

British Academy of Fencing **ACADEMY NEWS**



November 2017
Issue 93

"Run by coaches for coaches"

CRISIS!

By now, most of you will be aware that a lot has been happening in recent weeks, which is having a profound effect on the BAF.

Unfortunately, we are not in a position to give full details of the event that triggered all this, but it led to British Fencing deciding to suspend the Associate Body status of the Academy.

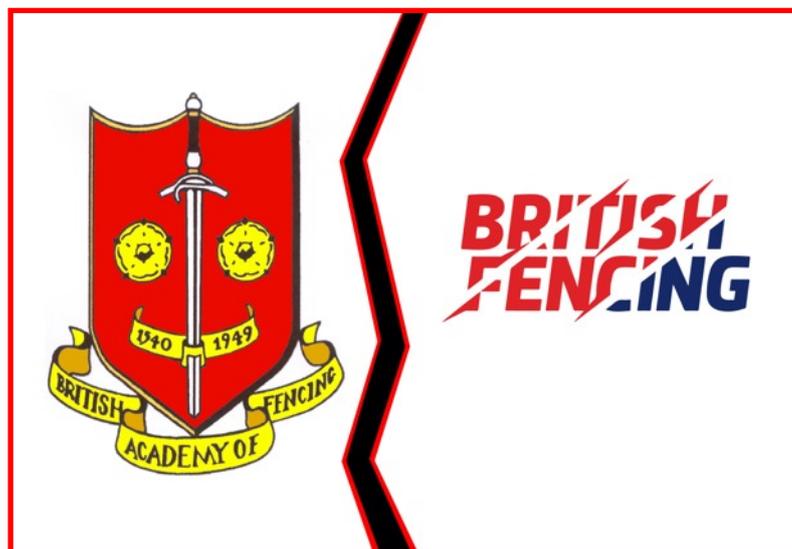
Following this, British Fencing has launched an audit of all its affiliated clubs, insisting that coaches operating in these clubs be on their Coaching Register, amongst other things. This will, no doubt, affect many of our members, who work in such clubs.

The suggestion has been that the Academy has not got a Child Protection Policy that is of a high enough standard. In fact, the SSTT has been working on a new policy for most of this year, researching methods of introducing suitable checks, whilst conforming with the various legal requirements that surround such things as DBS checks. The policy was well advanced, but, in light of recent events, has now been abandoned. The SSTT have made a statement on this, which you can find on page 5.

Unfortunately, these events have also led to a number of committee members resigning and this means that a Special General Meeting has been called for November 4th, to elect two committee members and allow the committee to be quorate for its last meeting of the year.

In addition to this, Prof Tom Etchells, the chairman of the SSTT, has decided to resign, due to health problems, whilst our Honorary Legal Advisor, Katy Wilkinson, has also tendered her resignation.

The Special General Meeting on the 4th November can only address one item, namely the election of new committee members, so the first real chance to have a full discussion of all matters will be the AGM in January. This is yet another reason for attending this meeting, when a new committee will be elected.



IN THIS ISSUE

<i>Useful Info</i>	<i>p 3</i>
<i>President Writes</i>	<i>p 4</i>
<i>SSTT Statement.....</i>	<i>p 5</i>
<i>Briefs.....</i>	<i>p 6</i>
<i>AGM Notification.....</i>	<i>p 7</i>
<i>Essay by James Lee.....</i>	<i>p 8</i>
<i>Letter to Editor.....</i>	<i>p 10</i>
<i>ClubKnight.....</i>	<i>p 11</i>
<i>More Useful Bits.....</i>	<i>p 12</i>

NEXT ISSUE: February 2018

Contributions by January 10th, please.

Following the decision by British Fencing to suspend the Associate Body Status of the BAF, Leon Paul has decided that it will not advertise in Academy News and has withdrawn the discounts it gives to BAF members.

YOUR COMMITTEE**Acting President:**

Prof. Liam Harrington
54 Laureate Way
Hemel Hempstead, Herts HP1 3RU
Tel: 07712 633106
Email: harringtonliam@hotmail.com

Vice-President:**RESIGNED****Secretary:**

Prof. Bob Merry
6 Birkdale Close, Bramhall
Stockport, Cheshire SK7 2LN
Tel: 0161 440 9613
Email: bobmerrybaf@aol.com

Treasurer:**RESIGNED****Assistant Secretary:**

Maitre Jackie Redikin
10 Beverley Avenue, Davyhulme
Urmston M41 0RY
Tel: 0161 747 6762
Email: jredikin@hotmail.co.uk

Members' Representative:**RESIGNED****Committee Member:****RESIGNED****Additional Appointments:****Chairman, SSTT, Course Officer:****RESIGNED****International Secretary:**

Prof. Liam Harrington

Proficiency Awards Administrator:

Maitre Donald Walker
4 The Aviaries
Castle Howard
York YO60 7BU
Email: maitredwalker@aol.com

**Child Protection Officer, Welfare Officer,
Chairman, Disciplinary Sub-Committee****RESIGNED****Editor - Academy News, Insurance,****Examination Results Coordinator:**

Prof. Bob Merry

Membership Secretary:**RESIGNED****Film & Theatre Representative:**

Andy Wilkinson
The Cottage, The Common
Kinsbourne Green
Harpenden, Herts. AL5 3NT
Tel: 01582 713052
Email: andywilkinsonbaf@hotmail.com

USEFUL INFORMATION**ACADEMY
WEB SITE**

**FOR ALL THE LATEST
INFORMATION AND
MERCHANDISING GO TO
THE ACADEMY WEB SITE
AT**

WWW.BAF-FENCING.COM**EXAMINATION
FEES**

Level 1 Assessment £11.00

Level 2 to Diploma £21.00 (**£26.00**)

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

**PROFICIENCY
AWARDS**

The current rates for awards are:

BAF Members:

1 - 4 Awards £3.70 each
5 - 9 Awards £3.60 each
10+ Awards £3.40 each

Approved non-Academy Coaches:

1 - 4 Awards **£4.70** each
5 - 9 Awards **£4.10** each
10+ Awards **£3.90** each

A5 Study Guides:

1 - 4 £2.65 (**£2.90**) each (incl. p&p)
5+ £2.30 (**£2.65**) each

A4 Syllabus leaflets:

Free with Study Guide, otherwise 60p
(**70p**) each.

A3 Sized Wallcharts:

65p (**75p**) each
Figures in **RED** are for non-BAF
members

DOCUMENTATION

The following documentation is available from Jackie Redikin (for contact details, see left)

Key Teaching Points Foil	} £7.35 (£9.45) each
Key Teaching Points Epée		
Key Teaching Points Sabre		
Key Coaching Points Foil		
Key Coaching Points Epée		

Key Coaching Points Sabre

Glossary of Terms (including Translation of Fencing Terms).....**£7.35 (£9.45)**Employment Guidelines.....**£7.35 (£9.45)**Teaching/ Coaching Tactics (2nd Edition).....**£16.80 (£21)**CD-Rom Issue 6.1 – this contains all the syllabuses and current questions for BAF examinations, as well as other examination material.....**£10.00 ****Examples of past written Papers – for the Advanced and Diploma examinations - **FREE** - apply to Course OfficerAll prices include p & p. Figures in **RED** are for non-BAF members

** Price of CD-ROM includes lifetime replacement guarantee - only buy once!

The Compendium containing all major Documentation, including the ones above, plus more relating to examinations, is currently under revision For further details contact Professor Isobel Bruce Combes (iacombes@btinternet.com)

British Academy of Fencing

The British Academy of Fencing Ltd

Company No. 8540066

A Company registered in England and Wales

Registered Office:

Talpa Hall
Station Road
Old Newton
Stowmarket
Suffolk IP14 4HQ

THE PRESIDENT WRITES.....



This is my last article for Academy News as Acting President. I will be stepping down at the AGM in January. Thank you to everyone who supported the Academy this year, either on courses or as an examiner, or working behind the scenes. On a personal note the messages of support I've had from the membership have really kept me going through a very difficult time. To say this has not been a good year for the BAF would be an understatement. If the BAF has had a worse year then I struggle to imagine what that must have been like.

There is a bit of gap between me writing these articles and the Academy News being published, and events have been moving so fast in the past couple of months that some of what I write might well be out of date by the time you read it. However, I'm aware that a lot of you will be wondering what on earth's been going on. So, while I regret that some things need to remain confidential for the moment, I will try to explain.

It was never going to be an easy year, but it started to get really challenging when the BAF Treasurer, Stuart Clough, suddenly resigned at the end of August.

Unfortunately, Stuart was unable to do any handover, so we were faced with the situation of not having a treasurer just as the membership renewals were due to be sent out and the insurance was due to be paid.

Many thanks are due to academy member Steve Morley, who managed to obtain a large number of documents, including the cheque book, from Stuart and hand them over to the committee. This at least meant we could pay the insurance and other bills on time. Without Steve's intervention, we would doubtless have been in a considerably worse position than we are. Even so, preparing an accurate set of accounts for the year is not going to be easy.

Unfortunately, for me anyway, one of the biggest difficulties of the year was brought on by a safeguarding case. This focused attention on the fact that, unlike British Fencing, the BAF does not require coaches to have background checks or attend child protection courses. This is something that has been brewing for a while now, and it is unfortunate that this was the year when matters came to a head.

Because of the safeguarding case both the BAF and British Fencing had their safeguarding policies reviewed by the authorities and were told to make changes. The BAF were instructed to implement changes to require our active coaches to have background checks and attend child protection courses. We have engaged a third party organisation to advise us on how to proceed, and by the time you read this we should have had our first meeting with them.

As I hope everybody already knows, from the earlier emails and letters I sent out, British Fencing have suspended the BAF's status as an associate body until such time as the BAF agree to support them in their efforts to implement a minimum level of safeguarding standards. At the same time Leon Paul also notified us they would cease to advertise in the Academy News until we reaffiliate with British Fencing.

Following the announcement that British Fencing had suspended the BAF's associate body status three committee members, Prof Andrew Norris, Prof Sam Smith, and Prof Lewis McIntyre were very unhappy with the way I had handled things and decided to resign. Lewis has agreed to carry on processing the membership renewals, and I think he deserves a lot of credit for that.

The above is my only personal take on things, and it's fair to say others on the committee have their own opinions.

A Special Meeting of the Academy has been requested, and some new committee members will be elected to tide the BAF over until the end of the year.

This forthcoming AGM on 6th January 2018 is going to be vital to the future of the BAF. The people elected onto the committee will be incredibly important for the very challenging year ahead. It is possible to vote for the new President via postal votes, but the other committee members can only be voted for in person, so please try to attend, and please choose wisely. I hope that a new committee will be able to rise to the challenges the BAF faces and give it a fresh start. Even without the safeguarding issues, we have a gradually declining membership, and declining numbers attending our courses. This needs to be reversed. The Academy does not live in splendid isolation but is part of a wider fencing community. I believe that in order to thrive it needs to be an active part of that community. I wish you all the best of luck

Liam Harrington, Acting President

SSTT STATEMENT ON SAFEGUARDING

At the January 2017 AGM, the SSTT reported that it was about to embark on a thorough revision of the Safeguarding Procedures of the BAF. It was hoped at the time, that the SSTT through research and guidance from appropriate authorities, would be able to recommend to the BAF a robust system of Safeguarding which would fulfil the requirements of the statutory bodies and provide a level of oversight equal to that of British Fencing without subjecting members to compulsory registration on the BFA's Coaching Register, an option that was rejected by the BAF 2008 AGM.

As the year progressed however, it became clear that the Acting President was pursuing his own course of action in this regard, without reference to the work of the SSTT and often without consulting the BAF Committee. The SSTT made a series of increasingly desperate attempts to persuade the Acting President to engage and communicate on this issue, to no avail.

As a result of this and of the repeated refusal of the Acting President to communicate vital information, it has not been possible for the work of the SSTT to continue effectively on this matter.

Recent events now make it clear that this issue is now becoming a crisis for fencing in this country. It is the opinion of the SSTT that at a time like this, it is the duty of the BAF to stand together with the BFA for the good of our sport. It is a time to put personal differences aside and work together. The SSTT fully supports the right of the BFA to set its own terms and conditions for its Affiliated Clubs and urges all BAF coaches to respect these. The SSTT further urges all active coaches to cooperate fully with the BFA's recent requests concerning the Coaching Register.

It is the opinion of the SSTT that, for the good of the sport, all active coaches who are not on the Coaches Register should seek inclusion as a matter of urgency and the SSTT calls upon the Acting President to make every effort to assist such members in doing so.

As the terms of membership of the BAF cannot be changed without an AGM or an EGM, the SSTT sincerely hopes that all members will behave honourably by complying without delaying until such terms may need to be made compulsory.

Prof. Tom Etchells

Prof. Philip Bruce

Prof. Bob Merry

Prof. Isobel Bruce Combes

13th October 2017

(Since this statement was submitted, the Chairman of the SSTT, Prof. Tom Etchells, has tendered his resignation on health grounds. The current SSTT are not pursuing any ongoing topics and has, in effect, ceased to operate)

BRIEFS

This is another in our occasional series which uses ideas, hints and tips sent in by our members.. The first one is a simple exercise that can be used by a coach to help a pupil achieve good timing for a disengage.

The coach starts with his blade in octave, whilst the pupil is in sixte. The coach then attempts to engage the pupil's blade in sixte and the pupil must avoid the coach's blade, in order to do a disengage attack. If the pupil avoids the coach's blade, then it is the pupil's point, but, if there is contact, the coach claims a point. The first to five points is the "winner". The coach can adjust the speed of the engagement to suit the skill level of the pupil and should also encourage the pupil to make a small disengagement. Later, the coach can add engagements into quarte and randomly change between the two.

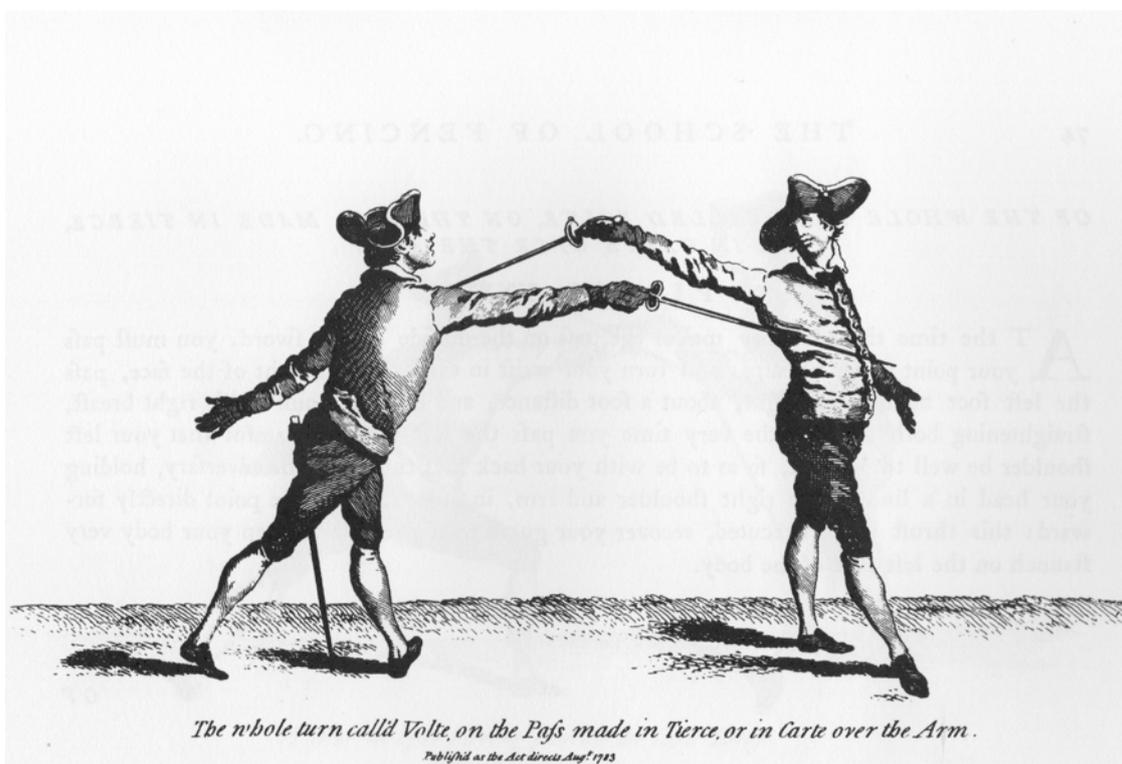
Another "game" that the coach could play with the pupil is one which discourages repetitive moves, particularly using the same parry too often, giving an opponent the advantage of being able to predict a likely move. The pupil loses the game if the same parry is used three times in a row. To help to distract the pupil and extend their concentration, the coach also gives openings for simple attacks. These count for nothing, but add a buffer between the coach's attacks, which the pupil has to parry, avoiding the dreaded "three times the same in a row". Of course, this is a game that the pupil is virtually certain to lose eventually, but the only way to win is to demonstrate to the coach that they understand the task, by regularly changing the type of parry used, until the coach "concedes".

Exercises that are presented like this as "games" can also be used by pairs of fencers in self-improvement practice sessions.

REMINDER

Members are reminded that annual subscriptions were due on the 1st October and that their insurance may be invalidated if they do not take steps to renew promptly.

It has also come to our attention that, occasionally, members are making transfers to a redundant account. This account is now closed and you are asked to make any bank transfers to our HSBC account; Sort code **40 43 37**, Account Number **41501089**



Notice of Annual General Meeting

The Annual General Meeting of the British Academy of Fencing will take place on Saturday 6th January 2018 at 11.00 am at the:

**Hilton Hotel, Warwick
Junction 15, M40 , A429
Stratford Road Warwick
CV34 6RE
Telephone: 01926 499555**

All members of the Academy are urged to attend.

The meeting of Maîtres d'Esgrime, Provosts and Members to commence at 9.30 am.

All positions on the Committee, except that of the Secretary, are due for election at this year's AGM. Members may request a proxy (postal) vote for the election of the President, by applying to the Secretary. All other positions will be determined by votes at the AGM itself.

Proposals for alteration or addition to the articles are required, in writing to the Secretary, at least 21 days before the meeting (by 16th December). Other proposals to be tabled at the AGM should be submitted to the Secretary 10 days before the AGM (by 27th December).

Apologies for absence may be forwarded via any Committee Member.

Professor Bob Merry, Secretary

AGM DINNER

At the time of writing, arrangements for the traditional Dinner on the AGM weekend have yet to be made.

It has been suggested that, in the light of current events and the possible ill feeling they might engender, it should not be held this year. Others feel that the social side of the weekend is an important part of the meeting.

If you intend attending the AGM and have strong feelings on this, either way, please contact either the Acting President or Secretary to make them known, as soon as possible.

STATEMENT BY THE SECRETARY

A lot has happened recently in the affairs of the Academy and many members are understandably confused and worried. I have been asked a number of questions about the situation, there being two that crop up the most often. The first concerns the underlying cause of the number of resignations from the Committee. I'm afraid I cannot give any detail of the event that triggered the initial resignation of our Treasurer and will have to leave it at that. As to the later resignations, I feel that it is not up to me to explain them. If the people concerned wish to explain the circumstances that led to their decisions, then that is up to them. I will not make a comment, other than to reassure you that they have done nothing wrong and their resignations are entirely their own decision.

The other question that I have been asked is "After the others, why didn't you resign as well?" Believe me when I say that I was very close to doing so, but in the end decided to continue. After Stuart Clough's resignation, I was the only co-signatory to our accounts left on the Committee. It has taken some time to get full control of them, including Online Banking, but this is now done and the business of the Academy can continue, with our creditors being paid; the most important one was the Insurance, which you can be assured has been paid on time.

The other factor that persuaded me to continue was the fact that, at the 2017 AGM, I was elected for a *two* year term as Secretary and Director. With the prospect of a complete change in the rest of the Committee at the forthcoming AGM, I felt it would be useful to have at least a small element of continuity; someone who knows how we got to where we are now, when the path forward is being planned. Therefore, I intend to complete this term of office, but I have to say that it is extremely unlikely that I will be seeking a further term. By the AGM of 2019, I will fast be approaching my seventy-eighth birthday and would like take the opportunity to hand over to the next generation of Masters. I originally took my place on the Committee because I felt that I owed the Academy a great deal; I had received help from a large number of people along the way (John Sanders, Leon Hill, Tom Etchells, Philip Bruce, Andrew Vincent, inter alia) and wished to do my bit in order to repay this "debt". I hope that I have done this.

Bob Merry

HOW I STARTED FENCING

an essay by James Lee (aged well over 14 and ¾ years)

Before I begin, may I just say hay fever is a very nasty allergy. Itchy nose, runny eyes, sneezing, and blowing nose all the time could drive anyone mad, as well as going through many boxes of tissues. Unfortunately, in my youth, I was suffering from this horrible condition. It was so bad that “Gardeners’ Question Time” could use me to predict which flower was in season. One of my former colleagues, whom I called Mr Nasty, would often kick our partition board between our desks, to remind me to keep quiet. Whilst another former colleague wrote the word “Ahhh--- Chofoo” on my leaving card.

Having already gone through numerous makes of conventional remedies, with varying success (dry mouth, passing pale green water and spent wads of £5 notes later), I decided to try an alternative route. Another colleague at the time was a fencer at Dacorum Fencing Club and he introduced me to this sport. The result was a relief, both physically and financially. I found that the combative exercises relieved my symptoms, as I didn’t have time to reach for the tissues during bouts. I also enjoyed this sport. I started with foil. I recalled an episode where a few months after joining, I was fencing someone who was a few years ahead of me. She was changing her line of engagement and was expecting me to do the same whilst maintaining a set distance; instead of this, I made a counter-disengage attack and hit her. Her face said it all, she wasn't pleased; especially as I had not learnt counter-disengage nor cut over attacks at the time.

Later on I studied épée with Mike Whale at Welwyn and Hatfield FC and St Albans FC. I remember that, after two short lessons, I was able to make two successful stop-hits against someone with 30+ years of experience, but once he sussed out his mistakes, he beat me convincingly, 5-2, as I was limited in experience then. But the memory of those two hits would stay with me.

I enjoyed going to competitions and local club matches, even though the results didn't quite match my enthusiasm. As the clubs grew, I started to help out with teaching the beginners; which I enjoyed very much. I gained my Club Leader award back in the late 90s. In 98/99 I attended a course ran by Dr Czajkowski, which was an eye opener (I still had hair then), even though I was thrown in at a very deep end, so to speak. In 2004, I attended the BAF course and gained my Level 1 Foil coaching award. (Isobel Combes, John Worsley, Stuart Lee, etc were my fellow pupils at the time; how time flies). One thing I remembered about Isobel was she kept an endless supply of bottles for the course evenings! The BAF coaching courses made me realise how little I knew about fencing, even after six or seven years practising!

These days I don’t do competitions, as I can’t get up in the early hours going to some distance places, then coming home empty handed; especially considering the various costs and time involved. However, I spend my time coaching others and attending coach education courses. Every Friday, I can be found in Welwyn Hatfield FC. I am hoping to induce our small group to enjoy more in this sport.

Being oriental, I would like to return to my roots. I was trying to find a suitable martial school that teaches Bagua, Pakua (depending upon where you are from), the Eight Trigram (some may call it Taichi on steroids). Eventually I found a group studying closer to what I wanted. At the beginning I was very clumsy, I couldn't tell my right side from left side, how far or close I was to the opponent. Eventually I began to see some similarity between fencing and this martial art. Sentiment du fer is similar to listening to the opponent’s force. Cadence and slow-slow-fast rhythm. If the opponent is too strong, transform their force, is similar to our prises-de-fer, ceding, opposition and detach parries. Their forms and katas are similar to our continuity hitting exercises.

These days I do not easily succumb to hay fever, apart from the occasional sneezing which is manageable and less obtrusive. In a way this allergy has steered me to learn a new sport and make many new friends.

Letters

To Academy News

I always read with interest the Academy News and have several times felt moved to respond to Bob Merry's request for articles or letters. I now feel that there are comments I wish to offer for discussion by members.

There will be many members who do not know me so I thought I should start with a short resume of my background:

I started fencing in Leicester 55 years ago and did my first coaching qualification with Leon Hill and Ken Pearson at Lilleshall in 1966, gaining my foil diploma in 2014. I fenced competitively for over 40 years, including internationally. I have coached in clubs and in the RAF. I refereed to National standard and at competitions aboard. I run events for the Veterans at home and aboard. I am Chair of England Veterans and Chair of the Commonwealth Veterans Commission.

I have always had a great deal of respect for and pride in the Academy, feeling that it had an excellent training scheme for coaches, supported by comprehensive paperwork. The Denstone courses were intense, rewarding and acknowledged around the world. Masters trained by the Academy established Regional centres of excellence, which played a major part in developing fencing in the UK.

Having highlighted what was good, there have been areas where things could have been better. We never managed to resolve our relationship with British Fencing and we withdrew from the Académie d'Armes Internationale. Recently attendance at the Denstone course has dropped off. Why this should be is a matter of concern. Certainly there is a shortage of coaches across the country. Finally I do not see a shared view for the future of the Academy.

In the past year the Academy has gained several new Masters, but the majority of these have been in their early twenties. Whilst we must congratulate them on the hard work and dedication they have put into gaining their qualification, I question whether they have the wider experience of fencing. How much credibility will they have with older fencers or those who fence at a high standard? Also how many of them will be going on to earn a living as a full time coach?

The nature of fencing has changed considerably over the past decade, especially in sabre. Perhaps there is a need to update the Academy approach to its qualifications, to move emphasis away from technical expertise to examination of modern speed and timing.

I believe that the role of Masters is to be a focus for coaching in their area, to be a mentor for junior coaches and to sell fencing.

I believe that the role of the BAF is to be the Lead Body for coaching in the UK, to set and monitor standards, and to be a forum for the development of coaches.

The reason for this letter, then, is to ask where the BAF is going. What are our vision, aims and objectives?

Without a plan for the future we are just an organisation wandering down the road to oblivion.

Maître John Crouch

ASPECTS OF COACHING

A Report on a Recent Course



The course, “Aspects of Coaching”, was run recently at Bramhall (near Stockport), led by Bob Merry. With the venue costs supported by the BAF Regional Coaching scheme and Bob not requiring any expenses, it was free to the participants, who came from Yorkshire and Cumbria, as well as more locally to the venue. Their experience ranged from some who had yet to start coaching, up to quite experienced coaches, including one Maître d’Escrime.

The course was intended to concentrate on the practical problems of coaching in clubs and schools, rather than preparing for any examinations. In presenting the course, Bob drew upon his experience of nearly sixty years of fencing, including twenty-one years teaching and coaching in local schools, clubs and recreation centres; in addition, during Bob’s time in the RAF, he spent much of it as an instructor, including a spell as part of a team writing a Programmed Learning course. All this helped him present a variety of ideas to the course.

The course was designed as a dialogue between Bob and the members of the course, who were encouraged to ask questions and make comments throughout the day. It was also important for there to be a great deal of practical work, trying out the various ideas and methods.

To start with, different types of educators were discussed and some basic definitions made. This was followed with an examination of different ways to present lessons.

After discussing the “standard” I.D.E.A. Pattern for a class lesson, Bob introduced the Project Method, whereby pupils are presented with a simple problem and asked to find as many answers to it as possible. The course spent some time on two examples of this:

- 1) Fencer A attacks, but fencer B parries and may riposte. How many ways can be found whereby Fencer A gets a hit.
- 2) Any parry is selected and the task is to find as many different ripostes as possible, including different footwork.

This method has been found to be particularly useful when faced with a mixed class of beginners and more advanced fencers; one group is given a task, such as the ones above, whilst the rest can have a more formal lesson.

The next topic was using Socratic methods of presenting material, whereby the coach teaches or coaches through a series of questions, either actual (verbal) questions, or “questions” asked through the coach’s actions with the weapon or through footwork. The course practised a simple example of this; one fencer sets a “problem” (e.g. hits with an attack). This is repeated and the other fencer finds an answer, which in turn creates a problem for the first fencer, who answers this on the third run through, and so on.

The next topic was the important one of good planning, with examples of planning the topics for a ten week course, allocating the time for each segment of a session, and the detailed planning of a lesson. Bob was able to draw on his Programmed Learning experience to show how to analyse what needed to be taught in a lesson; what to focus on and how to avoid unnecessary repetition, re-teaching what has already been covered in previous lessons.

There were also examples of typical lessons and fencing related games, for use in warm-up sessions.

The course concluded with a discussion session, which included examples of resources that could be used to help fencers with self-improvement, such as worksheets.

Throughout the course, Bob was assisted by Andrew Sercombe, who acted as his stooge for most of the demonstrations and as an extra pair of eyes during the practical work. At times, Bob also called on various members of the course to act as his pupil, when illustrating a particular point.

Bob said that he had been very fortunate to have been influenced by a number of coaches and freely admitted that he had “stolen” a lot of material from them (haven’t we all?), as well as gaining ideas from his pupils. He encouraged the course participants to take whatever they wanted from this course and use it freely.

Overall, the course was welcomed by those taking part as offering a different perspective; this was not a course to prepare for exams, but one aimed at practical day to day coaching and teaching. Bob is willing to repeat the course on an expenses only basis; just get in touch with him if you are interested.

CLUBKNIGHT - THE PAPERLESS POOLSHEET

By Gordon Love



On a variety of devices

As a coach, one of the things I often find myself doing is running competitions. It's gets my pupils more, and more varied, fencing. Plus it gets a bit of excitement into their fencing lives.

I used to run them on Excel at DT, and paper poolsheets - a tournament software licence didn't seem worthwhile for three small events a year. We run two seeding rounds of pools, and a third round streamed into "League Divisions". No elimination rounds, and a final round of closely-fought bouts. The children's last memories of the day are of really fun, exciting matches, and lots go back to their schools clutching trophies and medals. So more pupils join the classes, and then the competitions get bigger.

Soon, we had 11 pools of fencers (whenever there was a big-enough hall). Dealing with the new, interesting and varied errors in the poolsheets was taking up a lot of time, even with my nifty tournament spreadsheet. So I decided to computerise the poolsheets. I'd always expected a poolsheet app to turn up, but

unfortunately, none did.

I needed to set up a poolsheet, send out a poolsheet, and have a completed poolsheet brought back to me. And did I mention I wanted a correctly-completed poolsheet? So I built it. My wife (and Chief Referee) said "If it doesn't work on my Blackberry tablet, I won't use it." So - I wasn't going to get away with just an Android phone app! On to Plan B! This was a good move anyway, as referees were happy to use whatever they had in their pocket when they turned up, and we could use anything they brought. This poolsheet app is ClubKnight Referee.

Referee runs on pretty much any electronic device - phones, tablets, netbooks, laptops, desktops and some Nintendo handhelds - and on pretty much any operating system - Windows, Android, Fire OS, iOS, Windows RT, MacOS, Windows Phone, Symbian, Blackberry, Linux and ChromeOS. It is undemanding - it runs on 9-year old smartphones gathering dust in drawers, and £25 smartphones from the supermarket.

And it's free. If you set up poolsheets for free, you'll always have access to them for free.

Currently, it stores all its data in the cloud, so it does need a data connection. I find it easiest if the hall already has wifi and internet, but most often I use my own phone as a wifi hotspot for the referees. Even if the hall has no internet and no phone signal, you can use ClubKnight. Run ClubKnight server edition on a laptop, and set up a wifi router or access point.

Don McKenzie, the Commonwealth Gold medallist, runs a cadet class at Edinburgh FC. Every month they have an evening of pools. He suggested it would be nifty if you could set up a pool for yourself on the phone. So I created the ClubKnight web-site, where you can do this.

Finally, at the competitions, the parents used to have to scribble down all their child's results. So we built a "look but not touch" app - ClubKnight Audience. Parents can check the scores live as they happen, hit by hit.

ClubKnight Referee runs on everything. It's just a poolsheet. As flexible as a paper poolsheet. But much, much harder to fill in wrongly. And the scores stay on line for posterity. It can provide poolsheets for up to 8 fencers, and you can set any number of hits - 5,10,15 Or 7. Or 349.

Other nifty benefits include: it's easy to set Audience (and Referee) up to display on a big screen or projector; the Directoire Technique can monitor the progress of all the pools from comfort of their chair; and you can set up poolsheets for events that happen one bout a week, or one team match a month. If a battery gets low, you can instantly hot-swap the poolsheet to another device.

I've now used it for real competitions for two-and-half years. Scottish Fencing have now used it at a support event at the Scottish Open.

I'm now connecting ClubKnight to tournament software, especially the ones in common use, like En Garde and Fencing Time. Next month, I'm running an event using ClubKnight with a freeware tournament manager, using En Garde's XML files as a go-between. The not-yet-published ClubKnight Directoire reads the En Garde files, and creates the poolsheets for ClubKnight Referee. Directoire then updates the En Garde file once the pools are complete.

Future plans include pools of up to 12, adding a stopwatch to the poolsheet, a padlock to completed poolsheets, proper team poolsheets, plus team format and DE sheets. Directoire will be able to set up and run huge poules uniques soon.

If you find it useful, let me know. I'm also always delighted to get requests and suggestions for new features.

To try out an example poolsheet : <http://clubknight.uk/s/demo>
 Create your own test poolsheet (2 to 8 fencers, any number of hits) : <http://clubknight.uk/s/test>
 Set up your own club, etc, on ClubKnight : <http://clubknight.uk/trial>

Pool	Boutlist	Bout	Results
Fencers			
James, EFC	1	V.	0
Fred, SFIF	2	0	0
Rachel, WA	3	3	0
Jane,TcFC	4	V.	0
Laurie, GHS	5	0	1
Angus, EFC	6	V.	V.

Pool	Boutlist	Bout	Results
Fencers			
James, EFC	1	6	2
Fred, SFIF	2	25	1
Rachel, WA	3	25	1
Jane,TcFC	4	50	2
Laurie, GHS	5	0	0
Angus, EFC	6	100	2

All the screens

Pool	Boutlist	Bout	Results
Fencers			
Abingdon FC	1	23	0
Beaulerk FC	2	V.	
Luso Fencing Aca...	3		40
Metro-land Fenc...	4	V.	V.
Newbury FC	5		37
Reading FC	6	35	

A Team Event

MORE USEFUL BITS.....

TRAINING WEEKENDS IN THE SOUTH

Led by Prof. Andrew Norris

Olympic Hall, Mountbatten School, Romsey, SO51 5SY

18/19 November 2017

20 January 2018, 21 January 2018 – coaching exams

These weekends offer:

Fencers – personal performance focused on épée for adults and competitive juniors, including group training, sparring and individual lessons from developing coaches

Coaches (levels 1-3) – personal performance hand-in-hand with coach education (all three weapons)

Coaches (levels 4&5) – join in with main course or work independently on exam questions with guidance

Course Fees: £30 per day, £45 for a whole weekend

Early bird: 10% off if payment is made online at least 7 days in advance of the first day of the course (exam fees not included)

Interested? Contact Andrew Norris for details - see page 3 for contact information

This Course is subsidised by the BAF Regional Course Scheme

FENCING COACHING - A PRACTICAL APPROACH

Sunday 26th November 2017.

10am – 4.00pm

**King Edward VII High School for Girls, Edgbaston Park Road, Edgbaston, Birmingham.
B15 2UB...**

Led by Prof. Peter Northam, supported by other BAF masters, this will be an enjoyable and informative training session covering a variety of topics on the practical aspects of fencing coaching.

Fencers who want to learn about coaching and coaches who want different ideas are welcome!

This day is open to all coaches, so pass the word. It's important to bring lunch and a sense of humour.

Cost £15

Contact Peter Northam at prof.pnortham.baf@btinternet.com to reserve a place.