland were the best of the remaining European teams finishing sixth and moving into the European spot vacated by France's promotion to the top four. (JPN, ITA, USA, FRA; CHN, EGY, POL, CAN.)

Paris hosted the penultimate qualifier for men's foil where the USA claimed gold from Japan, France and Italy, with all four teams pulling away from the chasing pack in the automatic places - albeit in a slightly different order. China pulled away from Hong Kong and Korea in the Asian race by finishing fifth. Another top 8 and top 16 finish from Egypt and Canada, respectively kept them in their zonal places. (JPN, USA, ITA, FRA; CHN, EGY, POL, CAN.)



Team France

The final qualifier in Cairo was another golden performance from Italy who moved ahead of the USA into second. Japan's silver medal kept them at the top of the rankings as the USA secured their automatic place with bronze. Hong Kong finished fourth but that wasn't enough to overtake fifth-placed China in the Asian quota race. It was another sketchy performance from France who went out to Hungary in the top 16 but battled back to tenth place to secure their top four place. Egypt's seventh, Poland's eighth and Canada's eleventh place finishes were enough for them to secure their zonal quota places. (JPN, ITA, USA, FRA; CHN, EGY, POL, CAN.)

Also confirmed as individual qualifiers were Olympic Champion, Cheung (HKG), Dosa (HUN), Choupenitch (CZE), Ha (KOR), Toldo (BRA) and Heroui (ALG).

Women's Foil

Women's Foil qualification for Paris 2024 began in Plovdiv, Bulgaria where France won the opening World Cup beating Italy in the final. The USA claimed bronze with victory over Canada. Those four teams began the qualifying period occupying the top four automatic places. Japan, China, Poland and Germany filled places 5-8 and with no African or additional Pan American team in the top 16 teams in the World, they picked up the zonal/vacated allocation. (FRA, ITA, USA, CAN; JPN, CHN, POL, GER.)

The tour moved on to Tbilisi for the second World Cup which the USA won, beating Italy in the final. Japan beat France for bronze to replace sixth-placed Canada in the top four - with Canada moving into the PanAm spot. A fifth place finish for Poland and seventh for China meant they held their zonal quota places and despite Germany only finishing tenth, they were the team that filled the spot vacated by no qualifying African team. (FRA, ITA, USA, JPN; CAN, CHN, POL, GER.)

On to the Zonals where Italy claimed the European crown jumping to the top of qualification rankings. They defeated France in the final who also stayed in the automatic places. Germany took out Poland in the quarterfinals, going on to claim the bronze medal but still trailed them for the European quota spot.

Canada claimed a massive win over the USA at the Pan American Championships cementing their hold on their zonal quota



Team Italy



Team USA

spot, with the USA staying in the top four. Mexico took the bronze medal but were already trailing significantly.

Japan continued their good form and stayed in the top four by winning the Asian title. China's silver medal kept them in the Asian quota place and Hong Kong's bronze saw them overtake Korea in the race for that place.

Egypt cruised to the African title and into their zonal qualification berth, demoting Germany to the chasing pack for the European place. (ITA, USA, FRA, JPN; CAN, CHN, POL, EGY.)

Italy added the World title to their continental title on home soil in Milan beating France again in the final. Japan beat the USA to the bronze medal as the top four put over a thirty point gap on the chasing pack in the automatic places. China were the only other team in the top 8 and held onto the Asian place. Germany and Poland both went out in the quarterfinals but the Germans placed higher, snatching the European spot by six points. Egypt's top 16 finish was enough for them to retain their zonal placing. (ITA, FRA, USA, JPN; CAN, CHN, GER, EGY.)

The USA claimed their second World Cup title at the next qualifier in Novi Sad beating



Team France

Italy in the final and keeping both teams clear at the top of the rankings. Japan took the bronze medal to stay in the automatic places, defeating Canada in the play-off. Despite Canada's victory over France in the quarterfinals they didn't overhaul them for a place in the top four, instead retaining the PanAm spot. Meanwhile Germany won their placings match to China but Poland lost to France, keeping Germany in the European spot. However one of their key fencers, Leonie Ebert, got injured and would be out for the rest of the qualification race. China Can and Egypt maintained their zonal qualification positions. (ITA, USA, FRA, JPN; CAN, CHN, GER, EGY.)

Italy continued to build their lead at the top of the qualification rankings by winning the penultimate event in the next Olympic host city, Paris. France claimed the silver medal moving back ahead of the USA who finished fifth. Japan lost out in the bronze medal play-off but retained their automatic place. However it was their opponents who made a decisive qualification step - by taking bronze Poland overtook the weakened German team at the first opportunity, moving into the European quota spot. Canada, China and Egypt all did enough to retain their zonal places. (ITA, FRA, USA, JPN; CAN, CHN, POL, EGY.)



Team Japan

Like the men's foilists, the women concluded their race in Cairo. Title number three for the USA pushed them back into second in the ranking. The Italian's silver was enough for them to 'win' the qualification race. Japan beat France for bronze as both teams filled the remaining automatic berths - if they can continue with the consistency they showed during qualification, it may be fairly easy to predict the semi-final line-up in Paris. Canada put in another good performance to finish fifth retaining the PanAm place. Poland also finished in the top 8 to claim the European spot - the German injury ended that race early. A disappointing top 16 exit for China did not prevent them from earning the

Asian quota spot. Egypt who also made the 16 kept hold of the African place. (ITA, USA, FRA, JPN; CAN, CHN, POL, EGY.)

The confirmed individual qualifiers were Sauer (GER), Pasztor (HUN), Berthier (SGP), Chan (HKG), Esteban (CIV) and Inostroza (CHI).

Men's Sabre

Gold, silver and bronze went to Korea, Italy and Hungary at the Tokyo Games with German finishing in fourth place. Since then both the Italians and Germans went through some team changes. Qualification began in Spain at the Madrid World Cup where Hungary claimed gold over the USA, Iran and Italy. Those teams slotted into the provision automatic places, whilst fifth placed France, Japan eighth, Egypt twelfth and Canada sixteenth moved into the early zonal places. (HUN, USA, IRI, ITA; FRA, JPN, EGY, CAN.)

The continental championships followed with the USA comfortably beating Canada at the Pan Ams - the USA climbing to the top of the ranking and Canada easing away early in the Pan Am quota race.

France stepped up to win the European Championship, moving into the top four, with victory over Italy who were demoted into the European spot. With the European race so tight, even Germany's victory over Hungary left them trailing Italy by 18 points for their zonal place. Fourth was enough for Hungary to stay in the top four.

Korea were the form team at the Asian Championships beating Iran in the gold medal match. The result left Iran in the top four and promoted Korea into the Asian quota place. China beat Japan in the



Team Korea



Team USA

bronze medal match which added immense pressure on all the Asian teams heading on to the World Championships.

A much-needed boost in points came for Egypt at the African Championships. They beat Tunisia in the final and moved clear in their zonal quota race. (USA, HUN, FRA, IRI; KOR, ITA, EGY, CAN.)

The order was balanced out at the double-points scoring World Championships in Milan. Hungary beat Korea in the final, moving the European team to the top of the rankings and Korea into the automatic places for the first time since qualification began. The USA beat France to the bronze medal - a result that kept both of them in the top four. The Germans cut their European quota race deficit to just 14 points by beating Italy in the fifth-place play-off - game on? Meanwhile Iran lost to Asian chasers, Japan in the top 16 but battled to ninth place to hold the Asian spot by 24 points. A top 16 finish for Egypt and top 32 placing for Canada kept both teams ahead in their zonal races. (HUN, USA, KOR, FRA; ITA, IRI, EGY, CAN.)

The USA impressed at the Algiers World Cup not only winning the event but demolishing Hungary in the semi-finals. Hungary retained top spot but the USA closed the gap at the top to just four points. The Koreans grabbed silver to move clear in third ahead of France who despite falling to the USA in the quarterfinals, fought back to fifth place and held on to their automatic place. The Germans faced Italy in the quarterfinals giving them an opportunity to close the gap on them in the European race. It wasn't to be as Italy not only beat them but claimed the bronze medal and rebuilt the lead for the European spot. A top 8 finish for Iran, top 16 for Egypt and top 32 for Canada saw them all retain their zonal positions. (HUN, USA, KOR, FRA; ITA, IRI, EGY, CAN.)

Tbilisi hosted the next qualifier where Korea became the first team to win a second World Cup qualifier, moving them

up to second in the ranking list. Silver medalists Hungary stayed top and bronze for the USA kept them in the top four. The nerve-jangling nature of Olympic qualification was evident in Georgia though! Fourth placed Romania undid France in the top 16 and Egypt pulled off a fabulous one-hit victory over Iran at the same stage. Crucial placings matches lay ahead for the defeated teams with Iran finishing eleventh and France twelfth - far from spectacular but enough for France to stay in the top four and for Iran to retain the Asian quota spot. Italy's relatively steady fifth place pulled them clear of Germany in the European race but tantalisingly two points behind France for a top four spot. Both Egypt and Canada made the top 8, holding onto their zonal leads. (HUN, KOR, USA, FRA; ITA, IRI, EGY, CAN.)



Team Hungary

There was some normality at the penultimate qualifier in Padua where Korea took gold and jumped Hungary at the top of the rankings. The USA's silver moved them level on points with Hungary who lost out to France in the bronze medal match. Italy finished fifth having lost to France in the quarterfinals - enough to build their lead in the European race against Germany but falling away once more from the top four. Iran's top 8 and top 16 finishes from Canada and Egypt kept them all in their zonal leads. (KOR, HUN, USA, FRA; ITA, IRI, EGY, CAN.)



Team France

Budapest hosted the final qualification event which the USA won to move into second place in the race whilst beaten finalists Korea finished top of the pile. Hungary's fourth place kept them in the top four as did France's fifth place. Germany's run to the bronze medal proved too little too late. Despite having a wobble and finishing eighth, Italy finished with the European quota spot. Sixth place was enough for Iran to secure the Asian place and top 16 finishes from Egypt and Canada secured the African and PanAm spots. (KOR, USA, HUN, FRA; ITA, IRI, EGY, CAN.)

The individual qualifiers were also confirmed in Budapest with the Bazadze (GEO), Szabo (GER), Ferjani (TUN), Yoshida (JPN), Alshamlan (KUW) and Di Tella (ARG) booking their places at Paris 2024.

Women's Sabre

Reigning Olympic Champions Russia will not be in Paris to defend their title but could Tokyo medalists France and Korea navigate their way through the qualifying period?

Ukraine started qualification with gold at the first World Cup in Batumi beating the USA in the final. It was a cracking start to qualification from Spain who picked up the bronze medal beating Italy in the play-off. Fourth placed Tokyo Olympians, Japan beat Korea for fifth place sneaking into the Asian quota spot whilst Hungary claimed the European spot by beating Azerbaijan to seventh. Algeria got the best African result and Canada moved in early to the PanAm place. (UKR, USA, ESP, ITA; JPN, HUN, CAN, ALG.)

There was a big turnaround during the Zonal championships. To begin with it was no surprise to see the USA win the Pan American title and move to the top of the rankings but Mexico claimed silver having knocked Canada out in the quarterfinals - a result that would move them into the PanAm quota place.

Korea winning the Asian Championships was also no massive shock and it elevated them into second in the race. Team China pinched the Asian qualification place though by beating Japan in the semi-finals.

Japan recovered to win bronze leaving them just four points behind China.

A strong French team won the European title to move into the top four. Silver medalists Italy were demoted into their zonal place. Hungary completed the podium but were already 20 points adrift in the European quota race.

Egypt beat Algeria at the African Championships moving them four points ahead in that zonal race. Tunisia claimed bronze but were unable to challenge through the rest of qualification. (USA, KOR, FRA, UKR; ITA, CHN, EGY, MEX.)



Team France

There was more change after the World Championships in Milan. Hungary's victory brought them out of the cold and straight to the top of the Olympic race. They beat France in the final who moved up to second. Korea's bronze medal kept them in the top four whilst fourth placed Ukraine were relegated into the European spot, ousting Italy. The USA had lost to Ukraine in the quarterfinals and in spite of finishing seventh, held their automatic place. Meanwhile, Japan's sixth place finish was enough for them to overtake China in the Asian race and with no Egyptian team present, Algeria's top 16 finish pushed them clear in the African race. Both Canada and Mexico fell in the top 32 moving them out of the World's top 16 ranked teams and Italy benefitted by filling the vacated PanAm spot. (HUN, FRA, KOR, USA; UKR, ITA, JPN, ALG.)

Things settled at the Algiers World Cup with Korea beating France to the gold medal elevating them to first and second in the Olympic race. Bronze medalists, Hungary moved down to third in the race with just nine points between the top three. The USA, who lost to Hungary, fought through the placings matches to finish sixth and retain their automatic spot. Fourth place was enough for Ukraine to



Team Hungary

retain the European place and Japan went one stage further than China to keep hold of the Asian quota. Algeria went out in the round of 32 but held onto the African spot and with Canada not attending, Italy's tenth place finish was enough to keep hold of the vacated PanAm place. (FRA, KOR, HUN, USA; UKR, ITA, JPN, ALG.)

France won the next World Cup in Lima beating Italy in the final. Hungary's bronze medal moved them ahead of Korea who had a difficult day. They were beaten by Mexico in the top 16 and despite only finishing thirteenth held on to their top four spot in the race. The USA's sixth place was also enough for them to hold on to an automatic spot. Italy's victory over Ukraine wasn't enough for them to wrestle the European place as Ukraine went on to finish fifth. Japan also had a tricky event but so did Asian rivals China - both going out in the top 16 but with Japan holding on to the Asian quota. Algeria placed in the top 16 which was enough for them to keep hold of the African spot but Mexico's impressive eighth place finish was not enough for them to move into a qualification position. Italy held on to the vacated spot. (FRA, HUN, KOR, USA; UKR, ITA, JPN, ALG.)

The tour moved on to the Athens World Cup where France beat Ukraine in the final. The French team increased their lead at the top of the rankings whilst Ukraine moved into the top four for the first time since the World Championships. Hungary and Korea both went out at the quarterfinals stage but remained in the automatic places. The USA fell at the same stage demoting them to the PanAm place. Another impressive result saw Bulgaria claim bronze over Italy but Ukraine's promotion to the top four meant Italy moved up into the European place. Japan won the Asian head-to-head battle for thirteenth and continued to build their lead for the Asian place. Algeria again went out in the round of 32 but retained the African place. (FRA, HUN, KOR, UKR; USA, ITA, JPN, ALG.)



Team Korea

Back-to-back World Cup wins came for France at the final qualifier in St Niklaas. They beat a resurgent Hungary in the final as the two teams ended qualification at the top of the rankings. Ukraine beat Korea for the bronze medal as both secured their places in the top four. Japan and the USA finished fifth and sixth claiming their zonal qualification places and Italy's eighth place was enough for the European spot. Algeria made the top 16 and qualified for the African zone. (FRA, HUN, KOR, UKR; USA, ITA, JPN, ALG.)



Team Ukraine

On conclusion of the Belgium World Cup, the individual ranking qualifiers were confirmed as Gkoutoura (GRE), Martin-Portugues (ESP), Yang (CHN), Dayibekova (UZB), Brind'Amour (CAN) and Hafez (EGY).

PARIS 2024 TEAM QUALIFIERS

Men's Epee		Men's Foil		Men's Sabre	
336	FRA	384	JPN	400	KOR
333	ITA	360	ITA	376	USA
292	HUN	344	USA	352	HUN
292	JPN	280	FRA	272	FRA
274	KAZ	272	CHN	252	ITA
238	KOR	254	HKG	232	GER
232	VEN	220	EGY	224	IRI
214	CZE	218	KOR	206	EGY
209	EGY	200	POL	196	JPN
198	SUI	185	GER	191	CAN
179	ESP	170	HUN	184	CHN
165	CAN	168	GBR	163	ROU
162	GER	163	BEL	152	ESP
160	CHN	152	CAN	145	UKR
150	UKR	133	UKR	135	GEO
126	ISR	124	ESP	101	POL

Women's Epee		Women's Foil		Women's Sabre	
340	ITA	412	ITA	412	FRA
336	KOR	356	USA	328	HUN
288	POL	344	FRA	306	KOR
280	FRA	300	JPN	289	UKR
264	UKR	250	CAN	262	USA
256	USA	224	CHN	250	ITA
236	CHN	216	POL	217	JPN
223	HUN	210	GER	215	BUL
219	EST	185	HUN	202	ESP
215	HKG	179	KOR	194	AZE
209	SUI	173	UKR	176	CHN
179	CAN	164	HKG	164	GRE
169	ISR	162	ESP	160	GER
162	JPN	153	AUT	259	POL
142	EGY	144	EGY	244	ALG
113	SWE	136	SGP	240	MEX



France and Italy were the only countries to qualify teams in every weapon so will have a full quota of 24 fencers in Paris.

Egypt, Ukraine and the USA qualified five teams; Japan four; Canada, China, Hungary, Korea and Poland three; and Algeria, Czech Republic, Iran, Kazakhstan and Venezuela one.

Great Britain's final chance of qualification comes at the European Zonal Qualifier, 24-26 April, 2024.

HOW TO WATCH THE PARIS 2024 OLYMPIC GAMES



The anticipation continues to build for the next edition of 'The Greatest Show on Earth' as athletes and their entourages descend on the Games of the XXXIII Olympiad, Paris 2024 in a little over three months' time. A truly unique Opening Ceremony, taking place on the Seine river, kicks things off (sort of!) on Friday, 26 July with the Olympic Games running through until Sunday 11 August. (I say sort of because the action begins with football, rugby, handball and archery on 24 July.) A massive rebranding and logistical turnaround precedes the action kicking off again on 28 August with the Opening Ceremony of the Paralympic Games followed by twelve more days of sport.

Some will be fortunate enough to have bought tickets through the ballot and be there in person but most of us will be watching the sport unfold from the comfort of home. So here's a guide to how you can keep up with everything going on in Paris.

Let's start with the fencing schedules all taking place at the Grand Palais:

Olympic Fencing Schedule - Times BST

Date	Weapons	Qualification Rounds	Finals
27 July	Women's Epee / Men's Sabre	09:00 - 15:40	18:00 - 21:50
28 July	Women's Foil / Men's Epee	08:30 - 15:50	18:00 - 22:10
29 July	Women's Sabre / Men's Foil	08:30 - 15:50	18:00 - 22:10
30 July	Women's Epee Team	11:00 - 16:30	18:30 - 20:40
31 July	Men's Sabre Team	11:00 - 16:30	18:30 - 20:40
1 August	Women's Foil Team	09:00 - 16:10	18:10 - 21:00
2 August	Men's Epee Team	11:00 - 16:30	18:30 - 20:40
3 August	Women's Sabre Team	10:30 - 16:00	18:00 - 20:10
4 August	Men's Foil Team	09:00 - 16:10	18:10 - 21:00



[Click here for the full Olympic schedule.](#)

The BBC is the official television broadcaster for the Paris 2024 Summer Olympic Games with events being shown live on BBC Sport channels, the Red Button and the BBC iPlayer. Subscription service, Discovery+ also have rights to show the Games in Europe and Eurosport may also have rights to show some of the live action. Keep an eye out in the weeks leading up to the Games. For the delayed Tokyo 2020 Games, Discovery+ allowed viewers to subscribe for free for the duration of those Games and may well offer a similar deal. If they do, don't forget to cancel your subscription when the Games end!

The Olympics will also have its own [streaming channel](#) where some sports will be shown live and on demand.

Paralympic Fencing Schedule - Times BST

Date	Weapons	Qualification Rounds	Finals
3 September	Women's & Men's Cat A & B Sabre	12:00 - 17:00	21:00 - 22:10
4 September	Women's & Men's Cat A & B Foil	08:00 - 15:20	17:30 - 21:40
5 September	Women's & Men's Team Foil	09:00 - 14:20	16:30 - 22:00
6 September	Women's & Men's Cat A & B Epee	08:00 - 15:20	17:30 - 21:40
7 September	Women's & Men's Team Epee	09:00 - 14:20	16:30 - 22:00

Yet again, Channel 4 has the broadcasting rights to show the Paris 2024 Paralympic Games in the UK but as yet their schedule hasn't been published. As they have a multi-platform arrangement, you can expect some of the live action to be available online or via their smart device app.

Viewers may also enjoy the official Paris 2024 app which will provide live data during the Olympic and Paralympic Games for those on the go.

Faster. Higher. Stronger.....even if it is in your living room!



BOOK REVIEW

WHEELCHAIR MUSKETEERS: PRET

Written and illustrated by Vivien Mills

Reviewed by Lawrence Burr, OBE



Avid readers of the Sword will no doubt recognise the cheeky illustration on the cover of this second book of a trilogy that details the lives and adventures of an intrepid band of injured mice – the Wheelchair Musketeers – who live in Mouseland and to whom we were first introduced back in October 2020. Viv Mills, known to us all as such a wonderful advocate of the Para Fencing, (now successfully incorporated into British Fencing,) conceived the idea of stories about wheelchair fencing mice after the 2012 London Olympics when UK Sport inexplicably withdrew funding for wheelchair fencing and strenuous efforts were being made by their supporters to raise funds. Jo Gilliver, the mother of our World Champion and Olympic silver medallist Piers Gilliver, showed Viv a photo of a mouse in fencing kit sitting in a wheelchair that she had made as a good luck mascot. This sparked the idea of a children's book aimed at 6-10 year olds who might in their own lives be facing challenges of their own. The successful launch of the original book "Wheelchair Musketeers: En Garde" encouraged Viv to continue the saga with a second book.

My review of that first book was influenced by my granddaughter who gave me some honest thoughts on the story and its subject. The problem is that she has now moved into her teens and has a life filled with drama and adventures of her own. So I am faced with reaching down to my "inner child" for this review – as you might expect, some of those who know me might suggest that I have never really got beyond that stage of childhood and therefore I am the ideal person to review this book!

So, what do we have here? The story continues after the rout of the fearsome rats who had invaded Mouseland and were on the point of killing the mouse King before being rescued by the brave sword-wielding Wheelchair Musketeers (intrepid mice with names from fencing moves). Strange goings on have been observed on the borders of Mouseland and it soon becomes apparent from their spies that their homeland is now under threat of invasion by creatures from other territories. The exact nature of the threat is not immediately apparent, so the King of Mouseland enters an alliance with neighbouring territories, to provide mutual aid in the event of an attack by hostile forces. [Sounds a bit like NATO, doesn't it!] The tension builds up as their neighbours in Squirrel Place are attacked by invaders who plant traps and snares that harm the local inhabitants. The Wheelchair Musketeers need to find out who is planting the traps, and when Squirrel Pox is introduced into the community, they need to find a vaccine and a cure, to prevent the entire squirrel population from being wiped out. New recruits to their ranks, given foils, sabres and epees, are then put to the test and rally round to discover that the mastermind behind all of this is a feared arch enemy they have met before! All exciting stuff for the young reader.

I am pleased to say that this second book is written in a jauntier prose rather than the rhyming verses in the previous edition which had made the story somewhat difficult to read. This has produced a fluent storyline with readers able to follow their favourite characters along the way. Red Squirrels dominate this part of the book which will inevitably appeal to youngsters, especially as many are aware of the problems that interaction with grey squirrels has caused over the years in real life. [A visit to Brownsea Island would be appropriate at this stage!] If I had one criticism, it is that I would have liked to have seen a better map of the territories in which the tale unfolds, as it was irritating having to turn to page 67 all the time to understand where actions were taking place. Take note of how the first books of *The Hobbit* were displayed, as an example.

I have been trying to work out which of the real-world wheelchair fencers are depicted in this story (i.e. who are Prime, Nouvième and Flèche?). Hopefully, Viv might let us know at the end of her next book – I have my ideas already! I am pleased to see that there is a much larger Glossary of Fencing Terms and a list of the cast of rodents at the end of the book together with more information on the History of Fencing and the introduction of Para Fencing to the Olympics.

This is a fun book, good for parents to read at night to their children and a good stocking filler for Christmas. Remember that proceeds from every copy sold goes to The Sabre Trust which benefits all para fencers and helps TeamGB bring home even more medals and provide inspiration to future wheelchair champions.

The book is available through [Amazon](#) priced £8.00.

HENRY DE SILVA

By Malcolm Fare.

The founder of the veterans' fencing movement in the UK has passed away aged 90.

Henry de Silva, who has died at the age of 90, started fencing when he joined the Royal Navy at 15 and the following year hitchhiked to Paris to fence at the Cité Universit . He left the Navy in 1952 and started the Guildford Technical College Fencing Club, going on to become match secretary for Surrey.

After qualifying as a sports coach, he also played rugby and became the Surrey county walking club's novice champion. He moved to Birmingham where he established the Portland Fencing Club, which at one point had 99 members. Among his pupils was Sue Green, whom he took on her first trip abroad to Krefeld in Germany where she reached the final. She went on to win all the major British women's foil tournaments, including the senior championship, and twice fenced for Britain at the Olympics.

Henry moved on to Leicester, coaching and fencing competitively whenever he wasn't lecturing on PE. On his 40th birthday he



Henry CFC 2022



Henry

won the Tyneside Open epee. He started several clubs in the area, becoming chairman of Leicester County Fencing Union and organising the first age group championship for girls.

But his greatest service to the sport was as the founder of veterans fencing, beginning in the UK and spreading across the world. In 1987, he ran the first five-weapon national championships (women's sabre was added in 1999) for fencers over 45 and two years later he formed the National Veterans Association - now British Veterans Fencing.

Henry travelled all over the country encouraging older fencers to stay on in the sport. He ran fencing clinics in Europe, Asia and North America; wherever he made a contact willing to arrange a veterans' match, he gathered a battalion of what became known as 'Henry's army' to spread the gospel of veterans' fencing to those who had not yet experienced the delights of friendly but hard-fought matches between fencers over 45. He dragged fencers off to places including Edinburgh, Munich, Copenhagen, Madrid and Vilnius, and even further afield - Tunisia, Mexico, South Africa, Japan, and New Zealand.

In 1991, with a fellow enthusiast in Germany, he formed the European

Veterans Association and organised its first championships. From these small beginnings, the movement has grown to become one of the most successful ventures in world fencing, with a UK membership of around 600, biennial European championships now approaching 2000 entries across all weapons for age groups from 40-49 to 75+, annual world championships for qualified fencers over 50 and quadrennial Commonwealth championships.

When I phoned him a couple of weeks before he died to say how sorry I was to hear about his cancer, he brushed my concern aside and told me off for not mentioning in the piece I had written celebrating his 90th birthday that he had competed in every veterans' Commonwealth championships, winning a gold medal in his age group four times. I am glad to set the record straight.

That was Henry: blunt and to the point, but passionately devoted to the cause of veterans' fencing. There is now also a veterans' Winton Cup, a Celtic challenge and many other competitions for veterans.

He was made Life President of British Veterans Fencing, Vice-President of the Commonwealth Veterans Association and was a former Chairman of the European Veterans Association. His huge contribution to the sport was recognised by British Fencing, with the award of a silver medal in 1997 and a gold medal in 2012.

For the past 30 years, Henry lived on the Isle of Man, where he continued to coach, venturing out regularly to compete at veteran events. He also played competitive table tennis and was a regular race walker. At the age of 75 he completed a 10-mile walk in 2 hr 3 min 19 sec, which unofficially made him the fastest man in the country at that distance in his age group. He was a force of nature. Despite his sometimes eccentric behaviour, Henry was held in great affection by countless veteran fencers whose enjoyment of the sport he helped to foster through the movement he founded.

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RESULTS



The latest results are now listed online and can be accessed [here \(https://www.britishfencing.com/results-2/\)](https://www.britishfencing.com/results-2/).

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



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