

# British Academy of Fencing **ACADEMY NEWS**



**September 2015**  
**Issue 82**

***"Run by coaches for coaches"***

## **THE FUTURE IS ... YOU!**

### **EDITORIAL**

**What will the Academy be like in ten or fifteen years time? Will we have qualified many more coaches, including new Diploma Masters? How will the Academy be governed?**

The answers to those questions rest largely in the hands of the current membership. It is likely that many of those presently at the top of the BAF will no longer be as active in its affairs as they are now and we will be looking to another generation to provide leadership.

This is where **YOU** could come in. Most coaches, particularly those who are self-employed professionals, have good organisational skills. It is also true to say that most coaches have, as they have climbed the coaching ladder, received a great deal of help and guidance from other, more experienced, coaches. It is not unreasonable to think that, at some point, this tradition of helping others should pass to the next generation.

In the Articles of the Academy, one objective is "the promotion of the highest professional standards from fencing coaches, including the promulgation of a system or method of technical instruction to serve as a basis for examination...". In order to pursue this, the Academy seeks to educate and qualify many new coaches. A number of these coaches have the potential to reach the highest level, one or more Diplomas. Both for the sake of the future of the Academy in particular and fencing in general, the BAF needs these people with this potential to accept the challenge of striving to achieve their full potential. It will be coaches like this who will be running the Academy in the future.

You have a vested interest in the Academy continuing to be successful, so perhaps you can give some thought as to how you can safeguard its future. This might be in the form of offering to serve on the Committee at some point, or by setting yourself the goal of realising your full potential, so that you are in the position of becoming a coach educator, or examiner. If you believe that you have gained from your membership of the Academy and its coach education system, please consider how you will give something back to the next generation.



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Key Teaching Points Epée		
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Glossary of Terms (including Translation of Fencing Terms).....**£7.35 (£9.45)**

Employment Guidelines.....**£7.35 (£9.45)**

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A Compendium containing all major Documentation, including the ones above, plus more relating to examinations, is now available. For full details see Issue 64 of Academy News or contact Professor Isobel Bruce Combes ([iacombes@btinternet.com](mailto:iacombes@btinternet.com))

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## **THE PRESIDENT WRITES.....**



One of the best aspects of the Academy News is that every now and then an article comes along that makes one think and reflects some of the issues that really do affect the Academy. John Worsley's recent contribution was one of those and I thank him for it. Not only was it an insightful comment on the state of the Academy, it was a very brave one, as he will no doubt bring down upon himself howls of protest from those who make little contribution to the Academy but expect to criticise and complain unimpeded from the side-lines.

I believe he is entirely right in his distinction between members and supporters and his words made me think gratefully back to the supporters of the Academy in the past, without whose dedication and tireless hard work, the Academy would not exist today. People like:

Prof. Leon Hill – President for 20 years and before that a member of the committee for many years

Prof David Austin – President for 8 years and a committee member for almost 30 years

Prof. Mike Joseph – Vice President, Secretary and Committee member for just over 30 years and in all that time, until illness took its toll, he missed only two committee meetings

Prof. Roy Goodall – Editor of the Fencing Master (the forerunner of the Academy News) for over 30 years

Prof. Tom Etchells – former Vice President, course tutor, examiner, committee member and member of the SSTT. He has worked for and supported the Academy for over 25 years and continues to support us with his vast experience, wisdom and insight.

Provost Dave Jerry - former Members' Rep., course tutor, examiner and committee member for many, many years. Despite being diagnosed last Christmas with life threatening cancer, he has volunteered to continue to work and support the Academy.

The above are only a small example but they exemplify what is expected. The down side, of course, is that anyone who wants to step into their shoes will find them difficult to fill!

As well as the above, there are many more that support the Academy year after year as examiners; people who are often barely noticed by the candidates and rarely thanked or acknowledged (I remember a time when candidates saluted examiners at the beginning of exams and thanked them afterwards, but that is rarely seen now), but turn up time after time when asked.

We owe a huge debt of gratitude to these individuals and all the others who dedicated heart and soul to making the Academy work and whose hard work behind the scenes would have been unknown to all but those closest to them. In my own time as President, I have been able to rely on the support of a number of individuals without whose dedication, nothing could have been achieved. I am deeply, deeply grateful to them all for their support and endless hard work.

This is by no means to say that they have always agreed with me – far from it. Prof. Mike Joseph was one of the Academy's greatest supporters and a close personal friend, and yet he and I had many intense battles over the years over the direction of our policy. We often disagreed and we made no secret of it. However, what we had in common was mutual respect and a commitment to the good of the Academy, and, when he passed away, it was a heart-breaking and personal loss to me.



I remember the day Prof. Bob Merry was elected Secretary of the Academy – nearly ten years ago now. That evening, we sat in the bar together and he told me, with ever increasing vehemence, as the pints went down, that he would never be my ‘yes man’ . . . and he has kept his word! Since then he has become one of the most loyal, hardworking and reliable members of the Academy.

To support is not necessarily to agree, but I do believe that disagreement must be based on knowledge, respect and a dedication to the good of the Academy and the sport. There was a recent occasion on which I was making a point with a certain degree of intensity and was admonished by a member of the Academy to ‘get a life’. I disagree – the Academy has from the start, relied on people who made it, if not their life, then one of the most important parts of it. I am not ashamed of doing so. I am fortunate that this is made easier in my case by having a wife who shares my commitment and has no problem with the priority I give it in our daily life. However, even she, until she became a full Fencing Master, was not allowed by me to express an opinion on how the Academy should be run, as she keeps reminding me in that loving way that wives have! Quite right too, and incidentally, that is just what Leon told me when I was an up and coming coach; ‘wait until you are qualified and THEN you can change things’. I resented it at the time, but now I know he was quite right. It is my firm belief that an up and coming coach has enough to do in acquiring qualifications, knowledge, experience and skill, and no time to be fretting about how the Academy should be run. The very best candidates put their full attention into getting good enough to pass our exams and along the way, almost without noticing it, they gain a real understanding of our system, policies and history, and, in the end, the support and respect of their peers, such that, when they finally do express an opinion, we are all ready to listen and help them make the changes they want to see.

That is not by any means to say that only Masters can make a contribution. There are those who have put up their hands to help long before becoming fully qualified and we value them. What makes them different? They stand up and actually DO the work asked of them. Some contribute their professional skills when asked. Others show tireless dedication in attending course after course and being the ones that can always be relied on to show up to events the Academy organises. After a while, they naturally gain the respect of their peers and are listened to by the Academy.

As I said at the beginning, in this age where everyone expects their opinions, however ill thought out or uninformed, to be listened to in reverent silence by those who actually do the work, it was very brave of John to write such a hard hitting article and I know that there are those who will try to shout him down. It must never be forgotten that the Academy exists to train and qualify fencing coaches, and, therefore, by its very nature has to be run by Fencing Masters. After all, it is madness in my mind to let the direction of a future Fencing Master’s training be directed by individuals who cannot reach (or have not yet reached) that standard themselves.

Those who think that the Academy is run by a legion of ‘Yes Men/Women’ who all obediently toe the party line, should be a fly on the wall at a Committee meeting or (notoriously so) an SSTT meeting, where arguments comes thick and fast and a thick skin is needed for survival! I will emphasise again – why do I value the criticism, argument and conflict of these individuals? Because they are the ones who DO first and argue second. They are the ones who had the determination and strength of character to persevere through the training and gain qualifications, knowledge of the system, policies and history, before pontificating about how things should be changed. They are the ones who do the things that need doing because they need to be done, not because they find them fun or interesting to do. They do the tedious housework of keeping the Academy going and stick to what they have undertaken even in the midst of busy lives and in the face of boredom and criticism and rarely get any thanks for it. They are the ones who truly support the Academy and I thank them all.

## DEN OF VICE

*Contributions from the Academy's two Vice-Presidents*



Only coaches can appreciate what other coaches go through!

The work, the travel, the training, the competitions, washing equipment, repairing equipment, the list goes on. Giving individual lessons, to beginners is easy, but advanced fencers? And at any weapon? Right or left handed (them not you, although...). And the responsibility of running a club, with a committee, unless you're the hired hand of course. If you begin to look at all that's involved in being a coach, it's a wonder there are any around. Why do we do it? For my part, ignorance was the culprit, plus my coach needed help, as the club was getting too big. Looking back, if I had really thought about what it meant to become a successful(?) full-time coach, I would have never started. To be a coach requires qualities of leadership, knowledge, experience, personality, hard work ethic, selflessness, business acumen, inter-personal skills, goal setting, motivational skills – and an understanding wife! I had the last item!!

Fortunately, ignorance and inexperience can be cured, it just takes time.

Coaches should lean on each other, talk and pass on hints and tips, share knowledge, work with each other, pass on work or hire another coach to work for or with you.

One coach in a club can only do so much; two coaches can do more, three coaches much, much more. I've had some wonderful working relationships with other coaches, and thank you to you all (you know who you are).

If fencing wants to grow, it's in the hands of the coaches and coaches should work together. So much more success to be gained both financially and competitively.

I have seen coaches work together and it's great but most coaches work alone and see the other coaches as the competition or opposition.

I am not ignorant of the difficulties; personality clashes, arguments over pupils, promoting one's own pupils over another coaches pupils, preference of one coach over another. But all this is holding the growth of fencing back and devaluing the standing of the coach.

Divided we fail, united – unlimited possibilities!

*Prof Peter Northam, Vice President.*



Made any changes in your coaching so far this year? Tried anything new? Maybe you decided to get involved in a new venture or breathe new life into old routines. Whatever it is, who have you shared your ideas and innovations with? Forget Twitter, Facebook, Snapchat or other such social media ramblings, what about actually talking face to face with another human being. Yes, it's the British Academy of Fencing AGM 2016. Believe it or not there is still a need for one-to-one human contact.

The AGM this year is taking place on Saturday 9<sup>th</sup> January 2016. Specific details and arrangements can be found in the November edition of Academy News and via the BAF website (<http://www.baf-fencing.com/news.html>) thereafter, so keep an eye open over the upcoming months. The reason for the early plug in Academy News is due to the change of venue this year. The AGM 2016 will be held at the exotic location of the Holiday Inn Birmingham M6, Junction 7. The BAF have held previous AGMs at this venue, the full address of which is Chapel Lane, Birmingham, B43 7BG. Hopefully the early notification will enable BAF members to attend the AGM and awards dinner, and to secure accommodation if needs be.

Remember, the AGM gives members a chance to ask questions, to hold the committee members to account and to take an active interest in the organisation of which they are a member. BAF awards, diplomas and certificates will be presented during the annual awards dinner, which is always a great opportunity to socialise with colleagues, meet up with old friends and to make new acquaintances. Don't be a stranger and don't let your comments, suggestions and ideas be lost in the digital ether. As I said, more details to follow shortly so keep your eyes peeled!

*Prof. Louisa Miller, Vice President*

## Letters

*From Kevin Nelson*

Having read John's article from the last newsletter, I felt that the sentiments expressed were negatively skewed. But I agree with him that most of us only become members of the BAF because of the courses and the insurance. Although now, I find that biggest advantage of being a member is the community of coaches, and the discussions we have between us. These are not just limited to sword in hand, but cover other important issues like running a fencing club, or running a fencing business. Certainly I would not now be a professional coach without the help and support of friends that I have come to know through the BAF.

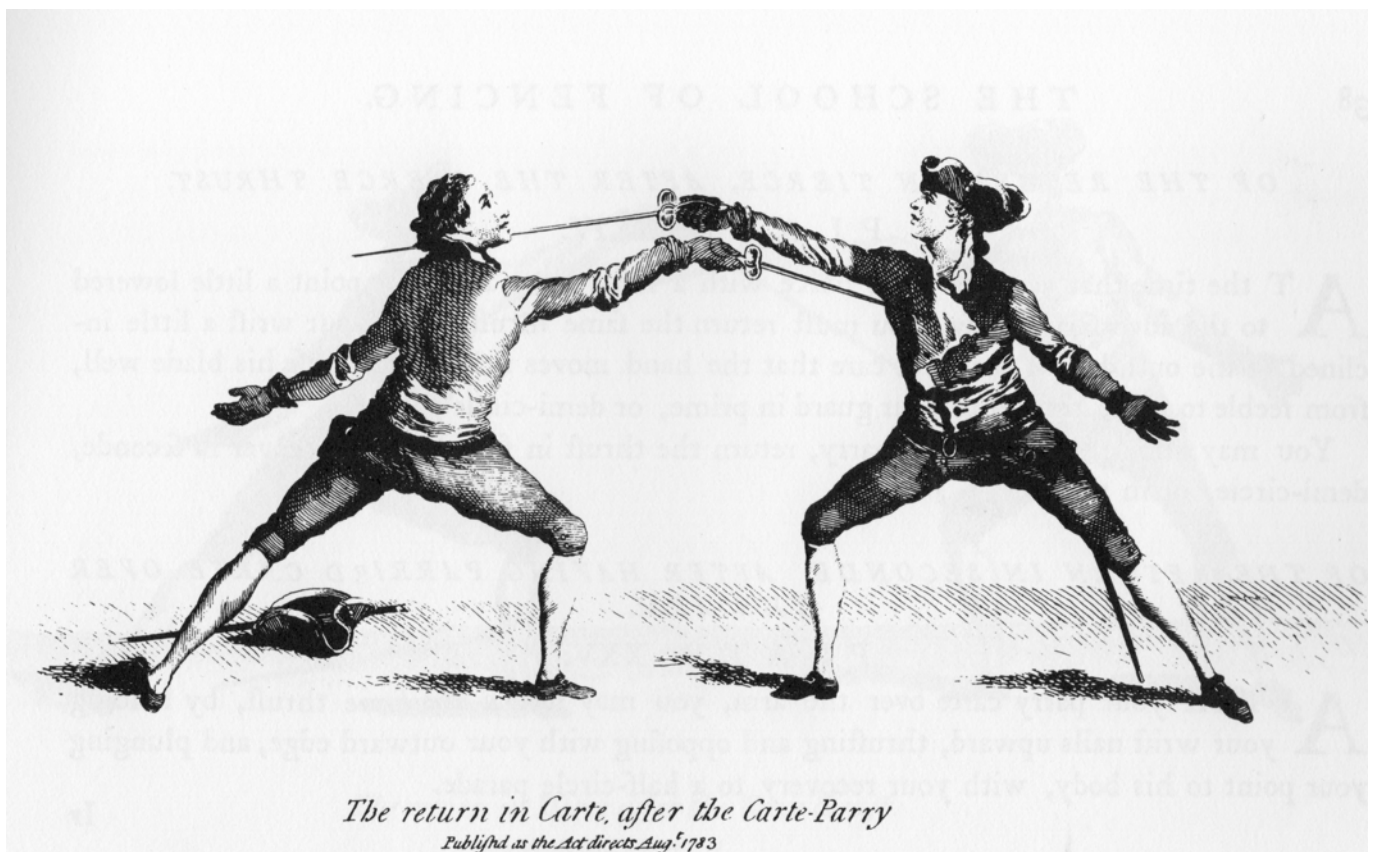
As to the difference between a supporter and a member, I feel that I am both, but that doesn't mean that I will agree with everything that the Academy does, or how it runs things. After all I am also a member of British Fencing. In a democracy you are allowed to have differences of opinion, and in fact they are encouraged. An almost fanatical devotion (with apologies to Monty Python) is more likely to be seen in a Theocracy, where the dogma has been established, and it becomes heresy to question. Healthy debate between members of, and within an organisation shows that people are passionate about what they believe in, and they care enough about our profession to try and improve it. One thing about the Academy I have disagreed with this year is the examiners/coach educators seminar that was run for level 4 and above. When I heard about the practical sessions my thoughts were, I could learn from that, why have I been excluded? New ways to teach my fencers are always welcome. When are the rest of us going to be offered a similar session? As during my times at Denstone one of most instructive parts of the organised sessions was working with a variety of coach educators, each one with a slightly different viewpoint, but all working towards the same end.

It was good to also read in the last issue the pieces from both Brett Gantry, and Phil Carson, both were thought provoking articles, and it would be good to see a greater range of members sharing their questions, experience, and knowledge within the Academy News.

Best Wishes,

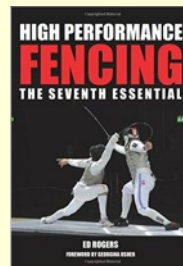
Kevin Nelson.

*Thank you, Kevin, for your interesting letter. On behalf of Academy News, I would like to endorse the sentiments expressed in your final paragraph. Let's have more contributions. Perhaps then I can avoid using the early picture of Sir Phil Space, that you can see below. Bob Merry, Editor.*



## High Performance Fencing: The Seventh Essential by Ed Rogers

- **Paperback:** 160 pages
  - **Publisher:** The Crowood Press Ltd
  - **ISBN-10:** 1847979858
  - **ISBN-13:** 978-1847979858
- Price £16.99 (also available in a Kindle edition at £11.99)



This new book by Ed Rogers takes the six essentials for a fencer described by Maître Bac H Tau – spirit, rhythm, thought, technique, tactics and strategy – and adds to them a seventh; how to prepare physically and mentally to fence.

Chapter 1 deals with **Fitness and Training**. Various exercises are introduced, followed by muscle stretching routines, as recommended by physiotherapists. These are clearly illustrated by excellent line drawings; these are superior to photographs as illustrations. Whilst exercises for their own sake are rather boring, they are a necessary route to fitness.

Next come **Strength and Conditioning**, consisting of exercises using apparatus, such as light weights or a giant rubber ball. This is weight training, but not weight lifting. Once again, clear line drawings are used for illustration.

This is followed by **Nutrition**. I was particularly pleased to see this inclusion, which is often neglected in fencing treatises. Eastern European fencing coaches once had the reputation of advising their pupils on *every* aspect of their living habits. The theoretical and practical choice of suitable diets and essential hydration are covered in this chapter.

**Talent or Hard Work?** It is claimed that 10,000 hours of deliberate hard work are necessary to produce a top fencer.

A chapter on **Sports Psychology** discusses the different types of fencer.

**Becoming a High Performance Fencer**. Detailed sample lessons for advanced fencers with a coach are presented for foil, épée and sabre.

A **Glossary** of technical terms is included.

Rarely have I read a more thoughtful account of these topics. It is also very well related to the published works cited as **References**. This is a worthy addition to the author's previous publications. The price is modest for a wealth of information which will make you think.

Highly recommended.

*Reviewed by Derek Evered*

## Olympic Trivia

In the build up to Rio 2016, here are a few facts to drop into conversations about Fencing.

For at least three countries, Fencing is their most successful sport, gaining more medals than any other sport.

Top of this list is Italy, who have competed at every Olympic Games since 1896. In total they have won 123 Fencing medals; 49 Gold, 40 Silver and 33 Bronze.

Another country to have done well is France. Again, Fencing is their most successful Olympic sport, with a total of 116 medals; 41 Gold, 41 Silver and 34 Bronze. One fencer, Christian D'Oriola, won Men's Foil Individual Gold medals at Helsinki and Melbourne and was honoured by having a stamp issued with a picture of him in a full lunge position.

Hungary have also made Fencing their number one success story, with their speciality being the Sabre. They have competed at the Olympic Games on all but two occasions; 1920 in Antwerp and 1984 in Atlanta. From 1908 to 1964 (with the exception of 1920), they won every Sabre Individual Gold medal and all but two of the team Golds. In total, they won 84 medals; 36 Gold, 22 Silver and 26 Bronze. Again, quite a few Magyar Posta postage stamps feature successful fencers.

In contrast, the Gold medal won by Ruben Limardo Gascon for Venezuela in the Men's Epée at London 2012 was only that country's second ever Gold medal, to add to a Boxing Gold won at Mexico 1968.

For the record, Great Britain's tally of medals is nine; one Gold (Gillian Sheen 1956) and eight Silvers, the latest being that of Bill Hoskyns in Tokyo 1964 (Men's Epée).

All the above statistics have been found at [www.olympic.org](http://www.olympic.org)



## WORSLEY'S WORDS

Musings from your Members' Rep.



As I sit down to write this edition of my article it's the start of August; by the time of publication it will be September. We are now over half way through the year and whilst we still have another four months before the end of the year, it's not too early to start thinking about possible candidates for Brian Pitman Memorial Award. Tony Klenczar was the last recipient of the award back in January 2013 and since then the Award has not been awarded to anyone. By mentioning the Award in this edition of the Academy News rather than in the last one of the year, it is my hope that people will have more time to think of possible candidates to put forward.

Below is an outline of the qualifying criteria for the Brian Pitman Memorial Award.

The award is awarded at the discretion of the committee to a member of the Academy who has shown particular skill or dedication to the promotion of and/or the development of fencing for young people under the age of 18, with a particular emphasis on non-performance or participation fencing. Anyone who coaches children or young people, especially in the following areas, would be strong contenders for the award.

- Young people with learning difficulties.
- Physically handicapped young people.
- Young people from deprived areas.
- Work in state schools.
- Work with voluntary organisations.

The Award is open to both professional and amateur coaches alike and, although it mentions non-performance and participation fencing in particular, please don't think that this disqualifies any potential candidates that are involved in competitive fencing. Fencing is a sport and as such there will always be a competitive element in any fencing activity, as long as the candidate being put forward is coaching or teaching in one of the above categories, they will be considered as a suitable candidate. The nominations don't have to come solely from other academy members either. The parents of fencers or fencers themselves can nominate their coaches for the award. All nominations can be sent to any member of the Committee, but they must be sent before the end of November to give the Committee time to consider the nomination and ask further question if necessary. Nominations should include the name of the candidate and a summary of why they qualify for the award.

It would be very helpful to include in the summary some details, such as the names of schools or organisations with whom the candidate has previously worked, or is involved with, along with a rough idea of dates and the duration of the candidate's involvement. For example, if the candidate is working in a deprived area then what is the name of the area? What is the name of the club they run? Or what is the name of the school or schools they work in? I'm asking for this information now, because, in previous years, some of the nominations put forward have lacked enough detail for the Committee to make an informed decision and it is sometimes difficult to get answers to the questions without arousing the nominee's suspicions. Sometimes we just don't get the answers.

Well that's it for this edition, until the next time. Hope you enjoy some peace and quiet over the summer, now the fencing season has wound down, and for those professional fencing coaches trying to make a living out there, I hope things aren't too quiet.

If you have any comments on the above or would like any more information then please get in touch.

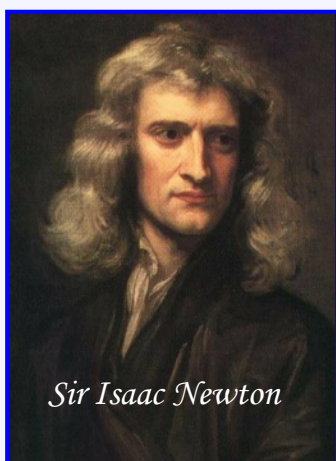
*John Worsley, Members' Representative.*

# THE BLIND PENSIONER TEST

*By Bob Merry*

When I worked as a Vision Supervisor at the studios of Granada TV, one of my colleagues would often repeat his belief that, “If you want to get on in show business, you need a gimmick!” Of course, he was basically right, insofar as that most successful “stars” made themselves memorable in some way; it could be a catchphrase (“Nice to see you, to see you...”), something about their appearance (Ken Dodd’s teeth and hair), or simply eccentric behaviour (any episode of “Top Gear”). This general principle of making something memorable can also be used as part of one’s teaching skills. Even after nearly sixty years, I have a vivid memory of one particular lesson at school about the properties of light. In our school, each of the houses had a rugby shirt of a different colour. Our physics teacher asked the class to bring their rugby shirts to his lesson and then illuminated the room with pure yellow (sodium) light. Only those colours that contained yellow could reflect this light, so many of the shirts, even the light blue of my own house, appeared black. (The same phenomenon was apparent when many of our streets were lit with sodium lighting.) Using projectors, he then showed how to mix lights of the primary colours of light, red, green and blue, to produce white. This became very important to me later, in my career at Granada, for my understanding of how colour TV works!

But what, may you ask, has this to do with the coaching of fencing? Well, it is my belief that we need to use ways in our lessons to make them memorable and interesting. This is especially important when dealing with younger pupils, who can easily lose concentration and also find it hard sometimes to remember things they have been taught from week to week. We sometimes need to find a “gimmick”. To illustrate this, I am going to take a simple beat-direct attack as an example.



*Sir Isaac Newton*

In a previous article, I called upon the ideas of Socrates to help me. In this example, I generally use the skills of that other great “fencing coach”, Sir Isaac Newton, because, for a beat to be really effective, it helps to understand Sir Isaac’s thoughts on basic physical actions; the relationships between force and acceleration, or between momentum and velocity. In beating an opponent’s blade, it is not the size of the beat that matters, but rather how we accelerate our blade from rest to the point of contact with the opposing blade. Because of this, it is difficult to make a really effective beat by using the forearm; to achieve the sort of velocity required would require too large a movement, which could be avoided by the opponent. Instead, better acceleration with a smaller action is achieved using a flick of the wrist, combined with partial pronation of the sword hand; think Indiana Jones and his whip!

Having achieved a good beating action from the pupil, we also need to consider the timing of the beat within the attack, when trying to hit with a direct thrust. The image I would use here is one derived from the cinema and, in particular, Westerns. Somewhere in most Westerns, there would be a scene when someone strides into the saloon, through a pair of swing doors. The idea, of course, is to push those doors open and be through them before they swing back. Whether wearing the black hat or the white one, villain or hero, the gunman loses a lot of credibility if they push the doors too early and they swing back into their face. The beat-direct attack has similarities to this scenario, as the natural reaction to a beat is for the opponent to parry. The object of the beat should be to make this parry less effective, by effectively slowing it down. The beat is made just before the parry would normally happen, moving the opponent’s weapon the wrong way and, by the time they have recovered from this, the hit has got through.

I normally start by getting my pupil to hit me with a beat-direct at riposte distance. If they perform the beat correctly and combine the wrist action with a *forward* movement of the sword arm (a good image to visualise here would be a gymnast using a springboard to vault over a “horse”), I can show that it is virtually impossible for me to parry this action. I then extend the distance by a step and instruct the pupil, “Step and *then* beat-direct”. If they beat before stepping, I would parry the attack. To emphasise the point, I use the simple slogan, “Feet before Beat”. Having established the principle, the distance is extended to lunging distance.

Once I am reasonably happy that the pupil is performing the action well, I confirm the pupil’s ability by using the test referred to in the title of this article. Please note, however, that I *am* a pensioner and can use this, but you may need to find a suitable description of yourself if you do something similar. I would say to my pupil that we are going to use the “Blind Pensioner Test”. I explain that I wish them to hit me with a beat-direct attack, but that I am going to try to parry it. However, in order that they can’t accuse me of cheating, because I know what is going to happen, I will close my eyes, so my parry will be a direct response to feeling the beat; I will be the “Blind

Pensioner". (A word of warning here; only do this with pupils you trust not to take advantage of your "blindness" by, for example, wandering off to get a drink!) When the pupil beats your blade, you respond immediately with a fast parry of quarte. If the pupil beats too early, you will be able to parry and can tell them why. When they beat at the right time, they will hit you and earn a word of praise. Of course, when summing up the lesson with the pupil, you can point out, "What kind of a fencer would you be, if you couldn't beat a blind pensioner?"

The whole point of using a "gimmick" like this is to make it memorable. In future lessons, when using beats, one has only to use the words "blind pensioner" to remind your pupil to get the timing right. I'm sure many of you have your own examples of imagery you use to enhance the quality of your lessons and make your pupils remember the points you are trying to put across. Why not share a few with your fellow coaches, through the pages of Academy News. You could write a full article, or simply confine it to a paragraph or two that could be combined into an item with contributions from other coaches (give the Editor more work to do!). Let's try to do what the Academy should be about and help each other to become more effective coaches.

## WHAT MAKES A GOOD FENCING MASTER?

*Some thoughts from Prof. Z. Czajkowski*

*"Every great coach walks his own way."* Nicolai Ozolin

When considering the qualities of a fencing master, I shall state that a very good and efficacious fencing master, who deserves recognition, respect and gratitude, is the one who fulfills the following criteria.



1. He loves fencing in himself and not himself in fencing.
2. He applies cooperative and friendly style of leadership.
3. His pupils achieve high results in competitions.
4. He positively influences his pupils, educates them, develops their personality, self-confidence etc.
5. He influences and teaches his pupils not only by what he says, but also by what he does (punctuality, enthusiasm in work, empathy etc.).
6. The good fencing master provides sport enjoyment based on all aspects of theory and practice. Sport enjoyment is due to intrinsic and extrinsic factors; factors connected and not connected with achievements.
7. The great fencing master tries to develop fencing: knowledge of psychology, physiology, sport science, theory of training, sociology etc. He tries to find new methods and new solutions. He takes part in various conferences, courses, seminars and workshops, observes carefully the competitions and conducts certain tests. He writes articles and books on fencing.
8. The outstanding fencing master not only produces champion competitors, but educates younger coaches (it never ceases to astonish me when I meet an experienced fencing master, who produced many top class competitors, but did not educate a single good young coach).

It is perhaps less important whether a great fencing master cultivates all three weapons, or only one. Just the same, I believe that it is much better to be many-sided, versatile and to teach all three weapons. Too narrow specialization may lead to strict routine and "ossification" of views, ideas, forms, methods and programming, and ways of conducting exercises. Great master Miyamoto Musashi in his famous: "The Book of Five Rings" (year 1645) wrote: "He, who knows only one weapon, is not a fencer". This is perhaps a slight exaggeration, but makes one think.

Some years ago, many top fencers achieved good results in all three weapons. Nowadays it is rather impossible because of the greatly increased number of fencers all over the world, changes of rules (weapons are more differentiated now), and the greatly increased number of international competitions. But this does not prevent a coach from loving, knowing and teaching all three weapons.

To those who read this, I would say:

1. Such theory is good which brings good results in practice. I have trained competitors in all weapons with very good results.
2. As Walter Lipman cleverly remarked: "Nobody thinks really, when everybody thinks the same".

Zbigniew Czajkowski

*(This article has been adapted from a previous contribution to "The Swordmaster")*

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