

New Professors

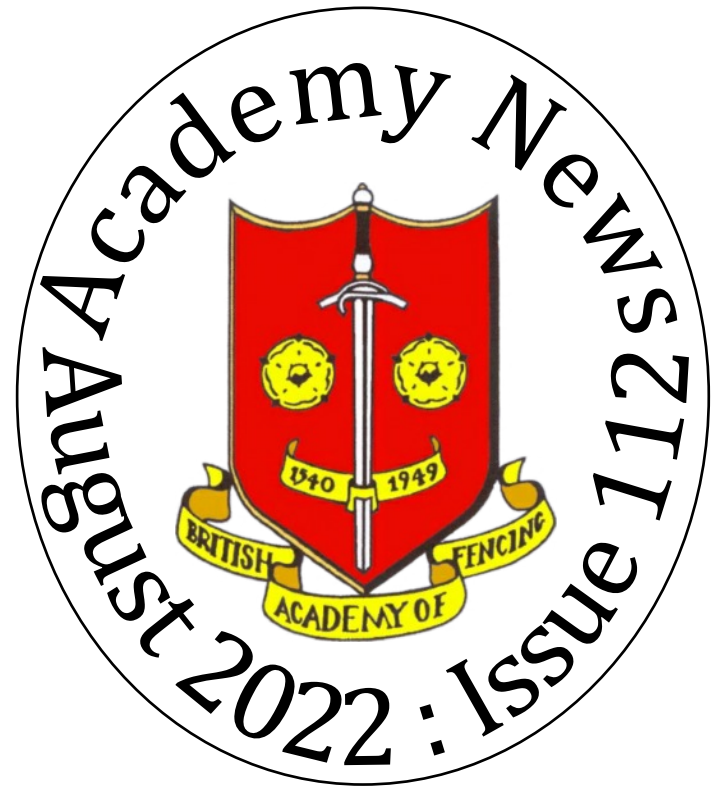
After a great deal of time, training and pure hard work, on Saturday 9th July, Tony Middleton and Jackie Redikin passed their final Diploma Exam and are now both full Professors of the British Academy of Fencing. Congratulations to both of them.



Professor Jacqueline Redikin

More on their philosophy and motivation to pass the exams, in their own words, inside.

On the same day Stefan Leponis also passed his Diploma Epee, and John Worsley his Diploma Foil.



Professor Tony Middleton

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British Academy of Fencing

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The President 's Piece.....

Welcome everyone to this issue of Academy News, thanks to the contributors to this issue and I hope we find you in good health and good spirits. No matter what situation you find yourself in, coaching fencing takes you out of yourself and puts you in a position to help your fencers.

It has been a particularly busy few months for the Academy, as we try to get back into a normal routine.

Of extremely important note, the Academy held an examination day on Saturday 9th July in Manchester. This resulted in the Academy now having two new Masters, Prof Jackie Redikin and Prof Tony Middleton. My congratulations to our new Prof's: on the same exam, Stefan Leponis passed Level 5 Epee and John Worsley passed Level 5 Foil, they all worked hard for their Diploma, hopefully, more new Prof's in the near future!

We have had four Committee Meetings, via Zoom, and five Coach Ed Training Days. The first Coach Ed Training Day was Sunday, 2nd March at Edgbaston High School for Girls, Edgbaston in Birmingham. This is next door to the Birmingham Botanical Gardens. This produced 14 coaches working on all levels at Foil, Epee and Sabre. Our next Training Day was on Sunday 24th April at King Edward's School, Edgbaston in Birmingham. This is next door to the Birmingham University Sports Hall on Bristol Road. Venue provided with the support of Nick Chapman and staffed by Profs Peter Cormack and Louisa Miller. This produced 9 coaches working at all weapons and levels. Next another Training Day was on Sunday 15th May at EHS producing a staggering 20 coaches and 2 fencers, brilliant! The next Training Day was on Sunday 12th June at EHS with 13 coaches and one fencer. Lastly, a Training Day on Sunday 31st July at EHS 12 coaches and one fencer. At this session we also held a Level 3 Foil exam and two Level 1 assessments. So, well done, Jack Stockdale-Haley (L3 Foil pass), Rachel Simons (L1 Foil Pass) and Ben Mitchell (L1 Sabre Pass). We do try to have course pictures available on the Academy website 'Slider' and Facebook, this way you get national recognition!

I am extremely grateful to the following Masters: Prof Andy Vincent, Prof Peter Cormack, Prof Louisa Miller and Prof Peter Stewart who gave their time and effort to help our members improve their knowledge and skills. I also want to mention that those who came were from Norwich, Gloucester, Derby, Leicester, Bradford, York, and locally. All the sessions have been friendly and informative, tea/coffee and biscuits provided free of charge, sweat provided by the members! This is an ongoing training regime, starting in Birmingham and hopefully developed by other Masters in other areas. It is your Academy, if you want something to happen in your area, get some like-minded coaches (or fencers who want to become coaches), and ask for a Coach Ed Training Day.

We have in mind to run an examination course, on a monthly basis for six/eight months, culminating with an exam week-end around about Easter. This will be for all weapons and all levels, if you want to be on it, you must commit to all six sessions, difficult I know, but this is the only way to have a good chance of succeeding. Dates, details and venue have not yet been decided but will be announced shortly.

On a final note, we will be receiving our insurance premium renewal soon and we are expecting quite a hike. This will be reflected in a rise in our membership subscription. We are a not-for-profit organisation, none of the Committee get paid, all profits from our Proficiency Awards, Courses and Publications gets put back into the Academy. In fact, if you come on Committee, it may cost you! Please continue to support the Academy by remaining members, more members - the cheaper for us all.

Have a good Summer break,
Best Wishes,

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Fencing Tactics: Percy E. Nobbs.

The Academy has a library of books that can be borrowed by members, and this book is one of those volumes. First published in 1936. Percy represented Canada at the 1908 Olympics. In the book he talks about 3 weapons, the foil, the sabre and the duelling sword. Its quite a short book by today's standards, but is well worth a read...

Quotes from Percy

On Footwork: "Nearly all fencing masters fail to give to this important matter the attention they should, and many imagine that the advance, the retirement, the lunge and the recovery, embrace all that is necessary and only need to be explained once, before proceeding to indoctrinate what the hand can do with a sword.

At Epee: "The stop hit at the arm is a different matter altogether and is really the best form of defence"

Feinting: "Before feinting at all there must be room for a feint: a really exposed part of the target. Feinting off target is just looking for trouble."

Sang Froid: A word on one's mental and emotional attitude towards one's adversary. One should assume that he is exactly as good a fencer as oneself; but different. The assumption of one's own superiority leads to rashness; the assumption of his superiority is paralysing."

Watching the pool: "When fencing in a pool, for individual honours, one should watch all the fighting; but it is probably best neither to give nor take tips, but to concentrate with pure egoism on what is going on."

On Being Taught: "The instructor does not act freely; his hand and weapon are manoeuvred to give openings for logical actions in offence and defence - actions which can be criticized and explained from the point of view of technique and execution, and discussed as to time, acceleration and speed."

Criticism of Tactics: "The master would sit on a sofa and call upon a pupil to fence"

"One would fence with the selected prevot till told to stop, when one would be invited to sit down beside the master"

V.A.K.

By K. Nelson

Visual-Auditory-Kinaesthetic (VAK) was a learning style developed in the 1970's, its underlying principle is that everyone has a dominant learning sense. People prefer to use their dominant sense to learn. Some people learn by listening, some by watching, while the largest group learn by doing. In reality it is accepted that most people will have a secondary sense, which is their next preferred method, and very often use both together.

The idea of learning styles go in and out of fashion, with the cyclical nature of education policy driven by politics. (It was in fashion when I did my PGCE). There are many studies now that attempt to debunk the neuromythical status of learning styles, as there is very little evidence that they actually exist, although these studies tend to focus on the Auditory and Visual styles^{3 4}, and not the Kinaesthetic style.

“While consensus among the academic community has found learning styles to be neuromythical, that doesn't necessarily mean that belief in them has brought about negative results. Much research suggests that learners learn best when presented with course material and online modules that run the sensory gamut². “

Although the VAK learning style is simplistic, we can still use it to inform our teaching; Remember it is a model that can give us information about how our pupils learn, and also how we teach, as we have a tendency to teach in the style that we ourselves think we learn best in¹. So next time you are in front of your fencers, explaining the how's & why's of a fencing move, are you connecting with all of your audience? When you stop talking, will they remember what you were talking about? Or will you be appealing to all three of these learning senses.

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4: <https://www.britishcouncil.org/voices-magazine/four-reasons-avoid-learning-styles-one-alternative> : Carol Lethaby :2017

Research conducted by Specific Diagnostic Studies of Rockville, Maryland, with 5300 students revealed that in any class in any subject in school there are on average

29% of students with a visual dominance

34% with and auditory dominance

37% with a kinaesthetic dominance¹



Mistakes: Part 1

By Nick Chapman

The value of a mistake

Received wisdom is that to have made a mistake is to have failed in that task. Failure is bad, therefore avoid mistakes. A while back I read something that made me question this, then in Issue 107 of the Academy News Prof. Carson wrote 'What is the point of failure?'. In the next issue our editor referred to the work of Carol Dweck (psychologist) saying that 'those with a growth mindset understand that failure is a way to learn'. These three things made me wonder if there was more to say on the subject, so I started to investigate. Turns out a lot of people have a lot to say about mistakes, failure, and learning. The following five articles explore some of what I have found or now believe.

Part 1 Philosophy: Fail first then learn

They say, 'every day is a classroom', by which I think they mean 'you learn something new every day' (as opposed to 'the only way to make a living as a fencing coach is to teach every hour God sends'). I found myself doing something new the other day. I found myself thanking my pupil for their mistake.

Too often we think of teaching a skill (in our case fencing) as being about trying to eradicate mistakes. If mastery is the goal, mistakes represent failure, but if you think bigger, whilst mastery might be the goal, perfection is unobtainable, therefore mistakes are an inevitability. Maria Hill (reiki master) suggests that 'When we recognize the inevitability of mistakes as part of the ongoing experiment which life is, then we can relax more. In doing so we may make fewer of them'. My personal preferred version of this idea is 'don't agonise, analyse'.

Mai P. Trinh (assistant professor, Arizona state university) says that 'although experts are valuable assets to organizations, they suffer from the curse of knowledge and cognitive entrenchment, which prevents them from being able to adapt to changing situational demands' going on to suggest that humility leads to flexibility. Over the years I have had many conversations with people I consider to be experts, masters of their skill or role (or at least, I considered them to be, at the time of the conversation), looking back I see a common thread. Generally, they expressed a belief that there is more to learn, that they are themselves a work in progress, those I considered expert were indeed demonstrating humility. They are experts from my perspective but only because they are further along the journey than I. James Clear (author) suggested 'an expert is someone who, over many years, manages to remain confident enough to keep trying and humble enough to keep learning'. Niels Bohr (physicist) suggests a slightly different, but very relevant definition of an expert, 'a man, or woman, who has made all the mistakes which can be made, in a narrow field'. Niels definition fits well with Daniel C Dennett's (philosopher and cognitive scientist) assertion that 'mistakes are not just opportunity for learning, they are, in an important sense, the only opportunity for learning or making something truly new'. Unfortunately fencing is not a narrow field, there is a lifetime of mistakes to make, perhaps that's why we encounter so few real experts in our field.

Robyn Davidson (Australian writer) tells us that 'The French word for wanderlust or wandering is "errance" The etymology is the same as "error" So, to wander is to make mistakes'. She suggests that we should embrace mistakes as they are a fundamental part of learning through trial and error, they are in every way part of the process. Maria Hill calls this 'adopting the evolutionary mindset'. I have a problem with this analogy as biological evolution is, in essence, the survival of random DNA copying errors, there is no thought, no learning in evolution! I find the terms productive failure and errorful learning to be more helpful.

Some people say 'Mistakes are proof you are trying', which is meant to encourage us that mistakes are a good thing, but implies some people don't make them because they don't try. Winston Churchill said that 'All men make mistakes, but only wise men learn from their mistakes', thus expressing a fatalistic belief that mistakes are unavoidable, but that it is down to the individual and what they do with the experience. Rachel Wolchin (author) continues that 'It's not how we make mistakes, but how we correct them that defines us'. In so doing she expands on Churchill's point and shifts the emphasis from, wise people learn from mistakes, to the idea that what we do with the wisdom is what is important. In his book 'Black Box Thinking' (2015) Matthew Syed (journalist) suggests that the single greatest obstacle to progress is failing to learn from mistakes, thus telling us that we must if not embrace at least study our mistakes. Robert Fripp (musician, songwriter and record producer) said 'There are no mistakes, save one: the failure to learn from a mistake' suggesting that there is only ever one mistake. I prefer Roberts idea articulated as 'You can't make the same mistake twice. The second time you make it, it's no longer a mistake. It's a choice' (Anonymous).

Matthew Syed goes as far as to suggest that, based on his study of the aviation industries approach to mistakes compared to the NHS approach as highlighted by the tragic events that led to Martin Bromly's work to change the NHS culture, 'Only by redefining failure will we unleash progress, creativity, and resilience'. Do something right and you gain nothing other than the reassurance that you can do that thing (let's not underestimate the value of that reassurance. After all there are times in lessons when we make sure that the pupils action is successful and that they make the hit/parry/whatever. It is important to give them the reassurance, to build their confidence, to boost their self-image, however it is a separate topic). Get it wrong and you have an opportunity to learn why, what went wrong, how the situation differed from what you expected or predicted and what you could/should have done differently to achieve the desired outcome. This process (whether it is achieved by analysis, experimentation, guidance or a combination of these) leads to a deeper understanding of the subject and a greater level of mastery. Essentially experience gained through mistakes makes for deeper learning than knowledge obtain from instruction. The real risk is not in making mistakes, but is in avoiding mistakes, which is why major corporations are now investing in becoming agile enough so that they can 'fail fast with minimum cost' (Tristan Hale, corporate coach) before learning and adapting. If we follow this lead and engage in errorful learning enough, maybe we can learn to do enough things right (sufficiently more things right than the other person) to get that all important win.

It may help when trying to reframe mistakes to remember that there are, as Prosunjit Biswas (PhD student) would put it, there are 'particular reasons or ways of making mistakes'. He asserts that most 'mistakes are being made out of wrong/invalid assumptions' 'insufficient/partial knowledge of something/somebody' or 'reliance on unreliable things or persons'. Firstly, let's as coaches, strive not to be the unreliable person, and when we are wrong let us model good learning behaviour by openly acknowledging and exploring our mistakes. Secondly let us continually strive to extend knowledge, accepting that we will always be working with those who have incomplete knowledge (otherwise they would be teaching us) and being humble enough to remember that we also possess incomplete knowledge. Thirdly let us work to empathetically help others process and adapt to making invalid assumptions.

Given that mistakes are widely interpreted as opportunities to learn (both anecdotally and within such businesses as the airline industry), next time your pupil makes a mistake think about thanking them, ...but do be ready for a very puzzled look on their face as it might be a new experience for them as well.

I conclude by repeating the words of Neil Gaiman (author), 'I hope that in this year to come, you make mistakes. Because if you are making mistakes, then you are making new things, trying new things, learning, living, pushing yourself, changing yourself, changing your world. You're doing things you've never done before, and more importantly, you're doing something'.

Over the next four articles I will look at the science/research into the field of mistakes and learning. Practical implications when coaching at competitions, delivering class lessons, and delivering Individual lessons.

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Other quotes from www.brainyquote.com

Wanted... Guest Editor

Could you write, or persuade a few friends to write a number of articles around a theme? For publication in the same edition of the Academy News.



Review: En-Pointe Wireless Display Set

By Kevin Nelson



Some of you may remember my review of some wireless options for fencing boxes. This is the latest offering from En-Pointe in Australia.

Having used one for the last three months, for foil & sabre (with a little bit of epee) it is time for a review.

Delivery takes a little while at the moment, as you have to preorder, but you do know roughly when it will turn up.

The unit comes in a nice self contained case, small and easy to slip into a fencing bag. The case

doubles as a display stand, the pocket boxes fit nicely in the back pocket of your breeches, although you must remember not to cover up the box with your lame. Otherwise you block out the bluetooth signal.

Display Options.

There are three options for colour display, mine is now permanently set to Blue /Red, and the brightness can be controlled, so it is easily used outside in bright light.

There are 5 different sounds it makes - so its easily identifiable from any other box - the kids seem to enjoy the foghorn like sound it makes. (Its a shame they didn't take this one step further and make the sounds different for each fencer), the volume is also adjustable (and pitch with one of the sounds).

Using the box

Plug in, touch the weapon name and then hover your point over the En-Pointe symbol, the connected symbol appears... and you are ready to go.

As with all wireless boxes there are some issues, and losing bluetooth connection seems to be the issue with this one. But it is a simple job just reconnecting the fencers. When on the floor my box seems to work better laid flat, rather than propped up on its stand, it also seems to work better with a wall behind it.

When I take this box to club, fencers will pick it up and use it rather than getting out a wired box.

I no longer use the Leon Paul 3 weapon wireless box for fencing sabre, as this one, and its predecessor are much more reliable, although heavier. But still ideal for a travelling coach.

Conclusion

At a cost of £1000 its reasonably priced against the Leon Paul wireless (£1087). The box works well and is easy to use, especially when the fencers are wearing breeches. {Prices at 19th June 2022.}

<https://enpointefencing.com/product/wirelessdisplayset/>

In Loving Memory
of



Michael Whale

10th May 1939 - 26th April 2022

West Herts Crematorium, South Chapel

Friday 17th June 2022
at 11.00 am

I first met Mike at Welwyn Hatfield Fencing Club back in the 90s. I remember it was a Friday evening, he wore a brown leather coaching jacket and he was of giant stature. He always carried a small white egg timer and a notepad for individual lessons. Mike was very knowledgeable, epee as being his favourite weapon; but he could give equally well lessons with the other 2 weapons.

My first epee lesson was on stop-hit (stand your ground and aim your point at your opponent's leading wrist). Then two weeks later, we had a visit from Bedford FC. I was substituted in and I managed to score 2 good stop-hits against a fencer with 30+ years' experience! Wow- What a result!

His idea of holding the french grip handle was with thumb at about 45 degree, with the handle resting on the fleshy of the palm. To disengage, just relax, tighten the hand and let gravity / tension do the work. He claimed that the handle had worn a curve on his middle phalange on his index finger from performing this action so much.

Mike was very meticulous, and he planned all his lessons beforehand. On one occasion, a fellow fencer was giving us a group warm-up session; only to be told afterward that it mucked up his original plan,

Even though he said he was retiring on many occasions, he still carried on coaching. He often gave me coaching advice, until we were forced to close by COVID. Mike often lent books and equipment to novice fencers to encourage them to stay on fencing. On, one occasion, one of his masks was chewed up by a juniors's pet dog.

Mike could be stubborn and believing only his method was correct. I remembered receiving a sabre lesson. I was using a quinte parry, as recommended by 4 different professors; he took offence and decided not to continue with the lesson. I later learnt both versions were correct. One was described as a straight parry (defensive); whereas Mike's method could be deploy as stop-cut to wrist then parry (counter offensive -defensive).

He also ran St Albans Fencing Club, being Chairman and Club Coach. It was later that he cut down on his activities, that someone else was in charge.

Mike is a fencing master at heart and he will never be without a sword in hand.

By James Lee

I was very sad to hear the news about Mike Whale

I have very happy memories of my time at Welwyn-Hatfield Fencing club where Mike taught me epee, and was training me to be a fencing coach. People coach fencing for all sorts of reasons, but Mike's reason was clearly just a love for the sport. He was always kind, patient and supportive, and he gave me a model of how to treat people and conduct yourself when coaching, which I am still trying to live up to.

I feel privileged to have known him.

Anne Stewart

I always remember Mike as a quietly spoken, but very skilful, coach. I first met him shortly after I started fencing, long before I became involved with the BAF.

Many years later, when I started on my own coaching career he took me under his wing as an assistant at one of his clubs. He was always very encouraging, and having the opportunity to put the things I learnt on BAF courses into practice under his watchful eye was invaluable.

Mike often used to tell me, with a wry smile, that all the coaches he trained with went on to become Fencing Masters, except him. He was a regular examiner for the BAF for many years, and always took an active interest in the Academy.

I was very sad to hear of his passing, he will be greatly missed.

Prof. Liam Harrington

It is essential that all activities that are undertaken by members (coaches) are risk assessed and the risk assessments are written down and dated. In order to comply with our insurers requirements, Academy members must ensure that they follow the NGB's (British Fencing's) guidelines when coaching and specifically those relating to health and safety. All equipment used must conform to the standards and specifications set by British Fencing.



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.



Time for Change: Reframing the Learning and Performing Relationship in Fencing

By Prof. Phil Carson

The QWERTY keyboard was designed to minimise the jamming of the mechanism when large keystrokes were pressured into the typewriter. Today of course, there are no mechanical issues, yet the QWERTY format is retained. By modern standards, QWERTY is a really bad design (Diamond 1997) but despite the evidence, the system prevails. This phenomena is known as path dependency where logic is set aside by the argument that this is how we have always done it.

Ian Renshaw, et al (2022) have produced a paper that invites us as coaches and coach educators to re-think the “how” and “why” of coaching. As coaches, we not only want our fencers to perform to the best of their abilities, but we also want to learn and develop so that our coaching becomes more efficient and effective over time. You will hear from many a wise owl within the BAF coaching community that achieving your diploma in coaching is a key milestone in your coaching journey, in the sense of having made it to the starting line. I think that is true, but also a problem, because it suggests there is a difference between the development of coaches through a coaching system and subsequent learning about how to coach for performance. Renshaw et al have identified this as an issue for sports generally, where although practitioners have moved on in the way they align learning and performance, coach education systems have not. “There is a path dependence, an ideological inertia, shielding the inherited beliefs about how skill is understood and acquired” (Kiely 2018).

The reason for this inertia is a lack of a learning in the coaching process itself. Fencing coaching courses are still largely about teaching technique, rather than how to coach technique in a functional context. Whether explicit or not, this outmoded teaching style relies heavily on the belief that once the fencer has internalised the perfect action, they will be able to rely on “muscle memory”, an idea the authors are keen to point out, is a myth. If you believe that technical drills are an effective and efficient means to delivering fencing performance then I’d be keen to see some evidence of this and in the absence of such evidence, I’d challenge the system to ask why the current approach is being perpetuated and why alternative evidence-based approaches are not being considered, never mind rejected? (Magill, Anderson 2017)

Renshaw et al suggest a way through this problem for national governing bodies and coaching organisations. Fundamentally, there is a need to see skill as a process and not as an outcome in itself. Good coaching is not about teaching

someone to lunge, it is about coaching their ability to recognise what any given situation is affording them and to deliver tempo actions e.g. attack, counter attack, attack on preparation, point in line etc. In technical language, "Skilled attunement is, therefore, predicated on each individual's ability to exploit the goal-specific information in the environment by assembling functional co-ordination patterns that are coupled to that information." The lunge is still there, but it is a bi-product of facilitating a fencer to learn how to act in the situation, rather than a coaching outcome in itself. Coaching, surely, is more about adaptability than rote learning? After all, rote learning was discredited over 100 years ago (Bernstein, 1967).

Helpfully, the authors provide four key principles to help coaching organisations think about how to embrace the idea that learning and performing are not separate activities.

1. Fencer intentions should reflect those needed in performance
2. Learning tasks should be highly representative of the performance environment
3. Fencers should be encouraged to explore towards stable and adaptive solutions
4. Let fencers learn how to act and adapt in the performance context

Renshaw et al conclude their paper by re-enforcing the idea that skill is not a thing in itself, but needs to be considered as a process and coached in context. Isolated technical drills are no longer a defensible approach to coaching when the alternative is highly functional, adaptive and instinctive fencers.

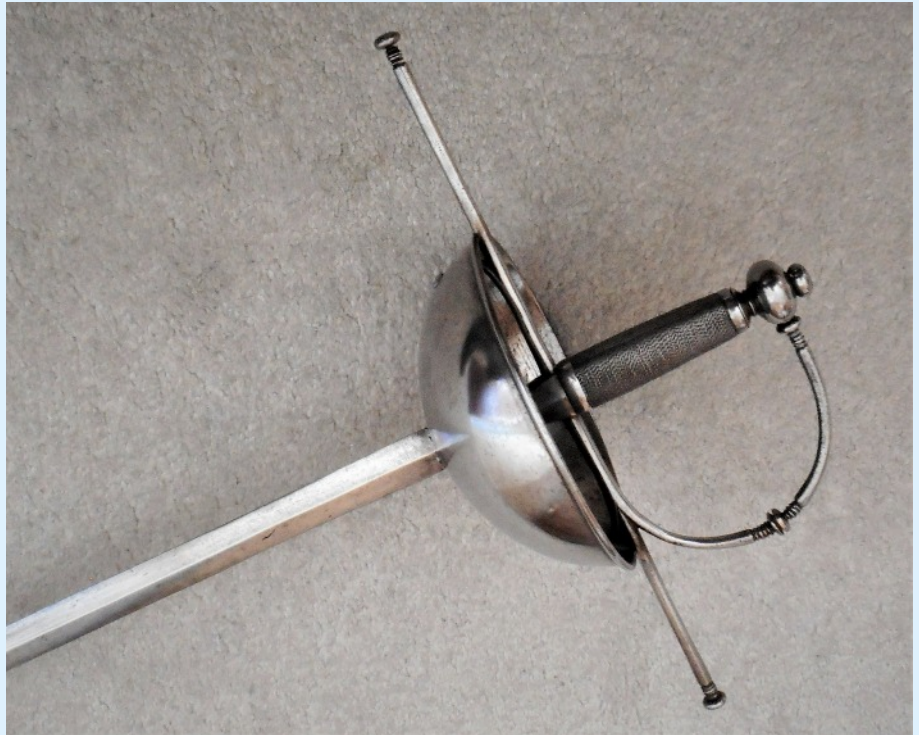
There has to be a strong link between coach education, coach development and fencer performance if any coaching system is to claim to be effective. The current underlying pedagogy will remain stuck so long as the prevailing approach to learning is based on models that continue to ignore evidence-based practice. Fundamental to any change, will be the need for coaching institutions to become learning organisations as part of a wider system. This integrated approach would necessarily require an examination of how coach educators learn; the learning process itself; and how the fencer learning of skill is enhanced. I again urge the BAF to undertake a root and branch review of its coaching education pedagogy, shake off the inertia and ditch the outmoded beliefs that underpin the current out-of-date approach. Time for change.

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From the Collection of Porthos

This is a Spanish rapier circa 1670-1680. The cup hilt was the final, and best, design for a rapier. It's completely original, with no replacement parts and is in fine condition. The blade is 37" (94 cm) long and the sword weighs 1 lb 13 oz (820 gm). There's no inscription on the blade, and no fuller. The quillons are a foot (30 cm) across and the decorative devices on the ends, also repeated on the knuckle bow, are a typically Spanish design.



Inside the cup is a very decorative plate (again typically Spanish) known as the guarda polvo. If your Spanish is a bit rusty, that's a dust guard. Your guess is as good as mine as to why it has a dust guard, and why it was necessary! It looks good, though. Inside the cup, there is a short, blunt section of the blade called the ricasso, which then leads to the tang inside the grip. It's stamped VA, which I presume is a maker's mark from

Valencia. Often the ricasso on rapiers was covered with leather or velvet to give a softer grip, as one's forefinger wraps around it.



Now the bad news! This is not a good fighting weapon. As the blade has no fuller, it's heavy and the balance is all wrong - ponderously heavy blade, unwieldy and sluggish. There are some tiny nicks on the forte, so someone used it at some time. Not my choice for a duel, though!

Porthos

Letters

I read Prof. Carson's article in Academy News 111 (The Coaching Emperor is Wearing No Clothes) with interest and would like to make a few points regarding Mr Kirkland's assumptions:

I have, roughly attended more than 500 days coach education days in the past ten years, including 5 day, 2 day, 1day and private lessons. So I am in a good position to comment on what I have observed.

Point 1: The BAF coach education system has been evolving constantly over the period that I have been coaching, 41 years and counting, and new ways of developing have been evaluated and tried.

Point 2: The BAF exists to promote high quality coaching and I have never been on a course yet where this was not the case. Furthermore I have never been on a course where the technical aspects were the only things emphasised. Nothing could be further from the truth; tactics, strategy, psychology, fitness, nutrition, child protection and safety are just a few of the subjects covered.

Point 3: BAF courses are run by Masters who know their subject from A-Z. Fencing is the highest IQ'd sport you can do so it attracts intelligent people. An ego oriented coach (and I must admit I've known a few), will soon crash and burn.

Point 4: I covered some of this in point 2, but will make this point. Fencing on the whole sometimes fails badly at fulfilling the needs of its customers i.e. the pupil/school/club that they are engaged to teach. To give an example: A school engages a coach to provide an hour long fencing session (this is the bread and butter of most professional coaches) and you have twelve beginners aged 11. By the time you have given a safety brief and got them changed you have forty minutes left to make sure they have fun and come back. What do you do with them? Competitively oriented coaches often fail to make the distinction that every pupil is important and not just the ones that are going to go to competitions, these are only the tip of the iceberg.

Point 5: This is a good point but not, I believe applicable to the BAF. I have been watched and been part of the coach education system of the BAF for a long time. I was in a former existence a work study officer with a particular interest in method study. I have applied this expertise to everything I do. The BAF system is flexible and far reaching; this is why it still uses examination in front of a board of three examiners. There is no box ticking, you have to satisfy the essential criteria to pass.

Point 6: The BAF coach education system is set up to engender the highest standards from the very outset, not simply to gain a qualification. The blade presentation required to, for example, take a parry of quarte, should be the same from a level 1 or a master. The skills are taught from the very beginning.

I would make one final point: the SSTT is the Standing Sub-committee for Technique and terminology. Techniques covers all the aspects of coaching already discussed, so there is no need for another committee. As Andy Vincent is one of the most successful coaches and coach educators in the country, I feel we are in safe hands.

Maitre. Donald Walker



Mask, White Suit & Glove(s)

By Kevin Nelson

What happens in lockdown is you take up a new hobby, and end up with something that is so similar to your old hobby that you have a serious sense of déjà-vu. (Although by now most of you will have forgotten lockdown). As can be seen from the picture, I am wearing a white suit, gloves, and a mask, although designed for a different sort of protection. Then there is the amount of equipment, not only hives, brood boxes, supers to collect the honey in, frames, foundation, tools, smokers, feeders, extractors, honey tanks, etc... It has its own language too. There are also arguments between beekeepers as to which hive is best, and top space or bottom space (bee space)... and then there is natural beekeeping, which I am not even going to touch upon.



One popular phrase is... Ask any 3 beekeepers a question about your bees and the way that they are behaving, and you will get 4 different answers.

The other phrase you hear a lot is... The problem with trying to do things by the book, is that the bees haven't read them.

Both sayings can be adapted to fencing...

As you gain experience with your own colonies, you come to expect them to behave in a certain way, same as your fencers, at a competition using their favourite moves. You can't just set up a hive and expect to get honey at the end of the year. There is a great deal of preparatory work involved. In some ways a fencing club is a lot like a beehive, in fact I was so struck with the similarities I decided to make a comparison, between the Bee Hive, and the Fencing Club.

The framework and principles are the same whichever hive you are inspecting, but you have to be aware that each colony behaves differently, even if they are related. *Those of you whose club has two or more evenings have you noticed that your fencers expect different offerings on different days?*

During the spring and summer (temperature above 12°C) I will check through the hive every seven days inspecting the hive for disease, checking that there is a queen, and that there is brood (Eggs, larvae, and capped cells). *How often as a coach do you sit back and watch your next generation*



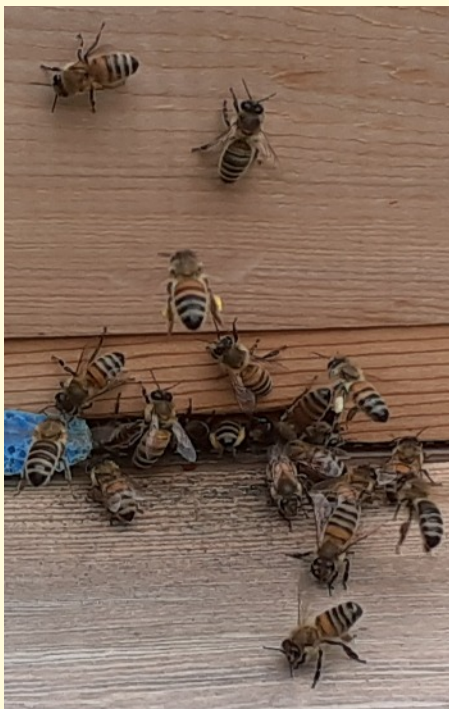
of fencers coming through? After each inspection we are encouraged to fill in an inspection card, so that next time we come to look at that hive, we have a snap shot of what it was like at the last inspection. When you write it out it is also a powerful hint at what you might need to bring to your next inspection, just in case there is an intervention needed (adding syrup, or are they preparing to swarm). *How many coaches write down or discuss at the end of a session, how things have gone, how they could be improved, or what needs to be looked at next week? And then use that to inform their lesson plans.*

Contrary to popular belief, the queen does not rule the colony, a beehive is the ultimate democracy, where the workers make the decisions. The queen is just an egg laying machine. But she does produce some very important pheromones (Mandibular and Foot), which are spread about the hive and help keep the hive as one unit. This is similar to the coach where the coach has to keep laying (new?) ideas to keep the interest of their fencers, engaging them all. How many coaches attempt talk to as many of their fencers as possible, either socially, motivating with praise, or suggestions for improvements, doesn't need much, do you know the names of all your fencers... do they know yours?



The number of bees in a hive fluctuates with the seasons, in summer there are more, as they are busy collecting nectar, in winter there are fewer, as their objective is to survive until next spring. Have you noticed how your club fluctuates with the seasons, with more members during the winter months (when there are competitions) and less members in the summer, when its just too hot, *do all your members come back after a summer break? What do you do to bring them back? Or do you run another set of beginners courses to increase your membership for winter?* Its a bit like the drones who have a good life in the summer (no work, eat, drink, and mate), but get expelled from the hive during the autumn.

One other thing that a beekeeper has to do is to check on the level of stores, by stores we mean honey. Have they got enough to survive until the next inspection? During the spring/ summer you hope that this will enable you to take a small crop of Honey. *This is similar to the club finances, does your club make sufficient funds every week to cover all your expenses? Do you make enough money to buy extra equipment? Or support fencers in your club who require some extra help?* If your bees don't have enough food, you feed them, rather than let them starve. *With your fencing club, if you don't have sufficient finances, do you know who to and how to apply for extra funding - either on a national or local level?*



Another important pheromone is produced by the Nasonov gland, you often see bees fanning with their abdomens stuck up in the air outside the entrance to the hive, this is the "find me" or "follow me" scent. This is similar to your fencers talking to one another, and wanting to come back next week, or advertising your club to other fencers or members of the public. *How many people come through the doors of your club on the recommendation of one of your fencers?*

There is one certainty as a beekeeper - and that is you will get stung.

So... there are a number of questions in this article, can you answer them? If you can how about sharing your answers with the rest of us? So that we have several different ways of working depending on our target audience.



Professor Middleton!

Time seems to go slower when you are waiting for exam results. On Saturday 9th July, after what seemed like an eternity, it was somewhat surreal to hear the words 'congratulations Prof!' My first thought was 'have I really done it?' After over 10 years of coaching exams, I had fully prepared myself to be told I had not quite made the grade and to try again. Indeed when you are taking exams it always feels like 'you're not quite there yet'. Having worked towards becoming a Maître d'Armes for so long, it seems strange to reach the finish line. It is both the end of a long journey, but also the beginning of a new one. I have heard several fencing masters say that the diploma is 'just the beginning'. Right now, that's exactly what it feels like.

Though I have reached the standard the Academy requires to pass, I almost feel I know less now than when I started! That's not really true of course, but there is always lots more to know. I'm reminded of someone who used to wear a t-shirt that said 'I smile because I don't know what's going on'. Well in some ways ignorance is bliss, and either way we can smile anyway! I hope that I never lose the passion for further developing my knowledge of the sport. Now the work really starts.

Before I go any further, I would like to thank all those who have helped me this far: fencers, coaches and coach educators. In particular a special mention should go to Prof. Liam Harrington and Prof. Lance Larsen who have given so much of their time without charging me a penny. Thank you gentlemen - I hope one day to do the same for someone else. Anyone who thinks that a fencer masters are unapproachable should think again. I have found them only too willing to share their knowledge and experience - you just have to ask.

Having reached this point, now it is time for me to re-evaluate how I am going to make a difference in the sport, and help raise the profile of the Academy further. What kind of Professor will I be? How will others perceive me, and thereby the Academy? I hope over time that people will describe me with words like 'kind', 'supportive' and 'generous' - possibly also with a good sense of humour! Well that's a lot to live up to, but I shall do my best. I think the days of strutting around like Napoleon are short lived. What we need to focus on is building a friendly, supportive environment that encourages others. That doesn't mean that the standard should be any lower of course (!) In the last few years I've had the pleasure of getting to know Ziemek Wojciechowski and Richard Kruse. When I first walked into their sessions, I fully expected to be ignored, or made to feel that I was at the bottom of the tree. On the contrary, the first thing Ziemek said was 'Ah Tony Middleton - the magician! Let me show you the magic of direct thrust!' It is a skill to make everyone in the room feel valued, but that is something we can all try to do. From my experience as a magician, I have seen this too with celebrities like Roger Moore - who was a gentleman. Not all celebs are nice of course - but the few that are restore your faith in humanity. When I did a gig with Gary Barlow once, I remember he made a point to saying hello to everyone in the room backstage - even if they were just a cleaner.

Subsequently when Ziemek published *This is Fencing*, he invited me to perform some magic at the book launch at the Lansdowne Club. It was quite funny because after Georgina Usher and various other fencing bigwigs had said their bit, Ziemek invited me up and said 'and now we will have *The Magic of Fencing* by Tony Middleton'. People looked at each other confused, thinking 'who the hell is Tony Middleton?' I then performed a trick where a pack of cards was thrown into the air and signed card was impaled with a fencing sabre. Well, people might hear my name around a little more now, so it is my responsibility to give the Academy a good name also!

Well, one thing is for certain, we - I mean the Academy and its members - all need to build and nurture a supportive, progressive and inquisitive community. I want to help drive that growth and development, and see B.A.F flourish in the coming years. Let's invite more fencers and potential coaches to join us, and inspire them to come back again and again. Coming together to share knowledge and skills should be a rejuvenating experience. I've always enjoyed coach education sessions, and want others to share in that passion too. Let's start building and welcoming through our doors the next generation of coaches, who might one day become a Fencing Master. But not only that, the more we share and build knowledge, the better results our fencers will start getting on the piste. I have recently had fencers qualify for the Welsh National Squad and GBR. For our provincial club this is a great achievement, but it's just the start. Those fencers in turn raise the standard, and encourage others to raise their game. Soon I will arrange regular coach education sessions in my county of Hertfordshire, and I invite you to join me. I will post dates on www.hitchinfencing.com so check there. If there aren't any sessions in reach of your county or club - why not ask the Academy for support?

Congratulations to Jackie Redikin who made Prof on the same day, and to Stefan and John who passed Diploma examinations also. It won't be long before the Academy has a group of new masters and can look forward to a brighter future.

Documentation

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

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

Examination Fees

Level 1 Assessment £11.00
Level 2 to Diploma £21.00 (**£26.00**)

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

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

Coaching Courses and Examinations

To put some myths to rest.

Coaching courses do not have to be run by full fencing masters. Anyone can organise a coaching course. However, it is important that the person delivering the training, as in any other discipline, has the appropriate knowledge, experience and skills. The level of knowledge, experience and skill required will be dependant upon the type and standard of training being provided.

However, for assessments and examinations there are a number of rules set down by the Academy.

Level 1 assessments may be conducted by either a Level 4 (Advanced) coach, a Provost, Maître d'escrime or a full Master. The qualifications held by the assessor must be in the same weapon that is being assessed. There is no minimum qualification for the coach undertaking the training of an individual for a Level 1 award.

An application to hold Examinations for Level 2 through to Diploma must be made to the Secretary of the Academy. It is then for the committee to consider the application and form the necessary boards. The Secretary of the Academy will also be able to advise on the costs of setting up examinations.

All assessors and examiners must be current members of the Academy.



For further guidance please contact Prof. Andy Vincent.

Committee Contribution

The committee met on 24th July via zoom, and discussed the following.

- Cancellation of Denstone, and what could replace it. After the recent success of the Birmingham coaching sessions, it was decided to try running a series of 6 monthly sessions, with an examination day at the end of those sessions.
- Insurance, and renewals. There will be a very short meeting once we have a quote for next years insurance, as any quote will only be valid of 30 days.
- History of the Academy.
- AGM via zoom or in person. This was decided by the fact that we have two new masters, and so the AGM will be in person.



Professor Redikin

First I would like to thank my family and friends for giving me support in my coaching and fencing. I would also like to thank Prof Andrew Vincent (coach and mentor), John Worsley and Stefan Leponis for their support and help at Stockport Sword Club.

I started fencing at Flixton Girls Secondary School and was coached by Jean Crowley who was a teacher at the school. I was a competitive foilist, fencing for the North West region. When I left school I stopped fencing and was reintroduced by it by a neighbour who found out that I had fenced before and took me down to the local club.

I was introduced to coaching by Prof Tom Etchells who got me to do a Basic coaching award. I was invited to attend numerous training sessions in the North West and saw lots of coaches being taught by both Prof Leon Hill and Prof Etchells. Tom kept on encouraging me to do more coaching as it would help me as a competitor as well.

Becoming a Professor has taken years to obtain, it has needed time and and commitment from my myself and understanding of friends and family of what I was trying to achieve. This included arranging training sessions with other coaches so that we could practice and explore aspects of coaching and looking beyond simply answering questions.

It has not been an easy journey with up and downs through the years on the way. I would like to thank my pupils for their patience and understanding whilst I was improving and honing my skills in preparation my examinations. I would thank all those who have helped me freely with their time it has been appreciated.

I coach at Stockport Sword twice a week with Prof Andrew Vincent, John Worsley and Stefan Leponis.

Favorite sword film. Zorro, black and white version starring Basil Rathbone

Advice I would give is; enjoy what you do. Keep things simple. Be the best you can be for all pupils.

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.

BAF Coach Seminar - Hertfordshire

Sunday 18th September, 2 - 6pm

Hertfordshire Combat Centre,
St Albans, Herts. AL1 5HN

Level 1-3, All weapons.

Staff: Prof. Tony Middleton.



All welcome. Advance booking required.

Find out more: www.hitchinfencing.com/coach-education

Forte & Foible

(Or Rats & Rabbits, or Black & Blue)

Equipment ; A single foil for the leader.
: Optional - wearing their fencing glove.

Activity

Line up your fencers facing each other in the On-Guard position, with their palms facing upwards about ½m apart.

One side is named forte, the other named foible.

If their sides name is spoken by the leader, then they have to move backwards to avoid being tagged (or forward to tag) once past a certain point they are safe.

No turning round - must use fencing footwork

Their hand must remain in front of them, no pulling it away to avoid being tagged.

The leader now must explain the parts of the foil, the fencers have to listen for their cue to either chase or move away. Use the foil and touch the parts that you are naming. Remember to use similar words like i.e. feeble for foible, or words with similar meaning i.e. castle for forte, to elicit a false response. Tell it like a story, with no emphasis on the relevant words (except for the first one or two, while they are getting the idea of the game).

Purpose : Warm-up.
: Attention span.
: Education.

Note : This works very well with other keywords and other subjects. Having an interest in science I have also used it to explain colour theory and stars to my fencers. Subjects they hadn't covered at school, a number of fencers were so engrossed in the explanations they forgot to move. Hope you enjoy... Kevin.

Safeguarding Referees!

By Nick Chapman

I recently attended an online zoom seminar titled 'Safeguarding in refereeing' (I know I live such an exciting life).

Despite what you might think (and for that matter what I thought beforehand) it was actually quite interesting and very thought provoking. It was a one hour (that inevitably ran to 90 minutes as all zoom events I'm involved with seem to do) British Fencing seminar taking as it's starting point the safeguarding material delivered as part of the current British Fencing level 2 refereeing qualification.

You might have expected given the subject (and the short notice given by BF) that it would be a very small niche event, however it had over 20 active participants.

The material was well thought out, well presented and at times challenging. Issues raised did not always elicit a harmonious response from the participants as the nuances of attitudes and approach were explored. This was good. Whilst there was much agreement about the basic principles, individual styles, individual emphasis, individual lived experiences were articulated in a safe space leading to thoughtful discussion (hence the 90 minutes).

The course explored such things as the roles of the referee and the qualities that are desirable in a referee. It contained much of the standard material you might expect from a safeguarding course, what is safeguarding, who is at risk, who is responsible etc, but it went on to consider a code of practice for referees, including issues such as rights, relationships, responsibilities both professional and personal. There was much discussion about the role of referees as enforcers but also as developers. The course concluded with some thought provoking and fact based scenarios.

We have all attended safeguarding events before, not least the required three yearly 'Safeguarding & Protecting Children' required to get a place on the coaching register, and for those of us who work in schools the annual September round of school specific safeguarding talks (I teach in five schools, groan), however this seemed a little different, despite many years of attending safeguarding lectures (some of which have been very good, guest speakers with specific knowledge, and some of which have been very bad, reading the material from the slides!) this had a new perspective prompting some fresh thinking.

In conclusion, safeguarding is everyone's responsibility, if you are offered the opportunity to attend this course, regardless of if you are an active referee or not, I recommend you do. It is only an hour (or possibly 90 minutes) and it just might help you to see competition and competition officials, the responsibilities they bear, and the challenges they face in a new light.



Denstone Cancelled But... Coach Education still continues...

Because of a lack of applicants, sadly, we have decided to cancel our Denstone residential course this year.

The Academy is planning to run a series of day courses, one a month, for those who are working towards their next level, starting in September and culminating with a examination board in March.

Contact our course Officer Prof. Jackie Redikin for further details of our training.

