

THE **SWORD**

BRITISH FENCING MAGAZINE
JULY 2021

#SUPPORTINGTEAMMARCUS



- FOCUS ON MEPSTEAD
- CELEBRATING KRUSE
- OLYMPIC PREVIEW

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UK SPORT - NEW STRATEGY

POWERING SUCCESS, INSPIRING IMPACT

UK Sport

Integrity is the foundation upon which sport is built. Demonstrating conduct that is honest and ethical; providing safe, fair and inclusive environments; playing by the rules. These are things that help define sport and underpin its value to our society.

UK Sport's new strategy sets out an unequivocal commitment to win with integrity. The public wants us to keep winning but they want us to win the right way. Ever-increasing athlete, sport and public confidence in the way we win is therefore essential to ensuring that success creates a strong platform to reach, inspire and unite the nation.

Integrity is not just an issue for high-performance sport. Enhancing integrity must be a whole-sport endeavour, and we will therefore be working closely with all the Sports Councils across the UK on this. Our focus is principally on conduct-related issues, given the more established regulatory frameworks covering other integrity areas such as anti-doping, safeguarding and match-fixing, however we recognise the intersectionality that often exists between these.

Progress to Date

High-performance sport attracts remarkable people working at the very limits of human endeavour. The nation is hugely proud of its athletes and coaches. They have excelled at recent Olympic and Paralympic Games and established the UK amongst the world's most successful sporting countries.

We know that most people in sport have the right standards and values to navigate the complexity of accelerating human performance within a challenging, supportive and nurturing environment. However, a system founded on the pursuit of sporting excellence must also strive for excellence in integrity.

In 2017, we took new steps to support sports to enhance their high-performance culture and integrity. We established a Culture Team to support National Governing Bodies (NGBs) to further develop positive cultures in their high-performance programmes, led by a new annual Culture Health Check. We also established an Integrity Team to support NGBs to deliver their responsibilities to uphold the integrity standards that they set within their sports.

As we start the Paris 2024 cycle, this paper sets out our future priorities for sport integrity, to help ensure that instances of unacceptable behaviour are as low as possible and (when they do occur) that they are dealt with swiftly and effectively.

Our Priorities

UK Sport, alongside the other Sports Councils, is not a regulatory body and, therefore, has no legal power to oversee the conduct of sporting organisations and the people within them. However, as a leadership body in sport, and an investor of public money, we have a clear responsibility to do as much as we can to influence and lead positive change. We have identified four priority areas to enhance the integrity of sport and



will be exploring these ideas across the Sports Councils and our key partners and stakeholders.

We will develop these priorities in the coming months and reflect on them in the context of the findings of the Whyte Review, which is expected to report later in the year. This will be an important moment for us all in sport, and we want to listen to and understand its conclusions. Once that has taken place, we will set out a clear integrity strategy for the future.

Summary

Working together, both as a high-performance community and across all the Sports Councils, is essential if we are to protect the integrity of sport and continue to grow a thriving sporting system. We will continue to develop the thinking around these priorities, with a view to revisiting them later in the year once the Whyte Review has reported, and then setting out a clear and ambitious strategy for integrity across the sporting system.

Read the full article [here](#).

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Email the editor: karim.bashir@catchsport.com

BF PERKS

NEW BENEFITS FOR MEMBERS

Sophie DeVooght - Media and Communications Manager

Members of British Fencing can now save money and increase their wellbeing with BF Perks. Available for all valid BF members, BF Perks offers financial savings at hundreds of retailers, as well as learning, wellbeing and fitness modules.

Valid members can access BF Perks at no extra cost via a new tab within the membership platform. The financial benefits for members are immediately apparent and the learning and wellbeing sections have the ability to enhance all areas of life, on and off the piste.

LIFESTYLE SAVINGS

Members can now save money on the weekly shop, holiday bookings, insurance, computers, home improvements and more. There are thousands of offers across retailers with more offers added every week.

There are different ways to save, depending on preferences. Prepaid gift cards and discount codes provide savings at the point of sale online and in store, whilst cashback offers add up to real cash in the bank. To save on groceries, members can buy a discounted gift card and top up to save at the supermarket of their choice.

Fencers can also save on actual garden fencing as well as home improvements, furniture, computers, gadgets and clothing with e-vouchers and promo codes across thousands of offers.

LEARNING

BF Membership now opens up a host of learning opportunities for members to increase their skills off the piste. Brush up on languages and presentation skills or try something completely new. There are hundreds of high-quality courses from top

learning providers. Over 92% of courses are free.

The most popular courses so far span a range of subjects from languages to computing, including a 4-week Sports Foundation Course, and an interesting course from the University of Glasgow: The Scottish Highland Clans: Origins, Decline and Transformation, about the Highland clans and how clanship has changed across hundreds of years. With hundreds of courses to choose from, there is a broad range of courses to suit the diverse interests of BF members.

MOVE

The Move module includes video workouts that can be completed at home. Members can use Deskercise to stretch whilst working at their computer, increase core strength with Pilates, or improve their flexibility with yoga sessions.

The Move module is a series of videos that take you through the classes with clear instruction and safety in mind. The workouts are suitable for all levels of ability and members are able to take the sessions at their own pace. With new classes added regularly, there is always something new to try.

WELLBEING

BF Membership now offers a new way to track and maintain your wellbeing. The wellbeing module takes you through simple questions to help you monitor your sleep, mood and more. Complete sets of short questions to start your wellbeing path. Discover breathing, sleep assistance and meditation recordings as well as simple tasks to keep you on track.

Each path is different, and members can choose to track one or all of them. Start by choosing a path, complete a short assessment and receive a tailored plan to help improve or maintain your progress. Add a new path at any time to build a full picture of your wellbeing.

Wellbeing Paths:

Mind - Feeling overwhelmed? Stuck in a Rut? Monitor your mood [here](#).



Work - Are you working with fulfilment? Are your work relationships beneficial? Track your approach to work and challenges.

Life - A look at your problem solving, self-care, social support structures and more.

Sleep - This path looks at your sleep habits, whether you are feeling rested, and helps you manage your sleep schedule.

Active - A popular path for BF members, this path tracks your exercise habits.

Food - This path looks at eating for nutrition, healthy habits and gives food for thought. Take a short assessment to receive a tailored plan for healthy living.

LIVE WELL BLOG

The Live Well Blog is packed with articles, recipes and thought-provoking ideas. Discover the benefits of sea swimming or read more about how to save the bees!

The blog is updated regularly, and members can choose to receive the articles, as well as new offers and info, directly to their email inbox when they first enter the BF Perks area via the membership platform.

ACCESSING BF PERKS

To access BF Perks, click on the 'BF Perks' tab within the membership platform. If your membership has lapsed, renew to access the BF Perks tab.

BF's 90-day Introduction membership is free to new members and includes full access to BF Perks.

Sign in or join to access BF Perks [here](#).



With Tommy Curran Jones

The Sword continues its latest series of interviews with members of the Board. In this issue we talk to current fencing international, Tommy Curran Jones.



Tell us about your role.

My name is Tommy Curran Jones and I'm a non-executive director on the Board of British Fencing. That role involves ensuring that British Fencing (as a company) runs properly, setting the strategy for it and ensuring those strategic aims are being met by the executive.

How did you get into fencing?

I started fencing when I was ten. My school said I was too young to try it there. So I found a coach who was trying to start a fencing club in Brixton. I was the first member but over the last 15 years Brixton Fencing Club has grown into one of the biggest Epee clubs in the country. During that time I've fenced at every level from the Leon Paul Junior Series through to representing GB at World Cups and England at the Commonwealths.

You must have some interesting stories.

One of the undeniable pleasures of international fencing is the chance to travel to places you might never go to.

I've been caught in riots in the middle of Jerusalem, had Bulgarian taxi drivers watch TV on their phones while they drive us to the venue and been mistaken for Uzbek Secret Service. But my personal favourite was a trip to Belarus for the U23 Euros. In a conversation with a local woman about what there was to do in Minsk she informed me, "Nothing. Minsk is a city of sadness." After my performance in the poules, I could only agree.

How important is the Board and how much should members be involved?

Anyone who cares about fencing should care about the board. There are the practical things like making sure people are insured when they fence that are crucial if not exhilarating. But what excites me most is that fencing, like all sports and all things really, is an ever-changing, ever-improvable thing that has to adapt to the world. If you think fencing can be better, whether that means more inclusive, more accessible or simply more exciting to watch, you care about the board. I know how passionate people are about this sport and engaging with the board through voting or joining is a brilliant way to channel that passion into making it the best it can be.

How did you become a Board member?

When I was a Junior fencer, I often felt like the board was a distant and unsympathetic body that only wanted to make my life harder. I helped set up and chaired the Youth Panel, a body that was created to help the board better understand the needs of young athletes competing at an international level. I was so blown away by the receptiveness of everyone at BF to hearing the voices of athletes that when I'd

reached a Senior level, I wanted to bring an athlete's voice on to the board.

And what are you trying to achieve?

As a fencer at a high level I've always been keen to ensure that British Fencing is doing everything it can to develop its talent and give itself the best chance to get the great results it is capable of. I also know that the best way for British Fencing to achieve great results is by making the sport as open and inclusive as possible. It's a brilliant sport that not enough people get to try or feel like they could try.

What is it like to be a Board member?

The role has connected me with the whole of the sport in a way I never thought possible. The different weapons can be quite insular at times, and at a club with only one on offer sabre and foil have always seemed a bit of a mystery to me. The board serves the whole of the sport and I've come to love all the weapons even if I do find priority a little confusing still.

Without a traditional background in business I certainly found it challenging at first to keep up with both acronyms and the minutiae of budgeting. The board is full of people bringing different skills and I've learned a lot from the wonderful people on there.

Any final thoughts?

BF changes to become a better, more inclusive sport every day. I'm incredibly excited to keep giving more people the chance to try something that's brought me so much joy. On a personal level I can't wait for the next competition, when it's safe and legal to have one!



RICHARD KRUSE - THE STATS

Senior Debut:
Bonn World Cup 2001

**1st GBR fencer to become
World #1**

Olympic Record:
Athens 2004: 8th
Beijing 2008: 14th
London 2012: 17th & 6th in team
Rio 2016: 4th & 6th in team

World Championship Record:
Wuxi 2018: Silver

European Championship Record:

Izmir 2006: Silver

Plovdiv 2009: Silver

Leipzig 2010:

Bronze & Team Bronze

Legnano 2012: Bronze

Zagreb 2013: Bronze

Torun 2016: Team Bronze

Grand Prix Victories:

Venice 2009

Havana 2016

Shanghai 2017

Shanghai 2018

plus 3 x silver, 1 x bronze

World Cup Victories:

Copenhagen 2009

Copenhagen 2010

Cairo 2017

Bonn 2018

Tokyo 2019

plus 2 x silver, 2 x bronze



KRUSE - THE NEXT CHAPTER

.....A 'KEEPER' FOR OUR FENCING WORLD

Karim Bashir - Editor

When a sporting superstar retires, there is a natural demand on their time. Understandably fans want to hear the back story - warts and all - and, of course, what's next. Richard Kruse's record to date speaks for itself, with the letters beneath the name on the back of his lamé adding a special patriotic meaning. He is undoubtedly our countryman but Richard is truly a global fencing superstar, universally respected and liked on the international circuit.

British Fencing and The Sword were first in line to celebrate Richard's amazing career. Preparing for our turn, I managed to sneak a preview of the quite brilliant interview conducted by Johnny Davis on behalf of BF. It's a chronological pit-stop tour through Richard's fencing life, shot superbly and punctuated with glimpses into the special relationship formed between two British fencing Olympians. If you haven't already, watch it [here](#).

My aim is always to produce as much original content for this magazine as possible. So a revisit to Richard's career was off the table and a blank document sat on my laptop staring back at me for a few weeks. My goal was to offer a different perspective on Richard's journey.

One night, still in Editor's no-man's land, I sat down with my wife to start watching Leonardo on a popular streaming channel. Settling in to view a dramatisation of Da Vinci's life, I switched off my internal fact-checker. One scene in particular gave me a lightbulb moment; an insight into how epic moments are sometimes made. Whilst preparing to create the biggest ever equestrian statue, Da Vinci fell under a rearing horse, affording him a unique perspective to serve as his inspiration.

Perspective - that was the keyword here. This interview was not just a case of hearing some of the stories away from Richard's on-piste life, it was equally about capturing him now at the crossroads - travelling away from an



Kruse Baby Announcement

athletic existence that has spanned over a quarter of a century and onto how he may be mapping out his future. Direction chosen, our interview, however, began with what can only be described as a false start. A bandwidth-challenged Zoom chat was, quite correctly, rejected by Richard. Undeterred, and mirroring how he would tend to face frustrations during his illustrious competitive career, Richard proposed a solution that would take up more of his time yet was bound to produce the result he (and I) wanted. He phoned me, "How about I come down to see you and we record the interview live?" My answer was simple: of course.

Da Vinci advised, "Begin every canvas with a wash of black, because all things in nature are dark except where light is exposed". So too the Bashir-Kruse relationship has moved between light and shadow over the years, depending on the aspect. When I was not quite at the end of my own modest competitive career, Richard entered the senior open circuit as a precocious teenager. He was cutting his teeth in my world and I knew (as did all of my peers) that when Ziemek Wojciechowski brought a "kid" to a senior event, attention was required. At least from my memory, Richard came as a pair - with Laurence Halsted. It wasn't long before both of them had overtaken me, as well as many others.

After a few years away, I returned to work in a multi-faceted communications role

with British Fencing. It was a period of gargantuan change; some of which was unquestionably painful and challenging. Lottery funding came with targets, and those standards triggered the need to evolve from a sport that had been run by passionate amateurs and volunteers whose knowledge of the game was immense but whose sports administration was lacking. I was the "company" man; Richard was one of the best fencers in the world but one who had been shaped by a time without the restrictions that were now being put on him. Our relationship changed from respectful competitors to begrudgingly respectful colleagues.

During that period, despite the challenges and the frictions, we somehow maintained a healthy relationship. What's more, our friendship grew. Having progressed into fencing commentary, I have since had the privilege of the long-view - the close-up lens - and I have been able to see that what Richard has achieved during his competitive career is not just monumental in terms of British fencing, it is impressive when measured against the whole world. I can't fully deconstruct the joy I have had in commentating on his performances over those few years, but I can say I have appreciated every second, and I still carry them with me.



Ziemek and Richard



Richard's Bongo

Back to marking the retirement of a Fencing Great and that ill-fated Zoom interview. Rather than turning out to be a false-start, it actually proved a perfect dress-rehearsal. Gone were the shackles of being a top international athlete for Great Britain and having to be cautious about every word uttered. Here was Richard Kruse: the man, the bloke, my friend. In that sense, it really wasn't an interview. Yes, I had my topics prepared, but no scripted questions. In fact, I think he asked me more questions than I asked him! It was a trip down memory lane for both of us. I remember thinking, "how am I going to be able to edit out all the bits about my career?" but I carried on regardless through pure enjoyment. Reciprocated, I believe. And as you will see, it amounts to an easy-going exchange between two unlikely fellows who have enjoyed very different journeys through our amazing sport; two guys who have also formed a friendship over twenty (or so) years.

Da Vinci's eye for the epic can be detected when he declared, "To enjoy - to love a thing for its own sake and for no other reason." This is how Richard and I talked about fencing. That word was ever-present as the very relish of our conversation. Wherever we meandered, it all came back to something fencing or fencing-related, in a way that could only have arisen from the individuality of his experience, from mine, and sometimes from how those two individual experiences have coincided. Through fencing, we are both well-travelled, and you'll be able to hear which country Richard likened to being a theme park, as well as the places he would like

to explore, "because they aren't on the circuit". We talked about his language skills - more a polyglot expertise that would put a life-long linguist to shame. He modestly volunteered that "having a bit of Russian really helps in fencing." Well let's just say, if you're ever trying to have a secret chat in Russian, make sure Richard isn't eavesdropping. His idea of a little might catch you unawares.

Richard talked about the challenges of making his exit from competitive fencing when the world pandemic ensured that there was nothing to retire from! When I posed the question, "what next?" I wasn't surprised that fencing did play a part in his answer. He spoke to me about his forthcoming professional plans. Coaching?



Johnny's Interview



Four-time Olympian

Involvement in British Fencing? Fencing Commentary? Maybe - in a true 'Coup de Kruse': all three? With no other way to finish the "interview" than to crack open a bottle of "Egypt's finest sparkling wine", we toasted an astounding career and also raised our glasses to what promises to be an incredible future.

What happened next will stay with me just as much as the "interview". We had the customary 'one glass' and then went out for a paddle-boarding session on the English Riviera. The sun was shining with a water temperature fit for a walrus. We paddled out through the invigorating surf, before sitting down and continuing our chat away from the cameras. A BBQ followed with our wives, Ivon and Jeanné, and much merriment; after all, he is "retired". It was a fitting end to that chapter of our relationship and a great springboard for the next.

Sport in the UK has turned its attention towards inspirational characters encouraging a healthy and fulfilling lifestyle. Richard embodies such qualities. Those - combined with his unique wit and charm - makes him an ideal candidate to become an approachable yet uplifting role model for all. If you ever get a chance to talk with him for even a few minutes, I'd urge you to do so. "I'll save it for the book" he said on a number of occasions. A book I can't wait to read. It will speak volumes about the mastery of his career on the piste, with an epic depth reminiscent of Da Vinci, and with a humanity that is solid Kruse.

What a fencer. What a guy. I can't wait to be part of Richard's next chapter.

Watch our chat in full [here](#).

ROAD TO TOKYO

The Mepstead Way (Four Key Fights)

We know that Marcus Mepstead's journey to Tokyo 2020 began a long time ago. Big decisions have occurred along the way including his relocation to New York. The successful conclusion is testament to him and those around him. Congratulations to all involved and we'll be backing you come Games-time.

Here, we take a look back at the period during which his journey became measured in the tensely punctuated race for Olympic ranking points. As we now know, the team did not qualify, so it's important to remember that Marcus could only make it if he was one of the top two Europeans in the Adjusted Olympic Rankings. If you are unfamiliar with the AOR check out page 16 of the [April 2019 issue](#).

The 2018-19 season was well underway by the time the Tokyo qualification period opened, by which point Marcus had already achieved two top 96 finishes, three 64s and a top 16. However, for the purposes of Olympic qualification everyone began on zero points at the first counting event in St Petersburg, Russia at the beginning of May 2019.....yes, it was that long ago! Marcus started by claiming a single point, losing 15-10 to Gryglewski (POL) in the 96. He only had to wait two weeks before earning another 6 points by finishing 23rd at the Shanghai Grand Prix. This time going out at the hands of Cheremisinov (RUS), 15-8.

The rules for qualification stated that points from the respective Zonal and World Championships had to count for each athlete's individual Olympic ranking - along with the five best other results - the next two events in June and July were crucial. A less-than-perfect start at the European



Victory Against Foconi in the 64 at the Worlds #TeamBizzi

Championships in Dusseldorf saw Marcus lose three first round fights - but he did beat World number one Foconi (ITA) 5-2 in that poule. Battling back to make the round of 64 before an 11-10 defeat to Zherebchenko (RUS) meant Marcus gained three extra points ahead of the season finale in Budapest.

Most readers will already know about the World silver medal winning performance Marcus put in in Budapest. (A refresher is available on page 6 of the [October 2019 issue](#).) Looking back, there are three points of great interest. To start with, there was the battle back from another shaky start. Then, there was that first round win against Foconi at the European Championships. If that was the starter, the 15-9 victory over him again in the round of 64 at the World Championships was a thoroughly enjoyable



A win over Choupenitch was next #TeamBizzi

main course. Finally was the dessert, as it turned out to be. Marcus also beat close European rivals Choupenitch (CZE) and Siess (POL) on the way to the best result of his career to date. It's fair to say that the Budapest Championship slogan "It's A Kind Of Magic" certainly rang true for Mr Mepstead - who crucially bagged 65 more points towards his Tokyo tally as well as those valuable "double-pointer" wins.

Ahead of the new season, Marcus warmed up with a silver medal and three more Olympic ranking points at the satellite event in Mexico City in September. He ended 2019 with two World Cup 32s in Bonn and Tokyo, losing to Cheung (HKG) and Safin (RUS) respectively, and gathering another four points at each event.

At the turn of 2020, as chatter about a potential global pandemic was growing, Marcus set about improving on the points he had scored in St Petersburg and Mexico



Preparing for Siess who he also beat #TeamBizzi

City. A top 32 finish in Paris in January meant he gained three more points on his Olympic total and with it a place in the top 16 of the World rankings - and no need to qualify for the final day at the next event. An even better result came at the Turin Grand Prix as Marcus made the top 16 adding nine more points to his growing total.

He made no further gain at the Cairo World Cup later that month (February 2020) and then Anaheim and the DNS Grand Prix. An agonising 13 month pause in proceedings followed before the final Tokyo qualifier, the replacement Grand Prix, could go ahead in March of this year. An almighty effort by the FIE and the host country federations saw the final three qualifiers go ahead in Budapest (sabre), Kazan (epee) and Doha (foil).

Nearest rival Llavador (ESP) did not make it to the second day but Marcus went out in the round of 64 in Doha, gaining no more ranking points. At that juncture his final total of 98 points did not guarantee him a place at the Games. A Choupenitch versus Siess final would see both of them leapfrog Marcus and it was on the cards, with the fencers on opposite sides of the draw. Tensions grew as both fencers made it through the next round but qualification was confirmed as the Czech fencer went out in the round of 16 and the Pole exited the event in the quarterfinals.

In a race that went to the wire, the battle back from a poor start at the World Championships, the subsequent victories over Foconi, Choupenitch and Siess and eventual silver medal in Budapest, served as the platform for Marcus to become a member of Team GB for the second time.

Now for the magic in Tokyo!
#SupportingTeamMarcus

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THE MEPSTEAD SECRET

The Making of an Olympian

Siân Hughes Pollitt - Feature Writer

The answer is an emphatic, "No. Never".

Stephen Mepstead, father of Marcus, has been asked if he ever utters the fateful three words: 'I can't watch'. Does he ever bury his head in his hands then? He laughs. "Absolutely not". He says that the most important thing to note about himself, his wife Janet, Marcus and Marcus' sister and two brothers is that the Mepstead Family are a team; and Team Mepstead always work together. For that team not to be watching Marcus fence - whatever the fight scenario - is not an option.

On starting their family, Stephen and Janet decided that there was no right way or wrong way to raise their kids, but there would at least be their way - and that was to be hands-on parents, spending as much time as they could with their children and, what's more, enjoying it. All four Mini Mepsteads started fencing after doing karate; well, not after they had all just been doing it, but after all four had earned their black belts at the martial art.

Empty-handed combat progressed to sword-fighting. By the time Marcus was aged 11 and still in junior school, he had written in his school-book that he was going to fence at the Olympics. But first came the Leon Paul Junior Series and that is where Team Mepstead started their fencing journey. They reminisce that, despite the hard work and hard travelling, these were times that both laid and made the family's team foundations, establishing them never as simply individuals doing a sport, but more as a unit that felt each other's pain, and each other's joy. Their bond was formed.

Stephen and Janet went to every single competitive fencing event they could. The inevitable ups and downs are not easy to recall per se - possibly because Team Mepstead do not see a problem as an end point; but rather as a speed bump. "It is how we view everything", Stephen explains. "When you come across the obstacles along the road, you have got

to find a way to get around them. A lot of people, whenever they are faced with difficulties, prefer to walk away".

Stephen and Janet do pinpoint how the rocks in the ride have always helped Team Mepstead enjoy the intensity of the highs. Marcus' eldest sibling, his sister Ciel, has a Commonwealth fencing silver to her name and, of course, Marcus has many a medal - one Junior World Cup gold being a notable example of how the Team Mepstead machine operates. On this one occasion, at a JWC in Burgsteinfurt, Germany, Stephen was - as he usually would be - with Marcus, piste-side. Nicknamed 'Towel Man' for always having one slung over his shoulder, it was Stephen's aim to keep Marcus relaxed but in the game.

Burgsteinfurt presented some all too familiar stumbling blocks to that plan. A very strong field of play, attended by the world's best juniors made for tough poules where, in Stephen's words, Marcus 'literally blew out', making his subsequent elimination fights all the harder. By the time Marcus had battled through to the Last 8, his kit was soaking wet and unusable. A fellow GB fencer lent him some dry fencing garb and Marcus progressed to the Last 4. The competition was over-running and the semi-finals saw Marcus' squad-



Stephen, Marcus and Janet Celebrate World Silver



Siân Hughes Pollitt

mates and their families needing to leave for the airport to catch their plane home. Stephen goes on to describe that curious 'bullet time', often experienced at a fencing competition, where, as the room emptied, their focus intensified; as the clock ticked, their energy distilled:- a kind of Mepstead Matrix that had been built over the years kicked in. Marcus kept going and won the competition.

Parents like Stephen and Janet know how to treasure the moments when something goes incredibly right. Equally they appreciate that such high points follow a spell in the shade. That dark place came after Rio 2016 where Marcus had participated as team reserve. Fencing lost funding; Marcus had to re-think his game. It seems so easy now to fast-forward onto Summer 2019 and remember Marcus being crowned World Silver Medallist, without acknowledging the grit and the graft in-between where he didn't just move towns, he moved continents; starting to work with a new club and new coach at Brooklyn Bridge Fencing Club with Dan Kellner.

That Budapest Senior World Championships sported the slogan 'A Kind of Magic'. "Magic - that was certainly our experience" confirms Stephen. "Marcus was nervous. He very nearly blew out in his poules but scraped through". Seeded 64th, Marcus' direct elimination event began with the then World Number One Seed, Alessio Foconi at the other end of the piste. "It was folkloric. On paper, everything was stacked up against him but I witnessed the most amazing match of my life. Marcus was 10-1 up by the end of the first period".



Marcus At The Beginning

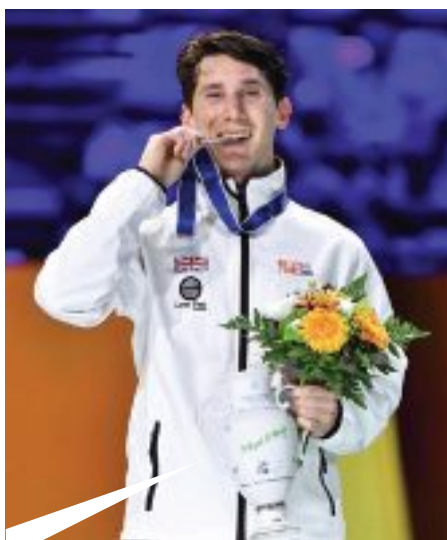
Anybody mistakenly thinking that 'Towel Man' and Janet, who by all accounts gives an awesome team talk, were not able to effect much of a material difference at Senior World Championship level, should have a chat with the Russian spectators seated next to Team Mepstead as Marcus took on their countryman, Timur Arslanov in the Tableau of 16. Stephen tells of how Marcus needed a shout to bring him back down to the 'game plan'. The shout could come from anywhere but it had to be audible to Marcus while he was fencing. "Whenever I could see that something was changing in Marcus' approach, I would yell the agreed word: RESET. On hearing



You Know What It Means #TeamBizzi

that word, Marcus would near enough immediately win the next few points. The Russians kept looking at me, eventually asking what this word 'reset' means. Too late. Marcus had won the match".

Team Mepstead attracted the approval and praise of Marcus' coach, Dan Kellner. Stephen and Janet concede that whereas coaches normally don't relish parents being around, Dan could see there was, in the Mepstead Family dynamic, a magic ingredient. Dan's words to them were, "Whatever you're doing, keep on doing it, because it's working". And it is to the parent-child relationship that Stephen returns when asked what he'd say to anyone who wants to discover the Mepstead Secret: "Mother or father, with a boy or a girl - if your bond is strong enough then you will get through anything together. It isn't easy and it may take time but as the song goes there ain't no mountain high enough to keep you from achieving your goals if you have them in your sights".



The First of Many #TeamBizzi

As for the Mepsteads, the strength of their bond with Marcus is made clear in how they talk about him. They mention his sense of respect, his courtesy, as well as his care for his fellow man. They tell of him being a kind and loyal friend. They also detail Marcus' work ethic - everything from developing sustainable materials to use in fencing clothing to his tenacity in working to support himself in New York, and training long hours in the gym and the Salle. It sums it up when they gently add, "Marcus is the kind of guy you'd always like to have on your side".

It is presumably then the same kind of guy that, as soon as he had won that gold



Team Mepstead

medal at that JWC in Burgsteinfurt, raced with his Team over to the airport to try and figure out a way home. The kind of guy who, once he and Team Mepstead had hastily handed over the keys to a bemused hire car employee outside the terminal, found that their plane was still waiting patiently on the tarmac. The Junior GB squad had saved the aircraft from departing; nobody was going anywhere without this kind of guy and his support network. As Team Mepstead boarded, the whole plane cheered.

Stephen and Janet do feel the love that comes from outside the family. They recognise that Marcus has a strong group of professionals around him who all know their roles and who all will him on to succeed. Originally they were both to travel to Tokyo but with a delayed Olympics without crowds, that's no longer possible. They plan to watch at home and say they'll be with Marcus piste-side "110%", spectating "raw. No drinks, no snacks. Just on the big screen on the computer. Live. Hit by hit. Shouting".

Searching for the meaning of the name Marcus, the internet suggests that it is derived from Mars, the God of War. Not just a fighter, but the fighter. Looking for the surname Mepstead, the search engine results inform us that family names come about by grouping relatives together by their characteristics, asserting that 'Mepstead' is a place 'where maple trees grow'. Should we be curious, maples are renowned for their attributes of balance, practical magic, promise, longevity, generosity, and intelligence.

There you go. The Mepstead Secret. Right there.

“2020” QUALIFICATION REVIEW

The Geeks' Guide

Karim Bashir

A fencer's journey to the Olympic Games has never been easy but this “four” year cycle has come with the added uncertainty caused by the global pandemic. Right now things look a lot brighter within our shores but you don't have to look too far afield to see that is not the case elsewhere. With that in mind, it's possible that the next few pages may be redundant by the time we publish the magazine, should things change.

That said, the qualification journey is now complete and I believe a celebration of the teams and athletes that made the cut is still worthy of celebration and note. For some athletes it may be their final chance or perhaps their only chance to compete at The Greatest Show on Earth. Of course, our joint desire is to see them on the piste in Tokyo but for now, let's take a look back at how they got there.

Before going into that I thought it might be useful to remind or refresh you about the process. The original qualification period was set to run from April 2019 to April 2020 with four additional zonal qualification events following in May 2020 plus the allocation of eight “host nation” places.

There were two key things to note throughout. The first was the fact that each athlete's and nation's World ranking would be different to their Olympic qualification position – a topic that led to some very confusing conversations around the globe. I made it simple for myself by putting everyone and every nation on zero points at the beginning of qualification. The FIE World ranking list was always going to be available on their website and important for the purposes of ranking for the crucial qualifying events. However, that alone did not give a true picture of fencing's Road to Tokyo.

There was also Dave Baker's very useful Facebook page – [Fencing – Qualification for Tokyo 2020 Olympics](#). A special thanks to

him for keeping us all informed throughout and allowing The Sword magazine to use his illustrations in this article.

The second factor was understanding which points would count for each athlete and team. For teams it would be the points earned at Team World Championships and respective zonal Team Championships in 2019 plus their four best Team World Cup points in the qualification period. For individuals it would be points earned at individual World Championships and respective individual zonal Championships in 2019 plus their five highest points scored at Satellites, World Cups and Grand Prix events.

To complicate matters further, the World changed in December 2019 and with it the qualification process for all sports on the Olympic schedule, including fencing. However, it wasn't until March 2020 that the full impact of the Covid-19 pandemic halted action on the piste. Ironically, it was in the shadow of Disneyland – a place of dreams and fantasy – where everything stopped just hours before the start of the Anaheim Foil Grand Prix. Quite rightly, fairness was the deciding factor. Most notably the teams from Italy and Russia had pulled out days before the event and the team from Korea, despite already being in California for a training camp, were unable to compete due to the new restrictions in place.

Those restrictions would last a year, preventing all international competitive action. It was a very long year for everyone in the World.

The work done by the FIE to complete qualification – 4 World Cups and 1 Grand Prix plus the zonal qualification events – was immense. At the end of it, the top four teams in the World qualified, plus the next best team from each of the four zones (Europe, Asia, Pan-America and Africa) – as long as they were in the top sixteen. Additional individual places were awarded to the top fencers per zone (one per country) from nations who hadn't

qualified through the team route – two each from Europe and Asia and one each from PanAm and Africa. The final zonal qualifiers had in their gift one place per weapon, open to one fencer per nation per weapon for nations without Olympic representation already in that discipline.

Let's take a look at who made it and their journey there, starting of course with team qualification.

Women's Epee

The qualification period began in May 2019 with the Dubai World Cup where Poland, the USA and Italy made the podium with China in fourth. These were the first teams to hold the automatic top four Olympic berths. Poland and China remained there throughout the race. Russia, Korea and Canada held their respective zonal places and with Egypt outside the top 16 in the World Rankings, Estonia held the “bonus” place.

Things were shaken up by results earned in June at the four zonal championships. Korea's win at the Asian event promoted them into the top four as replacements for Italy. Meanwhile, Russia were beating Italy in the semi-final at the European Championships; and despite Italy claiming bronze, Russia overtook them in the chase for their zonal spot. Brazil pulled off the same trick at the Pan-American Championships to overtake Canada, whilst Egypt took the African title, moving them into the top 16 and thus securing their zonal place.

With double points available at the World Championships results in Budapest were always going to play a key role in the battle. China's win moved them to the top of Olympic qualification – a place they held throughout. Russia's silver medal moved them into the top four where they would remain with China and Poland for the rest of the race. Italy dropped out of the top four but their bronze medal meant they only dropped into the European place. They beat Ukraine in the play-off match – a result that made a difference to both teams in the

end. Canada finished higher than Brazil in Budapest to move into the Pan-American place and remained ahead of them for the rest of the period. Egypt did enough to stay in the top 16, keeping hold of the African spot.

Epee, being what it is (so I'm told!) ensured the battle was far from over. However, the only significant change at the Tallinn World Cup in November 2019 was the fact that Egypt dropped out of the top 16 in World Rankings. Ukraine benefited and found themselves in a qualification position for the first time.

Italy enjoyed the winter sun the most in Havana at the start of 2020. They won the event and jumped into the top four places, moving the USA out but only down into the Pan-American place, to the detriment of Canada. With the USA so far ahead of their northerly neighbours, Canada's hopes of qualification rested on whether the USA could regain a top four place. Havana silver medallists, Estonia moved into the European spot despite losing to Italy in the final whilst Korea and Ukraine retained their respective Tokyo places.

All eyes were on Italy and the USA at the next event in Barcelona and they were on a collision course to meet each other in the quarter-finals. Whoever made the top four would open up another berth for their zone. That meeting never happened though, as Italy fell to Hong Kong in the round of 16. The USA went on to take bronze, moving into a top four Olympic places, meaning promotion for Canada into the Pan-American spot. Italy battled to ninth place in Spain to limit the damage done, moving back down into the European place. Estonia's top 16 finish kept them ahead of Ukraine, who went out in the 32 in Barcelona, thus ensuring them the bonus place. Meanwhile Korea won the event, securing the Asian zonal place but still a long way behind fourth place.

Just over thirteen months passed before the final qualifier in Kazan could take place and again all eyes were on Italy and the USA to find out who would secure that top 4 spot. In a turn of fortunes, it was the USA that fell early, going out to Hungary in the round of 16 but battling back to ninth place. Italy lost to Korea in the quarter-finals and they finished fifth which was not enough to overtake the USA. There was still time for one more twist in the tale though. Korea faced the top qualifier China in the semi-finals in Russia and went on to beat them. Despite the loss in the final to Poland, Korea had come from 59 points behind in

just two events to claim a top four Olympic berth. The USA, Italy and Hong Kong secured their zonal places as a result and Estonia held onto the place vacated due to the lack of an African qualifier.

It's hard to gauge performance trajectories because of the break in qualification and the likelihood that no international events will take place before the Games. However, despite the plateau, the Chinese team looks good and are being hunted down by both Poland and Korea. Russia were solid throughout and you can't go into any match against the USA, Italy or Estonia unprepared. Hong Kong definitely squeezed in through the back-door but remember they beat Italy in Barcelona so also represent a threat.

Will there be another twist in Tokyo itself?

Rank	Name	Country	Points	Rank	Name	Country	Points
1	ITA	ITA	1000	9	UKR	UKR	500
2	FRA	FRA	750	10	ITA	ITA	450
3	USA	USA	700	11	ITA	ITA	400
4	ITA	ITA	650	12	ITA	ITA	350
5	ITA	ITA	600	13	ITA	ITA	300
6	ITA	ITA	550	14	ITA	ITA	250
7	ITA	ITA	500	15	ITA	ITA	200
8	ITA	ITA	450	16	ITA	ITA	150

The Women's Epee individual race had its own twists and turns. With two berths available for Europe, five athletes reached a qualification position at various moments in the race - Mara Navarria (ITA), Ana Maria Popescu (ITA), Aurianne Mallo (FRA), Coraline Vitalis (FRA) and Olena Kryvytska (UKR). Vitalis won the European Championships in Dusseldorf which moved her into one of the places. She followed that up with a fifth-place finish at the World Championships and never dropped out of qualification thereon. Popescu, despite some good early running, dropped out of Europe's top two in the AOR (Adjusted Olympic Rankings) before winning the Tallinn World Cup in November 2019. Popescu along with Vitalis would not relinquish those places in the remainder of the race. That must have been a particularly crushing blow for Kryvytska who finished level on points with Vitalis but failed to qualify individually on the countback and whose team missed out in the eleventh hour.

Kong Man Wai Vivian of Hong Kong dominated the battle for the two Asian places but ultimately didn't need one as her team qualified. Instead one place would go to the highest Japanese fencer, a battle won by Sato Nozomi. The other went to

Uzbekistan's Malika Khakimova who had a top 16 finish at the Asian Championships and a bronze medal from the Satellite event in her capital city, Tashkent.

Tunisia's Sarra Besbes held the single additional African place throughout qualification and Brazil's Nathalie Moellhausen's World title was more than enough to secure the Pan-American place. It will be Moellhausen's second Olympic Games appearance for Brazil having competed at Rio 2016 under the Brazilian flag and her third Games in total after her reserve selection for Italy in 2012.

Rank	Name	Country	Points	Rank	Name	Country	Points
1	ITA	ITA	1000	9	UKR	UKR	500
2	FRA	FRA	750	10	ITA	ITA	450
3	USA	USA	700	11	ITA	ITA	400
4	ITA	ITA	650	12	ITA	ITA	350
5	ITA	ITA	600	13	ITA	ITA	300
6	ITA	ITA	550	14	ITA	ITA	250
7	ITA	ITA	500	15	ITA	ITA	200
8	ITA	ITA	450	16	ITA	ITA	150

Men's Epee

Beginning at the iconic Paris World Cup in May 2019, Switzerland, France, Italy and Spain claimed an early lead in the race for the team places; Switzerland being the only ones to maintain a place in the top four throughout. Japan, Hungary, the USA and Egypt were positioned in the zonal spots going into the regional championships.

Despite winning the Asian title, China only moved into the continental place as silver medallists Korea jumped into the top four. Pan-America's sleeping giant, Cuba won their Championships to claim the zonal place as second-placed America also moved into the top four. Morocco took the African title overtaking Egypt for the zonal place, but the real story of the round was happening in Europe. It was no surprise to see Russia win the event - jumping into the

top four Olympic berths in doing so – but they beat Denmark in the final. A resurgent Hungary claimed bronze as none of France, Italy or Ukraine made the medal matches. France came away with the European zonal place.

Something like “normal order” resumed at the World Championships as France beat Ukraine for the title. The two teams jumped into the top four to replace Korea and the USA. They also remained in top four qualification spots along with Switzerland for the remainder of the contest. China's fourth place finish pushed them above Korea for the Asian zonal place whilst the USA replaced Cuba as the Pan-American zonal qualifier. The USA held that place through until the end of the period. Italy's fifth place was enough for them to take the European berth as Russia remained in the top four and Morocco did enough to hold on to the African spot.

France followed up the World title with gold at the Berne World Cup in November 2019. Italy's second place meant that they joined France, Ukraine and Switzerland as the top four Olympic qualifiers. These four would remain in those places for the remainder of the battle. Russia dropped into the European place and Egypt did enough to overtake Morocco, who never got back ahead in the African race. China retained the Asian berth.

Hungary won the next event in Heidenheim which saw them overtake Russia for the European zonal places whilst the USA, China and Egypt retained their regional qualification places. The Vancouver World Cup was the last event to take place in men's epee before the enforced break. China's demise in the round of 16 was worsened by Korea's return to form to win the event. Korea moved into the Asian berth as Hungary, the USA and Egypt kept their zonal places.

After the long pause, the final qualifier by ranking took place in Kazan. Hungary knew that they had their hands full when facing China in the round of 16 and were edged out by a single point. They only recovered to fourteenth place as home team, Russia secured fourth and overtook them for European qualification. China went on to finish third which wasn't quite enough to overtake Korea for the Asian place. However, Egypt couldn't do enough to stay in the top 16 in the World rankings and

China picked up the vacant spot. So, France, Italy, Ukraine and Switzerland made it a European top four as Korea, China, Russia and the USA secured the other places.

Form isn't everything going into the Olympics but France, Italy and Ukraine will be the favourites. Switzerland may have plateaued but are always dangerous; and don't rule out Korea or China. The USA may be some way behind in points but are potentially only two wins away from an Olympic medal.

Rank	Name	Nat	Points	Rank	Name	Nat	Points
1	FABRICE DUPUY	FRA	1000	11	ANDRÁS BALOGH	HUN	400
2	LUCA BADOER	ITA	800	12	ANDRÁS BALOGH	HUN	400
3	OLEG SHCHEGOLEV	UKR	700	13	ANDRÁS BALOGH	HUN	400
4	ANDRÁS BALOGH	HUN	600	14	ANDRÁS BALOGH	HUN	400
5	ANDRÁS BALOGH	HUN	500	15	ANDRÁS BALOGH	HUN	400
6	ANDRÁS BALOGH	HUN	400	16	ANDRÁS BALOGH	HUN	400
7	ANDRÁS BALOGH	HUN	300	17	ANDRÁS BALOGH	HUN	400
8	ANDRÁS BALOGH	HUN	200	18	ANDRÁS BALOGH	HUN	400
9	ANDRÁS BALOGH	HUN	100	19	ANDRÁS BALOGH	HUN	400
10	ANDRÁS BALOGH	HUN	0	20	ANDRÁS BALOGH	HUN	400

In the individual race, seven European fencers held qualification places at some point – Radozlaw Zawrotniak (POL), Tristan Tulen (NED), Andrea Santarelli (ITA), Yuval Freilich (ISR), Gergely Siklosi (HUN), Bas Verwijlen (NED) and Sergey Bida (RUS). Verwijlen's fifth place at the Doha Grand Prix in January 2020 moved him into second position and one he maintained until the end. With Russia, Italy and Ukraine qualifying by team, Siklosi's World title was always going to be enough to see him through to Tokyo.

Japan's Yamada Masaru overtook teammate Minobe Kazayasu early in the season to secure one of the Asian places and Korea's team qualification along with Kazakhstan's Ruslan Kurbanov's rich run of form, meant he took the second place. Winning the Pan-American Championships

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1	FABRICE DUPUY	FRA	1000	11	ANDRÁS BALOGH	HUN	400
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3	OLEG SHCHEGOLEV	UKR	700	13	ANDRÁS BALOGH	HUN	400
4	ANDRÁS BALOGH	HUN	600	14	ANDRÁS BALOGH	HUN	400
5	ANDRÁS BALOGH	HUN	500	15	ANDRÁS BALOGH	HUN	400
6	ANDRÁS BALOGH	HUN	400	16	ANDRÁS BALOGH	HUN	400
7	ANDRÁS BALOGH	HUN	300	17	ANDRÁS BALOGH	HUN	400
8	ANDRÁS BALOGH	HUN	200	18	ANDRÁS BALOGH	HUN	400
9	ANDRÁS BALOGH	HUN	100	19	ANDRÁS BALOGH	HUN	400
10	ANDRÁS BALOGH	HUN	0	20	ANDRÁS BALOGH	HUN	400

secured Venezuela's Ruben Limardo Gascon's place whilst a quarter-final finish for Morocco's Houssam Elkord at the Berne World Cup gave him the African spot which he kept until the end.

Women's Foil

Beginning at the Tauberbischofsheim World Cup in May 2019, the team race for women's foil was settled relatively early on. Russia won the event from France, Italy and the USA. Those four occupied the four automatic Olympic qualification earliest – Russia, France and the USA continued without ever dropping out. Strong showings from Japan, Canada and Poland meant their journeys began in their respective zonal places and with Egypt outside the top 16 in the World rankings, Korea sat in the bonus place. Canada held the Pan-American zonal qualification throughout the battle.

Japan won the Asian Championships and sprung Italy into a top four berth. Korea took silver at the event which was enough to move into that zonal place. Italy's European bronze medal meant that they only dropped into their zonal spot – pushing out Poland. Tunisia upset Egypt at the African Championships by beating them in the final and moving firmly into the African place.

Italy's silver medal at the World Championships – losing to Russia in the final – moved them back into the top four Olympic places and they remained there for the rest of the race, with Russia, France and the USA. They demoted Japan but their fifth place finish was better than Korea's eighth. So Japan moved into the Asian zonal place. It wasn't all bad news for Korea though. Tunisia chose not to compete in this weapon at the Worlds and Egypt didn't do enough to get into the top 16 of the World rankings. Korea, thus, moved back into the bonus place. Poland's quarter-final finish was enough to move them back into the European spot and they put some distance between them and a chasing Hungarian team.

The picture became more clear at the next event in Cairo. The home nation, Egypt, despite finishing in last place, jumped into the top 16 in the World, due to the low turnout at this World Cup. That moved them into the African zonal place which they maintained for the rest of the race.

That meant no bonus place for Korea. Even though the Koreans outperformed Japan at the event, they didn't do enough to overtake them and didn't move back into a qualifying place for the remainder of the battle. Poland's exit in the round of 16 meant that they retained their European place, but Hungary closed the gap by finishing fifth.

Whilst not confirmed, seven of the provisionally qualified teams would go on to retain their places. The final place – the European one – was claimed and not relinquished at the St Maur World Cup. Looking over their shoulders, Poland went out to Italy in the quarter-finals as Hungary surprised France to make the semi-finals. Hungary finished fourth which was enough to overtake Poland for the European berth which they held onto through the final events in Katowice and Kazan.

Whilst Japan will be on home soil at the Olympics, there is a clear gap between them and Russia, Italy, France and the USA. The strong favourites have to be Russia.

Rank	Nation	Score	World Cup Rank	Notes
1	USA	544	1	Top 4 Qualifier
2	FRANCE	544	2	Zone Qualifier
3	ITALY	544	3	Zone Qualifier
4	UNITED STATES	544	4	Zone Qualifier
5	HUNGARY	544	5	Zone Qualifier
6	GERMANY	544	6	Zone Qualifier
7	SPAIN	544	7	Zone Qualifier
8	CHINA	544	8	Zone Qualifier
9	RUSSIA	544	9	Zone Qualifier
10	UKRAINE	544	10	Zone Qualifier
11	ESTONIA	544	11	Zone Qualifier
12	FINLAND	544	12	Zone Qualifier
13	NETHERLANDS	544	13	Zone Qualifier
14	ROMANIA	544	14	Zone Qualifier
15	ARMENIA	544	15	Zone Qualifier
16	GEORGIA	544	16	Zone Qualifier

In the race for the additional individual places, Saskia Van Erven Garcia from Colombia moved into the single Pan-American place and stayed there throughout. In the battle for the African place, Morocco's Manal Karmaoui, Tunisia's Ines Boubakri and Noha Hany from Egypt held the top position for one event each before Boubakri's top 64 finish at the World Championships moved her into the position – one which she would never give up.

The race for the two Asian spots was slightly more complicated, but once Korea dropped out of team qualification one of the places was always going to go to Jeon Hee Sook. The other battle was down to which Chinese fencer could finish top; in the end it was Chen Qingyuan who won that battle with Shi Yue. Germany's Leonie Ebert moved into one of the European places at the first event and did more than enough to stay there. Hungary's qualification by team meant that early runner Fanny Kreiss didn't need the spot and in the end the race came down to Spain's Maria Diaz, Julia Walczyk

of Poland and Israel's Nicole Pustilnik..... so it seemed! The distraction was that all three could end up on the same points after the last event and there was uncertainty as to who would win the countback. No one, perhaps other than the fencer in question and her team, expected that Turkey's Irem Karamete would reach the quarterfinals at the last event in Doha, to jump ahead of all three of them. She did though! "It's not over until it's over", they correctly say!

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6	GERMANY	544	6	Zone Qualifier
7	SPAIN	544	7	Zone Qualifier
8	CHINA	544	8	Zone Qualifier
9	RUSSIA	544	9	Zone Qualifier
10	UKRAINE	544	10	Zone Qualifier
11	ESTONIA	544	11	Zone Qualifier
12	FINLAND	544	12	Zone Qualifier
13	NETHERLANDS	544	13	Zone Qualifier
14	ROMANIA	544	14	Zone Qualifier
15	ARMENIA	544	15	Zone Qualifier
16	GEORGIA	544	16	Zone Qualifier

Men's Foil

The team battle for men's foil qualification began in Russia at the St Petersburg World Cup where the top four spots were claimed by the USA, Hong Kong, Korea and France whilst Italy, Egypt, China and Brazil moved into the early zonal places available. The USA and France never moved out of the top four from then.

The Zonal Championship period always throws the Olympic qualification standings off but, for this discipline, things looked more unusual than we're used to. Japan won the Asian Championships to move into their zonal place over China who they beat in the final. Hong Kong's bronze medal was enough to keep them in the top four. Germany's silver medal at the European Championships catapulted them into their zonal place and, despite Italy beating Russia for bronze, the two nations remained outside the qualification places. There were no surprises at the Pan-American Championships as Canada's loss to the USA in the final saw them overtake Brazil into their zonal place, where they would remain for the rest of the qualification period. Egypt won the African Championships moving them up into the top four, whilst Tunisia's second place put them into the World's top 16 and thus the African zonal spot.

The USA won the World Championships beating France in the final which widened their lead at the top of the Olympic rankings. Italy's bronze medal took them into the top four where they would stay for the rest of the period. They pushed Egypt out of the four automatic places but Egypt's top 16 finish moved them into the African zonal place which they did not relinquish. Russia's fourth place in Budapest meant that they overtook Germany for the European berth. Meanwhile Korea finished in the top eight to move ahead of Japan for the Asian spot. Japan never moved back into a qualification position.

Korea's second place at the next event in Bonn meant they swapped places with Hong Kong and moved into the top four. Hong Kong moved down into the Asian zonal place. The situation remained the same after the Tokyo World Cup which was the Olympic test event. Importantly, Korea beat Hong Kong in the fifth place play-off to increase their lead.

The crucial match at the Paris World Cup was the quarter-final showdown between Korea and Hong Kong with the latter getting revenge to make the semi-finals. Another straight swap was the result with Korea moving down to the Asian zonal place.

The final team qualification event was held in Cairo in February 2020 and again Hong Kong beat Korea in the quarterfinals ensuring that they would stay ahead of them. It was to be a crucial result with Russia finishing second in Egypt and moving into the top four automatic berths, pushing Hong Kong into the Asia place. Whilst it meant Korea missed out on qualification, Germany gained by moving up into the European spot.

The USA seemed lined up to win in Tokyo but France, Italy and Russia are all podium threats.

Rank	Nation	Score	World Cup Rank	Notes
1	USA	544	1	Top 4 Qualifier
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7	SPAIN	544	7	Zone Qualifier
8	CHINA	544	8	Zone Qualifier
9	RUSSIA	544	9	Zone Qualifier
10	UKRAINE	544	10	Zone Qualifier
11	ESTONIA	544	11	Zone Qualifier
12	FINLAND	544	12	Zone Qualifier
13	NETHERLANDS	544	13	Zone Qualifier
14	ROMANIA	544	14	Zone Qualifier
15	ARMENIA	544	15	Zone Qualifier
16	GEORGIA	544	16	Zone Qualifier

There was a lot of early movement in the race for the individual men's foil places, particularly for the European and Asian fencers. Brazil's Guilherme Toldo silver medal at the Pan-American Championships moved him into that zonal place and he defended his position through the rest of the period. Our very own Marcus Mepstead scored a superb World Championship silver and that moved him into one of the European berths. He went on to remain there for the rest of the race. Tunisia's Mohamed Samandi moved into the African place with his Budapest result and did enough to stay there. The second European spot switched hands for the final time at the Cairo World Cup, where Spain's Carlos Llavador took gold to secure qualification. The Asian battle also wasn't settled until the end either. With Korea and Japan out of team qualification the individual spots went to Lee Kwanghyun (KOR) and Shikine Takahiro (JPN).

Rank	Fencer	Country	Score	Position	Notes
1	Carlos Llavador	ESP	13-11	1	Gold
2	Lee Kwanghyun	KOR	13-11	2	Silver
3	Shikine Takahiro	JPN	13-11	3	Bronze
4	Mohamed Samandi	TUN	13-11	4	Fourth Place

Women's Sabre

Women's team sabre qualification began with the Tunis World Cup. Italy won the event moving them into the top four places which they remained in for the entire race. Korea's bronze medal was enough to put them into the top four and they also stayed there. Ukraine and Japan completed the top four as the USA and Tunisia moved into their zonal places and were never replaced. France and China did the early running in the races for their zonal berths.

In the round of zonal championships, Russia and China claimed gold medals, moving them into the top four. Russia went on to secure that top four position throughout the remainder of the qualification period. The teams they

replaced, Ukraine and Japan moved into their respective zonal spots.

Russia won the World Championships in Budapest, beating France in the final. The result was enough to elevate France into the top four automatic places where they remained with Russia, Italy and Korea for the duration of qualification. China finished above Japan in Budapest which meant whilst they moved out of the top four, they were only demoted to the Asian berth. Japan never made it back.

The status quo remained through the next World Cup in Orleans as Ukraine did enough to stay ahead of Hungary in the European race - the only one yet to be determined. That race was settled at the next event in Salt Lake City where the two European contenders faced each other in the semi-finals. Hungary took the victory and ultimately the European team berth for the Tokyo Games with two events still remaining in Athens and Budapest.

Russia will be the strong favourites for gold in Japan.

Rank	Fencer	Country	Score	Position	Notes
1	Olga Kharlan	UKR	13-11	1	Gold
2	Anna Smirnova	RUS	13-11	2	Silver
3	...	...	...	...	...
4	...	...	...	...	...

With the season starting with the Moscow Grand Prix and the subsequent fluctuations in team qualification - particularly for the European and Asian teams - there was little to discuss regarding individual qualification until after the World Championships. Canada's Gabriella Page claimed a bronze at the PanAmerican Championships and her top 32 finish at the Worlds was enough to move her up into her zonal berth and she remained there until the end. India's Bhavani Devi made the World Championships top 16, moving her into one of the two Asian places - a place she also retained throughout the battle. It took until Ukraine dropped out of the team running at the Salt Lake City World Cup before there was further clarity in the individual race. Ukraine's World number one, Olga Kharlan was always going to claim the top European place from that point on. Bianca Pascu of Romania sat in the second European place until the Athens World Cup when Greek fencer Theodora Gkountoura overtook her with a

bronze medal finish. Gkountoura held on to that position through the final event in Budapest. In fact, the Athens event proved to be where all the individual qualifiers were set. Nour Montaser of Egypt had been in pole position for the African place before her teammate Nada Hafez leapfrogged her. The other Asian spot was concluded too, as Emura Misaki of Japan overhauled her compatriot Tamura Norika.

Rank	Fencer	Country	Score	Position	Notes
1	Olga Kharlan	UKR	13-11	1	Gold
2	Anna Smirnova	RUS	13-11	2	Silver
3	...	...	...	...	...
4	...	...	...	...	...

Men's Sabre

Italy, Russia, Korea and Hungary made the early running at the first Olympic qualifier, the Madrid World Cup, by filling the top four places. Korea and Italy remained there for the duration of qualification. Iran and Egypt finished fifth and fifteenth respectively, and moved into their zonal positions where they stayed throughout qualifying. France were the early runners in the European zonal race whilst the USA initially occupied the Pan-American place.

Germany won the European Championships to move into the top four, replacing Russia - the Germans remained in the top four from that point on. They beat Hungary in the final who leapfrogged Russia to jump into the European zonal berth. It was no surprise to see the USA beat Canada at the Pan-American Championships, a result that moved the USA into the top four and Canada into their zonal spot.

Ultimately, the team qualification places were settled by the time the World Championships were over. Korea won a thrilling final against Hungary in Budapest. The result solidified Korea's position at the top of the Olympic qualification rankings and promoted Hungary into the top four,

where they would stay with Korea, Italy and Germany. Russia's fifth place finish put them into the European zonal place and the USA's tenth place was enough to move them into the Pan-American spot, demoting Canada.

Those places didn't change through the last four qualification World Cups – Cairo, Warsaw, Luxembourg and Budapest.

Will we get every neutrals dream and a repeat of the World Championship final – between Hungary and Korea in Tokyo?

Rank	Country	Points	Adv.	1st Qual	2nd Qual	3rd Qual	4th Qual
1	South Korea (K)	400	40	1	1	1	1
2	Hungary (H)	320	32	2	2	2	2
3	Italy (I)	270	27	3	3	3	3
4	Germany (G)	260	26	4	4	4	4
5	Russia (R)	250	25	5	5	5	5
6	France (F)	240	24	6	6	6	6
7	USA (U)	230	23	7	7	7	7
8	Canada (C)	220	22	8	8	8	8
9	Japan (J)	210	21	9	9	9	9
10	China (CH)	200	20	10	10	10	10
11	Spain (S)	190	19	11	11	11	11
12	Poland (P)	180	18	12	12	12	12
13	Ukraine (U)	170	17	13	13	13	13
14	Belarus (B)	160	16	14	14	14	14
15	Uzbekistan (UZ)	150	15	15	15	15	15
16	Georgia (G)	140	14	16	16	16	16
17	Armenia (A)	130	13	17	17	17	17
18	Belgium (B)	120	12	18	18	18	18
19	Latvia (L)	110	11	19	19	19	19
20	Estonia (E)	100	10	20	20	20	20

In the individual race, Tunisia's Fares Ferjani was the first to move into position. A top 64 finish at the Seoul Grand Prix was enough to stake an early claim for the African spot, that he never relinquished. Argentina's Stefano Lucchetti and Pascual Di Tella shared the early lead for the Pan-American race with Canadian Shaul Gordon. A quarter-final finish for Gordon at the World Championships was enough for him to take the lead – one that he would

never give up. Germany's Max Hartung and Vincent Anstett of France held the top European place early in the qualification period, but Germany moved into a team qualification position after the European Championships. Anstett's teammate, Bolade Apithy finished in the top eight in the individual in Dusseldorf and that was enough to claim the leading European place and he was never usurped. Georgia's Sandro Bazadze replaced Ukraine's Andriy Yagodka in the race for the other European place. He was temporarily removed after Russia dropped out of team qualification at the European Championships and Kamil Ibragimov moved up. However, Russia's promotion after the World Championships reinstated Bazadze and he remained there throughout. Vietnam's Thanh An Vu and Chinese fencers Xu Yingming and Wang Shi did the early running for the two Asian individual spots. Ultimately it became two races in one – with Wang and Shi competing to finish the top Chinese fencer and Vu battling it out with Japan's Yoshida Kento. Vu hung on until the Cairo World Cup where Yoshida's top 64 finish was enough to promote him. Yoshida's remaining results meant he held on for qualification. Wang's silver medal at the Asian Championships meant he overtook teammate Xu for the top zonal individual place. He held onto it until the penultimate World Cup in Luxembourg where Xu's top 16 placing was enough for him to pinch the place.

Rank	Country	Points	Adv.	1st Qual	2nd Qual	3rd Qual	4th Qual
1	South Korea (K)	400	40	1	1	1	1
2	Hungary (H)	320	32	2	2	2	2
3	Italy (I)	270	27	3	3	3	3
4	Germany (G)	260	26	4	4	4	4
5	Russia (R)	250	25	5	5	5	5
6	France (F)	240	24	6	6	6	6
7	USA (U)	230	23	7	7	7	7
8	Canada (C)	220	22	8	8	8	8
9	Japan (J)	210	21	9	9	9	9
10	China (CH)	200	20	10	10	10	10
11	Spain (S)	190	19	11	11	11	11
12	Poland (P)	180	18	12	12	12	12
13	Ukraine (U)	170	17	13	13	13	13
14	Belarus (B)	160	16	14	14	14	14
15	Uzbekistan (UZ)	150	15	15	15	15	15
16	Georgia (G)	140	14	16	16	16	16
17	Armenia (A)	130	13	17	17	17	17
18	Belgium (B)	120	12	18	18	18	18
19	Latvia (L)	110	11	19	19	19	19
20	Estonia (E)	100	10	20	20	20	20

Whilst other teams and fencers were involved in the races for qualification, this article has focussed solely on those that held a qualification berth at least once during the period.

The final chance for individuals outside of Japan to qualify came at the special zonal competitions. It was a high pressure winner-takes-all scenario. Here are the results:



TRAVEL TO TOKYO

Evie Millar - Head Office & Events Administrator

In March 2021, BF launched the Travel to Tokyo Challenge.



As we are unable to travel to Tokyo this year, and to get ready for the restart of activity, we set all members the challenge to join us virtually to "Travel to Tokyo". To complete the task to travel from BF HQ in London to Tokyo, we are challenging members to help us complete the 16,312,500 steps, which is based on an average of 1,250 steps per kilometre.

The challenge is taking place on BF's Playwaze platform, within the GB League Community. When you sign up to the challenge you can link your personal fitness tracker, which means all your steps - whether it's walking, running or any other exercise, such as your footwork sessions - count towards your total.

Within the first few weeks of the challenge, we saw some excellent totals, with some



Photo Credit: Hannah Gavin

Hannah, BF's Development Officer - Clubs and Regions, took this image whilst getting in her steps!

members averaging between 15,000-20,000 steps per day!

We have also been celebrating the progress of our challenge on social media. We have launched #BFTraveltoTokyo, where those taking part can share their favourite images while they are out and about and encourage others to take up the challenge.

BF Staff have also been getting involved!

Pets have joined in! I've been taking my dog with me on walks in the countryside!

The challenge is an environmentally friendly way to support Marcus Mepstead as he sets his sights on Tokyo. Marcus is an ambassador for Trees for the Future and supports their work in creating forest gardens across the world, for communities to grow sustainable food sources. With supporters unable to travel to Japan to spectate, they can now virtually travel the distance, whilst keeping fit and reducing their carbon output in the process.

We are pleased to announce that Pulseroll, BF's Official Supplier, has kindly provided prizes for the challenge! With prizes going to the 1st, 2nd and 3rd placed members who have completed the most steps at the end of the challenge, along with prize draws where all members who have entered the challenge are entered into the draw!

It's not too late to join the challenge! Join today and help us reach Tokyo! More information including how to sign up can be found [here](#).

In addition to a free profile, BF affiliated clubs also have access to a range of features including Push Notifications for Members and New Feed capabilities. Clubs also get to trial select features on a never-ending cycle - perfect for a series of repeating sessions or a one-off course.

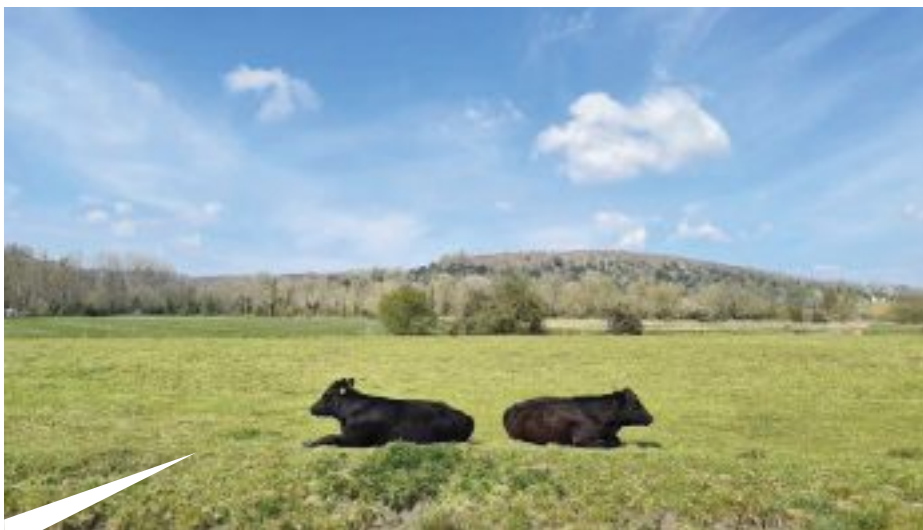


Photo Credit: Dan Kew

Dan Kew took this image while walking along the River Arun taking part in the challenge!



Photo Credit: Evie Millar

AN APPOINTMENT WITH DR KATZ

Rob Cawdron Talks with Consultant Psychologist Jonathan Katz

Dr Jonathan Katz and his company, The PinM Consulting, have been working in partnership with British Fencing's Athlete Development Programme to develop psychological and performance tools for athletes and coaches that will help them learn and refine the mental skills necessary for competing at international level. In this interview, Dr Katz will talk about how he got into fencing, where the sport led him and his experiences in a range of high performance environments including multiple Olympic and Paralympic Games.

How did you get involved in fencing?

I started fencing at the American School in London during a month-long summer camp aged 15. Fencing was something that I had wanted to do for several years before this opportunity arose and I have never looked back. My curiosity, motivation to master technique and tactics, compete and achieve this among a group of friends has remained strong ever since.

What have you done/enjoyed most in fencing?

My formative fencing years were characterised by developing technical excellence through the then proficiency awards scheme. I was supported by two coaches who were generous in their time and commitment to me personally and my fencing development, and I thrived in those athlete-coach relationships. My fencing education also included competing in school matches and local competitions, which needed to be negotiated with school, university and finally work demands. My desire to learn more about fencing took me to my first coaching course, which opened further opportunities. A chronic injury in my mid 20s cut short my competitive opportunities so coaching took precedence, becoming a three-weapon coach - BF L5 and BAF Diploma. I have and currently coach youth, senior and veteran fencers including piste-side support at national and international tournaments, Championships and at multiple Commonwealth Fencing Championships. I returned to competing following rehabilitation culminating in representing GBR at four Coaches World



Championships and at the multi-sport Maccabi Games.

More recently people might know you as a psychologist. Tell us about how you got involved in psychology and some of your experiences?

I studied psychology concurrent with my fencing training and coaching, with a focus on treating clients experiencing significant mental health concerns. I worked across a treatment service that handled a wide range of psychological difficulties, developing and delivering group-based and individual treatment packages. This role was as part of a wider team. Central to this experience is (a) the appreciation of understanding 'the whole person' and 'not just the problem'; and (b) the value of teams of professionals working together in the client's interest.

In the course of your career you've gone from working in clinical/counselling psychology to also being a sports psychologist. Is that a typical career path, and what are some of the key insights you have brought from the clinical world to the sports performance world?

My route to sport psychology integrated my training and experience of working in clinical/counselling psychology with my increasing interest in supporting performance and athlete growth through coaching. Sport psychology was in its formative stages of growth in the UK when I was entering the discipline. The typical route to becoming a sport psychologist at the time was psychologists and sport scientists, with a background in performance and exercise environments. My entry into becoming a sport psychologist was the integration of an academic and professional training in psychology culminating in becoming a Consultant Psychologist working in psychiatric hospital settings along with my ongoing career and training in fencing as a coach and performer.

Sport psychology was emerging as a distinct professional discipline that enabled me to express the full range of my experience, manifested through accreditation with the British Association of Sport and Exercise Sciences and as a Chartered Sport and Exercise Psychologist with the British Psychological Society. This pathway to sport psychology was rare at the time and remains somewhat unusual.

My professional background was founded on individual support through establishing effective therapeutic/professional relationships, which adds depth and breadth to the range of support options I access when providing and delivering sport psychology support. The lessons of understanding the client, appreciating the client's experience from their perspective, creating and facilitating the opportunity for client growth and change have stayed with me. These principles remain a feature in my professional work as both psychologist and coach.

Understanding mental health and recognising threats to an individual's wellbeing has become an increasing feature within performance environments.

My experience of having observed and worked with clients that have experienced significant psychological wellbeing issues provides me with an appreciation of (a) identifying and recognising the significance of early warning signs of wellbeing concerns, and (b) a capacity to provide appropriate interventions. I increasingly develop packages that use this awareness related to psychological wellbeing support of the client, to complement supporting athletes to develop resilient coping strategies in managing performance pressures and demands.

Over your career, you have worked as Head Quarters Psychologist for the British Paralympic Association at the 2004 and 2008 Paralympic Games as well as an NGB psychologist for the 2010 Winter and 2012 Summer Paralympic Games. What are some of the lessons that you have learned about what it takes to be successful in these high-performance environments?

The bravery and resilience of athletes to commit to deliver performances where their success and failures, in terms of outcomes, is so public, conspicuous and judged by so many. Because of this, the need to develop internal resilience that insulates (a) the process of the performance from the result; (b) supports psychological wellbeing from the demands of the emotional roller-coaster of performance highs and lows characteristic of the Games; and (c) developing and maintaining sustainable effective boundaries between the 'athlete performance' and the wider organisational and environmental distractions. The importance for athletes to have a dedicated support team where non-sporting support team members are incorporated into the important sport support team members.

For the last 2 years you, and your company, The PinM Consultancy, have been working with BF's Athlete Development Programme (ADP), designing tools for introducing athletes to mental skills. Why do you

believe it is so important for these skills to be embedded early?

Facilitating, supporting and maintaining positive mental health through managing psychological wellbeing is, and has been, central to all strands of my experience. Originally this took the form of providing external packages of support to individuals. A core feature of these packages was to provide information so that clients developed greater self-awareness through receiving accurate information and knowledge, thus supporting the skills to make informed decisions related to facilitating psychological change and developing robust coping.

There is a consensus in sport psychology of the interaction between personal wellbeing and sporting performance. So, the work undertaken with the ADP is designed to encourage the young athletes, and not so young ones, to develop awareness and understanding of how to meet their individual psychological and emotional needs, providing a foundation upon which to build resilient sporting performance. Importantly athletes tend to flourish when immersed in a supportive environment that is characterised by effective relationships with key stakeholders. Consequently, the Psychological Growth and Mental Skills: A Sports Psychology Programme, aka 'mental skills toolbox' is designed

to support individual personal wellbeing and performance delivery, athlete-coach-family/friends relationships, and managing pressures and demands related to the wider performance environment.

Prevention or cure? Mental health/psychological wellbeing or performance delivery? These dichotomies have been frequently cited when exploring how best to support athletes. I challenge this in favour of developing and supporting 'the whole person'. Accordingly, the mental skills toolbox provides opportunities for athletes to learn adaptive coping skills proactively as well as offering remedial support that work in a complementary way.

If you would like to learn more about the work that Dr Katz has been doing with the Athlete Development Programme, turn to page 24, where you can read an article introducing two of the centrepieces of Dr Katz's work with the ADP: the THRIVE-MANAGE-SURVIVE model and Mood & wellbeing Meter, designed to aid athletes and their support networks in developing accurate self-awareness and then communicating effectively with each other.



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SUPPORTING MENTAL HEALTH

The Wellbeing Meter

By Dr Jonathan Katz - Consultant Psychologist

In this article, consultant psychologist Dr Jonathan Katz will be introducing readers to the Mood & wellbeing Meter as well as the THRIVE-MANAGE-SURVIVE Model.

These psychological and performance tools form the centerpiece of the work that Dr Katz has conducted in partnership with British Fencing's Athlete Development Programme to give athletes the resources to develop the mental skills they need to be able to perform at international level.

Performers in general, and elite performers specifically, typically share certain psychological characteristics. There is a strong drive to succeed, frequently defined by winning, with an inner voice fueling this drive by "I have to win/succeed" and/or "I must not lose/fail"! The strength of this drive is channeled into 'doing my best' in every aspect of training, competition preparation and performance delivery. 'Doing my best' equates to being perfect!

Winning and success is primarily defined by achieving outcomes goals in the form of results. Performers then appraise their worth and value as a person based on these results: "I'm only as good as my last result". This result could be, for example, a competition outcome or how the most recent training session or lesson went.

Using an outcome to measure success means that either "I'm 100% okay" or "I'm a total failure". This has implications for mental health and psychological wellbeing, as the athlete's appraisal of their self-worth, self-esteem and competence is directly correlated with either being 'okay' or 'a failure' that is dependent on the outcome of their most recent performance, as they perceive it to be. The net result can be emotional states that swing from 'feeling great' to 'feeling awful' that, over time, become increasingly fatiguing and a drain on coping resources.

The athlete's personal perception of success or failure is the barometer used when appraising their performance.

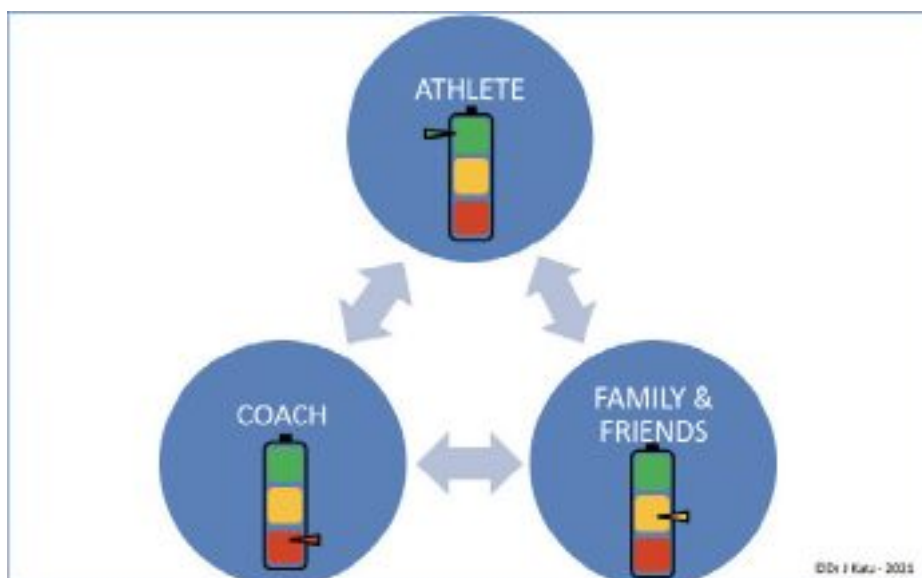
The perfectionist tendency previously mentioned adds a subtle but significant variable to the 'personal appraisal'. Even in performances when an athlete has achieved their outcome goal, this variable can be activated in the form of a "yes, but...". These 'yes, buts' take the form of 'even though I achieved my outcome': (a) it didn't feel good; (b) I should have been even more efficient in my execution; (c) I shouldn't have given away silly hits; (d) I didn't feel confident enough during the fight; etc. So, even though athletes are driven to succeed, they can subtly undermine their own feelings of success despite actually achieving what they set out to do.

Unrelenting standards and a drive towards achieving them, results in athletes demanding a high intensity from themselves in all training and competition activities. Taking time for what is perceived as 'doing nothing and a waste of time' encourages athletes to de-emphasise time for rest and recovery, despite appreciating that these activities are important.

The overall consequences of this include athletes experiencing a roller-coaster of emotions; driven to striving for success; an intolerance for what is perceived as failure in themselves and others; and limited acceptance in taking time for rest, recovery and relaxation. And despite this, athletes still expect themselves to perform reliably, predictably, at their optimum level under the high environmental, personal and interpersonal pressure-cooker of competition every time, all of the time!

The challenges associated with managing and coping with performance expectations are recognised in supporting individual mental health and resilience to athlete's performance delivery. These expectations include what an athlete expects from themselves; what the coach expects from the athlete; what other stakeholders expect from the athlete; and what family and friends expect from the athlete. And this does not include the demands associated with online sources of pressure. This is represented in the 'athlete-coach-family/friends interaction' graphic.

The knowledge, skills and techniques in managing one's mood contributes to



supporting mental health and developing resilience. A range of coping resources has been developed to provide athletes, coaches and other key individuals with the facility to support wellbeing. The Mood and Wellbeing Meter is the centrepiece formed around a THRIVE-MANAGE-SURVIVE (TMS) model, which is illustrated in the 'Mood & wellbeing Meter' (M&WB Meter) graphic.



Real-time reflective practice is a necessary activity that facilitates a 'being in the moment' focus, which is underpinned by an athlete developing 'accurate self-awareness'. Accurate self-awareness refers to a realistic appraisal of the athlete's current mental, emotional and physical state, and associated coping resources in relation to meeting 'real-time' situational pressures and demands. The creation of the M&WB Meter forms an accessible language to articulate, support and communicate an athlete's current mood.

The performance attributes discussed previously promote a binary appraisal of mood, either good referred to as 'thrive' or bad referred to as 'survive'. The binary appraisal of mood, thrive-survive, inadvertently mirrors the appraisal of performance that exclusively uses outcome measures, resulting in an athlete either feeling 'great' or 'awful'.

Minimising extremes in self-appraisal of mood facilitates a more stable, consistent and reliable sense of psychological wellbeing that widens one's self-appraisal to integrate both internal psychological and emotional states with external behavioural and outcome activities. It is this integration that encourages mood regulation and is represented by the THRIVE-MANAGE-

SURVIVE model where 'MANAGE' refers to greater tolerance and acceptance of psychological discomfort even while individual goals or preferences are not being met.

The TMS model adopts a holistic approach that supports 'the person' as well as 'the athlete'. Mental wellbeing and coping



©Dr J Katz 2020

are intrinsically linked as athletes who perceive themselves to be coping well, tend to feel more self-confident and trusting of their competence to deliver optimum performances. The battery representation of the M&WB Meter is designed to encourage the appraisal of coping in terms of energy and resources. The lower or higher the perceived levels at any given moment quantifies an associated mood associated with the three mental states (TMS). The green-amber-red colour coding adds an additional visual representation that some might find more helpful than using the mental state terms.

The M&WB Meter graphic includes general descriptions for TMS. These descriptions support a more shared understanding of the concepts that, in turn, facilitate the opportunity for increased understanding when one person communicates 'how they're feeling' to another. Further, the TMS terms can be used as 'shorthand', which makes the concepts portable and more readily available in time-sensitive moments such as during minute breaks in DE fights.

The M&WB Meter using the TMS model supports the notion that mental wellbeing relates to an appraisal of mood that is changeable and varies over time. For athletes, this means that their mood and associated degree of wellbeing is

likely to change during training sessions and certainly in competitions and championships. Applying the M&WB meter, therefore, becomes a valuable asset in supporting performance, achieved through using one's self-awareness to produce an accurate self-appraisal of one's current mental state - TMS.

Each mental state provides a 'signpost' directing the athlete to a range of helpful coping resources. For example, psychological strain, feeling emotionally drained, and/or physically exhausted are typical indications of "Surviving". Remember, one's current mental state acts as a perceptual filter. So if one is 'Thriving' one's appraisal of a given situation may be different compared to when one's 'Surviving' in a similar situation. An important consequence of this is how one either responds to feedback from others or how one provides feedback to others, is influenced by the respective moods of the people involved in that moment. Your attention is directed to the 'athlete-coach-family/friends interaction' graphic where you can see the three individuals' M&WB Meter ratings are different. Consider the implications for this when managing high performance demands?

Stability, reliability, predictability and consistency of mood supports psychological wellbeing that underpins mental health. Individuals who are able to construct their psychological wellbeing by incorporating internally based psychological coping resources, develop increased resilience to insulate their performance from unhelpful pressures and demands.

Dr Jonathan Katz is a consultant psychologist, registered with the Health and Care Professionals Council (HCPC), a British Psychological Society (BPS) Chartered Psychologist and is High Performance Accredited with and a Fellow of the British Association of Sport and Exercise Sciences (BASES). If you would like to learn more about how he came to work with the Athlete Development Programme and his extensive experience in high performance sport you can read an interview with him on page 22.

HIGH PERFORMANCE COACHES

Who Are They?

Steve Kemp - Head of Pathways

The High-Performance Coach. What do they look like? What behaviours do they exhibit?

These are two questions often posed to fencing coaches. To explore these questions, it's worth briefly revisiting theories of learning and development.

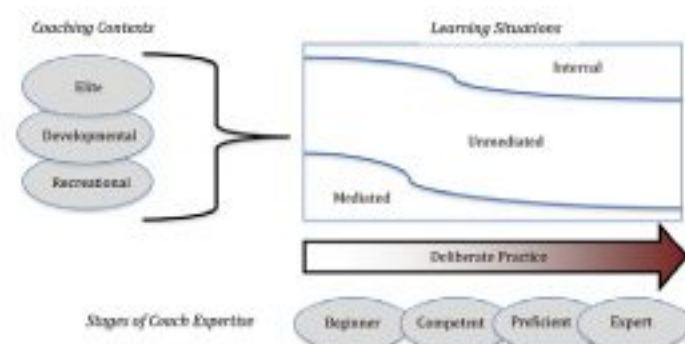
Before I get started, I want to set out the context for this article. At a time when we might be on the verge of returning to something more normal, most clubs and coaches, quite rightly, are focussed on getting back to their regular sessions. I am there for you and British Fencing will do what it can to advise, guide and support you however we can. This article may or may not be for you. The audience I'm writing this for though is those with aspirations to become coaches of the highest performers on the international stage. However, I hope there's something in here for all of you.

Readily available literature has multiple theories on learning and how adults learn best. It is important for coaches to understand and recognise the types of learning situations - the "coach's experience" - and how these relate to the complex and changing environment where coaches work? This can inform the balance of learning and development opportunities in the learning journey of coaches.

Types of Learning Situation

Mediated (Formal/Non-Formal)	Formal :Coaching awards and qualifications Non-Formal: Workshops, Seminars and Communities of practice
Unmediated learning (Informal)	Learning on the job Self-directed reflection
Internal Learning	Self-reflection - reorganising what you know

Trudel and Gilbert (2013) mapped how the learning situations are linked to the coaching contexts and the development of expertise.



Steve Kemp

The importance of revisiting learning theory is to recognise the learning situations and how that learning is driven by the coach, and this is driven by their known "self" - their self-awareness and self-management. This will be coupled to their Coaching Philosophy and underpinned by their values and beliefs.

The role of a high-performance coach working with an athlete is the refinement of the athlete performance to meet the demand of the high-performance environment, compared to the pathway coach who is helping develop the athlete to transition into the high-performance environment. To describe the High-Performance Coach; they have high levels of sporting intelligence and exhibit performance leadership, underpinned by knowledge of themselves and their ability to manage successful interpersonal relationships.

The behaviours that they exhibit will include:

1. **They are lifelong learners**, constantly curious and exploring ways of getting better. They spend significant time learning on the job. They know they are really good at some things and are comfortable that they don't know everything. They like experts around them and welcome the challenge and insight they bring. They have the confidence to embrace change and let people grow.
2. **They are the predictors of the sport in the future**. They are agile to impacts such as rule changes. They develop insights on how the game will be played and what the athlete will need to do in the future. To do this they are students of the sport - constantly building their knowledge of the sport, always looking to gain competitive advantage.
3. **They are educators**. They understand learning and the learning environment, with the needs to individualise those learning opportunities. That learning is often applied to themselves, using others to challenge their current thinking - sometimes confirming the thinking or causing a change in thinking and behaviour, otherwise known as "new learning".
4. **They are chameleons**. They are very self-aware and seem to have an innate ability to read their situation or environment and respond in the most effective way to support and drive high performance. This most likely

developed over a number of years of experience of being keen observers who think critically.

5. **They are relentless.** This is underpinned by a clear sense of purpose, coupled with high standards – an ‘all in’ commitment and a desire to win.
6. **They are benevolent.** Whilst they are driven in the pursuit of excellence, they are compassionate about the athletes, the team that supports them and also themselves. They have a “people first” value and they continually seek to better understand the athletes and how they can be best supported.

Leave No Stone Unturned In The Right Way

The next section will explore what relentless and benevolent means in multi-medal winning coaches.

The relentless drive to find a way to achieve repeated medal success consists of:

1. **Unwavering high standards.** Mistakes yes, blunders no! Leading by example, they are always thorough and prepared. They know when to raise the level and when certain standards have been achieved. They learn from failure quickly and effectively. They drive a high-performance culture in all that they do.
2. **An elevated sense of purpose and duty.** They are proud when representing a nation. They know and understand what they did is bigger than them. They understand that whilst the coach will have many chances, the athlete who has given years in pursuit of their dream may only have the one chance, which could be lost at any moment.
3. **A desire to win.** As athletes they were competitors and quite often for various reasons they have not achieved what they set out to do. They have a sense of underachievement, an atonement to make up for past shortcomings and there is a need to prove themselves and that need drives them.
4. **‘All in’ commitment.** A high-performance coach will be 100% mentally and physically present in all they do. They commit heart and soul to high performance whether they are planning and preparing, overseeing training or supporting at competitions. They deliver on all aspects of coaching, rather than cherry picking the easy or fun parts of the job. They match the ‘all-in’ commitment levels of the multi-medal winning athlete.

5. **20-20 Vision.** They have the ability to see into the future and identify what needs to happen to be successful, simplifying complexity to recognise what is important to maximise resources, planning to win and sharing the roadmap. There is a clarity of purpose in the planning for future competitions and events.

The benevolence required to achieve repeated medal success consists of:

1. **A people-first approach.** The high-performance coach puts the person before the athlete, creating balance between the right challenges and support, protecting the interest of the athlete’s individual needs whilst maintaining high standards, driving levels of expectation and demand, retaining uncompromising desire for improvement and victory combined with the highest respect for the welfare of the athlete.
2. **Seeking to understand.** They deeply care for the athlete, having taken the time to truly know the athlete, their hopes, fear, what drives them, and what drives them to push their bodies to the limits and beyond. Continually seeking feedback from the athlete to check and challenge understanding. This coupled with empathy and shared leadership, demonstrably taking into account the athlete views and the other professionals supporting the athlete. When tough decisions are required, the high-performance coach will take into account multiple points of view using understanding, evidence and persuasion over imposition.
3. **Tomorrow is another day.** Learn from failure with a good level of optimism. Being tough-skinned enough to deal with defeat, the arguments and disagreements whilst maintaining emotions and composure, and to be able to put aside personal emotions to support the athlete in times of stress. The ability to forgive and move on where necessary.

All these factors are pulled together into a philosophy, typically humanistic and a set of strong values and beliefs which guide informed decisions, linked to an internal compass.

Like other high performing professions, the high-performing coach resides in a different environment – keeping grounded with a sense of perspective, normality, and a positive work-life balance means that coach can achieve a level of longevity required to become a multi-medal winning coach.

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CLUB SPOTLIGHT

Crawley Sword Club

By Luke Deamer

Crawley Sword Club: Stepping up to the challenge of lockdown

Crawley Sword Club is a 3-weapon community club in the southeast of England, dating back to 1954. As a large community club we welcome all ages and abilities, from beginners to squad members. With members aged from 9 to 70, we faced many challenges engaging and supporting our fencers during the COVID restrictions in 2020. Here's a little bit about our journey through the last year.

Challenges of Crawley in lockdown

Crawley and the local area were hit hard by the pandemic. With 1 in 5 jobs in Crawley depending on Gatwick airport, the town saw the highest increase in unemployment in the UK last year, which affected a number of our members.

As a community club we rely on a great network of parents and friends of Crawley Sword Club to operate. Lockdown therefore presented an obvious challenge to engaging and supporting our wider club supporters.

Lockdown was also hard for our sister club, Redhill and Reigate Epee Club. Despite being a very strong epee club, increasing venue costs meant they were forced to close. This meant Crawley Sword had to reach out and support a whole club, all without being able to meet in person.

Crawley Sword at Home

Like many clubs, when lockdown was announced we started online Zoom sessions. Stepping up to the plate, my brother Euan and I began running sessions twice a week. From footwork and reaction classes, to 'beats per minute' cardio and S&C sessions, we were able to provide fresh content on a weekly basis, all free of charge.

During lockdown our members also stepped up, sharing their creations of fencing targets and the ingenious ways of training with little space at home. The parents and friends of Crawley Sword also

started meeting once a week on Zoom, catching up over a drink and maintaining that club community.

In the second and third lockdown, we realised the very real risk of Zoom fatigue. Thankfully, we were overwhelmed with the number of volunteers that offered to run sessions. Our own regular coaches jumped in, with Ian Lichfield running video analysis sessions and Dave Buist leading some S&C sessions. Tim Buzwell ran some footwork sessions and Andy Huckle, one of our club armourers, shared tips on blade maintenance. One of our juniors, Jamie Briggs, ran a fencing fundamentals session and Euan and I even branched out into referee workshops for our members.

Similarly, we were incredibly fortunate to welcome a number of special guests. Our greatest turnout online was for Dr Jon Rhodes, who ran two sessions on the psychology of fencing. Laurence Halsted also shared his journey through competitive fencing, with advice from the True Athlete Project.

In our final lockdown, a big thank you also has to go to George Morris. George



ran nearly half of all our Zoom sessions between January and March, educating members on the RAMP warm up, as well as developing S&C sessions tailored to our fencers' priorities.

To help promote all these online activities, we increased our club communications, starting a club Instagram account and posting more on Facebook than usual. For our less media savvy members, our club secretary Cheryl Deamer worked tirelessly, sending out Zoom links and materials by email every week to all our members.





Crawley Sword Outside

When outdoor fencing was permitted, our committee spent a few long evenings deciding on the best direction for the club. Cheryl approached lots of venues for use of their playgrounds, car parks and outdoor spaces. After many failed attempts, the Hawth Theatre proved to be the breakthrough. With a large car park, barriers on the entry/exits, and just 5 minutes' drive from our indoor venue K2, it made the ideal place to set up the club. What's more the Hawth offered this all for free, even turning the floodlights on in the evenings to improve visibility!

However, securing the venue was just the start. Managing sign ups, taking

temperatures, sweeping the car park and marking out pistes all required a lot of work. With 30 fencers spread out across a car park, we also quickly found we needed multiple COVID and safeguarding officers to cover everyone.

With no full-time coaches, the club once again relied on an army of volunteers, doing everything from manning the car park barriers to setting out wipes for the equipment. Club armourers Teresa Innes and Andy Huckle returned to help set up and keep our kit working. Parents such as Dan Kew and Steve Elliott stepped in to help enforce COVID regulations. Even club 'grandma', Christine Evans, helped transport and store kit between sessions.

With the original outdoor sessions limited to footwork only, Euan, Tim and I ran S&C and footwork sessions for each weapon. Some of our members, like Oliver Pilgrim and Mike Questier, also got the opportunity to try their hand at taking a session under the watchful eye of our coaches. We even recorded the outdoor sessions for those that were still shielding, so they could follow along at home.

These outdoor sessions proved very popular. As one of the few clubs meeting outdoors in our area, we welcomed fencers from Horsham, Brighton and further afield. Even the local deer decided they wanted to join in on a number of occasions!

Back Indoors

Again, like many clubs, we couldn't wait to get back indoors. After an extensive



risk assessment, we took a number of measures to improve COVID-security, such as temperature checks and creating two separate waves of fencing pods. We even decided to use badminton nets and benches to physically prevent pod mixing.

Behind the scenes, a lot of time went into preparing each session, particularly determining the 6-person pods. Ensuring everyone had the ability to develop, to mentor, and to be challenged meant redesigning the pods every time someone dropped out. The current 15-person pods, negotiated by Sport England and British Fencing, have therefore made a massive difference.

The COVID tier system also left us juggling how we supported our members. Being so close to Kent, at one point we had members in 3 different tiers, each with their own restrictions. We also faced a point where our juniors could fence, whilst our adults were restricted to indoor footwork. As a community club, the need to offer hybrid sessions really stretched our resources. Yet again though, we managed to coach our juniors, run footwork sessions and film the footwork for those in lockdown.

Crawley Sword's Future

Clearly this last year has been hard. We've seen members suffer with COVID, face redundancy and suffer the isolation of lockdown. Yet this year also saw many people step up to the challenges of the COVID restrictions. As a community club, we would have really struggled without the ingenuity of our volunteers, the generosity of our local community and the willingness of so many to give up their time. A massive thank you to all those that have helped Crawley Sword develop through the year!



THE MAKING OF UKC FENCING

British Fencing's University Club of the Year 2019/2020

Patrick Stillman - Former President

"Rome wasn't built in a day" is a commonly used adage that refers to the need for time in the building of great things, and the success of the University of Kent's Fencing Club (UKC Fencing) certainly didn't come overnight. Rather, the winning of the University Club of the year is a reflection of the work that has gone into the club since 2016, through various cohorts, committees, and coaches, culminating in a season that personified the previous 5 years' contributions to the development of the club in one final bow - before being abruptly ended by the Covid-19 pandemic last March. For the last year, as we're all well aware, fencing has been very much on hold, and that has included University clubs. It's likely that next year, many University clubs may find themselves almost back to square one and, ourselves included, in need of a rebuild. Every club will have its own challenges and hurdles to overcome when the new academic year starts, recruitment, coaching, funding, unfilled committee positions, to name a few, many of these occur year on year, but will be felt harder this year in light of the pandemic. So if you're reading this article as a nervous incoming president of one of those clubs, a coach who works in HE fencing, or an alumnus who got into fencing at Uni and wants to know how we're doing, then I hope that I can provide some inspiration when that process starts in September.

I don't want to focus too much on the specifics of what we worked on over the last few years, what works for one club won't necessarily work for another, but there are a few areas that I do want to talk about which I think provide a more general idea of how we got to where we are today. The first of which is something of a "something for everyone" approach for members. This applies across the board: coaching, training, matches, competition opportunities, as well as socials, trips, and events, should all consider how everyone can get involved, but still remaining specific enough that everyone can still enjoy it. This is a tricky balance, but in getting that right you achieve two things: firstly, everyone feels a part of the club, from novices to the international athletes, it creates a "one club" ethos, not a club divided into



cliques and teams. Secondly, you're able to see the transition of fencers between the 'groups'; from novice, to intermediate, to experienced. We've never been particularly lucky with recruiting experienced fencers as a club, and so our teams over the last few years have consistently been filled with members who joined the club as novices in our first year, including the women's team that made it to, and survived in, the Southern Premiership. What does this look like in practice though? To take an example from last year, the club always arranges transport and accommodation for its members to go to competitions throughout the year. For our experienced and some intermediate fencers, that was the Welsh Open, for our intermediate and novice fencers, that was the London Region Novice/Intermediate (which experienced fencers came and coached/reffed at) and for our Novices, the Warwick National Novice competition, where they were supported by intermediate fencers and committee members. In this, you can see how the experienced members are able to not only feel that the club is supporting them by enabling them to go to big opens with their peers, but also that they are able to give some of that experience back into the club by assisting less experienced members at other events. Naturally, this culture takes a little while to bed down but is best facilitated by good social arrangements which ensure that everyone, regardless of ability, feels they're a valued member and ingrained by an engaging and supportive committee, who act as examples of the expected behaviours by other members.

My second point surrounds the importance of maintaining a Growth Mindset year on year between committees - i.e. "whatever last year's committee did, we can do better". Uni clubs all over the country will have committees of different shapes and sizes,





but all with a common goal: to get people fencing. The Kent club has grown significantly over the last 5 years in terms of what we provide: from 2 to 4 teams, representation and medals at BUCS Individuals, competitions across the country from Warwick to Wales, refereeing and armoury courses for members to gain skills and confidence, bigger and better social events from formal dinners to movie and pizza nights, more fundraising, more members, more coaches and more training. All of which would've been impossible without the commitment of our committees over the years, and their desire to improve upon the foundations that the previous committee laid down. For the committee at UKC, it wasn't enough that the Women's team made it into the Southern Prem. We ended up hosting the second weekend of fixtures at our hall, to make sure that all our members got a chance to experience it. It wasn't enough to just do the fundraising for Movember, one of our committee got involved with the running of Movember on campus and pushed our club to raise over £1.5k. More. This second point is contingent on one key thing: Continuity. Trying to break that cycle of re-inventing the wheel every time the old committee graduate, by making sure that there are good and clear handovers for next year's committee, and by making sure that all members are involved in some way in all things. As I suggested above, everyone in the club knows roughly what to expect and that knowledge, and, more importantly, culture, isn't lost.

I think that these two points sum up nicely the work that UKC Fencing has put in over the last 5 years, and they certainly overlap



in many key ways. If these two principles are followed, grow your offer year on year and ensure that as you grow, you're including everyone in that growth, pushing all your members to fill their potential regardless of ability, then success will come. The most important thing to remember is that building a club doesn't come overnight, as I said at the start of this article, "Rome wasn't built in a day", but they were laying bricks every hour.



KEITH SMITH (1962-2021)

By Peter Jacobs

Former British Fencing president Keith Smith has died from cancer at the age of 58.

President from 2000 to 2012, he was a leader of imagination with an infectious enthusiasm that motivated those around him, enabling him to get the best out of willing teams of volunteers. Throwing himself into fencing organisation from an early age, he led British Fencing through a period of great change. He was an outstanding competition organiser and a World class referee.

An 'Essex lad', Keith was educated at Brentwood School. A pupil of Steve Boston, he fenced in the England U18 foil team and in 1980 won the Public Schools foil championship, coming second at epee and third in the sabre. He then went to university in Birmingham to study History and Politics, competing for the university and in a British Student team and fencing for the West Midlands in the Winton Cup.

In 1985, with a BA Honours degree, Keith joined the history department of Whitgift School directly from university. He remained there for the rest of his life, rising to become Head of History and Politics. A colleague has described his teaching as a tour de force. In his spare time, he organised numerous trips, to countries ranging from the USA to Russia and many in between.

As his career progressed Keith was for a time a Housemaster and a Sixth Form Tutor, where he was able to contribute significantly to boys' well-being and to guide them towards their chosen university. He also took on a role in the Whitgift Benevolent Society committee, his particular responsibility being to identify those boys in need of financial support. His nickname in later years of 'Uncle Keith' shows the affection and respect that the boys had for him, their understanding that he really cared for their welfare.

He committed himself to the school's Combined Cadet Force, which he joined in 1986, retiring in 2019 as a Lieutenant Colonel after some 14 years as its commander. Through force of personality, charm and sheer brass-neck he persuaded senior officers of all three services to



facilitate visits that probably every other contingent in the country could only dream about - on board a nuclear submarine and aircraft carriers, helicopter flights, tank driving etc. He set up cadet force partnerships with two local maintained schools and he and a handful of senior regular officers formed an MOD working party on such partnerships with a highly successful outcome. It was this project that led to his deserved appointment as an MBE. He also linked up with the local youth offender team to provide activities using the CCF and school facilities.

It is difficult therefore to imagine how he could still find time for his immense contribution to our sport - but somehow he did! While still at university he joined the Public Schools Championships committee, establishing a connection that continued up to his death. From 1985 onwards he also served for periods on the Epee, International and Youth, Refereeing (of which he was chair), Rules and Under 20 Championships committees and Schools Fencing Union, and was elected to the BF Board in 1993.

In 2000 Keith was elected British Fencing President and went on to lead the organisation through twelve years of unprecedented change and growth. During his presidency membership doubled and Team GB enjoyed international results not seen for nearly 40 years; but it was not an easy time to be in the role. On arrival Keith launched immediately into preparation and

subsequent implementation of a Corporate Plan covering all aspects of fencing from participation to performance. Meanwhile in response to new requirements to access public funding for sport, British Fencing established a separate England Fencing entity (implemented in 2005) and formalised the relationships between BF and the Home Nations.

The awarding to London of the 2012 Games led to an explosion in government funding, already increased six-fold from the £60,000 of 2000 under Keith's leadership, to a tightly controlled £1 million at its peak.

Finally, to meet with the governance requirements of a public funded sport, BF's Board and executive structure was radically altered, with from 2010 an independent chairman and a number of appointed external directors providing additional experience and diversity, along with a greater degree of delegated authority for the CEO and executive team.

Keith's extraordinary and infectious energy and enthusiasm, his leadership and organising skills were essential in bringing British Fencing through this tumultuous period.





His down-to-earth friendliness, accessibility and ability to motivate people earned him the loyalty of the staff in the office; and it facilitated everyone's efforts to implement all these changes and to encourage activities at county, regional and home country levels, on all of which he expended much effort – indeed, his energy was phenomenal, he was once accused of having a twin because “he seemed to be everywhere”! His sense of fun and ability to entertain with fencing anecdotes happily oiled the wheels of all this activity.

As the lead representative of Great Britain internationally he was a tremendous strength. His networking skills, coupled with his other attributes and his unflinching support for all British post-holders, as candidates and in office, ensured that Britain was over-represented in the FIE and European Fencing Union (EFC). I quote one post-holder “I wouldn't be on my FIE commission without his support. He was always seeing the potential in people and went out of his way to help them achieve it”. He himself, as well as being a member of the FIE Refereeing Commission from 2000 to 2012, stood for the presidency of the EFC in 2005. He was only defeated, by Alisher Usmanov, by the narrowest of margins; and he did become a member of its Executive Committee – and indeed was its vice-president.

His competition organising was a tour-de-force, preparing thoroughly, excellently organising on the day, using carrots rather than sticks, with an injection of humour wherever possible, be the events local

children's events or the Senior European Championships (in Sheffield in 2011) and World Junior Cadet Championships (in Belfast in 2009) – these last two made possible by funding opportunities that he grasped arising from the awarding of the Games to London. Somehow there was no shortage of volunteer helpers with Keith and he remembered to thank them all at the end. At the 2004 Olympic qualifying competition in Ghent, the Belgian theoretically in charge essentially grabbed Keith and said to him, “You're running the competition for me”. British Championships were redesigned at each level into combined events over one weekend, resulting in much bigger entries. Many FIE World Cups were staged at Whitgift, with the kind support of the headmaster.

He was an outstanding referee, officiating at épée finals at three Olympics – Barcelona 1992, Atlanta 1996 and Sydney 2000; and at every World Championships from 1990 until 2000, when he was ‘kicked upstairs’, to the FIE's Refereeing Commission, acting as a refereeing delegate at the 2008 and 2012 Games. He also officiated at numerous Junior/Cadet World and Zonal Championships, World Cups, Grand Prix events and several Universiades.

It was at Barcelona that he met Karina Hoskyns, daughter of the 1958 World Épée Champion, who was the FIE photographer. They were married in 1994.

His refereeing and role as a delegate were renowned for their authoritativeness and integrity. He seemed always in complete control of the bouts irrespective of the



pressures on him and in such a manner that the fencers did not try to argue with him. I recall, after a men's foil World Junior Championships gold medal bout, the loser proceeded to vent his frustration by attacking the scoring apparatus with his weapon. Keith, FIE Refereeing Delegate, awarded a black card. The ensuing ruckus lasted so long that the medal presentation was postponed until the following evening. Despite immense pressure to withdraw the card Keith, absolutely correctly, stuck to his guns.

He strove to establish a cadre of British top class FIE referees to follow in his footsteps, helping and supporting those already qualified, seeking new candidates and working to improve the entire British refereeing ‘pyramid’; and warm relations were established with the BAF.

His leadership was leavened by sociability and by evident care for the people involved. At home or abroad, he always joined in the after hours' socialising, helping maintain the best of relations and motivating everyone, sometimes involving very late hours – and ‘a few lemonades’, as he would say.

At the British Fencing AGM in 2005 Bobby Winton, then aged 90 and joint presenter of the Winton Cup with his brother Sir Nicholas Winton, stated that Keith was “one of the best presidents he had known in 70 years”.

In 2012 Keith stood down from the presidency to devote more time to his career, his family and serving his local community. He was awarded British Fencing's gold medal and honoured with the role of British Fencing Vice-President.

BARBARA PAUL 1936-2021

Linda McMahon

Barbara Paul passed away peacefully at her home in Highgate on the 2nd March 2021. Born on the 18th November 1936, she was the only child of Betty Comyns and Glynn Jones but aged only two, tragedy struck the family when her father was killed.

This must have been heartbreaking, and growing up without him, she developed a close bond with her mother who never married again.

On her marriage to Raymond Paul, she became part of the most influential fencing family Britain has seen. Leon Paul, renowned fencing master pre and post Second World War was also founder of the Leon Paul Equipment Company in 1921 and later Salle Paul Fencing Club. Sons Raymond and Rene were both Olympians, as well as their sons Barry, Graham and Steven. If this did not faze her, perhaps inheriting three step-children - Steven, Dani and Charlie - may have. 'A challenge' is how they were described by Charlie, affectionately, at her funeral on the 14th April but all grew in mutual admiration over the coming years.

Barbara will be remembered, particularly by the multitude of children, parents, coaches and helpers who turned up in the early days of the Leon Paul Series of children's competitions but few will have realised how these events came to be.

It was one day in 1986, after Allan Skipp, Ziemek Wojciechowski and Frank Charnock had already established their own fencing classes for children that, as Allan recalls, "Tomek Walicki brought a team from Pauls and Raymond and Barbara came to collect their young daughter, Anise, on Saturday afternoon and both wandered around the hall; both with their mouths open and Raymond clicking away with his camera. He later said that he never thought he would see anything like that in this country. They came back on Sunday just to watch little kids fencing with their dad's lames



which had to be tucked up and long foils. Raymond's photos were pinned up in the New North Street shop for years."

The seed was planted. Raymond, through the company, offered financial support and Barbara put together the format and gathered the necessary personnel to run the events which started with just two in Eton and London. This was a sea-change-moment for British Fencing; a bold statement perhaps but this spawned the idea that developing children's fencing would likely have a knock-on effect and in the long-term, provide a rich pool of cadet, junior and senior fencers.

However, Barbara had trained as a teacher and her knowledge was such that she knew the importance of fun, encouragement, competition and reward in that order, if children were to want to come back. This was her philosophy for how the events were to be managed. Her aim was for every child to go away having had a positive experience; fencing at an appropriate level, meeting new friends and leaving with a small present.

Adding to the fun, Allan Skipp again recalled that, "Barbara was a great supporter of 'Boris' the Leon Paul reaction tester, and she was to be seen with Boris at many fencing events where she ensured that all who had a go, and those watching, went away with 'I Love Fencing' stickers."

Thus, Barbara's legacy lives on in the Leon Paul Junior Series (LPJS), perhaps not in the same format but in its continued development of children's fencing and where she brought her own quiet but hugely significant contribution to fencing as a whole.

On a personal level, my own enduring memory of Barbara was her warmth, generosity and determination to make all welcome into the Paul household, often at one of her and Raymond's wacky New Year's Day open house parties in Highgate, where one would find the 'who's who' of fencing plus neighbours, children and a number of dogs.

And finally, Clare Halsted sums up her own memory, "She was part of my fencing life from those early heady days with the GBR squad. I saw her as a calm, caring presence in the background balancing all the excitement and stress of competitive fencing."

"She was an inspiring role model within the development of the LPJS, always clear about the need for it to be fun and nurturing. And then of course her legendary hospitality and memorable New Year parties, together with Raymond, full of laughter and the all-important fun."

Ben Paul, Director of Leon Paul added, "Barbara's legacy lives on in the Leon Paul Junior Series (LPJS), which she started in 1986 with a couple of foil competitions in London. Back then, there were simply no competitions for young fencers and Barbara wanted to address this. Thirty years later the LPJS involves events all over the UK in all three weapons. It has become the mainstream introduction to competitive fencing for nearly all youngsters. During the last 5 years there have been 15,000 entries into hundreds of different events. Most fencers in the UK start their competitive experience at an LPJS competition. Thus, Barbara made her own quiet but hugely significant contribution to fencing."

Barbara leaves daughter Anise and partner Sam, grand-daughter Iris and step children, Dani and Charlie.

CONNIE ADAM 1927-2021

Peter Gallop

Norfolk fencer Connie Adam died peacefully aged 94 on 8 April.

Connie was a charismatic individual who chose to take up fencing at the tender age of 60 having given a local education session a try. This was the start of an unexpected new era in her life which took her around the world and lasted until she retired from the sport in 2019. Her main reason being that it was becoming increasingly difficult to manage the portering of her fencing equipment.

She was always willing to look for new challenges and developed an active social life. She was a successful ballroom dancer/tutor, a self-taught skier, and keen badminton player. For many years she



was employed as a chauffeur to the Lord Lieutenant of Norfolk and accompanied him on many royal/official assignments. Her driving skills were acknowledged when she featured in a TV programme focussing on the driving abilities of older drivers. She impressed her instructor so much that he commented he would be willing to be driven anywhere by her. She once described herself as having done nothing up to the age of 40 and then "sort of went berserk" declaring "I'm a recycled teenager".

Given her activities and personality Connie was a local celebrity and publicity machine in so far as fencing was concerned. It is difficult to get the local media interested in fencing at the best of times but not when it involved Connie, as the club's press clippings show. Given her sporting profile she was often called upon by local organisations to inspire others to keep active. She was always willing to put in an appearance in full kit and give a demonstration. Her slogan when speaking to groups, including schools was "never give up".

She gained recognition for her achievements and was voted Inspirational Sportswoman of the Year and was also named 'Sports Girl of the Year' by The Sportspark at the University of East Anglia, as part of their 'This Girl Can' campaign. To cap this, she was selected to carry the London 2012 Olympic torch during the parade through Norwich.

Her irrepressible determination came to the fore when she decided that it was unfair that daughters were not given the

equal right to inherit the title and privileges of Freeman as were sons. For many years she undertook a lonely vigil whenever the City Council were meeting. She stood in all weathers on the steps of City Hall with her placard. She gained the support of some local officials and gradually other women joined the cause. Eventually they were successful. Connie with the surname Adam was first in line to be inaugurated becoming the first woman Freeman of Norwich.

Connie took every opportunity to participate in local competitions, but her vast medal collection came from her involvement with British Veterans, and it was with this organisation she travelled the world. Her main weapons were the epee and sabre with which she was willing to take on any within her age categories. It was reported on one occasion in 'The Sword' 1999, that she was asked to withdraw from the younger age category in case she embarrassed the other younger participants by winning. Her dedication to the sport was illustrated when she underwent surgery for knee replacements. She persuaded her surgeon to do both at the same time, not something he was accustomed to doing, because she wanted to get fit for a forthcoming international fencing competition. Needless to say, she achieved this. Whilst her mobility reduced, she maintained good hand-eye coordination and her parry ripostes were not to be underestimated.

Norfolk and fencing have lost one of its inspirational characters but her spirit will live on amongst those who have known her.

Editor's Note

It has come to our attention that the book which was reviewed in the January 2021 edition of *The Sword*, "Winning at Epee" by Robin Catling, contained material that is subject to claims that it was taken from a previous publication without reference or permission and that the book is no longer available from the publisher.

#SUPPORTINGTEAMMARCUS

How To Get Involved

With no foreign spectators allowed at this Olympic Games we want to make sure that Marcus knows we're all behind him. This issue of The Sword Magazine features a special back page designed to make that easy!

What fencing magazine would be complete without a build-your-own-mask guide?! That's right! We want you to make a Marcus mask, put it on and take a snap, on your own, with your mates, family, club or with anyone in fact.

Instructions:

- Print off the back page - in colour if possible
- Cut out the mugshot of Marcus
- Recycle your old cereal box and create a backing for your mask (Top tip: Cut a bit of extra card on either side of his ears!)

- Stick mugshot to card and make a hole near each ear
- Use string or elastic to attached to your head
- Take the most interesting photo, showing your support
- Post on Insta including #SupportingTeamMarcus
- When you're done with your mask, dispose of it responsibly!

BF will compile all of the photos into an album to share on social media in the days before Marcus competes.

We can't wait to see what you come up with to share with Marcus. Of course there are no prizes but you never know, the Editor might post one or two in the next issue!





#SupportingTeamMarcus