

Scottish Fencing

Talent Squad Bulletin 1/09

Introduction

A Happy New Year to all Talent Squad members, coaches and parents! 2009 is a Junior Commonwealth Championship Year and members of the TS will be competing in Penang in February. Penang is an island off the northwest coast of Peninsular Malaysia and that's why I have chosen to produce the article on 'the travelling fencer' in this bulletin, though it should be of use to any fencer going abroad. Congratulations go to TS members selected for the European Cadet Championships - Emma and Callum (and reserves Ruth and Casey). They compete in Bourges (France) early March - good luck! A number of you are also in the frame for selection for the British Team for the World Junior and Cadet Championships. The selection date is the 16th February and there are still some qualifying events between now and selection. Another selection date looming is that for the 2009 UK School Games. The selection date is the 1st March, though the event (this year in South Wales) isn't until September. This year the event is for under 18s which means that anyone eligible for last year's event is still eligible this year. Good luck to all TS members.

Squad members' results of note

Some more great results by TS members:

November 2008 - M8 Open

Women's Foil; 1st **Mhairi**.

November 2008 - Milner-Barry Cup

Women's Epee; 8th **Kirsty**.

December 2008 - Hereford & Worcester Open

Women's Foil; 3rd **Natasha**.

Men's Sabre; 5th **Vangeli**.

January 2008 - Gateshead B.S.C

Women's Foil; 8th **Ruth**.

Men's Foil; 6th **Callum**.

January 2009 - Scottish Open

Women's Foil; 1st **Lisa**, 3rd **Mhairi**.

Women's Epee; 1st **Kirsty**, 2nd **Emma**.

Women's Sabre; 3rd **Nicole**.

Men's Sabre; 2nd **Vangeli**.

It's possible that I might miss a good result - feel free to keep me informed and you'll get a mention. Results are generally limited to top 4 in Scotland, Last 8 in Britain and Last 16 abroad.

Squad update

Chris Harding and **Scott Chalmers** have both left the squad. **Chris** has retired from fencing to concentrate on his career in music, and **Scott** has decided that he will concentrate more on school work. I'm sure that we all wish **Chris** well in his career and that we also hope to see **Scott** on the piste again some time in the future.



The Travelling Fencer

All serious fencers travel regularly, often to Europe and occasionally beyond. Next month some Talent Squad members are part of the Scottish Team for the Junior Commonwealth Fencing Championships in Penang (Malaysia). Travelling, particularly to distant parts of the world, can take its toll on your effectiveness in competition, but there are sensible measures that you can take to minimize the effects.

Preparation for travel

Ensure that your passport is up to date and that any necessary visa is applied for in good time. Check whether any immunizations or anti-malarial tablets are appropriate. Remember to take a Therapeutic Use Exemption (TUE) with you if it is necessary for any medication that you are on. Your travel insurance should be up to date and cover you for the country that you are traveling to (it is sometimes cheaper to have an annual policy covering Europe, and upgrading for occasional trips beyond). If it's been a while since your last dental check-up or you have particular dental problems, it might be a good time to get a check-up as getting treatment abroad can be very disruptive. Take sufficient money with you for the trip – there are always incidentals on trips that you don't expect. As well as cash, traveller's cheques and a credit card are good back up. Don't keep all your valuables in the same location, so that a theft or loss doesn't leave you without anything. Take a copy of the appropriate page in your passport and of your European Health Insurance Card (you should all have one) and keep it separate from the actual documents (or better still with an official).

Take a note of important information (flight times, hotel details, competition details, travel insurance contacts, 'phone numbers for lost cards, 'phone numbers of members of the party etc.). Pack clothing appropriate to the destination and choose something comfortable for the flight – this is especially important for long flights. You should know what the baggage limits are for all your connections and weigh your bags before you leave – charges for excess baggage are high. Fencers often travel with vital pieces of equipment in their cabin baggage (such as a mask stuffed with fencing shoes, glove and whites). This can cut down on the weight of your fencing back and it means that you have less to scrounge from other fencers if your baggage is lost.

Travelling

When flying, make sure that you allow plenty of time to get to the airport and check in. Everyone experiences delays and you can't do anything to change attitude is important. Eat and avoid dehydration - too much alcohol should be avoided. should be in your hand luggage, remember to take your lens case will be allowed through security) give your eyes a rest. On long occasionally to avoid stiffness and swelling. Your feet may swell and this is where comfortable footwear (such as a fine pair of slippers) is invaluable.



a fine pair of slippers

cancellations from time to time - this but maintaining a positive drink sensibly and in particular, tea, coffee or cola, and especially Any essential medication and if you wear contact lenses, and a little solution (max 100ml in case you want to sleep or just flights, get up and stretch

Jet lag

Jet lag, which occurs when you have crossed a large number of time zones, is a result of your body's natural rhythms having to adapt to a new cycle of day and night. It may last for some days. Jet lag is generally more severe when traveling east (against the sun's movement across the sky). As well as a general feeling of tiredness, the symptoms may include; loss of concentration, loss of appetite, headache, dizziness, nausea and constipation. To cope with jet lag, adapt to local time as soon as possible. Set your watch to the destination local time as soon as you settle on the plane, and avoid mental conversions back to 'home time'. Avoid daytime napping in the new location as this may prevent adaptation to the new time. Instead, adopt local sleep patterns immediately. Take meals at times appropriate to the new location too. Avoid anything that might disrupt sleep at night such as late meals or caffeine. Your body needs alternating periods of light and dark to adapt to a new cycle so stay in daylight or bright artificial light during the day and sleep at night.

Hot climates

Your performance may be reduced if you are not used to the heat or become dehydrated. Penang will not only be hot, but the humidity level will be high too. Carry drinks with you at all times. Protecting yourself from the sun and avoiding dehydration should be taken very seriously.

Protecting from the sun

Remember that you can burn even when it is cloudy. If it is windy, you might feel cool and not notice that you are burning. Wear a hat and look for shade, but also make sure that you use a high performance sunscreen. Choose a sunscreen that isn't oily, so that sweat doesn't run into your eyes. Sunscreen should be applied 30 minutes before exposure to allow the skin to absorb some of the lotion. Reapply regularly. Sun reflects off water so take care when you are around water. Reapply sunscreen immediately after a swim – even if the manufacturer claims it's product is waterproof. Remember to protect your eyes too, by wearing eye protection with a UV filter.

Dehydration

The likelihood of dehydration increases when heat is combined with high humidity. The major way that the body cools itself is by the evaporation of sweat. When the humidity is high, less sweat will evaporate so the body temperature rises. In an effort to cool, the body will sweat more which can quickly lead to dehydration. Dehydration will reduce your performance significantly. If you are thirsty, you are already dehydrated! A good way to check your level of hydration is by noting your urine colour. It should be the same colour it is at home, but if you are dehydrated it will be darker and you will pass less urine. Begin all training and competition hydrated (start drinking 30-60 minutes before), and drink throughout. In hot and humid conditions you will need to make an effort to drink enough – remember that your thirst is not a good indicator of your needs. Drinks should be taken with every meal (at least ½ Litre). Choose drinks that are designed to replace fluids – electrolytes help you remain hydrated as water loss through sweat increases.

Altitude

The maximum rate at which the body can use oxygen decreases at altitude (effects may be noticed from 1500 metres). This effects endurance athletes most, but can certainly affect fencers (and did at the 1994 Commonwealths in Whistler in Canada). You should be fit and healthy prior to the trip. Training intensity should be reduced at altitude and longer rests and recovery periods should be taken. Try to get plenty of sleep. Activity at altitude uses more muscle glycogen than the same activity at sea-level, so make sure that you eat plenty of carbohydrate-rich food. The intensity of the sun is greater at altitude and dehydration is also a big danger and so the advice under these headings is important. Eat more iron-rich foods before going to altitude (Iron supplements can cause constipation so do not take iron tablets unless advised to do so by a professional).

Cold climates

Performance is reduced when the body is cold. Several layers of thin clothes are better than one thick one. Avoid alcohol as this dilates the blood vessels which will increase the rate of heat loss. You will need more energy exercising in the cold, plan a snack every 2 hours when training or competing. Sun at altitude, and reflected off snow will burn the skin quickly, so take precautions.

Illness

When traveling abroad, check if you need specific vaccinations (but have them well before traveling to avoid adverse side effects). Find out if you need anti-malarial tablets. The course has to be started before you go and must be continued for 4 weeks after you get home.

Avoiding food poisoning

Sanitation and clean water standards vary from country to country. If in doubt follow these guidelines;

Do not eat from stalls on the street or in markets. Choose food that has been well cooked – it should be hot and avoid re-heated food. Do not drink tap-water – stick with bottled water (check the seal is intact) and use this to brush your teeth too. Be wary of salads and raw vegetables as they may have been rinsed in tap water. Don't have ice in drinks as it may be from contaminated water.

Fencing Kit

Make sure that all your kit is tested and working before you go. You should have a minimum of 2 weapons and 2 body wires. When I competed internationally, I had 2 lamé jackets with me - my 'current' competition jacket plus a new and unused one. Both would go through control and I would default to using the current one, however the day it failed a check I would use the new one which then became my new 'current' jacket, and purchased a new lamé on my return which became my new 'insurance' lamé. Before an important event, check things like springs, grub screws and body wires - if you have to change a spring quickly between bouts, the last thing you want is to struggle with an old grub screw that has become mangled and difficult to remove. Take some spares with you along with a few tools (screwdriver, allen key etc.). It's a good idea to create a check-list of all the things you need to pack to reduce the chances of leaving something out of your kit-bag.

Some general points for fencers going to Penang

- > The flight will be long - take loose and comfortable clothing and footwear.
- > You do **not** need a visa for Penang, but your passport **must** have at least 6 months validity.
- > Penang will be hot and humid - you must take hydration and the sun seriously.
- > Contact your GP in good time about updating vaccinations and advice on Malaria (though Penang is considered a 'low to no risk' area).
- > You must have comprehensive travel and health insurance
- > Carrying even small quantities of illegal drugs can result in imprisonment or **the death penalty**.
- > Malaysia is 8 hours ahead of us, so the advice on jet lag is very relevant.
- > Take a look at the Foreign Office's advice on travelling to Malaysia at <http://www.fco.gov.uk/en/travelling-and-living-overseas/travel-advice-by-country/asia-oceania/malaysia>
- > Your Team Manager is **Jen Neil-MacLachlan** and her mobile number is **0797 693 2324**.

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