

Scottish Fencing

Talent Squad Bulletin 3/09

Introduction

Some of us are not long back from the 4th UK School Games, and once again, Scotland put on a great show. Not only did we return with a ton of metalware (every single Scottish fencer came home with a medal), but as in previous years, the team was a model of good integration - everyone was well supported by their team mates and I was delighted at the great relationship between

particular note were the Foilists - 1st, 2nd and 3rd in Following on from the Team thrown down the gauntlet to We are now in what is the for most fencers - certainly wish you all the very best.

the season for you then this

Phase' of your Annual Plan. If you don't have an Annual Plan, make sure that you read this Bulletin's feature article on planning your year.



UKSG WF Team Gold

fencers and officials. Of results of our Women's the individual and Team Gold! Gold in Penang, WF have the other weapons.

busiest part of the season Cadets and Juniors and I If this is the busiest part of might be the 'Competitive

Squad members' results of note

Some more great results by TS members:

April 2009 - Birmingham International

Women's Epee; 3rd= **Kirsty**.

May 2009 - Inverclyde Open

Women's Foil; 2nd **Ruth**, 3rd= **Mhairi**.

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

Men's Epee; 2nd **Neil**.

July 2009 - Bill Hoskyns Open

Men's Epee; 2nd **Neil**.

July 2009 - National Championships

Women's Foil; 6th **Lisa**.

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

August 2009 - Szombathley

Women's Foil; 3rd= **Lisa**.

September 2009 - UK School Games

Women's Foil; 1st **Natasha**, 3rd= **Mhairi**, 7th **Ruth**.

Women's Épée; 6th **Ali**.

Women's Sabre; 8th **Jessica**.

Men's Foil; 3rd= **Callum**, 6th **Casey**.

Men's Sabre; 3rd= **Matt**, 3rd= **Michael**.

September 2009 - Bristol Open

Women's Foil; 6th **Lisa**.

September 2009 - Manchester Cadets

Men's Foil; 7th **Casey**.

October 2009 - Highland Open

Men's Épée; 1st **Neil**.

October 2009 - British Cadet Championships

Women's Foil; 2nd **Ruth**

October 2009 - British Cadet Championships

Women's Foil; 8th **Natasha**

Men's Sabre; 7th **Matt**

Squad update

The composition of the Talent Squad can fluctuate from month to month as fencers move up and down their ranking lists. If you are no longer listed, you should respond positively by redoubling your efforts to climb back up the ranking!



Lisa McKenzie
Natasha Thomson
Ruth Clarke



Callum O'Donnell
Casey Avril



Ali Evans
Kirsty Thomson



Neil Tannock



Jessica Murray
Harriet Stillely



Matt D'Agostino
Michael Clarke
Neil McGibbon

Periodised Training Plans

Introduction

Before each season begins, it is important to think about what it is that you are trying to achieve. In fact, identifying where your season starts and ends is part of the process of

planning your season. Whether you have put it into words or not, it is likely that you have some idea of where you want to get to with your fencing. For some it may be to fence for Great Britain or to be the best in the country, for others it might be an uncompromising Olympic Gold. Whatever your ultimate goal, the next season is part of the path towards your destiny and should be planned as such. To this end, your season's goals should include some competitive focus - to make a team, to rise to some point in the rankings or to achieve certain competition success, but also some training goals such as to improve your lunge or develop a better defensive system. It is usually better to have a single main competitive focus for the season - often good Scottish fencers are in the running for several things at once; it is possible to be going for the GB Team at your age-group at the same time as you are hoping to qualify for a senior Scottish Team for say the Commonwealth Championships. To avoid spreading yourself too thin it is best to plan your season around the most important goal and hope that you manage to qualify for the other event as a consequence of your preparations. This way you can be clear about when exactly you want to be on form. Having identified the period when you hope to be at your best (the most important competitions with respect to your single main goal), the rest of your season falls into place.

The fencing year

Let's say that you have identified the busy period from mid September to mid December as the part of the season that holds the most important competitions in your calendar (as might be the case for someone hoping to make the GB Women's Junior Foil Team). This means that your preparations would be timed so that everything should be working well at the start of this period. This period is known as your 'Competitive Phase', and 3 months is about as long as you could hope to maintain good form. Now you would work backwards and identify the period of about 8 months as your 'Preparation Phase'. The only other part of your season to identify now is the 'Rest Phase' - the period immediately at the end of your Competitive Phase. A month is about the amount of time you should take off from your preparations to ensure that you are ready for the start of a new season. So with 8 months preparation, 3 months competition and a month's rest we have a fencing year!

The Preparation Phase

The Preparation Phase immediately follows the Rest Phase so you need to ease back into things. Conditioning wise, it's time to start working on a good Cardio-Vascular base. As you are probably aware, this should be followed by Muscular Endurance, Muscular Strength and only then should you tackle Power with Plyometrics. See Bulletin 2-09 for more details on conditioning. The start of the Preparation Phase is when you tease out bits of your game to work on them individually - time to brush up on your technique, add any new strokes or aspects of your game. As this long phase progresses, you would gradually bring everything together, getting faster and more tactical and holistic as the Competitive Phase approaches so that you 'hit the ground running'. There will be competitions during the Preparation Phase but you can not expect to be at your best for these - nobody can sustain form over a whole season, and you have decided that there are

competitions that are more important to you later in the season. They are however opportunities to get feedback on your preparations and this allows you to incorporate small changes in your training.

The Competition Phase

If all has gone well, you have a good chance of performing your best (nothing's guaranteed) during this period. All the hard work that you have done engineering improvements should now come to fruition. What happens during this phase will also inform your training plan for the following season.

The Rest Phase

Nobody can sustain constant training and a Rest Phase is vital to your continued development. After 3 months of high intensity competition you are likely to feel a little jaded and in order that you can recharge your creative batteries, you need a break from fencing. It's also likely that you are showing the strain physically. 11 months of lunging may manifest as a niggling pain somewhere. The tendon in your sword arm may be a little tender. A break from your usual activities will allow you to recover from these minor ailments (anything serious must be seen by a professional whose advice should be followed). This does not mean that you should do nothing. Complete inactivity for a month will render you susceptible to injury when you start to train again. Instead, enjoy a little swimming, play a few games of badminton - just make sure that you stay reasonably active.

Put it on paper!

It helps you to focus on your training if you can look at your plan and see where you are at any given time. Start by jotting down your year's goals - it might look something like this...

Main focus - the International season for my age-group

1. To make the top 4 of the GB ranking for my age-group
2. To improve the speed and reach of my lunge
3. To develop counter-time as part of my game
4. To improve my concentration
5. To compete in at least 3 International events
6. To train in at least one camp abroad

Then consider the means by which the goals will be achieved.

The first - to make the top 4 and hopefully then, the team, should come about by means of successfully achieving the other goals. Improving the speed and reach of your lunge would be by practising technique and through increasing your power to weight ratio through the Strength & Conditioning that you do which culminates in Plyometric exercises. A particular strategic goal such as developing counter-time would be done by practising it with your coach, exploring it in freeplay and finally introducing it in competitions during the Preparation phase. Concentration might be improved by themed fencing such as 'squash fencing' which only rewards successive hits, and by exploring mental strategies to help you concentrate. 5 and 6 simply require you to look ahead and plan.

You might also produce a spreadsheet that shows what you will be doing throughout the year. The model below is by no means complete as you would mark actual events

(competitions and training camps) plus other important things such as exam times etc.

| | | | | | | |
|-------------|---|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| month | Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | Jun |
| phase | Preparation phase | | | | | |
| competition | Some competitions, but mostly for training, not on form yet | | | | | |
| S & C | Cardio-vascular...Muscular endurance...Muscular strength... | | | | | |

| | | | | | | |
|-------------|-------------------|-----|---------------------------|-----|-----|------------|
| month | Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct | Nov | Dec |
| phase | Preparation phase | | Competitive phase | | | Rest phase |
| competition | As above | | Main events, on form | | | None |
| S & C | Plyometrics | | Maintainance of condition | | | Light |

So why not make a start now? If you produce your spreadsheet on a PC then you can continue to update it as your plans get more sophisticated. It's a great way to help you to focus on your goals and will act as a fencing calendar for the year.

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