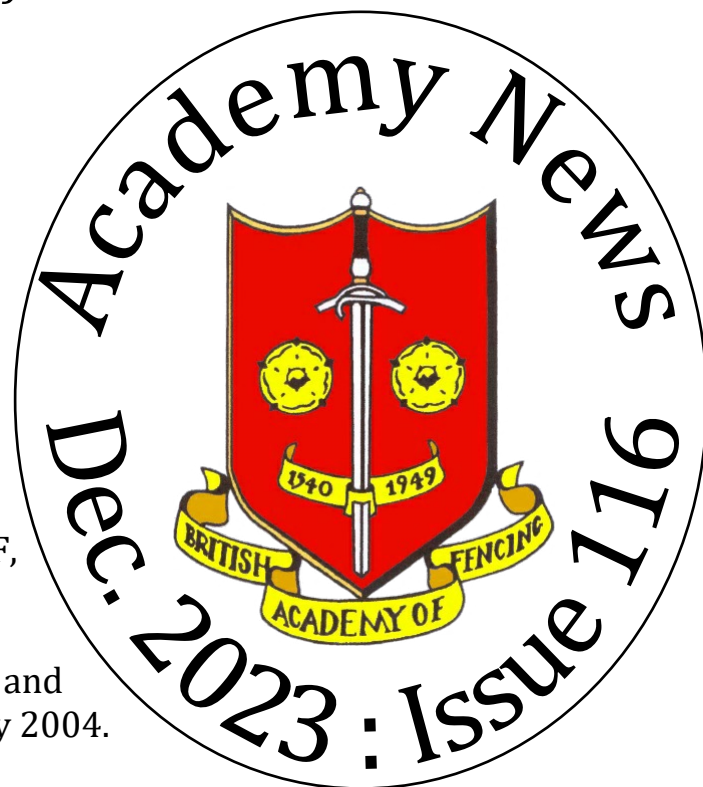


"Run by Coaches for Coaches"

BAF AGM Saturday 27th January 2024

This year's AGM will be held at:
Holiday Inn Birmingham M6 Jct7 Chapel Lane,
Great Barr, Birmingham, B43 7BG

Annual General Meeting Notice: To assist with the ongoing and proper governance of the BAF, the Annual General Meeting for 2024 will be held in accordance with the Articles of Association of the British Academy of Fencing and Companies Act 2006 on Saturday 27th January 2024.



The **member's meeting** will start at **11:00am** and finish at **11:45am**

The **main meeting** will start at **12:00pm** and finish at **4:00pm**

The notice of the AGM will be advertised on the BAF webpage, email and facebook.

A copy of the minutes for the 2023 AGM and an agenda will be given to those who attend. Apologies for non-attendance can be sent to any committee member which will then be recorded.

Posts for election are:

Both Vice Presidents

Treasurer

Committee member

Assistant Secretary

Member's representative - (to be elected at the member's meeting).

Changes to the Articles:-

A written copy of any proposed alteration or addition to the Article, 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.

There will be no formal post AGM meal booked. Members are free to make their own arrangements for an afternoon or evening meal if they so wish.

Academy News is edited by Kevin Nelson. 14 Duncroft Road, Hucclecote, Gloucester. GL3 3AS..

Email: editor@baf-fencing.com

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

A pdf version of the Academy News can be found at www.baf-fencing.com after publication.

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Welcome to the Academy News

In This Issue

BAF AGM Saturday 27th January 2024 Committee	1
Welcome and Information	2
The President's Piece Prof. Peter Northam	3
Exam Success Down South! Prof. Tony Middleton	4-6
The British Academy of Fencing Archives Prof. Peter Northam	7
Going Nowhere Fast By Maître Donald Walker	8
Addendum: Do you Sell Fencing Kit in the UK. Howard Wheeler	9
An Approach to Delivering Junior Fencing Sessions Adam Blight	10-11
Poll of Membership: Insurance Proposal Before 2024 – 2025 Season Prof. Graham Stretton	12-13
Fencing Warm-up Games Kevin Nelson	14-20
Make Them Think Prof. Bob Merry	21-23
My Final Word Kevin Nelson	23
British Academy of Fencing Historical Notes British Academy of Fencing	24

Contributions to New Editor

The e-mail address below will remain valid for the incoming editor.

editor@baf-fencing.com

British Academy of Fencing



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The President 's Piece.....

Following my announcement in the last issue of Academy News, this is the sad follow up. Peter Howes, President of England Fencing, has resigned, below is taken from British Fencing website.

“England Fencing announces that Peter Howes has resigned from the Board of England Fencing, and as President of England Fencing, effective from 31 August 2023. The Board thanks Peter for his contribution to England Fencing and

wishes him well in his future endeavours.

In accordance with the Articles of Association, Caryl Oliver – Deputy President of England Fencing – assumed the role of Acting President on 31 August 2023. Alex Savin has been co-opted to the Board of England Fencing as a Director effective from 6 September 2023 until the next AGM. England Fencing looks forward to presenting the new Board to members later this year.”

This means that the collaboration we (EF/BAF) is unlikely to happen unless the new President, who has yet to be voted in, wishes to continue the process.

The Academy will always work towards the development of new coaches and support those coaches who wish to progress. We have at least a dozen new Level 1 coaches, have several Level 2 and 3 coaches, two Level 4 coaches and two new Masters this year. Our courses run on a monthly basis and are open to all. See our website for further details.

Prof. Peter Northam,
President: British Academy of Fencing
Tel: 0121 429 9717
Email: president@baf-fencing.com

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.



Exam Success Down South!

By Prof. Tony Middleton

Since before passing my final diploma, I have been actively engaged in promoting coach education near London. Although there have been a number of B.A.F coaching days in Birmingham & Manchester, and week long courses at Denstone, there has been a bit of a gap further south. Exchanging ideas, building community and developing coaches of the future is important, and I wanted to set things in motion in my area. I began my journey as a coach educator by instigating a level 1 course in St Albans pre-covid. Prof. Harry Gulliver gave a hand and this was very well received, so I started to make plans to offer a level 2 course. Then of course the pandemic struck, and both time and momentum were lost. When the dust finally settled I picked up coach education again with monthly seminars from summer 2021. Prof. Phil Carson delivered successful sabre CPD sessions, and I was assisted for a time by Prof. Lance Larsen in working on the B.A.F syllabus with those who were interested in furthering their qualifications. In the last year, having qualified as a Full Master of the Academy, I have been delivering coach seminars on my own. This was partly to help me develop my own confidence and voice as an educator, and also because I knew that nearby professors might be called on to examine my students at a later date, and I wanted to maintain a degree of impartiality. It has not been easy to convince would-be coaches to take that leap of faith and go through the exam process. There is quite a jump from Level 1 to Level 2. But for those who did, it has been a very positive experience, and I hope they feel encouraged to take it further.

In August 2023, I'm pleased to say that the four candidates I put forward: Thomas Dickson - Level 3 Epee, Ian Brown - Level 2 Foil, Inesa Soghoian - Level 2 Foil, and David Clewett - Level 3 Foil all passed. Several passed comfortably above the pass mark gaining a credit in several parts of their exam.





This was a relief for me as it was the first time putting candidates through, and I was pleased to see that the training I had imparted was more than sufficient. All four had the chance to brush up in the days before the exam during the HFC Summer Camp in the first week of August. This was also the first time running a junior summer camp, which was also a great success. I can

see potential for a combined performance camp and coaching course running next August with an exam at the end, around the same time - so keep your eyes peeled.

It is great to see new coaches making steps in the Academy down south, and I hope it will encourage others to join us. Offering a space for coach development, and encouraging dialogue is important, as it helps ideas and methods to cross-fertilise. It's also good to have a space where you can try things out that is not at your club, and the opportunity to learn from those with more experience. If we don't develop our skills, or breathe fresh air into our lessons, or question our own practice, we can stagnate and become repetitive. We trot out the same exercises, and are in danger of becoming bored or too comfortable. Improving our abilities as coaches means that we in turn improve our lessons for our students, and stay interested in our sport and its developments. It also helps at training days to work with coaches who have more knowledge and experience, so you have something to measure your skills against. It's easy to think that what you are doing is 'fine', but when you measure it against others you realise that your blade skills and lessons need improvement. We owe it to our students to make ourselves better.

I am running a few coach seminars in St Albans (20 mins north of London) in January 2024, the dates are next page, on the website, and in social posts or emails from the Academy.

I hope to see some more of you here, and to build the community further.

Coaching Dates for St Albans

To be led by Prof. Tony Middleton, possibly with some assistance depending on numbers.



14th January, 12 - 6pm, St Albans
11th February, 12 - 6pm, St Albans
12th March, 12 - 6pm, St Albans

Coaching Courses and Examinations

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. vicepresident1@baf-fencing.com



The British Academy of Fencing Archives

By Prof. Peter Northam.

This year, I recently opened a box of the oldest Committee Meeting/AGM minutes of the Academy dating back to the 1949 re-formation. Whilst we know who the President's were from that time (there is a list on the Academy website, (News/History/Academy Diploma), there is no list of who were the Vice Presidents Secretary, Treasurer etc.. The material I have looked at does indeed list those names; names I have never heard of, rarely heard of and some familiar to me. It is fascinating and I hope to compile a list of each Committee and put it on our website.

I hold a small collection of fencing books & magazines (200+) that belong to the Academy, these have been donated by members. The value in these is that they record the progress of the Academy and in particular, dates and times, with pictures of newly qualified Professors.

This brings me to asking our members, if you are retiring, or no longer coach, to donate to our archive, items such as fencing books, past Academy Newsletters (particularly pre 2010, issues 51, 34, 32, 30, 29, 26, 25, 24, 23, 21,), photo's from Lilleshall, Loughborough Bisham Abbey and Denstone courses, or send me copies which I will return.

The other thing I have noticed are items being put on auction websites of particular importance, for instance, Roger Cronier's Diploma, Bob Andersons Diploma and also Alf Simonds Diploma. If you hold anything that reflects the activity of the Academy, I can then add this to our Archive.

Many thanks.

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



Visit the Academy's web site
www.baf-fencing.com





Going Nowhere Fast.

By Maitre Donald Walker

Professor Carson in his last article made the case for Coaching systems continually evolving, I agree; anything that helps produce better fencers is a good thing. I do disagree that coach education systems of other countries have been rejected, I do think they can't in many respects be applied. Why?

There are three factors, in this country that he hasn't considered : Time, Money and Facilities.

To train a competitive fencer requires all three, and all three are sadly lacking in Fencing in Britain. Successful Fencing nations have invested in all these areas. Their Fencers have access to salles and coaches for lessons 24/7. It's worth looking at the programme the Koreans instigated after the 2008 Olympics and the progress they made by 2012.

In this country it is frequently the case that venues are only available for an hour a week. Since the start of Covid many venues have shut, especially Council run ones, or increased their prices, sometimes more than double. Not all venues are exactly suitable either; what might suit a small class of kids might not suit for electric fencing. Even if the facilities were available the coaches aren't. The NGB does nothing to encourage professional coaches so there are clubs running without a coach. This leads to all sorts of errors, especially in the application of the rules. I was recently at one club where the Captain of the Sabre squad did not know the rules regarding priority.

Fencing is also not taught in State schools as it is not part of the key stage curriculum. This has meant that Fencing has moved back to being an elitist sport as the vast majority of children do not get the opportunity to try it. It never ceases to amaze me that the government are happy to promote sports in schools, like gymnastics, that cause so many injuries and complications like arthritis in latter life than a mentally and physically challenging sport like fencing. Before anyone accuses me of exaggeration, I worked beside an ex-Scottish under 18 gymnastic champion who had permanent curvature of the spine and incipient arthritis at the age of 18.

This brings me nicely onto Money. If a competitive fencer is having three lessons a week, assuming he can get them, and is also entering as many competitions as s/he can the cost is extortionate. This has the effect of narrowing the pool of fencers prepared to pay and again making the sport more elitist. It also reduces the amount of talent available. Successful Fencing Nations invest in their fencers, coaches and facilities. To all intents and purposes, we in this country are still in the dark ages.

Addendum: Do you Sell Fencing Kit in the UK.

Since I wrote and submitted the article below, but before the publication date of Issue 115 of Academy News, the UK Government changed (yet again, this is the fourth change I think!) the rules for most products.

Nearly all the article is still completely valid, with NO changes to the roles, responsibilities or even to information that manufacturers and sellers have to hold.

The ONLY change is that for fencing goods (and many other goods as well) the existing CE mark will now continue to be accepted indefinitely and does NOT have to be replaced by the UKCA mark from 31st December 2027. The UKCA mark can still be used, and that is the UK Gov preferred mark but there will now be no legal requirement to do this.

I would however stress that this DOES NOT affect any of the other requirements referenced in the article even if the CE mark is to be used.

I could comment on this latest alteration to product regulations by the Government, but I think their continued tinkering with the system speaks for itself.

Kind regards

Howard Wheeler

Proficiency Awards

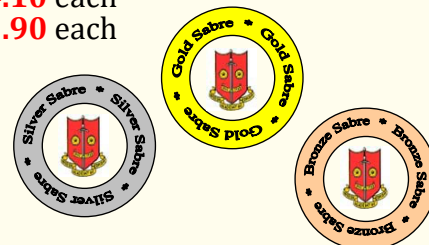
BAF Members:

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

The study guides are being reviewed and re-written,



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.

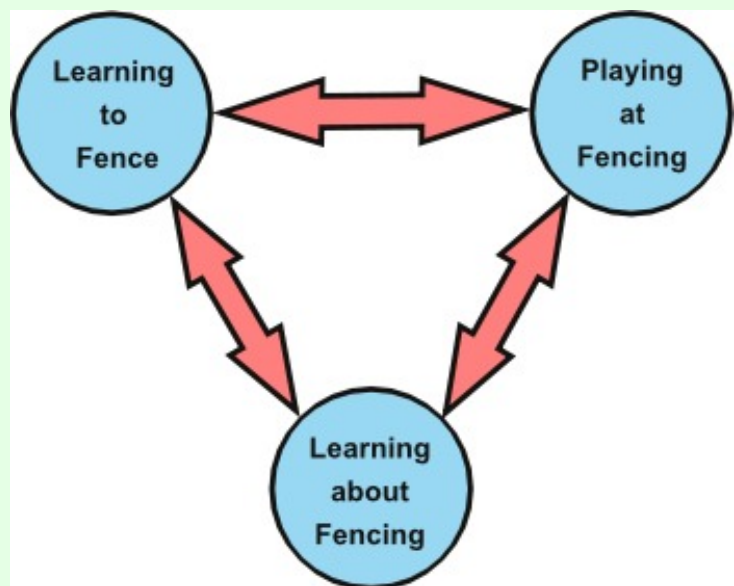


An Approach to Delivering Junior Fencing Sessions

By Adam Blight

For a period of seven years I found myself delivering fencing sessions in a small Chesterfield Primary School for the Y6 P.E. class. Once a week I delivered 2 back to back 1 hour sessions, each for half the class focusing on foil. This presented a very different challenge to delivering after school sessions where every child has actively and enthusiastically chosen to take part and has some idea of what fencing is. So each September I had a new group, most of whom had no idea what fencing is, many of whom had no interest in sport or being physically active and also of course pupils with various special needs. I had the group for the whole year. I also had an enthusiastic and supportive head teacher. My goal for each year was that by the Summer term there would be a competition using electric equipment and that the children would fence, referee and score keep. Essentially run the competition themselves and the competition would stretch over a number of weekly sessions. Each year I managed to make this happen. The real trick I found was not to spend all or even most of the time teaching and coaching fencing but to switch between three different approaches namely - **Learning to Fence, Learning about Fencing, Playing at Fencing**.

Learning to Fence was just that, trying to master and understand the different fencing actions and tactics. With this particular group the challenges and difficulties of this could become frustrating and challenging a bit more readily than with other groups (we know that fencing can be a very frustrating sport). When this began to show, the next few sessions would take a different approach. **Learning about Fencing** would often use watching videos of fencing activities as the starting point for the session.



For **Playing at Fencing** we would for e.g. run a 'pretend' International Tournament (done non electric). We had watched these kind of events in videos and discussed what goes on in past sessions. There would be a weapon check where some pupils behind a desk would inspect the equipment and mark it if it passed. Things would start with a presentation of the fencers and referees to the audience. Because the referees had to be smart I would take in some bow ties and once they had a set of cards in their hands they felt all powerful. The coaches would be weighed down by coaching jackets, give a little warm up lesson and discuss tactics with their fencer, with an emphasis on being positive and encouraging. When the bout progressed the coaches would try all the tricks we see from coaches at International events, cheering for doubtful hits, showing dissatisfaction for some decisions and trying to furtively give advice to their fencer without attracting a card from the referee. All done as a game.....Great fun!

At one time a mother had been objecting to her daughter being taught to 'fight with swords', thinking it was violent and inappropriate. The head teacher suggested that she and other parents and grandparents should come and watch the session. At that time I was teaching the children to do fencing bouts with a referee and four judges and about 12 parents and grandparents sat on one side of the room as the children fenced refereed and judged a sequence of bouts with great enjoyment. All I had to do was sit in a chair and give little bit of advice. It didn't take long before our audience was completely converted to the value of our sport. We also had some matches with other clubs and I got some participation in local youth competitions.

These sessions ended when the head teacher at the school changed and also as I found out, the school had somehow managed to get the funding for these sessions to come not from the school budget but from the local council and that funding ended.

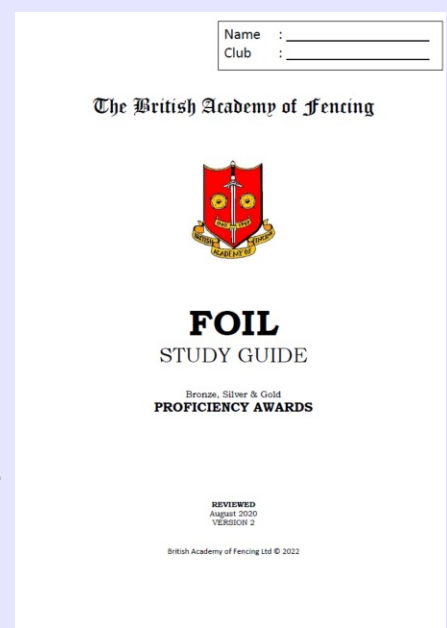
Foil Study Guide

The Foil Study Guide Version 2 is now available. It has been completely rewritten, which is why it has taken so long, and there have been some minor changes made to the syllabus. Changes reflect the character of the weapon, rules update, introduction to refereeing, a more pupil centred approach, as well as including some new photo's. The cost has increased to £7.50 which includes postage.

Order your copies now....

From Maitre Donald Walker

proficiencyawards@baf-fencing.com



Poll of Membership: Insurance Proposal Before 2024 – 2025 Season

Dear Colleagues

As we all know, insurance costs have increased exponentially yearly. This has affected the BAF and taken up much of colleagues' time during the year resolving issues and responding to questions raised at recent AGMs and resultant correspondence.

Just as it is deemed essential that DBS covers working members of the Academy in a like-minded and parallel membership rule, all active members must be covered by insurance.

The BAF Committee is undertaking a member's online/postal survey with one of two possible solutions to cover working members' insurance for Public Liability and Professional Indemnity.

The survey will be open to both 2022/23 members and 2021/22 who have yet to renew (reason: using Clause 24)

This is a survey, not a vote, so the committee will not be beholden to the result. However, the Committee will strongly consider the survey result, reflecting the membership's will.

This one-time poll will end the perennial debate, taking us away from planning and delivering coaching courses that will better enable coaches' development.

SURVEY: This is an anonymous survey managed by appointed tellers.

BAF Committee

Graham Stretton: VP2 BAF
10.11.23

Note: The survey was sent out via e-mail on 2nd December 2023

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.**

Simply send the Editor your advert.

editor@baf-fencing.com

The Committee's Observations on Proposal One:

- If the membership goes for option one, then the BAF will have to pay the insurance premium upfront and claim the money back from the membership.
- If members choose not to renew their membership, the BAF will be left with the bill. This is the current situation.
- **Members are aware that the BAF uses reserves to enact this procedure.**

The Committee's Observations on Proposal Two*Points for:*

- The subscription fee for the Academy will be considerably lower than at present.
- Members will be able to source insurance policies that suit their individual needs.
- The members will be free to choose from whichever provider they feel is best for them. (e.g. British Fencing Coaching Insurance, UK Coaching, Home Country Insurance, Private Coaching Insurance, etc.)
- The individual member can determine the duration of Individual insurance policies.

Points against:

- Individual members will have to ensure an insurance policy always covers them.
- Members must comply with the terms and conditions set out by whomever they choose as an insurance provider. Depending on who they use as an insurance provider, this could be more demanding for some.

Please complete the survey and return it to Jacqueline Redikin, Secretary, British Academy of Fencing (secretary@baf-fencing.com) by 10/01/24:
Put one X in your preferred proposal.

Name:

BAF Number:

Proposal One:

The Committee is charged with securing the most beneficial insurance coverage for Membership, and the actual costs are passed onto the membership following constitutional requirements. (The precise split between insurance and constitutional running is being delineated.)

Proposal Two:

Individual members of the Academy source their own coaching insurance providers and pay their own premiums. When renewing their Academy annual membership, all Active Coaches must submit current proof of insurance along with DBS proof and undertake assurance of maintaining insurance throughout the membership year.



Fencing Warm-up Games

By Kevin Nelson

Over the years as a coach, I have tried to vary my warm ups so that my pupils do not get bored with the same warm-up every week. So I have developed/modified/stolen a number of warm up exercises to use in schools and for my U18's. You may recognise many of these games by other names.

All the games on the next few pages have been play tested by my fencers over the years, and I am always on the lookout for new ones, although I do try to make sure that they have a fencing purpose. I hope that you enjoy trying them out. Just make sure that your risk assessment covers your activities...

Head, Shoulders, ...

Apparatus : Mask, Glove, and Chair; plus glove should be worn on fencing hand.

Activity

Put the mask on top of the chair, and then the glove on top of the mask.

The fencers face each other in the on-guard position, at lunge distance from the glove. Tell them to go on-guard, and on the word fence, they both have to try and grab the glove. Once they have the idea, then, work through the children's rhyme; Head, Shoulders, Knees & Toes. While staying on guard, the fencers have to touch the part of the body mentioned with their non-sword hand, while keeping their sword hand in the on-guard position. Say fence randomly.

Note: This seems to be a highly competitive game.

Variation 1 : Step lunge - but watch for them sneaking forward.

Variation 2 : Tell a story, similar to rats & rabbits.

Purpose : Warm-up
: Listening for the referee
: Ready to go off the mark

This could be followed up with a scenario where a point is given for having priority off the line, and a second point for the actual hit.

Sabre Strike

Apparatus : Foam Sabre(s)

Activity

Essentially British Bulldogs, but you tag with a foam sabre.

The players all line up against one wall. On a signal they all have to run to the other side of the room. Initially one player is on, and has to tag the others with the foam sabre. When a player has been tagged they have to stand still in the place where they were tagged, becoming an obstacle. The final player to be tagged is the next one on (unless they have been on before when they select the next player)

Variation 1 : More than one player tagging, or a reduced playing area.

Variation 2 : Only one den, so they have to run on the signal.

Variation 3 : The obstacles may lunge tag, as long as their back foot remains on the floor

Purpose : Warm-up.

; Use of a straight arm when attacking, a shoulder swipe will usually miss, and is more likely to hurt.

Line Tag

Apparatus : Floor with lines marked for other sports.

: Foam Sabre(s) For tagging

Activity

If you have a hall with lines on the floor then they can be used for line tag.

The players use fencing footwork to move along the lines, but must keep one foot on the line. One player is “on”, and chases the others. When they are hit (out) they sit down and block the line, other players cannot go past or over them, but the player who is “on” may go past.

Variation : Limit the players to certain coloured lines, but not the tagger.

Variation : Packman (Run instead of fencing footwork)

Purpose : Warm-up

: Puts footwork under pressure

Simon Says

Apparatus : None

Activity

All fencers in a line. (Initially on-guard)

Give a simple footwork command, if it is prefixed with “Simon Says” then they do it, If not then they don’t move.

Note: Helps to use a single item of footwork, for each command as this will make it clearer, also split lunge from recovery.

If they move when they shouldn’t, or don’t move when they should they are “out” sitting down on the floor quietly.

Last person standing wins.

Variation : Instead of sitting out they can continue, but have to count the number of times they get out.

Variation : Can be used to teach refereeing hand signals as well. But string phrases together, as well as doing single commands.

Purpose : Footwork practice
: Attention span

Rock, Paper, Scissors

Apparatus : Glove for each fencer.

Activity

Pair the fencers up facing each other. both on-guard.

They then play rock paper scissors

The winner has to try and tag or touch the loser on the gloved hand, while the loser tries to run away, to a specified point.

Start again.

Variation : Winner has to run away

Variation : Fitness forfeits if caught

Purpose : Timing
: Reaction to a stimulus
: Teach the crossover step

Witches Finger

Apparatus : None

Activity

All your fencers lined up in the on-guard position against one wall.

They have to use fencing footwork to get to the other end of the hall, without the “witch” seeing them move

The “witch” turns round walking to the other end, and counts out loud ...1... 2...3, and on 3 turns.

The witch then points at those who were moving and they have to back to the start again.

Repeat until someone reaches the other end.

Variation : Vary the timing of the count i.e. ...1.....2.3 but keep it consistent for that turn.

Variation : Don't count out loud, but allow your footsteps to make some noise.

Variation : Have a second person, making sure that they are not running, but using fencing footwork, and if not they go back to the start.

Purpose : Rhythm recognition
: Footwork practice

Troll on the Bridge

Apparatus : Full Kit, P.E. bench (Wooden & suitable for standing on)

Activity

The leader stands on the bench, towards one end, in the on-guard position (Troll).

The fencers line up, and try to cross the bridge, they have to attack the troll, they are only allowed one go, and no retreat. Failure to hit with their attack, means they they have to step off the bridge, and go back to the end of the line.

Note : With younger ones, open their imagination, and tell them that the bridge is over a lava pit (or similar), and allow them to die horribly, as they fall off the bridge.

The troll uses different parries, or attacks for the fencers to deceive.

Variations : Keep going until everyone has completed the action.

Variation : Everyone rejoins the line, and the troll changes the action, when the line is back to the start.

Variation : The troll changes the action every time he is defeated.

Variation : Set up a pattern of actions, and see how long it is before the fencers realise.

Purpose : Observation of your opponent

Forte & Foible

(Or Rats & Rabbits, or Black and 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 name is spoken by the leader, then they have to run 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 run 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 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

Last Man Standing

Apparatus : A foam sabre for all participants

Activity

The Fencers spread everyone out around the hall with their sabres:

Basic rules are one hit received and you are out.

Any arguments then both fencers are out.

Once out then stand against the side of the wall, sabre point downwards.

Last person standing wins.

Variation : If you do not have enough foam sabres, then allow those fencers to join in, but they have an unlimited amount of lives, until they take a sabre off of someone who is out, when the normal rules will apply to them.

Purpose : Warm-up
: Tactical thinking

Foil Circle

Apparatus : French Foil for each person. (Or a rod)
: Mask for each person

Activity

Put Mask on, and form a circle facing inwards

Place foil point downwards and balance it on its tip. Use your index finger of your sword hand to hold it upright. Always return to this position.

Variation : Let go clap and catch, then two claps, then touch head., Each time catching your foil before it falls.

Variation : Spin or jump round and catch again.

Variation : The leader calls out a direction (left or right), and you move in that direction to catch your neighbours foil.

Note : You can make the game easier or harder, by changing the size of the circle.

Note : Move arm to catch - makes it much easier (Arm before foot)

Variation : Can also be done as a pairs game, where you balance the foil with your back hand about ½ metre to your side. Your partner lines up with the foil, and also holds a foil in their back hand. On a signal you both lunge and catch each others foils.

Variation : Similar to Silent Rifle Drill (see Y-Tube) you can pick up, throw from hand to hand, spin the foil, and move it around your body. But do make sure you practice all the moves that you wish to demonstrate beforehand. Needs plenty of space.

Purpose : Arm before foot
: Concentration
: Dexterity

Catch, or Not

Apparatus : Two different sorts of balls (or bean bags). The difference can be size or colour.

Activity

Pair the fencers up facing each other one on-guard.

The other fencer, is stood ready to throw the balls. (Underarm)

One of the balls the fencer has to avoid, the other they have to catch. i.e. Catch the red ball, avoid the blue one.

Variation : Change the distance : The closer they are the less time they have.

Variation : Have the on-guard fencer stand on a balance board.

Purpose : Decision making

Circular Catch

Apparatus : Several Tennis balls or Juggling balls
: Hoodie with front pocket or big pockets for leader.

Note : Juggling balls don't roll as far when they are dropped

Activity

Everyone stands in a circle including the leader.

All throws are underarm .

Note : So there is no such thing as a bad catch, but there is a bad throw.

You may not throw to the people directly either side of you in the circle

You call out the name of the person that you are going to throw to, **before** you throw the ball.

On the first round only, once the person has thrown they put their hand up, and must remember who they have thrown to, because they are only going to throw to that person.

The final person will then throw back to the leader, and all the hands can go down.

The second and subsequent rounds, the names are still called, before you throw, but as confidence grows the leader slowly adds more balls into the ring until several are passing round the group.

When it collapses, then collect the balls in and start again.

Variation : Have different size/weight balls

Variation : Randomly throw to someone within the circle - but do call their name first.

Purpose : Getting to know your fencers names

: Co-ordination / distance judgement

: Attention span

: Paying attention to what is important, and not worrying about what is going on around you.





Make Them Think

By Bob Merry

Although I am 82 and have occasional problems with spinal stenosis, I still enjoy giving lessons at my club. Of course, nowadays, such lessons are not the ones where the pupil is chased up and down the piste, doing action after action, until they are sweating profusely (were they ever?), but rather I try to play to my strengths and concentrate on getting the pupil to think. From the very beginning, I want them to know, not just the HOW, but the WHY and the WHEN of any action and to be able to solve problems.

I have long been a believer in a Socratic style of teaching, the pupil learning by answering a series of questions designed to lead them through the subject. I employed this extensively in the RAF, when I taught the mysteries of electronics and later prepared programmed learning texts. During my own training for this latter task, I was introduced to the work of the educational psychologist B F Skinner and was fascinated by films of his experiments in the 1930s, when he "taught" pigeons to play table tennis, amongst other things. I sometimes think that, using similar methods to Skinner, it might be possible, with a lot of patience, to teach a chimpanzee to do all the fencing movements necessary to pass, say, a Bronze Proficiency Award (put your hand down that coach who wants to say they already have one at their club!). But would this make the chimp a "fencer", if they don't have the ability to solve the problems an opponent poses in a bout? I think not.

Bearing all this in mind and finding sleep hard to come by recently, I spent some time devising a lesson suitable for one of my young pupils that would present them with a number of problems to which they would have to find the answers. Having mentally rehearsed it, I was ready to try it out on a pupil at the next club session. The pupil in question is a ten year old girl, who is very keen on her fencing and has already had a little success in competitions. This, then, is a description of the lesson.

After light-heartedly checking that she was correctly equipped with the right requirements for the lesson - two eyes and a brain - I placed her on guard at a long lunge distance and instructed her to make six attacks by first engaging sixte and then disengaging. During these attacks, I parried each attack, three with simple quarte and three with circular sixte, in a random order. After the quarte parries, I riposted direct, but did not riposte after the sixte parries.

Then came the inquisition.

"How many hits did you score?" *"None"*

"How many times were you hit?" *"Three"*

"Oh dear! You wasted energy doing six lunges and are now three nil down. What did I do to get you to this position?"

"You parried"

"With which parries?"

"Quarte and sixte"

"When did I riposte?"

"After the quarte parry"

It can take a bit longer to elicit the answers, but this pupil is already used to me expecting her to be observant during my lessons. Now she is going to find six answers to various aspects of the situation, starting with attacks where I parry quarte.

"Why was I able to parry your attacks?" *"My attack took too long"* (She understands the concept of being quicker than my reaction/response time and how it relates to speed and distance)

"How can you change your preparation to overcome this?" *"Use a step forward"*
Answer One - CHECK. This is put into practice a few times.

"Now I'm a slightly cleverer opponent and know why you use a step forward, so I step back at the same time. What can you do?" *"A compound attack (one-two)"*
Answer Two - CHECK. And practice.

"An even more crafty opponent might want you to commit to a simple attack, so I'm not going to step back until after you start the attack, then parry and riposte"
With each stage, the pupil could give a verbal suggestion, or simply deal with the situation in practice, in this case with a first counter-riposte.
Answer Three - CHECK.

The process is repeated against the times when I parry sixte, using a step with the preparation and simple attack, a doublé and, as there is no riposte in the third example, a redouble. Answers Four, Five and Six - all CHECK!

"Now we will rewind to the beginning of the lesson and you will do your six attacks again, but this time using the answers you have just found. I appreciate that choosing the right compound attack when you don't see the parry straightaway can be difficult, so use whichever answer suits you" (See Supplementary Exercise below)

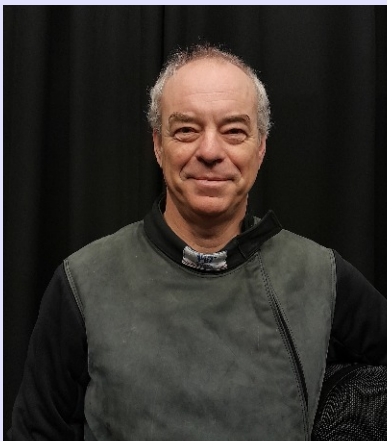
The pupil attacked six times, with me varying the parry as before and also using the different footwork. All goes well and the pupil is rewarded with six good hits. All too often we see coaches who wish to dictate every move during a lesson, giving the pupil little chance to think, experiment, or solve problems. Sometimes this can be a necessary part of a lesson, especially if working on technique, but it can be taken too far. We have probably all been guilty of this at some stage (I know I have - I got a mild rebuke for it after my successful Diploma Foil exam), but perhaps we can put our minds to finding ways to make our pupils think for themselves, or we'll end up with pupils unable to act independently, relying on their "puppet master" to pull the strings and leading to the type of situation described by Craig Jinks in his insightful article in the July issue (Academy News 115).

Supplementary Exercise. At the end of the main lesson above, I gave my pupil a bit of guidance in selecting the right compound attack to suit the parry. My inspiration here was a demonstration given some years ago by Prof Geoff Hawksworth at a Coaches Club Conference in Buxton.

My pupil was told to start by guessing which one to do, but to watch me carefully to see if could pick up any clues from my body language.

When she engaged my blade during the preparation, I would start to close the line, giving the opening for a disengage. However, I was already thinking about my parry. If it was to be quarte, my movement would be minimal, so I was ready to move the blade back to quarte. On the other hand, if I intended to parry sixte, I would move completely across to sixte. I'm very pleased to say that my pupil didn't need many guesses before being correct around 90% of the time. You may well find that left-handers are naturally quite good at this, but my pupil is right-handed.

My Final Word



I would like to thank all those who have contributed to the Academy News over the past few years, your efforts have been enjoyed and appreciated. I enjoy seeing new perspectives, or being reminded of old ones as they all help inform my own coaching.

But due to the work pressure of my professional coaching circuit, I no longer feel able to produce the Academy News, and so this will be my last edition, as I will be standing down as Editor at the A.G.M..

Kevin: Editor



British Academy of Fencing

Historical Notes



The British Academy of Fencing is an organisation for fencing coaches in Great Britain and Northern Ireland

Its origins go back to 1540, when King Henry VIII issued a signed Bill (or Warrant signed by the Sovereign and directed to the Lord Chancellor for passing Letters Patent under the Great Seal) under the title "Masters of ye Noble Science of Defence". This still exists at the Public Records Office (C.82/770)

This Bill gave Masters a monopoly of teaching fencing in England and empowered them to commit to goal any offender who taught without being a member of the Guild.

When Henry VIII died in 1547 his monopoly lapsed and it was not renewed so far as research can prove. However, the Ancient Masters seem to have recovered their lawful privileges from a sympathetic James I. On July 1st, 1605, he granted them a Warrant (Rymer's Feodera Vol. XVI. This Warrant was abolished when James I was forced to pass the Monopolies Act 21 Cap III in 1623/24.

During the Restoration the body fell into ill-repute because of the so-called "Masters" who did not ply their prizes (a traditional examination which required the fighting and defeating of their betters). These swordsmen merely gave themselves the title "Master" or "Professor" and were, in fact, nothing more than paid prize fighters with swords and were the forerunners of pugilists. From then on decline was rapid and to all intents and purposes the Body ceased to exist, even though some Fencing Masters managed to earn a living in the country.

In 1903 the Guild was reformed under the title "The London Academie d'Armes and again in 1931, under the title The British Federation of Fencing Masters".

During the last war it hibernated, but in 1949 the Ancient Guild of Fencing Masters was refounded as "The British Academy of Fencing". The inspiration for this venture came from the late Charles de Beaumont and it was implemented by Professor Roger Crosnier, Professor Leon Paul and Mr J D Aylward. The Academy's first President was Professor Leon Bertrand.

The Academy of today is a progressive organisation and changes are constantly taking place. By the maintenance of a carefully structured system of courses and examinations, the Academy provides teachers and/or coaches of fencing with the opportunities to qualify through Level 1 to Level 5 (Initial, Basic, Intermediate, Advanced and Diploma) Awards with Foil, Epee and Sabre. Members may choose to study and be examined at one/two weapons up to Level 5 (Diploma) and use the title Maître, or complete all three weapons at Level 5 and use the title Professor.