

# *Holiday*

Due to the COVID19 outbreak and recognising that members have not been able to work as fencing coaches, and may not be able to work for some time. The committee have decided to give a subscription holiday for the next year (2020/21) to all current members of the British Academy of Fencing.



## How are YOU Keeping in Contact?

How are you keeping in contact with your fencers and your fellow coaches, and club officials? What are you

doing to keep the sport of fencing alive during the lockdown? Are you preparing for a return to fencing? Remember to keep an eye on the latest news section of the British Fencing Website to find the latest advice about what we can and cannot do.

The picture above shows me giving one of my Zoom lessons to a brother & sister in their garden while I am sat in my garden. All the more poignant as I will not see one of them again, due to him suffering from terminal cancer. I have recently stopped the lessons as he is unable to take part.

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Articles and other material are welcome and should be sent to the Editor.

A pdf version of the Academy News can be found at [www.baf-fencing.com](http://www.baf-fencing.com) two weeks after publication

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**Contributions to Kevin Nelson**  
**by 20<sup>th</sup> August 2020**

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# The President 's Piece.....

**Prof. Peter Northam, President, British Academy of Fencing**

Welcome to another 'stuffed' edition of Academy News, where we keep in touch with each other and pass on news of what's happening in our coaching world.

The previous edition was largely concerned with the Covid 19 pandemic. Whilst it seems that the immediate severity is over and infections seem to be dwindling, it is still out there. Please follow the UK Government Guidelines and in particular, go to the British Fencing website for more fencing relevant guidelines. The Academy does not encourage or condone any face to face/group fencing/coaching activities until those guidelines are changed. Talking to other coaches, their clubs can't start back because the sport and leisure centres are closed anyway.

What has also come about as a result of this pandemic is the serious financial effect on employment. All coaches, including yours truly, have lost an entire term's income. We have the added difficulty of going through the summer without work (unless the lockdown lifts enough for some to arrange some fencing training) which looks like September being a more realistic start and fees beginning to appear late September.

The Committee understands and has great sympathy with its members, so has decided to offer a 'subscription holiday' for Oct 2020-Sept 2021. No member will have to leave the Academy because of financial difficulty! This means that you will still remain a member and be covered by our insurance. Of course, if you can still pay your subscription, that would be very welcome. I envisage the application form that will be sent out during September will give you the option to take advantage of the 'subscription holiday'. We hope this is of some help to you all.

Also, as a result of the epidemic, the last two Committee Meetings were conducted under the Zoom programme. Quite interesting really, the meeting has to be well managed and kept to the agenda but the saving of a couple of hours travelling x2, the cost of the venue, makes it well worthwhile. It does not replace a normal face to face meeting but I think we should consider Zoom on a more regular basis. As we said in the last issue of Academy News, Denstone has been cancelled this summer. It looks very likely that any coach training/examinations to be offered will be in the autumn, around about half term, subject to venue availability, so be aware. Notices will be given in this magazine and also posted on the website.

We must look long term and think and behave positively. So, hang in there and follow the guidelines!

## Documentation

The following documentation is available from the Course Officer Jackie Redikin.

Key Teaching Points (Weapon specific)	£7.35 ( <b>£9.4</b> ) each
Key Coaching Points (Weapon specific)	£7.35 ( <b>£9.4</b> ) each
Glossary of Terms (including Translation of Fencing Terms)	£7.35 ( <b>£9.45</b> )
Employment Guidelines	£7.35 ( <b>£9.45</b> )
Teaching/ Coaching Tactics (2nd Edition)	£16.80 ( <b>£21</b> )
Examples of past written Papers for Advanced and Diploma examinations - <b>FREE</b>	
All prices include p & p. Figures in <b>RED</b> are for non-BAF members	

## Examination Fees

Level 1 Assessment	£11.00
Level 2 to Diploma	£21.00 ( <b>£26.00</b> )

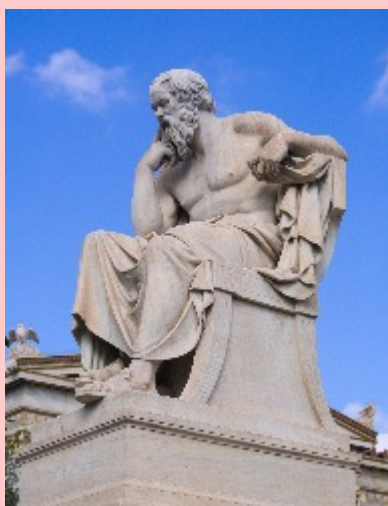
These are for "normal" exams - for Special exams, consult the Course Officer. Figures in **RED** are for non-BAF members

# THINK ABOUT FENCING

*by Prof. Bob Merry*

This article is based on a series of posts I wrote for the Facebook page of Bramhall Sword Club. It was mainly aimed at our junior fencers, to maintain their interest in fencing during the lockdown, but may prove useful at many levels. I realised that there was quite a bit of activity online, covering such things as footwork practice and other drills, so I concentrated on another important part of the fencer – the brain. In order to make them think, I did not supply answers or instructions, but presented them with questions and problems. This, I hoped, would be the key to understanding; not just the HOW, but also the WHY and the WHEN. Did it work? That is hard to say and we may not find out until we get back to the club, but I have received some written feedback from one 13 year old pupil, in the form of mini-essays, that shows a very good level of understanding and evidence that he was listening during our lessons together.

No, the ancient coach, whose picture is in the post, is not me, but a gentleman named Socrates, a Greek philosopher, who lived from around 470 to 399 BC. He's there because his favourite method of teaching his pupils was through a series of questions, a method I like myself, as some of my pupils will recognise. Before you say it, I may be ancient, but I've yet to reach the level of Socrates.



During our enforced break from real fencing, many of you will have found other ways of keeping up your training. You may have joined online footwork classes, or others practising skills with the sword. My intention is to concentrate on another part of the fencer's make-up, which is, in my opinion, the most important. That is to say, your brain. To be successful, you will need to be able to plan strategy and tactics for a fight, or, to put it simply, to outthink your opponent. For this you need to have knowledge and understanding.

To help you think more about your fencing, I will be asking a series of questions. What I will not do, at this stage, is provide answers. For many of the questions, there will not be just one right answer, but several, so you will need to take quite a bit of time forming your own thoughts. But look at the advantages of this method; you can be sitting in a comfy chair, reading from this document on screen or printout, and, if anyone asks, you can say you're practising your fencing.

For this first lesson, the questions will be about **simple attacks**.

***What is a simple attack?*** (Not sure of the correct wording? Why not consult the Rules. You can download the Technical Rules at <https://www.britishfencing.com/the-fie-rulebooks/> The rule to have a look at is **t.10**)

***What types of simple attacks do you know?***

***What factors determine whether a simple attack will be successful?***

***Why would the opponent be more likely to parry the attack?***

***Attacks toward which areas of the target are easiest for the defender to spot early enough to parry?***

***And to which areas of the target would attacks be harder for the defender to react to?***

***Having decided on what will be the right conditions for your chosen attack, how would you set about creating these conditions, before launching the attack?***

(NB. There are many, many answers to this question, so don't be satisfied with just a few)



Before we get on to the next set of questions, here's a simple one – fill in the blanks in these things that go together: Fish and C\_\_\_\_, Romeo and J\_\_\_\_, Ant and D\_\_\_\_, Parry and R\_\_\_\_. I hope you all answered "Riposte" to the last one! If you are one of those fencers who gets the overwhelming majority of your hits on attack, you may be missing out on a lot of opportunities to score and, if you are fortunate to reach the final stages of a competition, be too worn out to finish properly. If your opponent attacks and you parry, you have a chance to score a hit, while your opponent does most of the work. Lazy fencers have a place in the great scheme of things!

**Remember the old motto, "THINK, maybe we can avoid this work".**

Now to THINK about Defence. Here are the questions for you to ponder:

***Do you need to know more than one parry? If so, why?***

***What are the advantages and disadvantages of direct ripostes?***

***What are the advantages and disadvantages of indirect ripostes?***

***What factors can influence your choice of where on the opponent's target to direct your riposte?***

***In your mind, select one parry. Now try to work out and imagine all the different ways you could riposte from that parry. The need to use footwork, either on the parry, or the riposte, would count as different variations of the riposte. (Don't stop thinking about variations until you are well into double figures – and then, don't stop thinking!)***

***Having decided to use defence as a tactic to get hits, how can you get your opponent to attack you? (without being too obvious, of course)***

There we are, then. Just a few questions, but plenty to think about. Why not make notes as you go along. As I said earlier, no answers from me at this stage, but I welcome your feedback, especially if you'd like more "thinking" lessons. You can contact me with your suggested answers, thoughts, questions, etc., at

[bobmerrybaf@aol.com](mailto:bobmerrybaf@aol.com), or even call me on 07836 764 026.

*I have compiled two out of the five pieces that Bob wrote in this article. The rest can be found on the Bramhall Sword Club facebook page. As this idea of questioning equally applies to those of us who are coaching, or taking our coaching exams. I also often teach with questions, especially with an individual lesson; when you ask a pupil a question, it makes them think a little bit more about what they are doing, while involving them in their own lesson, and allowing them to find their own solutions, with a side bonus that it gives you (& them) some important rest time.*

*Kevin : Editor Academy News.*

**For those coaches who are self-employed, have you applied for the Self Employment Income Support Scheme grant yet?** You have until 13<sup>th</sup> July 2020 to apply. The grant was a single payment for the three months March to May 2020 based upon 80% of average monthly trading profits (as declared on a self-assessment tax return) for the three tax years 2016/17, 2017/18 and 2018/19. The grant was capped at £2,500 per month. The second grant will be available in August. <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/claim-a-grant-through-the-coronavirus-covid-19-self-employment-income-support-scheme#eligible>



# Losing the E

By Nick Chapman

Here's a question for you, what do you call a 'Direct Elimination' fight when you don't eliminate anyone?

There is a format that the FIE use for team events that is called 'Fighting off the places'. They use this format to counter the problem that results from wanting people to stay on for an extra day and fence the teams event based around a standard tableau using rolling ranking based on results from previous team events. The implicit problem is that because a number of the teams (up to 50%) will only get one match, not many will stay the extra day, incur the extra accommodation costs, pay an additional entry fee, for just one match. **How can they be encouraged?** Answer; **give them more fencing**, for example, run pools of teams, but that's slow and more importantly negates the value of the rolling ranking.

The solution the FIE prefer is to run a form of DE where no one is eliminated, teams that lose just move into a different tableau. This works well for certain numbers and not so well for others, therefore the reality is events run 'fencing off the places' from the last 8, or from the last 16 depending on the size of the event. Your reward for getting to the 'fence off all the places' stage of the event is that your team gets as many matches as every other team that gets there regardless of how well they do in those matches (that's four if it's a last 16 whether you end up first or sixteenth).

My problem with this lovely egalitarian system is that the way the computer programs display the process, it's not very transparent. From 16 there are 7 sub tableau's, so it can be a bit hard to work out what progress you have made and who you fight next. Fortunately, this is easily sorted. I have designed a way that allows the whole thing to be displayed on a single tableau, a single sheet of paper. Making it, I believe, far simpler to see what progress you have made, who you are fighting next and how much you have left to do, not to mention making it easier to answer the all-important question 'what will be the effect of the next win or lose be on the final result'.

In my tableau (or if you prefer, my flow diagram) you have the teams/fencers arranged in the left-hand column, by seeding, just as you would see in a standard tableau. Then, unlike a standard tableau, where only one fencer would progress to the right across the page, from each pairing the winner follows the green arrow to the next column whilst the loser follows the red arrow and therefore both progress.

If you study my tableau you will see the implicit beauty of the system, whoever you fight, at whatever stage of the event, has always had the same sequence of wins and losses to get to that point. I love this, it offers such a good competitive experience, everyone in the last 16 gets the same number of matches and each one is fenced against opposition who has had the same win and lose up to that point.

For all the latest information about the Academy  
go to the British Academy of Fencing web site at [www.baf-fencing.com](http://www.baf-fencing.com)

Given that this format offers such benefits why limit its use to just FIE team events, in fact, why limit it to teams at all. I see a real benefit, especially for the young, in a system that provides all competitors with the same number of fights regardless of how well they do in those fights. Providing you have the space and resources to run a last 16 you have the space and resources to run this system from 16, the only difference is that as you progress towards the end of the event the demands on those resources remain constant rather than diminishing as they would with a conventional DE.

I would go further; this is an excellent system to use in training. If you want your pupils to practice fencing DE style 15 hit fights and want a logical process to organise those fights that keeps everyone involved throughout the training, then this is the system for you (provided you have the space for everyone to fence simultaneously).

This system works well from 16 and from 8. It's fine with 12. Other numbers become a little messier. 9 and 17 are both numbers that still result in one competitor being eliminated after only a single match.

Accepting this limitation, I believe 'fencing off the places' is an excellent competition format that, given the clarity provided by my tableau, could be utilised within training and should be used to enhance competitions where the emphasis is on participation and or learning (which in my opinion is everything short of a national ranking competition). This system has a hidden benefit, because everyone has the same number of fights everyone finishes at a similar time therefore ensuring there is a big crowd for the medal presentations. Give it a try on a club night or a training day.

OK, that just leaves the question we started with, 'what do we call a DE fight without the Elimination', a fight, a 15 hit fight, a placing fight..... I really don't yet have a good answer so send in your suggestions I would love to hear them.

*Thanks Nick, I want to go out and use this one straight away, it a great solution to that problem of fencers giving up competing because they only get one DE. Its a much fairer system, and encourages more fencing. Should any of our readers like a copy of the tableau in a useable format (excel) then please let Nick or I know.*  
Kevin : Editor Academy News



## Ambition.

Mother's in the kitchen weeping,  
Father's drunk as he can be.  
All because their loving offspring,  
dropped this bombshell over tea.

"I've finished now my education,  
and sweating o'er my Ph'D,  
I want a life of high adventure,  
a Fencing Master I will be."

"I've already bought my plastron,  
one Jim Perry had designed,  
and my shorts, so brightly garish,  
folk will think I'm colour blind."

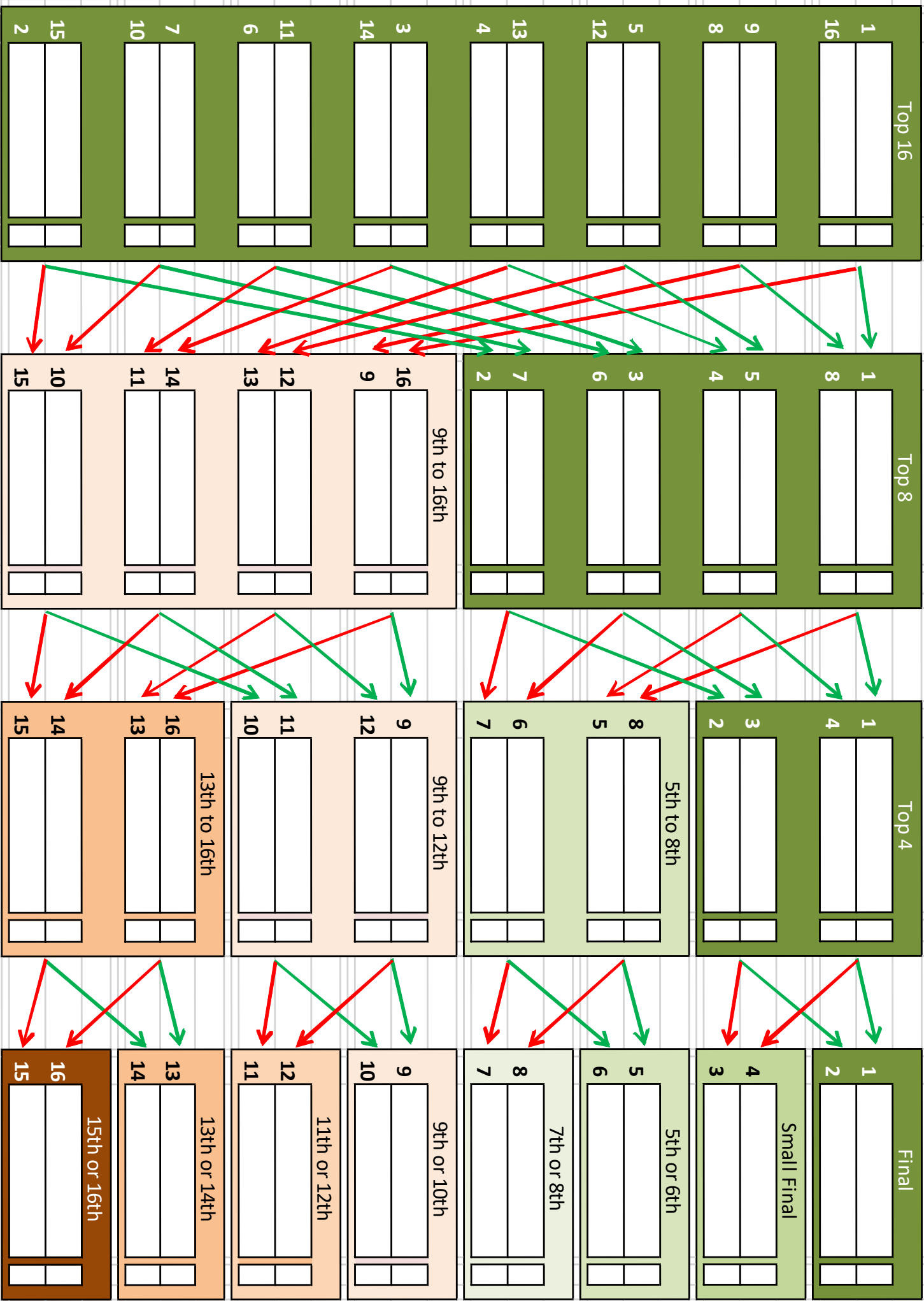
"I know that I can really make it,  
I've already got one star,  
and I'm getting in the training,  
spending each night in the bar."

So the family saw the doctor,  
but saw the doctor all in vain,  
"because he wants to be a master,  
doesn't mean that he's insane."

So Father joined the Foreign Legion,  
couldn't face his workmates in his shame.  
Mother took to drinking Buckfast,  
poor old fencing got the blame.

So what became of our young hero,  
to poor old fathers pleas quite deaf.  
He's now a torn faced, grumpy bastard,  
Professor of the B.A.F.

*I found the attached poem that I wrote on a summer  
course at Brighton, about twenty five years ago.  
I thought it might amuse you.*  
Donald Walker







# Sharing Dutch

By Henk Uijting



A small report from the lower country where the fencing has taken place outdoor till now. This story is from our club in Arnhem and called Scaramouche. We fence all the three fencing weapons, standing and in wheelchairs.

When we passed the 1<sup>st</sup> of June the measurements changed again. We now can let the youngsters have some fights now. Until now we only could allow the young ones up to 12 years to do sparring.

The rest could only stay at 1.5 meter distance. We found a solution in keeping that distance by fencing in chairs like the wheelchair fencers do in our club.

When 2 fencers are one household they are allowed to fence. We had some jealous looks of other fencers who had to see that 4 could fence, the two brothers and the two sisters.



The 2 brothers are senior epee fencers and ranked 1 and 4 in the Dutch ranking list. They try to find as many possibilities as they can find to train and fence. They use the flexible Artos piste outside.



Outside because we are still not allowed to fence inside our hall. We were told that on 1<sup>st</sup> of September we could go inside again, but now we now hope for that on 1<sup>st</sup> July. It looks good and the numbers of Covid patients in the hospitals tell us that we can expect this. We had a new hall this year and enjoyed the use of it for such a short time. It is hard to fence with your sunglasses on.

Before we allow the fencers entry, we have to ask them if they have met a patient, if they have fever or have a persistent cough? Parents are not allowed to stay. We ask them to drop their kids just before start of the training and pick them at the end on time.

We use disinfectant at the hands at the beginning and at the end like we see in all the shops here.

**Was that meant when we speak of Dutch courage? First the alcohol and then the fight?**

We hope the competition will start soon. Fencing is not just fun and a sport, it is also an addiction.

met sportieve groet

Henk Uijting

I'm currently running free fencing workouts through Facebook Live - see <https://www.facebook.com/Hfencing/>

They take place at 6pm on a Monday night - free of charge - throughout lockdown.



Tony Middleton 'Sonic'

# Wireless Review

By Kevin Nelson

A couple of months before we went into Lockdown, I acquired my third type of wireless box, some of you may remember my article on EORI, which was triggered by the purchase. As a professional coach working in different schools and several small clubs where we meet for only an hour..... or less. Wireless has been the only sensible way that I can introduce my fencers to electric fencing. With wired boxes under these time constraints by the time you've set it up, its almost time to pack it up again (especially if no-one is there to help you). So with my experience over the last year or three I've put together some notes below on the systems that I have used.....

All three wireless boxes come with fencer units that are designed to sit in back pocket of your breeches, plugging into the bodywire. With the Favero & EnPointe systems you can choose which unit matches to which side as part of the calibration procedure.

I coach mainly Foil & Sabre, so I don't feel that I can comment on their longer term use at Epee. Although they do all work.

## Favero WF1 - Wireless Fencing (Foil /Epee)

### Positive

It is easy to set up.

Relatively Cheap.

Good battery Life

Can join two scoring units together. Useful for individual lesson where you can have one behind the coach and the other behind the fencer.

Favero have been open about the limitations of the equipment, which means it is possible to work round those issues.

### Negative

No Sabre

Regular Re-calibration - the calibration does sometimes change while fencing, and it will require re-calibration. But once you explain how the box appears to work and what issues result, the fencers can work round the issues, and can enjoy electric fencing.

Good enough for sparring/practice, but not for competition (As Favero actually state).

### Notes:

These boxes are now only used occasionally, due to their size, and the fact that the Leon Paul and EnPoint versions are so much more precise.



## Leon Paul (Foil/Epee/Sabre)

### Positive

Compact (One usually travels with me in my coaching bag)

Easy to use, and calibrate

Works Well

### Negative

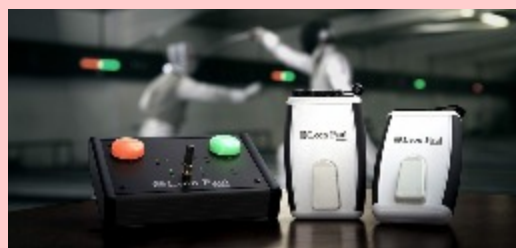
Expensive

Sabre not particularly reliable, especially if the single dongle goes missing (remains connected to outgoing fencers bodywire), or is plugged into the wrong fencer pack.

Difficult to fault find when something does go wrong - but maybe it will get easier with practice.

### Notes:

My first unit (Foil/Epee) had to be returned due to a repeatable fault, and even when it came back it was still possible to get the fault to reoccur, but at a much reduced rate. (Roughly 1 in 100, as opposed to every time) Which makes it OK for club competitions.



## En Pointe

### Positive

Works very well

Essentially it's a set of wireless spools, which will work with any standard fencing scoring box.

(Equivalent price to the LP wireless if used with a 3 weapon Fencing SmartBox\*)

Compact

Good battery life (AAA batteries), not replaced the first set yet.

Easy identification of fencer unit, first to wave their magic wand over the unit is on the referee's left.

Would work really well with multiple fencer units.

### Negative

Expensive

Have to import from Australia (EORI)

Wireless connectivity sometimes fails if the box is not properly in contact with the fencer.

Time limits for automatic switching off of the units is not quite long enough, so between bouts you will often end up having to switch on and connect up again.

### Notes:

Once set up in my experience this has been the most reliable option for wireless Sabre at club level.

\* SmartBox, reasonably priced (c. £200) 3 weapon box, with armoury testing facility.



Any of these three wireless boxes would be good to use for practice during the Lockdown, if you are at home with another fencer (of the same weapon). As they require minimal set-up time, and have no wires to trip over, although it does help if you can raise them up on a chair or a table.

**WHAT ARE YOU DOING TO KEEP FENCING ALIVE DURING LOCKDOWN?**

**WRITE AND TELL US ABOUT IT!**

**SHARE WHAT YOU ARE DOING!**

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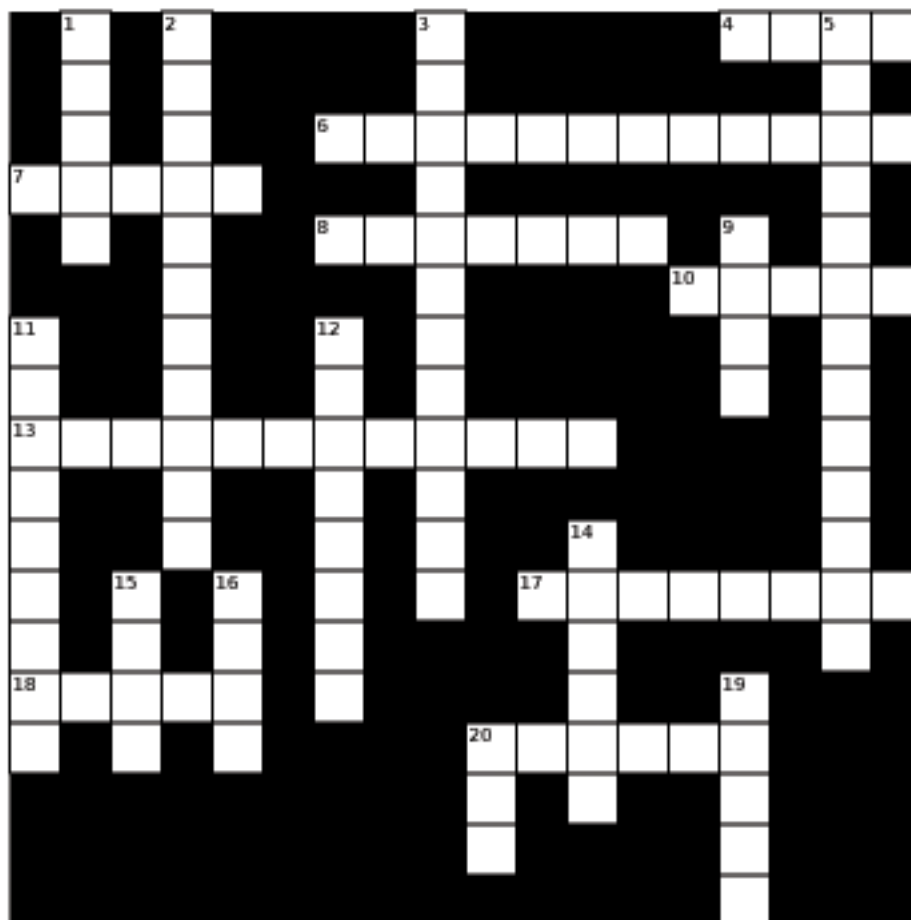
## Committee Contribution

The committee has met twice since the last edition, meeting via Zoom, rather than in person. This is something that we intend to continue once lockdown has eased.

- Denstone cancelled for this year, and deposit transferred to the following year.
- The committee discussed the membership having a payment holiday, during 2020/21 while many of the members are on limited or no income. After the treasurer confirmed the financial considerations to the Academy, it was agreed that it would be possible to do this for a single year. Voluntary membership contributions from members will be accepted, for those who feel able to pay.
- Ongoing review of the articles of the Academy.
- Review of the Proficiency Awards.
- The Academy News is one of the main outgoings of the Academy during this time, and to keep costs lower, a request has been made for some editions to be published digitally, rather than on paper.
- The committee is clear that we will follow the guidance of British Fencing on the return to fencing after lockdown. **And** that currently individual fencing lessons, between coach and pupil are not possible under the current guidance (Unless isolating at home together).

12<sup>th</sup> June 2020

# Referee's Rules



- |    |        |      |   |
|----|--------|------|---|
| 9  | Down   | t.47 | What does the referee call?   |
| 13 | Across | t.47 | Referees duty towards the proper functioning of the electrical apparatus                                  |
| 14 | Down   | t.46 | What does he pledge?  |
| 18 | Across | t.46 | What does he respect  |
| 7  | Across | t.47 | What does he maintain?  |
| 20 | Down   | t.48 | How many Judges may assist the referee?   |
| 8  | Across | t.48 | In a bout when do judges change ends?   |
| 5  | Down   | t.46 | Absolute what?  |
| 6  | Across | t.53 | What is judged with an electrical recording apparatus?  |
| 11 | Down   | t.55 | What does the referee do to a hit if the fencer hits any object other than the opponent or his equipment? |
| 16 | Down   | t.56 | If there is a fault in the recording apparatus how many hits can be annuled?                              |
| 2  | Down   | t.56 | When must a failure be tested?  |
| 17 | Across | t.56 | What is of no importance in the fault in establishing the materiality of the hit?                         |
| 4  | Across | t.56 | How many times must a fault be seen?  |
| 12 | Down   | t.58 | When must the referee stop the fight?   |
| 1  | Down   | t.64 | When must the referee check all equipment?  |



19 Down



15 Down



20 Across



10 Across



3 Down



## From the Collection of Porthos



A pair of fine French duelling swords with 34" (86cm) very rigid blades of hollow ground, triangular section. The guards have multiple piercings and staples pass through them to hold thick leather pads in place. The grips are covered with fishskin, bound with twisted wire. The pommel is pineapple shaped. The red felt washers cushion the scabbards (not present). They were made 1838 - 1840 with the blades inscribed in French. They were made in Klingenthal, though the Coulaux brothers took over the business. One died, but the Coulaux name is also on the blades. They each weigh 1 pound (454 gm), which is not a lot more than a foil, and are very easy to handle. Nowadays they'd carry a H & S warning : 'These

blades are LETHAL!!' However, I doubt if they were ever used, as the blades retain their factory polish and there are no traces of nicks on their edges. These are the sort of weapons we might have been using in the past. Just one hit, and you're out of action. Or dead.

Porthos

Should you require help or information on safeguarding then please contact Jacqueline Redikin

E-mail [courseofficer@baf-fencing.com](mailto:courseofficer@baf-fencing.com)

Should you need to report a Safeguarding issue then use the procedures of the organisation that you are working for. Then contact British Fencing, either through your club welfare officer, regional welfare officer, or directly .....

Equality and Safeguarding Manager, Liz Behnke for advice on 077177 40125

If you have a serious concern and you believe that a child or vulnerable adult is at immediate risk then in the first instance you must contact the Police or Children/Adult Services in your area.

*Please note that articles published reflect the viewpoint of the individual authors in our knowledgeable and diverse academy, and the viewpoints expressed in articles are not necessarily those held by the British Academy of Fencing SSTT.*

*I have a light editorial touch on all articles received. So far all of which have been published. I am aware that sometimes there may be differences of opinion between members. If you have such a difference, you are always welcome to submit your own viewpoint in an article, as long as it contains reasoned arguments in favour of your viewpoint. Learning to coach is a process of evolution for each individual, and exposure to different viewpoints should encourage self reflection. Therefore I will always welcome thought provoking articles from members.*

*Kevin: Editor Academy News*



# Coach as Mentor, Educator and Student in Lock Down

By David Kirby

*Article submitted to the BAF Academy News April 2020*

Lockdown is upon us and Stefan speaks well. Coaching is, as we all know, about relationships between coaches and their athletes, their pupils. The coach is often seen as a mentor for their developing charges, and it is quite a responsibility as Professor (an academic one at Loughborough University) Chris Cushion (2006) writes in Robyn Jones's excellent book, *The Sports Coach as Educator*. Stefan (2020, p.19) has this concept spot on when he says, "You are likely an important and valuable part of your pupils' lives and thus maybe one of only a few people they are willing to talk to about their fears, insecurities, achievements in lockdown and well being right now. As much as you can reach out or create a place where they have an avenue to share what is going on with them and above all LISTEN."

There are a few points here which are worth emphasising. People, especially the youngsters, may be confused and fearful. Their immediate carers – parents, siblings etc – may be highly stressed, and even ill themselves. The coach mentor should be in a unique position to help and guide. To be able to provide a place for the anxious to be able to, as Stefan says, reach out to. To give them someone to listen and hear them.

So that's that bit. Now there is Stefan's fencing roots. We all know that the ten thousand hour or repetitions rule is a bit suspect when pedantically applied, but as Matthew Syed said in his book *Bounce* (2011), it is generally true that the more we engage in deliberate practice (that means actually doing it, not just talking about it!), the better we get. That presupposes that we actually know what to practice, of course. So back to roots. Practice. And get pupils to practice.

Stefan makes some good practical suggestions about what to do in the lock down, and what comes out of it is how much coaching is actually about leading and mentoring people, it's about communicating, about socialising. And all his suggestions follow these coaching behaviours. This is really good stuff. This is what we pay our fees for: good advice from people who are knowledgeable, skilful and experienced. To make this work we need to create meetings (on apps like Zoom) to get our clubs and schools back in action, but we have to deliver carefully planned content with clear outcomes and assessments. And note the "planned" bit. Coaches are often not the strictest at keeping to the disciplines of planning – are we? But things do go much better when we do plan, and particularly when we are out of our usual comfort zone.

Of course lockdown does give us a great chance to read ourselves, and Jones's book can be had at bargain prices at Amazon (<https://www.amazon.co.uk/Sports-Coach-Educator-Re-conceptualising-Coaching/dp/0415367603/>), and Syed's *Bounce* from Abe Books (<https://www.abebooks.co.uk/>) – and all good booksellers. There are loads of things that are worth reading through now we have the time. Read them and think how the ideas can affect your coaching or the sporting behaviour of your pupils and students. Wade Gilbert has one (2017 – *Coaching Better Every Season*), and there's our own Ziemowit Wojciechowski (2019) with his new *This is Fencing!*. For those with academic accreditation, you could also look at Jones & Hemmestad (2019) – at least all Masters, Maitres and aspirants should ask themselves if they understand *phronesis*, and do we think this is something for the open-minded, expert coach's knowledge-base? Has anyone in the membership got any suggestions for good informative reading?

So there you are. Some really good advice from Stefan, backed up by top people in the industry and delivered by enthusiastic coaches using their skills at planning and delivery on new media. Go for it. Read all about it. Just do it. And make sure you and everyone ENJOYS it!

### References, Books and Articles

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 Wojciechowski, Z. (2019) *This is Fencing! Advanced training and performance principles for foil*. Marlborough: The Crowood Press.

Further information from David Kirby at [dmjksabre@gmail.com](mailto:dmjksabre@gmail.com) (07970 642967)

It is with the deepest regret that we inform you of the passing of Professor HT (Bert) Bracewell on Sunday, 14 June 2020, aged 84. Bert passed peacefully with his family by his side. His wife, Joan, daughters Julia and Karen and son, Michael, ask us all to celebrate his life and not mourn.

A full obituary will follow in the next edition.



*"I have dealt with pupils of the most varied ages and natural endowments; I have learned, seen and experienced a great many things.*

*As a fencing master I was led by the principle that I should not only teach someone to fence, but also use my knowledge to educate in the broadest sense. I endeavoured to develop my pupils into men, who with confidence vested in me – entrusted me with their careers as contestants and this filled me with a sense of responsibility. I could not be exempted from this responsibility either by the children's divergent moral and volitional attributes, their differing personalities, or the inadequacy of available facilities. Even amidst the most difficult circumstances I strove to find the methods by which I could meet the confidence of both the parents and the pupils.*

*My aim was that never should a disappointed fencer leave my hands! A pupil might be disappointed in himself – acknowledging that he is unsuited for competition; he might be disappointed in his master, as somebody with whom he could not find common ground as a person; but by no means should he meet with disappointment in fencing itself! And this depends first of all on me. I instructed, with patience and responsibility, not only the talented, but also the less skilful. I endeavoured to win their fascination for a lifetime for the camp of fencing."*

**Laszlo Szabo**



# A Look at the Various Stimuli Affecting a Fencer During Competitions

By Sally Peat

Fencers of any age or ability, no matter how seasoned they are, will feel the various pressures of the day at a fencing competition. I tried to consider this from the perspective of an international cadet fencer but some of the environmental and psychological effects may apply to fencers of all ages and for all sizes of competition, international and domestic. So here are a few thoughts on the stresses of the day.

The lead up to a competition can be a stressful time; the anticipation of the event, and the extra training can trigger the anxiety of not knowing what to expect. There may also be self-imposed pressure on results and a fencer's own expectation of how they should perform and where they expect to finish in the competition rankings.

Then there is the travel, the early start, the drive to the airport, the flight, staying in alien accommodation and a time zone difference, all causing a little bit more pressure and stress to the situation. Weapons check can also be a stressful experience especially if something fails. It is just more of the unknown.

Then comes the morning of the individual event, which usually involves a very early start and possibly a little more travelling to the venue. It is good practice to arrive a couple of hours before your event starts, not only for the warm up but to get accustomed to the venue and where the pistes are located and find loos! Many fencers at this stage are feeling nervous and apprehensive about the day to come and trying to focus on their warm-up routine but are no doubt affected by the noise, the hustle and bustle of the room, which gets progressively busier throughout the morning. The bright lights and the noise can also be overwhelming and add to the adrenaline rush of the pre-competition nerves.

One other aspect to the preparations is the warm-up fights that are a useful tool for fencers to get on the piste, feel their feet and try getting their arm out. It's not always possible to find a GB team mate to compete against to warm-up, and your fencer may need to approach a complete stranger, who doesn't speak the same language, to arrange warm up fights. The other fencers in the room and the other coaches' presence may also add to the nerves.



Finding information about pistes and which Poole your fencer is in, is the next step. It may be in a different hall and there may be a time pressure to arrive at your piste before the referee. Your fencer is then called onto the strip and gets wired up and tested ready to go for the next three minutes. This is where the real stress starts for the coach! It is, I feel imperative that you as a coach keep in mind what your fencer has been through to get to this stage of the day, it will have taken a toll on them, no matter how seasoned they are. Watch your fencer but also watch their opponent, so that you can provide feedback at the end of the bout but whatever the result, keep it positive.

Focus on what they did well and help to keep them calm and grounded, make sure they drink and watch the other opponents throughout, keeping a mental note of any who are 'unusual'.



Avoid too much feedback from others, team mates, team-mates parent, other coaches, however well meaning, you both have to stick to your game and your strategy. Your fencer can't take in all this information and act upon it, and you as their coach can't ensure that the feedback is positive and not in any way detrimental to your fencer's state of mind.

Adrenalin during the fighting action has an additional effect on your fencer and may accelerate all their responses in a good, or sometimes negative, way and can have all sorts of effects on them. Sometimes you might find an absence of adrenaline and this could potentially make them under perform. So being aware of their state, do they seem heightened or slightly dampened, either way be ready to try to counter it.

Hydration is also key, keep reminding them to drink lots all day and to eat whatever they can manage whenever they can, as the day could be a long one and they will need energy reserves when they feel their most tired.

The one minute break during your fencers D.E.s. The most precious minute to any coach. After considering all of the above mentioned stimuli and effects these can have on a fencer, they may not be receptive to feedback at this point in the fight. Provide information about what you can read in the fight from the side-lines but only provide one or maximum two things to work on and please don't be tempted to introduce any new moves at this stage. Be specific and unambiguous!

Providing feedback to your fencer after the fighting is over may be a meal best served cold. Providing feedback on the day is probably going to be counter productive. It may be preferential to go over the days' events when you are back at your club, in a safe environment, where your fencer is more receptive and more likely to remember what you are saying. You can give honest feedback while making it positive and providing examples of what you could work on. Try not to let them obsess with points and rankings, they will come along the way as they develop.



## Editorial

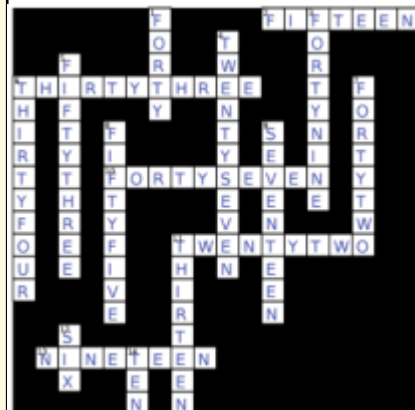
Another edition produced under lockdown. For me work and home life are starting to blend together, so I am now changing my shoes to let me know if its work time, or if its time to relax.

These times are incredibly hard, both for those of us who are stuck at home feeling we are not working, and therefore not contributing. To those of you who are at work, and working twice as hard as normal because of the new limitations on your workplace, and absence due to co-worker self-quarantine. As we go about our daily lives we must remember our own mental health, and that of those around us. It is very important to remember to communicate with those around us, and those that we are currently unable to see. Remember that an act of kindness or a compliment may go further than you think.....

On the subject of mental health, I recently did the online UK Coaching "Mental Health Awareness for Sport and Activity " course, it took around 1 ½ hours, and was a reasonable basic refresher to raise awareness of mental health issues. If you are just starting out in your career as a coach, then this is a piece of free CPD (until 31<sup>st</sup> August 2020), that would be well worth doing.

Kevin : Editor Academy News

Answers :  
Foil Rules  
and  
Numbers  
From the Technical  
rules. All answers  
are rule numbers.





## **Eileen Dorothy Pitman MBE**

### **19th August 1926 - 6th June 2020**

Eileen was born in Hove, East Sussex, the youngest sibling of two brothers, Bill, John and sister Lilian.

Her father William was an Army man, joining at the age of 13. He served throughout the First World War during which the family moved South from London to Hove. War injuries plagued him with both mental and physical pain for the rest of his life and kept him out of the Second World War, which mum remembered very clearly. The family moved from Hove to Brighton during the Second World War. In these years Eileen often recalled taking cover from dropping bombs and

Doodlebugs while walking to school.

An active, intelligent student, Eileen joined Brownies and then onto Girl Guides becoming Pack Leader. Eileen excelled at school and went on to secretarial school before joining the Regent Oil Company in Brighton as a pool secretary where she spent many happy years. She had a fond memory of being given a turkey each Christmas as a Christmas bonus. In these young, fun years Eileen loved dancing, especially Spanish dance, taking local classes and for a short while teaching Spanish dance.

Then in her 20's, back in the early 1950s, a friend suggested she joined him at the local fencing club. She went along to Brighton and Hove Fencing club then based in Davigdor Road, Hove. Attending was to be the first day of love for fencing, which would last the next 60 years and more.

Mum was very competitive. Fencing in both County and Regional events and winning the Sussex Ladies County Championships on three consecutive years, 1962, 1963 and while pregnant with her first son Justin 1964. In honour of this achievement, Eileen received a silver rose bowl cup, which still proudly stands on the family windowsill at home.

Eileen met Brian Pitman at Brighton & Hove Fencing Club. Peter Townsend, a family friend and fellow fencer, remembered meeting Eileen Nicholls with boyfriend, later husband, Brian Pitman at Bisham Abbey in 1955/56. Where fencing courses were held and run by distinguished professors of fencing such as Prof. Bob Anderson, who subsequently become a family friend. Both had fond memories of these courses where they met so many new friends that would stay with them in the fencing family for all their lives to come. Both Eileen and Brian became Amateur Coaches at a time when amateurs could not earn money for coaching. To do so would remove their amateur status and they would not be able to compete in competitions. "You coach for the love of it," as mum would say.

Eileen and Brian Pitman were married 17th March 1962, and three sons were to follow, Justin, Dominic and Rory.

Brian, with mum's support, moved up the coaching ladder, training under Prof. Bill Harmer-Brown with help from Prof. Bob Anderson. Brian achieved Professor of Fencing in 1970. At this time, a diploma master had to pass at all three weapons at one exam to be called a Professor. As a professional, he could now charge for teaching. So, Dad became a full-time Fencing coach and would go on to become English National Coach, and was awarded the BAF Gauthier Trophy in 1976. He freely told everyone his success was down to Eileen's support and guidance behind him.

Despite a busy home life, Eileen joined the Sussex County Fencing committee on which she served for more than 40 years, well into her 80's most of which as County Secretary. Along with this she also served for many years on the South East Section Committee in various roles. In 1974 Eileen set up the Portslade Fencing Club and coached at the club well into her mid 80's before standing down to her son Dominic Pitman who continues to run the club to this day.

### **Eileen's philosophy was "Fencing for all".**

Whoever you are, however old or young, whatever your background there was always a place at Portslade Fencing Club for you. Club members were required to fence all comers. This policy was reinforced when necessary by Eileen's sharp tongue and the obligatory Club ladder with the best starting at the bottom. No one dared step out of line!

In 1977, Eileen with Brian's support started the Silver Jubilee, International under sixteen competition at Portslade, which hosted some of the best European under 16's of the time. Many of the competitors going onto International careers. Years later still under the stewardship of my mother, the competition would become the Sussex Open which continues to run to this day.

In 2002 Brian Pitman passed away leaving a vacuum in mum's life never to be filled again; they had shared everything.

The British Academy of Fencing awarded Eileen Honorary Life membership in 2004 for her long service to fencing, to which she was surprised and honoured to receive.

In the Queen's Birthday honours 2006, Eileen was awarded an MBE for services to Sport in Sussex.

A fitting and final act to a very long amateur as both amateur coach and fencing organiser that benefited so many students and fencing participants at all levels for so many years.

**We will miss her.**

**Dominic Pitman**

(Edited by Prof. Graham Stretton)

Eileen epitomised a generation of fencers, coaches and organisers whose whole energies went towards promoting 'Fencing for All' at Club, County and Regional levels. This often-overlooked group of the fencing fraternity keep fencing alive, frequently fulfilling several roles within the greater fencing community.

Eileen, quite rightly, received an OBE for her work and by proxy championed these vital group of dedicated volunteers. To Eileen and all who promote fencing in this way, as a professional coach, I say thank you.

Sitting alongside Eileen at Coaches Club meetings, (I'm showing my age) and more latterly at BAF Dinners, one was always aware of Eileen sitting quietly with eyes twinkling behind those large lens glasses, poised, waiting for a pause in the conversation. Then with a quiet voice, asking timely searching questions of anyone pontificating a dogmatic view on fencing.

At one such BAF Dinner, Eileen was awarded Life Membership of the Academy. This was deservedly awarded to Eileen in her own right.

I owe much to Brian during my training days to become a better coach. Invited, I travelled down to the de Beaumont Centre/London Thames Fencing Salle for 18 months. However, it was Eileen who would answer the phone when I needed to speak to Brian. Eileen knew precisely how my progression was going and would always give encouragement, even when BAF exams were not going well. This was Eileen. Thank you, Eileen.

**Prof Graham Stretton**

# Specificity

By Prof. Phil Carson

*"...specificity (leaves) no room for certain analytics or out of context exercises. That is why it rejects isolated physical or technical exercises that do not relate to the playing model, as this leads to lack of specificity in the process". (What is Tactical Periodisation, Xavier Tamarit).*

Specificity is an important guiding principle in coaching. The more the training replicates real competition conditions, the more likely the coaching will be relevant. Disaggregating the game into its component parts works against this principle in that it removes the fencer from the whole game experience and away from the potential to develop high level skills. The closer the mental, physical technical and tactical elements are melded together, the more cohesive the training experience and learning will be.

The modern game of fencing is a highly chaotic, complex and dynamic game comprising multiple and interwoven systems of technical, tactical, physical, emotional, psychological, cultural and environmental factors in a competitive setting. There are an infinite possibility of interactions between any two fencers. By its nature therefore, the game of fencing allows for highly adaptive competitors to find creative solutions to problems they face on the piste. Arguably, whoever is coached to learn and adapt fastest will win. Appreciating this, there has been a significant shift in the world of sports coaching to embrace complexity and to put it at the centre of many coaching philosophies.

Taking a whole systems approach, technique remains important, but no more so than any other element of the game. Think about it. Technique will give a fencer an appreciation of the actions only; and where competitive fencing allows the fencer to develop an appreciation of the challenges to be faced, it is when we start to consider learning how to win, that the need for a systems thinking approach to coaching and problem solving becomes apparent. If it is such an important element, then surely we should be coaching this from the very start? There is an infinite number of technical/tactical/distance/timing combinations that can be practiced, but in what context is it being learned? It is the "why are we training" and "how are we training" that determine the training requirement, not the other way around. If there is no context, then it doesn't really matter what is being practiced. There should always be context.

The coaching theories of Teaching Games for Understanding, Constraints-Led coaching and Ecological Dynamics offer a solid theoretical basis towards supporting this approach and have been the catalyst to important advances in coaching practice in recent decades. Some heavy reading there, but the good news is that it is through games and play that a real competitive dynamic can be simulated and whole game skills assimilated.

## Proficiency Awards

### 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

During the current crisis, the study guides are being re-written, so they will not be available for the next few months.

**Members Advertise in the Academy News for Free**



# Fencing at the FFF Club .

(Föreningen för Fäktkonstens Främjande in English Association for the Promotion of Fencing)  
In Stockholm, Sweden, during the 2020 spring Coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak.

**By Prof Miguel Rodríguez Medina.** Overseas member at the British Academy of Fencing, BAF  
Fencing Master at the FFF club that was founded in 1901, being Sweden's oldest fencing club

This spring has not been as other springs. Although we have not had total lockdown, it has affected us in many ways. Competitions, training camps and other events have been cancelled. However it has been stressed that in times like this it is still important for the youngsters to maintain everyday routines, be physically active and keep the body going.



Fencing training, both for young people and seniors, from beginner to elite level, have continued, but has been adapted to the recommendations of the authorities. The training for our veterans, many of them older than 70 has been cancelled since they have been recommended to stay at home. Instead a digital forum to exchange knowledge, experiences in many subjects was started.

An important issue has been not to use loan equipment to avoid the risk for infection. Training sessions were set up in such a way that the loan equipment is not used. The content of the training was adapted to the situation by having more play, physio, legwork, technical training, theory briefings, etc. When entering the club, all have to carefully wash their hands, keep distance and avoid direct body contact. This means, among other things, that the usual after-match hand shaking was replaced by salute or elbow bump greeting. Having a slightest symptom of cold or fever, you will naturally stay at home instead.



The club was aware and fully understood and respected that some families choose not to attend the training, resulting into smaller numbers of fencers attending. Some coaches have been allowed to avoid coming to the club to work with their students if they felt anxiety. This has been my case. I reduced the number of training days from 4 to 1 to avoid travelling long distances on public transport, with almost full buses during the weekdays. On Saturdays we have taken the car (not so many vehicles on the roads) and went to the fencing club to meet and work with two groups of students (about 9 or 12 youngsters in each group).

Those who attend have their own equipment, with the exception of two girls and one boy. In the case of both girls their parents immediately bought new equipment so they could continue training. The boy was sad because he did not have equipment and due to the rules would not be able to join the training. Fortunately I had a spare mask, jacket, glove, épée, and body wire at home, which I purchased 2 years ago. He got them as a gift from me and he is so happy being able to continue training.

Hopefully this situation will change soon so I can continue with my groups and enjoy watching my students competing again. Here I include some pictures from my Saturday groups training.



# Letters

Ref: This is Fencing :

I first met Ziemek at an A.F.A. Coaches Club conference - That dates me! In those days the B.A.F. and A.F.A. (B.F.A.) worked together! Ziemek was a visiting coach and led a session in which he recieved a foil lesson given by a Russian coach in Russian, which Ziemek gave a running commentary in English.

Ziemek's book "This is Fencing" illustrates his great analytical ability, it is outstandingly useful. Its subdivisions, like a text book make it really easy to study. Every foil coach should read it! But, I think there should be a word of caution to coaches - do you really agree with P.77 "using a loud voice after scoring a hit increases a fencers performance" ? Behaviour goes through phases. In my youth, before electric foil, if you shouted "Est La" as you lunged, the judge would award a hit, even if your point never got nearer than 1cm to the target. Nowadays its shouting again. My reaction as an elderly opponent would be "I'll show you who is better", or as a referee "Silly idiot, never grown out of childhood behaviour".

So....a plea to coaches of children, help them to channel their emotions into calm, peaceful, and effective success!.

And a word of caution to everyone, you never know, who knows who! When I was referred to a consultant at our local hospital, he didn't greet me formally with "good Morning", but instead merely said "Ziemek". Obviously he had read the report on me carefully and noted that I coached fencing, although retired. He knew Ziemek.

Finally, surely there is a coach in Britain who could write an advanced coaching book on Sabre, and one on epee, of an academic standard equal to Ziemek's. As there are plenty of elementary books.

Valerie Morrish.

## Voluntary Work / Unsung Hero

Are you ? Or do you know of a member of the Academy who is helping during the current crisis? What are you doing? And will you share it with us?



### *Voluntary Membership Fees for 2020/21*

Insured Coach £60

Retired Member £26

Overseas Member £35

Due to COVID 19 and uncertainty following the outbreak, the Academy is offering a subscription holiday from October 2020 until September 2021, for all current members of the British Academy of Fencing. Should members feel able to still pay the membership fees, this would obviously be appreciated, and will help to offset this years costs. This offer will not apply to new members.

Membership is due on the 1<sup>st</sup> October 2020, and will be automatic.

If you require a copy of the insurance letter please contact Stefan Leponis (Membership Secretary).

[membersrep@baf-fencing.com](mailto:membersrep@baf-fencing.com)



# Stefan Speaks

The thought of your Members' Rep.

When a day that you happen to know is Wednesday starts off by sounding like Sunday, there is something seriously wrong somewhere. Yes the UK and world is in a state of 'new normal'.

As I stand in the garden with the dog, instead of the rumble of traffic I hear the birds chirping and the bees buzzing. My commute is now a walk upstairs rather than the usual 45 minute drive, not that I have any extra time as I am working longer hours. But in those quiet five minutes whilst I sip coffee and the dog checks the garden perimeter my thoughts turned to fencing and the world.

Across the world historically each country has developed fencing in its own individual way through the years yet all with the same intrinsic imperative and aim. Even now regional differences and attitudes can be seen if you look. The history of human civilisation is closely tied with the history of fencing as people settled and needed fences to keep animals out or alternatively in and later with defining boundaries and areas of ownership. Fencing materials have typically been made from what was cheaply available, stones from a cleared field, the planting of hedges, the modern wire fences barbed or not, or as in my garden reasonably cheap thin timber fencing panels on concrete bases.

A couple of things of interest about fences. In Roman religion the god of fences was Terminus who was honoured each year with honey and wine on 23<sup>rd</sup> February. Ancient authors agree that Terminus was of Sabine origin introduced to Rome by either Romulus or Numa. The world's longest fence according to Guinness book of records at 5531km (3437miles) is The Dingo Fence in Australia, built in 1880 and finished in 1885 mostly made of 180cm high wire mesh to protect sheep in southern Queensland, the Australian government stopped maintenance on it after 100 years in 1982.

The question then turns to is a wall a fence? For example the Great Wall of China (China), Hadrian's wall (UK), Serpents wall (Ukraine), Silesia Wall (Poland), the Great Wall of Gorgan (Iran), the Berlin Wall (Germany) and many more.

I hope you have enjoyed this article and it hasn't put up any barriers between us, in the meantime I will leave you to contemplate the infinity fence ha-ha.

## Donning my Membership Secretaries Hat.

As the membership fees for 2020/2021 are voluntary as per article on page 18. I will not be sending out renewal notices, neither will I automatically send out copies of insurance and membership cards. If come October you require a digital copy please email me, if you require a printed copy and a membership card please send me an envelope upon which you have put your name and address and a stamp so that it can be posted to you.

Can I also request that if your details have changed since you filled in the last renewal form please email me those changes.

I send out the odd email from BAF to all members and am finding a lot of those emails bounce back to me with email not known, so please if you are not receiving emails about BAF make sure I have your correct email address.

**Thank you**

# IMPORTANT INFORMATION ABOUT DENSTONE 2020



It with regret that due to Covid19 the British Academy of Fencing have taken the decision to cancel this years course at Denstone. I would like to thank all coaches who paid their deposit and expressed interest in the course. All coaches who paid a deposit will get their money back. The course will be run next year at Denstone.

Take care at this time  
Jackie, Course Officer

**During the current COVID19 crisis it may be necessary at times to produce a digital copy of the Academy News.**

**If you are unable to receive a digital copy, or would much prefer a normal paper copy then please let me know, either by post or email.**

**During these times I would like to encourage members to put pen to paper; quill to parchment; or fingers to keyboard and write an article, we all have something worthwhile to give, and to share.**

**Please make sure that you have given your current email address to the members rep to ensure that you receive your digital copy of the Academy News.**

**Kevin.**

## **Members Advertise in the Academy News for Free**

Academy News is a service to our members and we offer the chance to advertise on its pages, whether it be for an **event, a course, your club, or indeed anything**. There is **no charge to members**. It would be very helpful if you could supply with me the artwork that you would like to see published . Simply send me (Kevin Nelson) the details and I'll see you get a mention.

**[editor@baf-fencing.com](mailto:editor@baf-fencing.com)**