

Merry Christmas

Following the government guidelines is very important, in the current crisis. We must be **Jolly** careful who we meet and under what circumstances. We may form a Christmas bubble from the 23rd December to 27th December, with up to 3 households, we can then meet people from our Christmas bubble inside, and in our gardens, and go to church with them, but we may not visit pubs and restaurants with them. We should also try to restrict contact with other people in the two weeks before we form our Christmas bubble, and the two weeks afterwards. The rules of your tier will still apply for meeting people outside of your Christmas bubble. But most of all enjoy the psychological benefits of a holiday celebration with those that you care for.

Something For Everyone This Christmas

Whether we follow the government advice, or that of their advisers is our choice, it will depend on our view of Christmas, and what it means to us. But what we must do as fencing coaches is follow the guidance issued by our national governing body if, when, and however we make a return to fencing in the current crisis. It is important that we keep ourselves, and our fencers safe and healthy by following the guidelines.

The current guidelines can be found on the British Fencing website on their COVID-19 page. When you start up again please make sure that you follow these guidelines.

Bah Humbug

Following the scientific guidelines is very important, in the current crisis. We must continue to minimise contact with other people. Although the scientific advice informing the SAGE committee's decisions has not yet been released. It is unlikely that the Christmas bubbles are going to reduce the spread of COVID19, and the scientists are already predicting the third spike after Christmas. So if you don't wish to form a Christmas bubble, **you don't have to**. Stay at home, and only meet an acceptable number of people (according to your tier) in an outside setting. Turn off the TV, it will only be showing more repeats of old Christmas specials. Dust off some of those books in your fencing library you've always meant to read, and sit down with them, & a glass of your favourite tittle.

It is up to us as coaches to set an example that others will follow. While we all wait for vaccination and the return to normality. Basic details of the guidance can be found on page 11, but do check the website for the full details.

Wishing you all an enjoyable festive season, however you choose to enjoy it, and a Happy, Healthy New Year.



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For all the latest information about the Academy
go to the British Academy of Fencing web site at
www.baf-fencing.com

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The President 's Piece.....

By Prof. Peter Northam

Welcome to this edition of Academy News, where we keep our members up to date with what the Academy is doing! My thanks to our valuable contributors for this issue.

My comments in the last issue seems to be largely redundant and overly optimistic with regards to the COVID-19 pandemic, how wrong you can be! We seem to be in a position that is barely better than when we went into lockdown at the end of March. I am in Tier 2, so at least I am able to coach with restrictions in my schools.

The 'Second Wave' of COVID has started and although slower, the indications are it will take some time to bring under control, with the inevitable consequences of very little fencing, except in schools. My schools have restricted fencing to year group 'bubbles' until the New Year, and have asked me to provide them with risk assessments, to enable us to start even this limited amount of fencing. Some Fencing Clubs remain closed, because venues are still not able to open. I have been told by one of my 'lettings' that they will not be available until Jan 2021, and even that is not certain!

This is a great burden and trial for our full-time members, especially those whose livelihood and very existence is at risk, and incredibly inconvenient for our part-time members. What the leisure industry and fencing in particular will look like in 2021 is anybody's guess. What damage will the pandemic have on our beautiful sport? How many fencers will we lose? How many clubs will not survive? How many coaches will decide that earning a living from coaching fencing is not worth it, and move on to other more lucrative jobs, if they can be found!

The Academy has helped by cancelling subscriptions for 2020-2021 (which I know has been welcomed), yet still providing insurance for all members. I also know that there are some members, who have continued to pay their subscriptions, and for your continued support I thank you.

Our Officers and Committee are passionate and dedicated volunteers who bring their time, expertise and experience to make the Academy the best it can be. They are doing this for love of fencing, coaching and the Academy, no-one is in it for the money (we are all volunteers) or an ego trip! We are doing our bit at the moment to update and improve the Academy's paperwork so that we are able to increase the number and quality of our coaches which in turn should help produce more and better fencers.

All we can do now is keep in touch with our fencers and support them as best we can, keep informed with regard to the Government Guidelines, follow the guidelines from British Fencing and keep safe.

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The Impact of Engagement in Sport on Graduate Employability

By David Kirby

Who do you have at university that you coached in your club or school? Do you think it was worth the effort to put those hours in while they were with you? Well, you should, because it appears it certainly was worth it for them - even if you didn't get much more than the hourly rate for what you did.

But the next time around... you have a chunk of evidence that what you are doing for your fencers really is worth it - to the tune of thousands of pounds. Of course they get all the fun and enjoyment, they get fit, and potentially acquire extra years of life. But that's another story. For now, let's look at the financial and employability benefits of being a sports person at university.

BUCS - the governing body of university sport in UK - commissioned a report on the impact of engagement in sport on graduate employability from the Sport Industry Research Centre at Sheffield Hallam University. They found quite clearly that a graduate, who had engaged in sport at university would have "a higher annual household income than graduates who do no sport. This premium is £6,344 per annum. For graduates who take part in sport and undertake volunteering activity related to sport the difference in annual household income is even higher, a further premium of £2,704 per annum" (p.8). This is one of the many pieces of research and evidence, which support the recently announced British Fencing FTEM Framework.

So let's see. That's £9,048 a year because you qualified as a BF coach as you left school, fenced for and coached your university team or club, and generally volunteered with the managing committee of the fencing club. Now that could be called a good RoI - Return on Investment, as the business graduates would say. That's a total investment of £450 and a week of your time (plus a considerable amount of preparatory work, we know) and you get an extra £9,048 in the first year? That's a potential 2,000% per year!

Readers should remember who commissioned the report. This is always something to look out for in so called academic research. All peer reviewed articles, for example, should carry a note about possible conflicts of interest. Here the research is paid for by the British Universities and Colleges Sports, so there is a built-in bias, and not being a peer reviewed piece, nobody mentions it. There's a bit on p.23 which says that they look at the universities that have sport strategies and their Graduate Employability Score. However, what we really want is their sport participation. So one has to be careful. There can be a lot of self-promotion in publishing. But does this matter? Do we not need some promotion?

You will notice that you have to be a BF coach: no university should allow a coach to deliver any training unless they are on the BF Register (insurance, codes of conduct, ethics etc), and BAF, being responsible and regulation abiding would support that. BF courses are getting back on track after the hiatus caused by the Covid-19 b break.

This concept is also supported by the universities, as Allen and colleagues¹ say, "Student engagement in sport whilst at university (especially volunteering) is considered to have significant impact on student employability, and is an essential part of the development of 'well rounded' graduates." (p.10). Employers also agree, with the researchers writing, "Employers emphasised that it would not be enough for graduates to simply list playing sport on an application form, but rather they are looking for graduates to be able to demonstrate the employability skills and attributes that they have developed through sport. Some graduates sell themselves short by not doing this as well as they might." (P.9)

But the real point here is that you will notice the potential benefit to your young fencers if they keep going at our beautiful game through years 12 and 13 and into university, picking up their qualification along the way. It's a way to challenge your fencers, it gives excellent holistic coaching opportunity for the coach who is looking for knowledge. It's a good way to keep up engagement and retention. All we need now is to make sure that we have enough interesting, challenging and developmental training for them to do along the path of GCSEs and A Levels.

But that's yet another story...

Further Reading, Books and Articles

1 Allen, K., Bullough, S., Cole, D., Shibli, S. and Wilson, J. (2013) *The Impact of Engagement in Sport on Graduate Employability*, London: Sport Industry Research Centre (Sheffield Hallam University). Available at: http://c1593.r93.cf3.rackcdn.com/BUCS_Employability_Research_Report.pdf.

Further information from David Kirby at dmjksabre@gmail.com (07970 642967)

Committee Contribution

The committee met on Sunday 1st November via Zoom, it was a long meeting, nearly 3 hours, as there were many things for us to discuss.

- A date has been set for the AGM at the end of January, this will be officially announced once all the details have been finalised. Members will receive their invite & paperwork through the post.
- Insurance was discussed.
- The devolution of responsibility for the checking & creating a coaches/volunteers DBS to clubs and schools was discussed, and how the clubs now create & check new DBS applications through Vibrant Nation.
- The possibility of setting up Zoom sessions for formal CPD sessions, and informal coach chats during the lockdown.
- The possibility of putting together a test scenario for examining online for level 1 coaching award was mooted and the issues aired.

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 reviewed and re-written, so they will not be available for the next few months.

The Foil Study Guide will be out soon.



Don't Forget the Minnows!

By Nick Chapman

The format I want to talk about in this issue is one I fenced when I was young, and hated. As a result for years I had nothing to do with it and dismissed it as a negative and counterproductive experience, however I have had an epiphany....ok perhaps not, but I have reconsidered. It turned out to be a convenient format for an afternoon's sparing on a training camp where I wanted some structure to the training and some variety from the previous days training. **I shrugged my shoulders and got on with it, when I saw how much fun was being had** I reconsidered my position and the virtues of the format. I went back and gave consideration to why I hated it and thought about how I could, if not eliminate the issues, seek to mitigate them.

Like so many formats the concept is simple. Two rounds of pools. No, that's it, just two rounds of pools, nothing else. The bit that makes it work is how you arrange the second round.

First round is seeded normally to the best of your ability given the information and knowledge you have of the fencers. The second round is seeded on the results of the first round (and here is the important bit) with the top few seeds going in the top pool, the next group down the seeding list going in the next pool, etcetera down to the bottom group of fencers going into the bottom pool. Those in the top pool are fencing for the overall top places, the next pool are fencing for the next group of places down to the bottom pool fencing for the bottom places. Many of you may be familiar with this system, it's sometimes referred to as 'Sharks and Minnows'. It is very different to the normal system where you seek to have a statistically equal distribution of seeds across the second round pools.

So why did I hate this simple format, well when I didn't make it into the top pool (I know, shocking) I felt cheated as I could no longer win the event, my final result was limited by my fencing in the first round which was dependant on (what I clearly felt were) some fairly dodgy seedings.

So why do I now see the format as having value;

- Firstly, from an organisers point of view it's two rounds, that makes it comparatively short and makes for reasonably predictable timetabling. Whilst this might not seem important it can be very useful when fencers are attending their first event and parents ask 'how long they will be there', you can give a reasonable estimate rather than the normal and very vague 'well it all depends on how well they do'.
- Next, all the participants get the same amount of fencing (not precisely true as the numbers might not perfectly divide into equal size pools, but essentially true in that every one gets two rounds of pools, no more, no less). This egalitarian format means participants get the same amount of fencing/experience/value for money regardless of their ability to win fights. The amount they fence is not dependant on how well they do. This has to be a positive especially with beginners.

- The next one is possibly the most important one to me, especially when using the format with younger fencers and first-time competitors. I really believe fencing to be a sport for all and a sport for life, as a result I want all participants to feel equally valued. I want everyone to go home having enjoyed themselves and wanting to do more. We all know that ultimately the ones that turn out to be the best fencers are not necessarily the ones who are initially successful. This is especially true with children, and even more so with younger children. The one who succeeds initially might just be the one who is strongest, the one who hit their growth spurt earlier than their class mates, or the one who was lucky enough to be born on the 1st of January rather than the end of December. Given all of these factors some of these fencers will do better in the first round than others regardless of their long-term potential. The difference with this format is rather than giving the less successful first rounders a tougher second round pool you reward everyone with a second round of fencers who have demonstrated a similar level of competence in the first round. Result is the second round should provide a more ability specific challenge for all who take part. The more successful fencers get the challenge of fencing with the winners of the other first round pools, to try and be 'champion of champions', whereas the least experienced fencers get an opportunity to win some fights, all be it against other novice fencers. **Don't underestimate the value of these little successes in development of a young child's self-image**, they really will go home celebrating their wins not worrying about who they were wins against. The worst case should be one child going home without winning any fights at all. The value of this second round levelling is immense. I have now run this format quite a number of times and I think every time I have had a smiling parent come and tell me how their child 'seemed to get better as the day went on', obviously I smiled and told them that 'clearly this means they need to build on this foundation by doing more competition' rather than pointing out that they were more successful because their opponents in the second round weren't as good.
- Finally, this format is incredibly easy to organise. No computers needed. Seed them into first round pools, then at the end of the pool write their names, first, second and third indicators on a slip of paper. Shuffle the papers into seeding order based on this information. Put them into pools for the next round. Job done. All you need is pool sheets and scrap paper (OK a pen helps too).

What do we do about my problem with not being able to win the event from the second pool? This actually turned out to be really easy. As well as awarding medals for first second and third in the round two top pool, I also give a medal to the winner of each of the other round two pools. Now everyone is fencing for something in the second round. OK, people in pools 2 still can't win the event but they can win something and that seems to make all the difference. It does mean that a random assortment of fencers go home with medals, but if the aim is participation and encouragement then that's no bad thing.

I think this is a simple fun and inclusive format that is easy to run and doesn't take forever. As a result, its possible to run in an afternoon, perhaps on a training camp, but it also opens up the opportunity to run it twice in a day. This is how I use it. I run one weapon in the morning and another in the afternoon in a shameless attempt to get my foilists to try epee and my epeeists to have a play at foil.

This is not a complicated one but it is excellent as a children's or novices' event where the priorities are participation and the fostering of a lifelong passion for the sport. **Go on give it a go.**

Maître Christopher Penney

- 2020



Chris started to fence in his teens in the late 1960's at Stockport Sword Club under Bernard Popland and Adrian Kellett and quickly found that he had not only a great interest in the sport but also a natural flair, and the club asked him to teach other pupils. He competed in County and National competitions amassing a number of gold, silver and bronze medals. On leaving school he went to the University of Wales at Wrexham where his main subject was Physical Education, concentrating on Gymnastics, Outdoor pursuits in addition to sailing, mountain climbing and all standard sports and qualified as a PE teacher. Fencing went on temporary hold whilst at college, but he developed an interest in martial arts and soon became leader of the college Kung Foo Club. In his final year at university Chris became a committed Christian and his faith had a profound influence upon his career.

After university Chris found a position on a project with a civil engineering firm in Wales. On completion of that project, during which he did not fence, he decided on a change and moved to Kent where he chose to take up his grandfather's profession of a medical herbalist. He completed his qualification and practised for more than a decade at clinics in Kent and London. Following his moving to Kent he resumed his fencing. By the mid-1980s, however, he felt the need to change his path again, and having been fencing at Gravesham Fencing Club started to coach there. Further coaching appointments followed: in schools in Kent and Sussex, which comprised a wide variety – prep, independent, both day and boarding, as well as maintained schools – and at Salle Paul where he worked with Peter Frolich and the Olympic team, which he enjoyed very much. Chris took his international diploma in Sabre in 1999, one of his proudest fencing achievements. During this time he produced many successful fencers in National Youth Championships and the Public Schools Championships, several of whom were medallists and three were National Champions. He also opened his own Clubs variously in Tunbridge Wells and Tonbridge. During this time Chris served the wider fencing community by becoming a committee member of the BAF and was a Regional Coach Educator operating in the South East Region.

Throughout his life his faith had been strong, and he first felt the call to ministry in his twenties. He was active in churches in the Church of England wherever he lived and in the 1990s explored the possibility of ordination, and just into the new millennium undertook training at Wycliffe Hall, Oxford. This was fulfilling but generated some doubts about some of the CoE's ontology and as a consequence he did not become ordained in the Church of England. However, he preached and ministered at many churches and gradually becoming more comfortable amongst the Baptists became a member of Tonbridge Baptist Church. This led to him being appointed Minister to the Baptist Church in Eynsford, Kent, in 2011, a fulfilment of his long felt calling.

As his commitment to the church increased Chris reduced his coaching load, and by the time of moving to Eynsford was only coaching at Tonbridge School, where he latterly surprised the club by arriving in a Caterham 7, in which there was hardly enough room for both himself and his kit! A little while after an operation for a heart condition he considered that retirement was a wise step, and moved to a cottage in north Wales which he had been renovating for some years and joined the Baptist community in the area. He had been there only a short time when pancreatic cancer was diagnosed.

He met his wife, Abigail, at university. She survives him.

From the Collection of Porthos



Two 19th century foils, both with string bound grips and very, stiff, rigid blades. The top one, with a very open figure 8 guard (which may have had a leather pad originally) has the 34" blade stamped HAMON FENG MASTER LONDON. He had a salle in London in 1824 and also taught at the London Fencing Club. He boasted he had never had more than 6 months training in his life, reflected, in my opinion in his teaching. He taught a pronated hand, using the parries of quarte and tierce, and put great faith in huge counter parries reaching from the top of his opponents head to his knee.* This is the only sword in my collection to which I can attribute ownership. It cost me 10 shillings, 50 pence, in a pre-plastic age junk shop. (eat your heart out, collectors!)

The second foil. Italian style, has the 32 1/2" blade stamped I K IN SOLINGEN. Solingen, Germany, was famous for its blades for centuries, but I can't identify I K. This one, in another old junk shop, cost 12/6, 63 pence!!

* Facts from the books by John Aylward, writer, collector and fencer. He received his last lesson at the age of 91. I believe he was a founder member of the modern BAF, and it's my pleasure to own one of his swords, still retaining his small, neatly written label.

Porthos

Call for Articles! For March Edition of Academy News Subject : Coaching Post Lockdown

Suggestions for Brief : How has lockdown affected the way you coach ? How have you worked round the issues posed by fencing in Tier 1, 2, 3, or total lockdown. How do you operate with respect to masks, space, equipment, venue, and numbers? How have you kept in contact with your fencers? How are you looking after the mental wellbeing of your fencers, and yourself? How are you keeping your fencers competition ready? Have you looked at potential funding streams to keep your club operational? Have you looked at ways that you can attract members back? Are you running beginners courses?

Please write and tell - it is important that we share this information!

editor@baf-fencing.com

What is the Point of Failure?

By Prof. Phil Carson

In fencing, hit's are scored at the moment fencers come close enough to hit each other and then in the blink of an eye. This distance/timing "moment" is measured in mili-seconds and is often referred to as tempo. Fencers take tempo dependent on the tactical context using hits, blade actions and changes in direction to score or to defend against an opponent. Everything outside of the tempo distance can be thought of as preparation.

When introducing the idea, tempo can be explained simply as meaning "in time". In order for the fencer to understand where when and how tempo arises, the coach needs to simulate the role of the opposing fencer and create points of failure. That is to say, where the action is not in time, the coach does not allow the hit to succeed. The high performance coach is skilled in creating and recreating realistic tactical situations for the fencer and to develop in them a sense of tempo including the physical and psychological framing to set it up and to deliver it. After safety and culture, the most important conditions necessary for effective learning by students are a realistic tactical context and for the hit to be in time. If the hit or defence is not in time, then by definition, the actions are not adequate. This is quite a useful definition, because the fencer can judge for themselves whether or not it is a good action.

So how do you coach "tempo"? Let's take for example coaching a lunge. Ask the fencer to take a step into hitting range; for a beginner this might be quite close to begin with. On the tempo moment, the coach, in the role of the opposing actor, has three basic actions they can work with; they can hit the fencer, parry the blade or step back - or any combination of these actions. The coach cannot do nothing, this is not a realistic role for an opposing training partner. To get the fencer to understand it is a timing issue and not a technical issue, the coach should do something different each time the fencer steps in to distance. In this way, the fencer will learn the conditions for where, when and how to deliver an in time touch. But what if they can't? What if they step in to distance and they try to lunge when the coach steps away, or they try to hit into a parry, or they are hit on preparation? Well, these are examples of the fencer reaching the point of failure. And it is on reaching the point of failure that the fencer can start to learn and adapt to deal with the situation.

Because it is such a small moment, a tiny window of opportunity, every fencer senses tempo in their own way. What the coach needs to do is to allow that learning to take place by staying out of the fencers personal experience as tempo develops. Telling the fencer when to lunge or otherwise is a sure way to interfere with this learning process. Rather, the coach needs to work on a high level of consistency in providing realistic opposition to the fencer's attempts to make the touch or to avoid being hit. Care is needed not to create a false point of failure. This is very easy to do and pointless. Rather the coach should work to find the point of failure with the fencer and to consistently recreate the conditions so that the fencer's adaptation can take place. Once the adaptation is made and the fencer scores, or avoids being hit in time, then the process starts over, with the coach working with the fencer to find the next point of failure so that the next coaching opportunity arises. **In this sense, failure is not an outcome, rather the point of failure is that it is a critical component of the coaching process itself.**

Self-Employment Income Support Scheme (SEISS): Third Grant.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/self-employment-income-support-scheme-grant-extension/self-employment-income-support-scheme-grant-extension>

The next **SEISS grant** for the three-month period November through to January will **now be paid at 80% of average profits**, up to a maximum of £7,500 (in line with the first SEISS grant). Since the weekend, this has increased from 40%, to 55%, and now to 80% in line with the furlough payments. A fourth grant will be available for the February – April 2021 period next year. **Applications for the third SEISS grant will now be open from 30 November 2020.**

Basic Guidance for Fencing after the Second Lockdown

- U18s are able to participate in organised indoor fencing following the BF guidelines in groups of 15 (excluding coach/welfare officer/covid officers) in all three tiers.
- For those age 18 and over in Tier 1 they will be able to participate in organised indoor fencing (sparring and lessons) following the BF guidelines in groups of 6.
- In Tier 2, those age 18 and over indoor can participate in socially distanced classes with no interaction between households/support bubbles (ie no actual fencing). BF will be publishing sample Tier 2 compliant activity sessions that clubs can choose to run.
- In Tier 3, those age 18 and over – no indoor fencing, except between members of households/support bubbles.
- 1:1 lessons can take place in all tiers at all age groups but restrictions apply with regards to interactions, travel and location.

Please note – this may change if detailed guidance from DCMS changes. Always check the current COVID-19 guidance before you start up, and continue to do so at regular intervals

British Fencing Website : 10/12/20
<https://www.britishfencing.com/tiered-guidance-december-2nd/>

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

E-mail 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.

News Extra - From Prof. Phil Carson: In some positive news, we've been able to expand our facility and have now increased from 6 to 9 pistes and introduced a gym. Here's a quick glimpse of what we've achieved.

https://www.instagram.com/p/CFxPNv1pZag/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link

During COVID Phil would like to offer the use of his clubs facility to coaches while they don't have access to a venue, they can use ours at anytime - obviously to the extent that the Covid regs. allow.

Contact Phil Carson for further details. prof.carson@yahoo.co.uk

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

Digging Further into Pre-Competition Periods

By David Kirby

Sally Peat wrote an article about pre-competition goal setting, preparation and anxiety¹. In it she explained ways of bringing a cadet fencer on to their meaningful competition. Here, we try to put flesh on those bones and take the concept a stage further. Specifically, we are looking at:

- Goal setting theory and practice;
- Confidence building;
- Programming, planning and cohesion;
- Kit checks;
- S&C and performance e preparation.

In the first part Sally's strategy should naturally be a coherent part of the whole training programme. For example, why is the fencer even doing this particular competition? Where does it fit within their plan for the season or longer? The goals that are written and agreed into the programme will colour and inform the goals Sally mentions for pre-competition. All would be SMART² goals, as Thelma Horn³ says (p.341)

"Goals are like magnets that attract us to higher ground and new horizons. they give our eyes a focus, our mind an aim, and our strength a purpose. Without their pull, we would remain forever stationary, incapable of moving forward... A goal is a possibility that fulfils a dream."

During lockdown training one of the subjects Chris Buxton⁴ touched on was goal setting, and how it helped progress the athlete towards their aims. Chris stressed how these goals should both fit in with and align with "your values and long term objectives". He said that goals should be **Specific & narrow, Measurable, Attainable/agreed, Realistic and relevant, and realistically Time based.**

Whatever, the whole pre-competition build-up should be designed to build confidence, focus, self-belief and general fencing skill set. Sally's reference, Gareth Mole⁵, says: nothing new! But everything that's in this period should already be in the grand design.

So, what's the timescale for the pre-competition run up period? That will depend on a lot of variables, but let's look at some striking ones. The number of sessions your pupil trains a week would affect the length of the period. Five to seven sessions a week might mean a two-week build up, longer if there are fewer. What do you put into them? This is the driver to the pre-comp camp: defining what's needed. The time for this planning is not just at the start of the pre-competition time, but well before. A coach's job is planning, just like a teacher's. To see the detail you could do worse than look at Lázló Szepesi's⁶ work when he trained the French team to Olympic gold. As in so much, you find it's the attention to detail that makes the whole thing work. You need to start by knowing what you want your fencer to be able to do, or the state you need them to be in after the period of preparation. If you, the Coach, don't know exactly what the outcome should be, how is a teenager going to make it?

One of the important pre-competition elements, as any experienced competition coach will tell you, is the kit check. Always allow time for maintenance and buying replacements. Then check again. It's amazing how grub screws can magically fall out, and swords mysteriously stop registering between checks!

Fitness should already be well planned into the programme. Here we are looking at the S&C requirements directly before travelling and on arrival at the venue. Often this is Mole's rest time. The hard work should have been completed well before the event. Now it's a matter of storing up the energy to perform at personal best level. Again Szepesi's⁶ programme shows how this works.

So there are some specific ideas on how to use and deliver Sally's pre-competition preparation. Now all we need are some events to try it out at.

References, Books and Articles

1 Peat, S. (2020, 14 Sep 2020). Pre competition: Goal Setting, Preparation and Anxiety. Academy News, 2020 (August), pp.4-5. <https://baf-fencing.com/academy-news-archive/>

2 Kogler, A. (2013). The Mental Preparation of Fencers and Others: Awareness-based concentrative analysis and mind fitness training. SwordPlay Books.

3 Horn, T. S. (Ed.) (2008). Advances in Sport Psychology (3rd ed.). Champaign, Human Kinetics.

4 Buxton, C. (2020). Practice (6). Stratford upon Avon, Shakespeare's Swords. (Slide 9) https://drive.google.com/drive/u/0/folders/1k6vUIPAXUxP3ThzfSQVV197qwfc_n_3m

5 Gareth J. Mole, [2019]. Pre Competition Routines How do you spend the hours before you compete? More importantly, does this time help or hinder your performance? <https://condorperformance.com/pre-competition-routines/>

6 Szepesi, L. (2005). Fencing: how to design success - Competition training and competitive preparation at top level. Canadian Fencing Federation. Retrieved 30 March 2007 from http://www.fencing.ca/coaching/news_coaches.htm

In Lockdown

By Provost Jan Lacey

Since the COVID-19 virus, many clubs like my own have not been able to meet up and use their venues. Which means that fencers are not able to practice, improve their skills, and keep fencing fitness. As a former Physical Training Instructor of the Royal Marines, I have considerable experience of cardio vascular fitness training, and muscle strength exercises. I have always given my club members about a twenty minute warm up session, which always includes cardio fitness, and muscle strength exercise. To make this as enjoyable as possible the warm up is always done as a game. Because my club cannot meet at this present time, I have given every member a fitness programme which can be done at home, two or three times weekly. We all know that doing lunges can be a boring exercise, so it must be made to be interesting. So I have included various movements with it such as On-Guard in sixte, parry circular sixte, and riposte with a disengage on the lunge, as soon as your foot arrives on the floor, immediately return to your guard of sixte, and repeat the exercise about 6 times. Then rest for a few minutes, now go on-guard in quarte, parry circular quarte, riposte with a disengage on the lunge, and return to guard, again repeat about 6 times. To get the full benefit of this exercise it should be done in a rhythmical movement. I hope that this will be of some help to those who may need to exercise in this difficult time.



Editorial : Re-Evaluation

I was asked by a member of the Academy during lockdown what my aspirations for the Academy News were. At first I wrote, "anything remotely related to coaching". But that's a bit woolly and all inclusive. So I changed it to Hard and Soft skills, as that is terminology that most of us have a similar understanding of. At the time I didn't have enough time for a comprehensive reply; too much paperwork as that week I was opening up outside for the first time since lockdown (As per usual if you want something done in strict timelimits - you have to do it yourself). But on reflection hard & soft are just labels, and maybe hard skills are those that you need to pass an exam & practice coaching, and the soft skills are those skills you engage in to improve your coaching. But as was pointed out by the member concerned, that's not correct either, as in that case the soft skills gain a huge importance in the learning process, both yours and your pupils. So after another re-evaluation, I have come to the conclusion that I do not know what is meant by hard and soft skills. So we must be careful when we use phrases, so that we know exactly what they mean.

I have also been in a re-evaluation process within my club, as to my role as professional coach (& Chairman). Since we restarted after lockdown, I have been giving less individual lessons and working more with small groups (6), or running a small team of coaches, working on the same lesson across a number of groups (with a differentiated offering, and sometimes different weapons). Planning ahead, and communicating that planning has become imperative, and very time consuming. Not only what we are doing on a club evening, but contingency plans, and testing if they will work, then looking to the future membership mix and financial stability of my club. This is a time when we all need to re-evaluate what we are doing, and maybe how we are doing it, and can we do it better. I don't need to re-evaluate the why, that happened when we started fencing again, and I could stand back and watch the smiling faces of my fencers.

Then returning to and re-evaluating the initial question; what I really want Academy News to be is a newsletter that covers a wide range of subjects, that are thought provoking, engage interest, look outside our own organisation/sport for inspiration, articles that are written by many different people, to a high standard, that is readable whatever the level of your education. But would still come as a paper copy. I hope that many of you will be able to help me with this ideal.

I would also like to thank all of you who have contributed to this issue of Academy News, your efforts are really appreciated, and have allowed me to concentrate on getting my clubs and schools back fencing again. Thankyou, both from me, and all my fencers both young and old who are once again able to enjoy fencing (For as long as the South West remains in Tier 1).

Kevin: Editor Academy News: 30th October 2020.

The Academy has had a number of enquiries about "**A Compendium of the Theory and Practice of Teaching and Coaching Fencing**" this document was produced as a limited edition run to celebrate the contribution to the Academy of Leon Hill M.B.E.. The Academy would like to apologise that the Compendium is not currently available and there are no plans to reproduce it.

However, the documents contained within the compendium are available to purchase individually.

Members Advertise in the Academy News for Free



Stefan Speaks

The thought of your Members' Rep.

A Story has no beginning or end; arbitrarily one chooses that moment of experience from which to look back or from which to look ahead. How can a coach in these dark times with little if any fencing going on make this year, this moment, this day, the point to look back on and for his/her pupil to say this was the moment when I looked ahead and had the aim, the desire, the purpose.

Well 2022 is the commonwealth games in Birmingham (July 28th - August 8th), there will also be veteran and youth commonwealths. So why not give your pupils homework that will inspire them and feel YOU if no one else believes in THEM. What is that homework that is possible in a tiered covid country and what has it to do with the commonwealth games? Give them the lyrics to learn for their countries national anthem, telling them you are sure they will need to know this.

Guernsey - Guernsey Dear (Sarnia Cheri) George Deighton wrote "Guernsey Dear" in 1911, after going to Guernsey to live, and asked Domencio Santangelo to set it to music. He soon composed the romantic waltz tune which was given the name "Sarnia Cherie".

Isle of Man - Arrane Ashoonagh Dy Vannin The Manx anthem was written by William Henry Gill in 1907 with a Manx translation later by John Kneen. It was performed for the first time that year, yet the melody dates back originally to 1770 and a traditional Manx melody.

Jersey - "Island Home" In 2007, the Jersey government started a search for a new local anthem. At a public concert the following spring, Gerard Le Feuvre's "Island Home" was selected as the new anthem. The anthem was inspired by the sounds of Jersey wildlife (the opening three notes, if played two octaves lower, are the lowing of a Jersey cow), Jersey poetry, and Jersey folk music, and was written independently of the contest, in 2002.

Northern Ireland - "A Londonderry Air" The melody of "A Londonderry Air" is considered traditional. The tune was first called "Londonderry Air" in 1894 when Katherine Tynan Hinkson set the words of her "Irish Love Song" poem to the tune.

Scotland - Flower of Scotland Written by Roy Williamson in 1965 for the popular folk group The Corries. It was first used in a sporting match in 1974

Wales - Hen Wlad fy Nhadau (Old Land of My Fathers) The words were written by Evan James and the tune composed by his son, James James, both residents of Pontypridd, Glamorgan, in January 1856.

England - Jerusalem From 2010 Team England use the hymn "Jerusalem" as the victory anthem. This replaces "Land of Hope and Glory" which was used at previous games. I hope to see many of your pupils of all ages competing in the commonwealth games and making it to that podium to sing their national anthem.

Stefan Leponis : Your Members Rep

Tel: 07816 423 809

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British Academy of Fencing

Notice of AGM – via Zoom on 30th January 2021

Dear Member,

I hope that you are keeping well and safe.

Due to the exceptional circumstance of the pandemic, we will be holding our AGM via zoom. We waited before announcing details of the AGM hoping things would improve and we would be able to all meet up together, however this is not likely to be possible.

Annual General Meeting Notice:

To assist with the ongoing and proper governance of the BAF, the Annual General Meeting for 2021 will be held online in accordance with government guidance and The Corporate Insolvency and Governance Act 2020 on Saturday 30 January 2021.

The members' meeting will start at 9.15am
and the main meeting at 10.30am.

The notice of the AGM will be advertised on the BAF webpage, email and facebook. To book to attend the AGM please email secretary@baf-fencing.com. A link will then be sent 2 days before the AGM meeting. A copy of the minutes for 2020 AGM and an agenda will be sent to those who attend.

There will be limited time to ask questions and if members have any questions they wish to put to the committee it would be appreciated if they could email them to the secretary.

Apologies for non-attendance can be sent to any committee member which will then be recorded

Post for election are:

Secretary

Assistant Secretary

Committee member

Members' Representative – (elected at the Members' meeting)

Changes to the Articles:-

A written copy of any proposed alteration or addition to the Articles, shall be sent at least 21 days before the Meeting, to the Secretary, who shall send a notice of any proposed alteration or addition to each person holding Membership of The Academy at least seven days before the Meeting.

ZOOM

Versions of the Zoom video conferencing application are available for different computer systems. Full details and download of applications can be found at: <https://zoom.us/download>

If you are unfamiliar with the system please contact the Secretary, Jackie Redikin who will endeavour to assist (Contact details on page 2).