

British Academy of Fencing **ACADEMY NEWS**

**May 2018
Issue 95**

"Run by coaches for coaches"



A NOVELTY

EDITORIAL

This edition of Academy News is a bit of a novelty in a number of ways, particularly for me, as Editor.

Firstly, over 90% of the material reached me by the deadline date, without any chasing up on my part. In my time as Editor (over 11 years), I cannot remember anything similar.

Secondly, a larger proportion of contributions than normal came from members and others who are first-time contributors to Academy News; a very welcome trend.

Finally, and this is also another new phenomenon to me, there was a surplus of material to choose from; Coaches' Corner has been particularly popular this time. For once, no having to contact regular contributors for a last minute article, nor having to write a lot myself (apart from this Editorial). Some items have had to be omitted, or held over for future use, and I apologise to anyone who is disappointed not to see their efforts in print this time. Please do not let it put you off sending me more items for future use.

My thanks go out to all those who have made the task of producing this edition of Academy News so much easier. I hope that this will become less of a novelty and more of a norm. Academy News does not have any regular journalists or photographers to call upon, so it relies very heavily on members for items of interest. It is a channel of communication within the Academy, but is not there simply for the Committee's use, to tell the membership their thoughts; it is also a vehicle for all the membership to share ideas, as suggested by Nick Chapman, in his letter on page 7.

It is also helpful at this point to draw your attention to another innovation. If you refer to the details of committee members on page 3, you will find that they now have new "official" email addresses, ending in @baf-fencing.com. These should be easier for members to remember, should they wish to contact a committee member. Of course, if you are used to contacting one of us on a familiar email address, don't worry; they will still work, but you may find that using these new addresses will prevent your query being lost among all the other email traffic.



A busy course at Ashby-de-la-Zouch (see page 5)

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Contributions by June 10th,
please.

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BAF/BFA Relationships

Following a meeting with British Fencing (Georgina Usher, CEO and Steve Kemp, Coaching Development Officer) and ourselves (Prof Peter Northam and Prof Liam Harrington) we have agreed on a Statement of Intent. The two-hour meeting was cordial, pleasant and informative. We look forward to further meetings.

Statement of Intent

Following on from a meeting on 15th January 2018, BF and BAF representatives committed to working together in order that BAF regain recognised body status:

It was agreed that the following activities will be undertaken by representatives of both organisations as part of regaining this status

1. Continue registering coaches working in the UK on the BF Coaches Register
2. Align approach on Safeguarding Policies and Procedures (including Safeguarding reporting frameworks)
3. Clarify responsibilities and respective coverage around Insurance framework

In addition to the above, the organisations will also have ongoing dialogues with regards to working together on:

1. Sector Qualification & Accreditation in light of the expected new cross sport professional coaching standards(CIMSPA).
2. Addressing poor practice concerns

Prof Peter Northam

President, British Academy of Fencing.

Prof Liam Harrington gives a fuller explanation of 'Recognised Body Status'.

We're using the phrase "Recognised Body Status" as opposed to "Associate Body Status", because "Associate Body Status" is a more formal status (e.g. the status a home country or a region might have) and could require the BAF to abide by some governance regulations with which we might not be comfortable at the moment. The BAF could perhaps look at formal "Associate Body Status" later, once it has had a chance to review the regulations in England, Scotland etc.

Calling us a Recognised Body, is more informal, indicates that we are happy to cooperate with British Fencing, but leaves the BAF a greater level of independence and flexibility. It is in fact the relationship we had with British Fencing under our previous status as an Associate body.

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USEFUL INFORMATION**ACADEMY
WEB SITE**

**FOR ALL THE LATEST
INFORMATION GO TO THE
ACADEMY WEB SITE AT
WWW.BAF-FENCING.COM**

**EXAMINATION
FEES**

Level 1 Assessment £11.00

Level 2 to Diploma £21.00 (**£26.00**)

These are for "normal" exams - for
Special exams, consult the Course
Officer. Figures in **RED** are for
non-BAF members

**PROFICIENCY
AWARDS**

The current rates for awards are:

BAF Members:

1 - 4 Awards £3.70 each
5 - 9 Awards £3.60 each
10+ Awards £3.40 each

Approved non-Academy Coaches:

1 - 4 Awards **£4.70** each
5 - 9 Awards **£4.10** each
10+ Awards **£3.90** each

A5 Study Guides:

1 - 4 £2.65 (**£2.90**) each (incl. p&p)
5+ £2.30 (**£2.65**) each

A4 Syllabus leaflets:

Free with Study Guide, otherwise 60p
(**70p**) each.

A3 Sized Wallcharts:

65p (**75p**) each
Figures in **RED** are for non-BAF
members

DOCUMENTATION

The following documentation is available from Jackie Redikin (for contact details, see left)

Key Teaching Points Foil	} £7.35 (£9.45) each
Key Teaching Points Epée		
Key Teaching Points Sabre		
Key Coaching Points Foil		
Key Coaching Points Epée		
Key Coaching Points Sabre		

Glossary of Terms (including Translation of Fencing Terms).....**£7.35 (£9.45)**

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

Teaching/ Coaching Tactics (2nd Edition).....**£16.80 (£21)**

CD-Rom Issue 6.1 – this contains all the syllabuses and current questions for BAF
examinations, as well as other examination material.....**£10.00 ****

Examples of past written Papers – for the Advanced and Diploma examinations - **FREE** -
apply to Course Officer

All prices include p & p. Figures in **RED** are for non-BAF members

** Price of CD-ROM includes lifetime replacement guarantee - only buy once!

**The Compendium containing all major Documentation, including the ones above, plus
more relating to examinations, is currently under revision For further details contact
Professor Isobel Bruce Combes (iacombes@btinternet.com)**

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THE PRESIDENT WRITES.....



From the conversations I have had with some members, the last Academy News has been greeted with some enthusiasm;; 'a breath of fresh air', 'a more positive direction' are some of the comments. This edition is even better! It is the membership that makes the Academy News what it is; letters, articles, coaching questions, in fact anything fencing related is always welcome.

Having now had only one committee meeting so far and another that will happen by the time you read this edition, it is clear that there is an enormous amount of work to do. The committee is prioritising its action plan but on the face of it, we will not cover everything in one year.

One of our top priorities is to get all our members on the British Fencing Coach Register, this is the only way we will regain 'Recognised Body Status'. By us all being on the Register, we will be regarded as a 'safe' coaching organisation. I am now a member of British Fencing, have completed a DBS check and attended a 'Safeguarding and Protecting Children' course. I would strongly urge you all to do the same.

The Practical Coaching Days that we have been running will end with a London event, after which there will be an evaluation process to go through, to decide where we go next. I am extremely grateful for those Masters who have turned out to make these sessions work. Whilst they have been of a general, non-specific nature, it would be great to see them turn into serious coach development, this means working on individual lessons, exam questions, special lessons etc.

Denstone is coming ever closer, that time when coaches spend a week of intensive training with the potential of passing an exam. This is the time, for Advanced and Diploma candidates especially, to work towards qualifications. Don't think that Levels 2 and 3 are small awards; the better trained you are at these levels, the easier it will be for Levels 4 and 5. This course is residential. However, day visitors are welcome; just make sure to book in advance!

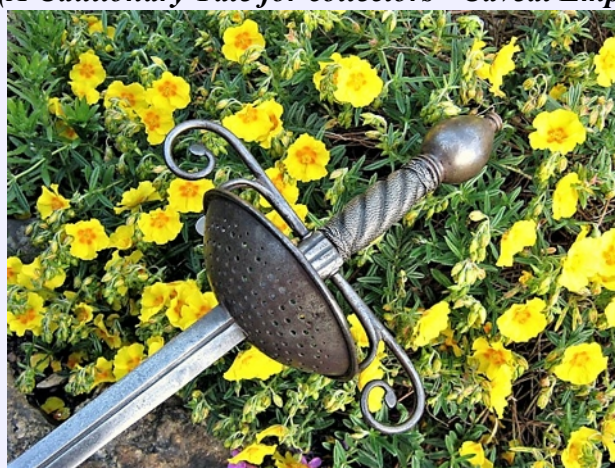
Thank you to all who have spoken to me or emailed me with suggestions of how we can make the Academy more relevant and successful. These will be added to those the Committee have.

If there is one piece of advice I can give you to guarantee success it's this, enjoy your coaching!

Prof Peter Northam, President, British Academy of Fencing.

FROM THE COLLECTION OF PORTHOS

(A Cautionary Tale for collectors - Caveat Emptor)



Further to my last photo of a 17th century English duelling sword, here is a similar weapon. The principal difference is that this one is a fake, a copy. Copies are not uncommon, but usually one can pick them out. I know for certain that this one is a fake, because I made it in the late '80s. I admit to buying the 35" blade and having some help with the grip - I can't make the 'Turks Head' bindings. The rest I made over a period of weeks. It was 'aged' by leaving the steel parts in my garden for a few weeks, before final surface preparation and assembly. All other swords I've contributed were genuine!

Porthos

erratum : my previous rapier weighs 1¾ pounds, not 4 pounds.

REFLECTIONS ON THE RECENT COURSE HELD AT ASHBY-DE-LA-ZOUCH

(Being two "customer" reviews)

I arrived not quite knowing what to expect, having signed up to the event as a prospective coach!

The morning opened with a briefing to all fencers and coaches, referencing recent interpretations to the Rules of Fencing with regard to the refereeing of contests and in particular about how to interpret "Right of Way", now to be known as "Priority"! The presentation was accompanied by very useful hand-out to help us all advise our colleagues and pupils accordingly.

This was followed by an encouraging warm up routine of footwork with weapon in hand. I found this to be particularly helpful and a good way with which to round off any prior warm up activities.

We were encouraged, as coaches, to deliver a coaching to one of our "Fencing" partners, and to break it down into simple, easy to understand, steps. Whilst focusing on the importance of accurate technique, we were to bear in mind the idea that, "if it works for the pupil, do not over coach", to the point of undermining their success and self-confidence.

A view that I found to be most encouraging and applaud.

Later in the day, the coaches were encouraged to present a lesson that was at level above their qualification level and out of their comfort zone. A demanding challenge which was well received by one and all.

At the very "close of play" I was surprised to be asked to present myself for scrutiny as to my suitability to be awarded a Level One coaching award. I had not prepared for this!

Sufficient to say that at the conclusion of the evaluation I was both flattered, and no end pleased, to be awarded the status of Coach.

In every way it was a very good, informative, and rewarding experience, and one that I will be very happy to repeat.

Yours sincerely,

Robin



A training day was arranged by Tamia John for all standards of coach and all weapons on 24th February.

Thirty-two people turned up, about twenty coaches, plus others for general practice work.

I hadn't been to such an event for about twelve years and so wasn't too sure it was for me, or what to expect, but felt it was important to go and support. No specific requests were made for the aim of the day or our needs. To start with, there was an excellent footwork session after which, I settled into a simple easy routine lesson with a pupil, so didn't gain much early on. However, six Masters turned up and their enthusiasm, support and encouragement changed my attitude and aims. They gave realistic demonstrations, explained rule changes and what they meant to us, and excited us with possibilities at all three weapons.

They came around each group or pair spending whatever time was necessary to improve our skills, challenging us on to higher levels of competence. We worked harder set ourselves goals, improved in our abilities.

All too soon it was over. The end of an enjoyable and successful day, which had been fun. And the Masters (and Mistress) gave so freely of their time to encourage us.

Everyone left with a smile on their face, if not a spring in their step (they were too tired for that!) and a desire for more.

So when's the next one?

USING THE PROFICIENCY AWARDS

For about ten years after taking my Basic Coaching Certificate, I used the British Fencing Award scheme. I wasn't a member of the Academy at first and it seemed a useful way to encourage beginners in schools and clubs. They could get their first badge quite quickly, and then easily go on to the next. The trouble was, there were so many levels at each weapon that some pupils (younger and older) got tired of taking them. For others, it was almost like "collecting bus tickets".

Obviously, keeping students interested is down to the coach, but when badge collecting is seen as the main aim of their lesson, others may drop out.



It was a Master who asked me why I wasn't using the BAF system, which made me think about the method. The only other sports I'm aware of (although there may be more) that use lots of different level awards are judo and karate. They use that system to grade pupils who have to fight their own equal in competition to gain higher grades. We do not.

About this time, our county council sports development department decided to promote sport in schools by running a scheme called Going for Gold. Each child who took part had to reach a certain standard in six sports to gain their bronze, silver or gold award. It excited so many to join, that the after-school sessions all over the area were oversubscribed. At the end of the year an awards ceremony was held, where a well-known Olympic Medallist made the presentations. The young people were over the moon to receive the awards they'd achieved. Everyone understood exactly what level everyone else had reached by the award they received. It was so simple, yet good.

It struck me that the bronze, silver and gold award system run by the Academy was much more user friendly and obvious for our sport. With only three levels, clearly defined, pupils know where they are and what they have to do to attain the next level.

The coach can structure the lesson to suit the needs of a class, whilst during it encouraging individuals to improve on an action to pass their next test. So everyone benefits from the class. This still leaves opportunity for a separate individual lesson later, if the pupil needs it.

I changed to the BAF system for all my classes and felt everyone was happier. There is a simpler progression, and students can learn at their own pace, yet know they're always improving. They appear prouder of what they've achieved.

The study guides provided for all three weapons are progressive and well thought out. Each move is clearly described with space for the coach to confirm when the pupil reaches the required standard. It also includes the theory test. There's a glossary of common fencing terms at the back.

These guides can also be used by those wishing to take fencing as part of their Duke of Edinburgh's Award.

Having tried both systems I'm much happier using our BAF one. The members of our club know what they've achieved and what they're aiming for, using well laid out details. They are proud owners of their bronze, silver and gold awards. It's a good well organised scheme and I'd recommend anyone to give it a try.

Hook your pupils with it!

Vlad.

NEWS IN BRIEF

INTERNATIONAL SUCCESS

Congratulations to Prof. Miguel Rodriguez Medina and his pupil Elvira Mattensson, who won a Bronze medal in the Women's Épée at the European Junior Championships in Sochi.

Elvira has been Miguel's pupil since 2010. In expressing his pride in her achievement, Miguel also paid tribute to the training and help he had received from the his friends in the Academy (not forgetting the assistance and support from his late Mami). "You made this possible!", says Miguel

Elvira later went on to achieve a commendable twelfth place at the World Junior Championships.



Three generations of Fencing Masters, with William Gallimore-Tallen, Lewis McIntyre, Philip Bruce, Leonard Hill, Andrew Norris, Scott McMenemy and Sam Smith

Leonard Hill: "It makes me so proud and it celebrates one of the British Academy of Fencing's greatest achievements - that this group of young fencing coaches should take (and pass with truly magnificent. Marks) the Academy's Diploma Examination at all three weapons."

Letters

From Nick Chapman

Dear Editor

I recently attended my first Academy AGM. Among the topics of conversation was the nature of coaching and the extent to which the training offered by the Academy covers its many and diverse elements. To summarise if I may, coaching is far more than just 'blade wagging'. Whilst this position attracted little argument, more opinions were voiced about its significance and how, or if, the academy should adapt its offering. There were those who felt we should broaden our approach to include, or at least acknowledge, other aspects of modern coaching such as psychology, nutrition, strength and conditioning and there were those who made the point that we should play to our strengths and delegate these other roles to those with expertise (and qualifications). Whilst not expressing an opinion one way or the other, I wonder instead if there is some grey area in between.

I believe that there is a vast coaching knowledge present within the membership which does not relate to blade wagging skills, or at very least, that relates to skills that fall beyond the scope of the current examination structure, and yet does not stray into the clearly defined areas of expertise of less sport specific sport sciences. Because such knowledge is not required to further the individuals' exam progression the academy has not found a voice with which to articulate it (or possibly has not felt a need to) and as a result much of this wealth of experience is not shared. It may be that ideas are exchanged within local coaching circles, but my fear is that as we all work so disparately, that these ideas are not well travelled.

One example of this type of knowledge is the games we play. Many of you will recognise that if fencers simply spar with each other they have a tendency to 'do what they always do', they become better at their favourite moves and, I might suggest as a result, become increasingly one dimensional in their fencing. Many of us tackle this by setting specific goals or targets for the evenings fencing, either for the group or the individual. Some of us will tackle it by changing the rules, creating a game, the rules of which will emphasise or reward a specific element or tactic. Those games form a useful element of coaching our sport, entertaining and educating our pupils, an element that is not going to form part of our next exam, but is sufficiently specific to our sport as to not fall under the remit of the team of sport scientist that the lucky among us may work within.

Back in November, I attended Prof Northam's training day in Birmingham. Rather than working to an exam syllabus he presented a very experienced, well qualified and approachable staff, who could take the training in whatever direction those attending wanted it to go. I found the approach of not having a pre-determined exam related syllabus, but instead offering flexibility, to be an effective strategy for fostering more general coaching skills. There were plenty of useful opportunities to ask questions, and discuss the process of coaching rather than the specifics of passing the next exam. I suggest that this training offers a template of one possible way of spreading the knowledge, and I am heartened to see a second instalment being offered. I would not advocate this as a replacement for the more formal exam based training that the Academy provides, but rather as one useful extension to the Academy's offering. Broadening our offering without compromising the quality of the core can only enhance our reputation, improve our relevance and in so doing reinforce (or rebuild) our place within the sport.

Whilst at this training, I had a conversation with a Professor whom I had not previously met. I was picking his brain for ideas and explaining things I already do. His response to one of my offerings was that he hadn't tried that, but liked it, and might in future. This gave me pause for thought. I am not a professor (nor am I currently likely to become one) but I have been in the game a long time. I have been reasonably successful and therefore have gained a fair amount of experience. If I can come up with ideas that are fresh and interesting to professors then there is a fair chance that those ideas might be of use to other members. Further, and perhaps more importantly, if I have this kind of knowledge then others must also have ideas or insights of equal, if not greater, value.

These may be simple ideas, and not in themselves worthy of time on training days but they may none the less be useful. If useful they are worthy of a little space here in this publication. Academy News has the potential to be far more than a list of, who has asked to join, passed exams, been elected or died. These are all important, but none of them improve our coaching; let's make the Academy News into a talking shop for coaches, not just committee members. Let's hear about new ideas and old, let's talk about coaching rather than coaches. Let's make the Academy News another tool for raising coaching standards and in so doing add to the value and relevance of the Academy, and Academy membership.

So my challenge to you the members and the associates is to have the courage of your convictions, to put pen to paper. If your ideas are worthy of your pupils time they are certainly worth sharing with your colleagues. Let's all help each other to become better at passing on the passion.

Nick Chapman.

(Thank you, Nick, for your interesting letter and can I emphasise that Academy News has long been seeking ideas from all of the membership. When received, they have been published. Nick also shared an idea on how to concentrate on specific aspects of a fight, such as a DE, within the time constraints of a training session. We expect to use this in a future edition and welcome any similar ideas. Editor)

ERR.....WHAT WAS THE QUESTION AGAIN ?

Or thoughts on preparing notes for future use.

When I stand there in front of an exam board, my mind always goes blank. I can never remember what I was supposed to be doing. I regularly answer the compulsories piecemeal, with the board helpfully reading them out to me as we go along. But even when I have an answer, there is no point in it unless it has a practical purpose, and I can use it back at club. Often I find that I have a closed answer to a question, which is great to start with, but, without the exercise able to evolve, it gets put to one side and forgotten. Over the Years, I've used a number of techniques to help me remember and record what I am supposed to be doing, with varying levels of success. I've listed a few below.

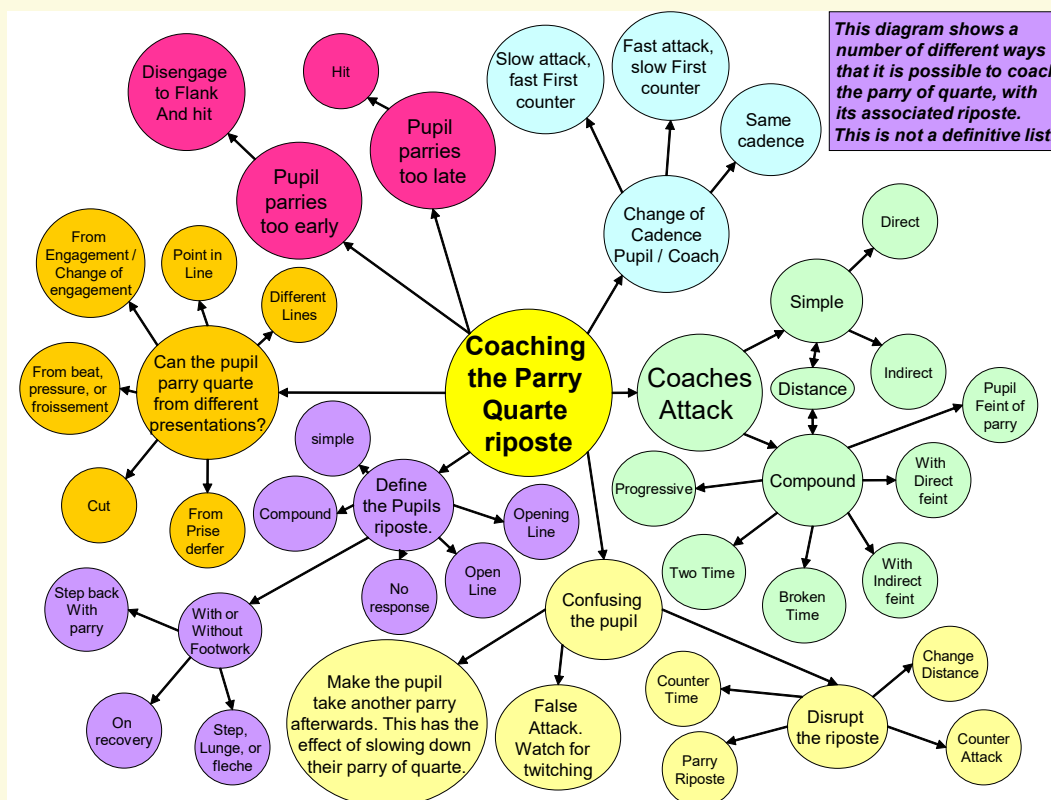
Writing it down If I have a plan about how to answer the question, I first test it, and then write it down several times. This is a good quick fix for me, but tends to produce a lesson that looks more like stage fencing than real fencing. Also I've forgotten it by the following day; it does leave me with something I can use, but evolution is an issue, because the pathways are fixed, and it hasn't developed my understanding of what I am trying to do.

Flash Cards I have a similar problem with flash cards, after all they are just writing it down.

Flowcharts I like flowcharts but for me they tend to produce a closed lesson. I also have to remember them. So while they work very well within documentation where you require a closed solution, they don't actually survive kinaesthetic use.

Practice There is no substitute for this. But most of us don't have the time or a willing training partner. After all, there is only so many times that you can get a paying customer to go through the same exercise while you are perfecting it.

Spider Diagrams My current preference is for spider diagrams which tend to be open ended, usually going out of control with the number of potential options. But it gives me a clearer thought process about where I can take a simple exercise with pupils of differing ability. Below is an example for parrying quarte.



Does anyone else have any thoughts on how to record what we learn from courses, enabling us to apply and develop our learning into practical useful exercises, that improve our understanding?

Kevin Nelson.

STEFAN SPEAKS

The thought of your Members' Rep.



Congratulations: You have chosen Fighter

It was about eleven o'clock in the morning, mid-October, with the sun not shining and a look of hard, wet rain in the clearness of the foothills, the last time I arrived at Denstone. I knew what to expect as I had been several times before, but, maybe this summer will be your first time.

You will not have received your invitation by owl, as you have chosen Fighter not Wizard. We thought we would move into the digital age plus we heard rumours of what animal activist groups are planning for the Wizards!

For you, Leon Paul, or Ullman Allstar etc stand in for 'Madam Malkin's Robes for all Occasions', or 'Twilfitt & Tattings' as well as 'Ollivanders' in Daigon alley. You will have chosen your equipment with care and budget in mind, as full coaching kit and swords are as essential as any wizard's robes and wand.

As you climb the steep hill, with woodlands at the bottom, it will not be until you reach the start of the formal drive that you will be confronted with the majestic Victorian Gothic school known as Denstone.

With architecture designed to inspire the education and imagination of those attending, the great East Chapel with its huge stained-glass windows balancing the bulk of the banqueting hall on the west, both flanked by spires and rambling towers.

On arrival you will report to the drill hall, which you will find next to the cricket pavilion, which believe it or not is next to the cricket pitch which echoes with the sounds of leather on willow.

There is no sorting hat; however, there is the course officer who will enquire as to the weapon you wish to study this time Sabre, Foil, Slither.... Oops, I mean Epée, and at which level.

Your room will not be hung with sumptuous velvet drapes surrounding a four poster, it will be a basic spartan room, for you have chosen fighter not wizard.

Should we not have en suite bathrooms during this visit, do not worry; the communal bathrooms are not haunted, that's just a rumour put about by the wizards.

The canteen does have a big vaulted ceiling, towering brick walls complete with life size portraits of previous headmasters (spookily their eyes do follow you around the room). Sadly, no floating chandeliers. The food is no wizards' grand feast with tables groaning under the weight. However, the canteen cooks pay close attention to nutritional content and wholesomeness, so you are unlikely to go hungry. But, if you are a very fussy eater, it might be an idea to bring a microwaveable meal, just in case one day nothing appeals to you.

Whilst Pete Northam has a far neater and better looking beard than Dumbledore, he also holds the belief that "Help will always be given at Denstone to those who ask for it."

I shall leave it to you to tell me who the two other professors Andy Vincent & Pete Cormack remind you of.

Equipment List: (also known as things you should bring)

- ~ Lots and lots of t-shirts (although a washing machine has been available sometimes)
- ~ Full coaching kit
- ~ Weapons and spares (this means fencing sporting sabres, foils, épées; NOT broadswords, nerve agents, tactical nukes etc)
- ~ Ideally, if you can, bring one each of the other swords also, in case you are being a pupil on exam day.
- ~ Fencing whites, if you have them, for exam day, whether you are taking an exam, or just acting as a pupil for those who are.
- ~ Nice smart casual outfit for the dinner on Friday night.
- ~ Snacks in general (biscuits, crisps etc). To help you decide what to bring there is a microwave, kettle and a fridge in the kitchen area.
- ~ Food and beverage supplies can be found at -
- ~ Tesco's in Uttoxeter 15 mins drive
- ~ Chip shop and Spar shop in Rocester 5 minutes drive
- ~ Pub 1 mile down the hill, feels like 5 miles up the hill on the way back!
- ~ Beverage of your choice for evenings in the common room.
- ~ Key Teaching Points and Key Coaching Points guides and a set of FIE rules if you have them.
- ~ Towels, maybe 2 or 3, so one can be drying. For you are a stinky Fighter.

Now your adventure begins...

Stefan Leponis,

(with apologies to J.K.Rowling)

COACHES' CORNER - 1

Dear Coaches' Corner,

I am looking for some advice or suggestions with regards to a fencer I coach who has suffered quite a knock in their confidence recently. I have tried to be supportive and positive for them, but this seems to have had negligible effect. Any help would be greatly appreciated.

Dear Coach,

Firstly, can I say you are not alone. I am sure every coach has been faced with a fencer who, for whatever reason, is having a hard time, can't seem to win, is down in the dumps and so on.

Unfortunately, there is no miracle cure, no quick fix and no words that will put things right immediately. We are dealing with human beings and the very small branch of which have decided for whatever reason to become fencers. We are a strange bunch to figure out at the best of times.

A loss of confidence may occur for any number of reasons. You may never be able to find out the actual cause, nor might you have the time to go looking.

A fencer who is fencing well, winning and developing is unlikely to suffer from confidence related issues. Fencers who are not fencing well, on a losing streak and are struggling to improve are prime candidates for 'dark clouds' to appear.

The following are some exercises to try with your fencer. However, what may work for one fencer might not work for another. The difficulty is to find what does work for an individual. This is what coaching is all about, finding the right solution at the right time.

Exercise 1 – Positive reinforcement

Instead of telling the fencer what they should not do, tell them what they should do. For example, rather than telling a pupil that they are attacking with a bent arm (negative reinforcement), remind them to straighten their arm before they attack (positive reinforcement). Instead of saying you are fencing too close, tell them to stay further away from their opponent. Leave your pupil with things to do and be careful not to make the list too long. Keep it short and simple.

Exercise 2 – Build confidence

Try to establish consistency in training. By getting the pupil to repeat simple exercises eg blade/footwork combinations it may be possible to improve the pupil's confidence in being able to replicate the success at the next training session.

Exercise 3 – Negative emotions

Negative emotions can adversely affect performance. Allowing a fencer to dwell on bad performances and experiences can lead to a habit of negative thinking. The pupil should be encouraged towards positive thinking and to feel confident about themselves. Get your pupil to imagine the feeling of being successful. You are looking for the habit of thinking positive to become dominant. The greater the sense of positiveness the more their performance will improve.

Positivity also develops from becoming more proficient in the sport and being able to perform fencing movements proficiently. Fencers benefit more from a coach who praises their abilities than one who hurts their self-esteem. This feeling of success will build a pupil's self-esteem, increase their chances of continuing in the sport and improve their chances of success. It is important though to be honest with the pupil. Individuals will quickly see through false praise that is not deserved and then they will start not to respect the opinion of the coach.

Exercise 4 – Relaxation

Try to develop a sense of humour in your training. Don't treat everything too seriously. A fencer who is afraid of making mistakes is in fact more likely to make them. Humour and fun can be good mechanisms to getting a pupil to relax. Rather than telling a fencer to relax or calm down, try telling them a joke. The act of laughing relaxes the body, aids digestion and improves circulation.

Exercise 5 – Motivational phrase

Create a positive word or short phrase that the fencer can say to them self whenever they have feelings of doubt. The word or phrase can help bring them out of negative thought patterns and remind them that they are capable and strong.

Exercise 6 – Selection of training partner

Find a training partner who can help remind them of their abilities. A good training partner who understands the sport and can support and increase your pupil's spirits when their confidence is falling. Work together as a team or a group rather than as a number of individual fencers.

Exercise 7 – Historical evidence

Use previously successful fights and results to promote positivity and remind the pupil of the fact that they have achieved, have been able to win and can do.

In summary, no miracle cure; if there was it would be bottled. There are many books, courses and instructional videos on the subject. Patience is required to find the system that works for you and your pupil. I hope this has provided some ideas.

COACHES' CORNER - 2

Q. I am currently looking to progress my coaching qualifications but there is no fencing master close by to whom I can go to for advice on what I need to work on or am doing wrong. Please can you offer some help.

A. First you should ensure that you are in the possession of the latest set of the coaching examinations questions (Issue 6.1) and have the key teaching/key coaching documents for reference. If you are missing either of these please contact courseofficer@baf-fencing.com

The routes undertaken by most coaches is to either find a master, or highly qualified coach, and to undertake coach education instruction under their guidance, or to attend a coach education course or workshop. There is also the option of attending the annual residential course run by the Academy. Here a longer training period with fencing masters is available, together with the opportunity to mix with other coaches. We appreciate that these, for many reasons, may not always be practicable or possible.

Recently we were asked to review video footage of a coach giving lessons and to comment upon their technique and lesson structure. Written feedback was provided to the coach making with reference to appropriate points in the video. It was important for the coach set place the lesson in context with a brief written summary including the topic for the lesson, the standard being aimed at, the focus of the lesson (technique, timing, distance, cadence, competitive, tactical) and any particular aspect they were seeking feedback on. There are drawbacks to this method including the quality of the video/sound, restricted viewing angle etc, but there are benefits to if there are no other means of gauging whether you are on the right lines with a lesson.

Others have asked for comments on lesson plans and approaches to answering certain questions. Again this was provided. However, just because a lesson plan is correct and well written, it does not immediately follow that it will be interpreted and delivered correctly. Ultimately, it is the sword in hand part that really matters and how well the coach delivers the lesson and interacts with their pupil.

In summary, we are happy and willing to provide assistance in many forms. No question is too daft. All requests for help will be answered.

If you would like feedback on lesson plans, approaches to answering the questions or have video footage you would like reviewing please contact membersrep@baf-fencing.com in the first instance. Stefan will collate requests, pass them on to the appropriate person and ensure you get a reply. Please note that we will only comment upon your lesson and not that given by other coaches you may have filmed. You should also get the permission of your pupil to record them receiving a lesson.

RECOMMENDED RATES OF PAY

The committee have been contacted by a member seeking guidance on recommended rates of pay for coaching.

The Academy did use to publish a recommend rates of pay for coaching. However, I understand this was discontinued following several complaints from members. The rates were published in the Academy News and were thus in the public domain. The rates came to the attention of a number of employers who had been paying their coaches at a higher rate than published recommended rate and thus sought to reduce the rate of pay of their coaches.

After much research it was found that rates of pay varied considerably across the country as did the coaching services being provided.

There are many points to consider that will affect the amount being charged, such as:

- Individual or group tuition
- One-off booking or regular booking
- Duration of session and down (non-productive) time between sessions
- Travelling time and distance to booking and then between bookings
- Parking costs
- Additional hire of fencing kit/equipment and wear and tear
- Minimum fee to turn up with an agreed hourly rate
- Some organisations have agreed coaching fees across all sports with no room for individual negotiation
- Are you classed as self employed or are you an employee?
- Venue fee extra or payable by others
- Wear and tear on kit
- Breakages extra or included
- Do you charge a block fee or charge per individual attending?
- Are assistants required and do they need paying?
- Payment available in advance or after invoicing upon completion of the course, i.e. how long do you have to wait to get your money?
- How productive are you able to be?
- Is there a possibility to supplement income by running proficiency awards or selling kit?

In summary, the rate that you can charge is set largely by what the market is prepared to pay. If your rate is too high, you might not get much work. If there is a high demand for your skills and little alternative, you might be able to charge more. You also need to consider exactly how much income you need to achieve. A lower rate may attract more work, but also mean you need to work longer.

Some coaches do not charge anything for fencing lessons.

Like anything it will be the customer who ultimately decides whether they think you are worth the money or not.

MORE USEFUL BITS.....

British Academy of Fencing Residential Course

Monday 23rd July to Saturday 28th July 2018

The Course

The British Academy of Fencing's residential course is open to all fencing coaches irrespective of whether they are members of the BAF.

The course is designed for fencing coaches who wish to improve or enhance their practical skills, increase their technical/tactical knowledge or to simply meet other coaches and share ideas and experiences. The course is also ideal for those wishing to prepare and take BAF examinations. Optional examinations are held on the Saturday 28th July, for those who wish to take BAF coaching awards.

There will be nightly optional specialist training events which will look at the wider aspects of coaching and the sport of fencing. The sports hall at the venue is available for use by course members until late in the evening for those who wish to practise further.

The highly experienced course tutors for this course will be Profs. Peter Northam, Andrew Vincent and Peter Cormack, who will be assisted by other BAF coach educators depending upon numbers attending the course.

There is also a non-residential option if you do not wish to stay at Denstone College; for further information on this, please contact the Course Officer.

Whilst the course might be considered to be intense, there is also a strong wish that learning should be fun and enjoyable.

The Venue

Denstone College, Denstone, Uttoxeter, Staffordshire, ST14 5HN

Accommodation

The accommodation at Denstone will be single rooms in a self contained block of the college. There is use of a common room which has a TV and kitchen facilities available, which you will be able to use if required, (washing machine etc).

Cost: British Academy of Fencing Members : £444 Non Academy Coach: £499 .This fee includes full board (breakfast, lunch and evening meals), tuition and course documentation. Examination fees are extra.

If you wish to apply for the course or obtain further information please contact the Course Officer, Mrs Jacqueline Redikin: jredikin@hotmail.co.uk or via post 10 Beverley Ave, Davyhulme, Urmston, Manchester, M41 0RY, England, United Kingdom. Please Note: You must be aged over 18 to attend the course

UPDATE:

Over half of the places available have been booked and deposits paid. It should be noted that, due to other activities occurring at the venue, it may not be possible to increase out allocation of accommodation. The advice is, if you are considering attending the course, please book with the course officer as soon as possible. Until a deposit is paid no space is reserved.

To date we have coaches studying at the following levels/weapons:

Diploma Epée and Sabre

Advanced Foil, Sabre and Epée

Level 3 Epée and Sabre

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