

Choosing the right tournament

“Am I ready to compete” – is the questions that coaches are asked often. The main idea of competing at the early stages of athlete development is to encourage children to learn new skills, get experience by fencing different opponents and perform under pressure. Children need to accept the idea of losing and the fact that not everyone gets a medal, teaches them that they have to train hard to succeed and always have a winning spirit. In youth development competitions the emphasis should be placed on the process rather than the rankings or medals.

Almost every fencing competitions is individual and occasionally, fencers will get a team competition sprinkled into the competitive schedule, but for the most part, fencing is about personal performance. When athletes fail, they have no one to blame for their failures but themselves; and when they succeed, it is their hard work and determination that will mold the foundation of their character for the entirety of their lives.

The transition between recreational and competitive levels can be tough, specially for the younger fencers. Coaches need to communicate their expectations clearly to both fencers and parents verbally and include it in the program description for each level.

Carefully selected competitions provide an opportunity for ongoing skill and development. Competitions should be age-group specific and are selected to ensure a balance of self-confidence and technical/tactical development for youth development and reaching the potential for the “Train to Compete” and “Train to Win” fencers.

The competitive season in Canada runs from September through July, with the majority of the tournaments organized from September to December. Coaches can have pre- and post-season one-on-one meetings with the athletes to determine their competition goals and benchmarks.

Coaches need to assess athletes’ progress, determine readiness and help to select the tournaments, appropriate for the skill, level and goals. I.e. fencers of 10-13yo who are at the “Learn to Train” stage, can fence in Y12 and Y14 categories at the local events, such as “Just For Fun” (JFF) event and club's youth circuits. The local tournaments give fencers the opportunity to gain more experience before moving on to higher-level tournaments, such as the Provincials or Easterns.

The focus should be on getting as much experience as possible, rather than on points and rankings. A fencer should be competing at a consistent level at local events before entering national events. Once athletes are performing locally at a consistent level and improvements are solid, they may to consider competing at a national tournament. It’s recommended to start the national level tournament with the athlete’s own age category (i.e. U15, Cadets).

The USA youth circuits provide an opportunity to fence at a large tournament with a variety of fencing styles.

The Canada Cup, the Nationals, NACs, European Cadet Circuits and Cadet/Junior World Cups are a qualifying path to the Canadian National Team.

Training camps is an important part of youth development where athletes not only learn new skills and fence against the different opponents, but also have an opportunity to learn from the different coaches. There are usually 2-4 the Provincials and Nationals camps ran during the school holidays.

References: CFF LTAD Handbook:

http://www.fencing.ca/sites/default/files/ltad/CFF_LTAD_program-en_r5-web.pdf

Ontario Youth/Cadet Program Guide, 2013-2014:

<http://fencingontario.ca/storage/downloads/flyers/1314/OYC.OCDGuide13-14Final.pdf>

Competition Basics

Careful planning allows the fencer's mind to relax and avoid having to deal with the stress associated with preparation. Below are a few recommendations to share with your fencers:

Prior to the tournament.

- Fencers need to eat well, rest and not to try new food, activities or participate in any other tournaments.
- Review your competition goals and establish positive self-talk for improving confidence.
- Register on time: all tournaments have a registration due date. Have your CFF # and registration receipt handy.
- Check all equipment the day before a tournament. Be familiar with your equipment bag and make sure you can find everything, even in the dark. Use the equipment checklist to ensure you have all of the necessary gear for the tournament. Fencing gear has to be recently washed. Other important items will include: cash, snacks, water bottle and warm-up suit.
- Establish similarity in your weapons. Many fencers have favorites in their weapon inventory, but what happens if your favorite breaks during competition?

During the tournament.

- The times listed on the registration form are for the close of registration. That means you need to show up for the registration at the computer desk no later than the listed time, but allow yourself at least 30 min. before that time. Tournaments start within 30 min. after the registration is closed.
- Allow enough time for a) equipment check: the armourer will be at a table with lots of tools and put an inspection mark on your gear; b) warm-ups and c) changing into the fencing gear.
- Listen carefully to pools and DEs announcements.
- Plan for periods of inactivity between bouts, and between pools and DE's. Warm-up before pools and each DE. Keep your muscles warm by wearing a track suit. Be mindful of the need to increase arousal or reduce anxiety between bouts.
- Keep your fencing gear in one spot, and don't leave foils and cords on the floor unsupervised.
- Do not use brand new gear at the tournament - allow yourself some time to get used to it.

Dealing with referees.

When dealing with referees it is important to be polite, know the rules, and be able to change the action toward the referee. Fencers must be aware of how to ask questions:

- If video-arbitrage is not being used, then the fencer can only question the application of the rules. No allowance is made for the explanation of the fencing phrase.
- If video-arbitrage is being used, then the fencing phrase can be questioned (using the correct rules as per FIE rules) as well as the application of the rules.

Sometimes referees make mistakes, but other times fencers do. If a referee can't see a certain action, fencers need to try to come up with a different, or "clean" action. The worst mistake a fencer can make is to start arguing with a referee. Instead, ask questions politely. Learn about referring rules and practice them at the club or local events to become a stronger fencer.

After the tournament.

- Cool-downs can include light jogging for 20 - 30 minutes and static stretches.
- Write in your fencing diary to reflect on the experience and improve self-reliance, reflection and organization skills (i.e. pool and DE scores, what did you like/did not like about your fencing or how would you do things differently if you fenced that tournament again).

Nutrition in Fencing

Why do coaches need to know more about nutrition? So they can provide better support to athletes, flag potential nutritional issues, and gain more nutrition knowledge and awareness.

Athletes following a specific training plan for maximum results may be sabotaging all that work with poor diets. An athlete's nutrition plan should be individualized to monitor nutrition factors that impact the athlete's performance and meet the needs of training and competition.

Fencing is an anaerobic activity, which means fencers burn carbohydrates (carbs) and sugars. Nutrition requirements for fencing involve recovery of the phosphagens (energy storage compounds), making sure the fencer has small doses of quick energy replenishment on a regular basis. Carbs are the primary fuel for intense muscular effort and should be the cornerstone of a fencer's diet.

Training diets vary based on level of training and season (pre-season vs. competition).

The key nutrition considerations:

- Eat small frequent meals and snacks every 2-4 hours
- Balance carbohydrate, protein and fats at each meal: low sugar, high fiber carbohydrates, lean protein choices and healthy fats.
- Decide on the quantity of the meals based on the athlete's goals: are they trying to lose, gain or maintain weight?
- Ensure proper hydration: at least 2L or 8 cups/day minimum (does NOT include exercise or environment).

So what should fencers eat? These general guidelines are the following:

- 12-15% of daily calories from protein.
- 25-30% of daily calories from fat.
- 55-65% of daily calories from carbohydrate.

Before the competition:

3 to 4 hours: 60-200 g carbs, 10-30 g protein, at least 500 mL (2 c.) fluids; low in sugar, fat and fiber.

30 to 60 minutes: a small high carb snack: 20 – 40 g carb, 250 – 500 mL fluids, moderate protein.

During the competition:

Small meals: Absorption of calories and nutrients is limited by time therefore small meals (fast energy) throughout the day should be sources that are easy to digest and prepare/pack.

Carbs: A variety of carbs will help athletes perform in the anaerobic alactic zone which foil fencing requires: dried fruit, fruit, grains, granola bars), 30g to 60g carbs per hour.

Food to avoid: pop, frozen slushy drinks, candy, bars, chips, or other high fat/sugar snack foods.

Hydration: Hydration for fencers is key. Long days spent in venues with several hours of down time without proper hydration can affect the performance. Fencers need to drink at least 2L of water and fluids with electrolytes, such as home-made Gatorade and fruit juices, throughout the day. Watch for signs of dehydration: thirst, headaches, poor concentration, dizziness or lightheadedness, cramping, nausea, fatigue, and dark-colored urine.

After the competition:

Protein intake: Fencers need to have a meal that includes protein and carbs to insure recovery. A 4:1 combo of carbs and protein is recommended.

Rest: Optimal performance requires 8 hours of sleep nightly.

Mental Skills Assessment

"Fencing is 50% physical and 90% mental." - Yogi Berra

Being mentally prepared for competition can help develop consistent results. Fencers may be able to perform up to their potential while improving already sharpened physical skills. The well trained (physically and mentally) athlete who is faced with critical performance situations is better able to tolerate increasing arousal levels and may even draw extra energy from the pressure of competition. *Athlete Mental Skill Assessment* tools can be used for pre- and post-competition planning or for identifying the athlete's mental skills. It will include the following steps:

Step 1. Educate your athletes (and parents) on why mental training is an important part of fencing through individual and group meetings.

Step 2. Develop an individual meeting or interview template for your athletes, using questions like "How do you feel about competing?", "What's your biggest concern when you're competing?" or "What do you do when stress affects your performance?"

Step 3. Meet with your athlete to discuss how they relate their emotions to fencing. Write a quick reflection on how the process went and how you felt afterwards.

Step 4. Identify strengths and weaknesses in the athlete's mental skills by using your own template or an existing tool, i.e. Competitive Adjective Profile (CAP) template (p. 20).

Step 5. Set specific goals for developing and refining mental skills. Athletes need to consistently practice mental preparation methods to improve their performance (p.21).

Step 6. Meet with your athletes on a regular basis to re-assess and discuss mental goals, progress and monitor their overall well-being, i.e. general health, relationships with friends.

Competitive Adjective Profile (CAP) process for Athletes:

- ✓ Describe yourself in the context of fencing. Try to be as objective as possible and avoid making yourself look better or worse than you really are. Any item scored 4 or below indicates weakness and 7 or higher indicates strength.
- ✓ Ask the teammates who know you well to fill out the CAP using colour markers to keep the feedback anonymous. The coach will collect all the copies and fill out his/her own one, after which the coach will go through the results with you.
- ✓ Identify the 4 top weaknesses from the list, gain a clear understanding of them and develop a strong commitment and strategy for change. Check your motivational score: the level of drive is the number 1 predictor of how far you will go in the sport. If it's below 7, it will be hard to improve in all other factors without motivation.
- ✓ Restate the weaknesses (i.e. impatient) in a positive form, i.e. "I am very patient". For the next 30 days make those positive statements the most important themes in your life as an athlete. Put reminders about it everywhere, - in your fencing diary and around your room.
- ✓ Write a one page summary on what you'll do to improve each positive factor over the next 30 days, i.e. "My plan to becoming patient is..."
- ✓ Track the progress daily for one month on each of the 4 positive factors. Give yourself 0, +1 or - 1 if you felt nothing happened, you improved or you moved backwards.
- ✓ At the end of 30 days re-take the CAP, see if there is progress and find the other 4 top weaknesses.

References: "Assessing Mental Demands in Sports", Beth McCharles, PhD, 2014; "The New Toughness Training for Sports", James E. Loehr. 1995.

The Competitive Adjective Profile (CAP)

	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	
Even-tempered	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	Moody
Resilient (quick emotional recovery)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	Non-resilient (slow emotional recovery)
Competitive	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	Noncompetitive
Self-reliant	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	Dependent
Committed	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	Uncommitted
Aggressive	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	Passive
Confident	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	Insecure
Patient	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	Impatient
Disciplined	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	Undisciplined
Optimistic	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	Pessimistic
Responsible	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	Irresponsible
Realistic	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	Unrealistic
Challenged	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	Frightened
Coachable	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	Uncoachable
Focused	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	Unfocused
Mature	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	Immature
Motivated	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	Unmotivated
Emotionally flexible	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	Emotionally rigid
Good at problem solving	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	Poor at problem solving
Good team player	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	Poor at team play
Willing to take risks	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	Unwilling to take risks
Skilled at acting	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	Unskilled at acting
Strong body language	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	Weak body language
Relaxed	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	Tense
Energetic	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	Nonenergetic
Physically fit	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	Physically unfit

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References: "The New Toughness Training for Sports", James E. Loehr. 1995.

Mental Preparation Exercises

Mental strength training involves learning and practicing mental skills that strengthen the ability to control thoughts, emotions and performance. The skills applied to manage the mental game involve the following basic mental training for athletes:

Relaxation/Breathing

The ability to be composed under pressure and to relax on the piste, is a necessity. Finding the balance between feeling overly-energized and overly-relaxed is the key to mental training. Feeling excited and nervous before the competition is normal; however, fencers need to know how to reduce stress and anxiety to a minimum while competing. Relaxation is designed to slow the heart rate and reduce the effects of adrenaline. Simple breathing techniques can reduce tension enough to allow for further muscle relaxation. Taking slow breaths using the diaphragm instead of chest and shoulder muscles promotes relaxation. Once a relaxed breathing pattern is established, you can calm yourself even further by relaxing your muscles one group at a time. Listening to quiet music or go jogging can also help with reducing anxiety.

Self-Control

Self-control begins with knowing your own patterns, strength and weaknesses; of how you usually think, feel and react to situations. Select a situation in which you become anxious or uncomfortable and complete self-control interview (slide 22). Once you know this, you can establish priorities and pursue things which are really important and avoid those which are not. Experiment with one or more coping strategies, first during training and then in a competition.

Concentration

Concentration issues are one of the most difficult and essential skills to master in mental skills training. No matter how well thought out your game plan, during the stress of competition your mind goes blank. Concentration allows you to develop a more comprehensive picture of your opponent. Learning to focus not only while fencing but also between touches and between bouts is paramount to good performance. Exercise practice involves focusing on internal sensations and external stimuli while at the same time being able to avoid distractions of noise and unwanted visual cues. Concentration skills allow you to be able to respond to your opponent's style and recognize patterns in their game.

Self-Talk

Self-Talk is something that people engage in thousands of times a day. Successful athletes are self-confident athletes. What you think or say about yourself in practice situation is critical to how you will perform. Self-talk can become a self fulfilling prophecy whether positive or negative. Reframing negative statements into positive self-talk can often produce a dialogue to work through problems. At the first sign of negative statements you should take control by saying "STOP" and begin to think about a possible solution ("Let me try something different" vs. "I can't beat this person" or "I am losing the bout!"). Find a phrase that can bring you back to the positive thinking, i.e. "Think about next point", "Focus on the action", or "Keep breathing".

Imagery/Visualization

Imagery involves visualization of positive outcomes. To see in your minds eye successful performance can influence the outcome. Picture yourself walking into a gym with no fear, no emotion and no performance worries. Imagine yourself facing a known opponent and watch their attacks unfold in slow motion. See your response and rehearse it over and over until it becomes automatic.

Self-Control Assets Rating Scale

1 = False 2 = So-So 3 = Somewhat True 4,5 = Completely True

Comments

1. Get so absorbed in game everything else disappears. 1 2 3 4 5 _____
2. Can avoid becoming too nervous in competition. 1 2 3 4 5 _____
3. Can maintain or quickly regain emotional control. 1 2 3 4 5 _____
4. Quiet confidence or feeling "I can do it". 1 2 3 4 5 _____
5. Rarely get frustrated. 1 2 3 4 5 _____
6. Take criticism well and learn from it. 1 2 3 4 5 _____
7. Can handle bad referee calls. 1 2 3 4 5 _____
8. Can stay motivated when down in points. 1 2 3 4 5 _____
9. Can maintain or regain concentration even after a mistake. 1 2 3 4 5 _____
10. Can maintain focus in the present (i.e. action, next point, "here and now"). 1 2 3 4 5 _____

Total Self-Control Score

Commitment Condition Rating Scale

1. Willing to sacrifice other things to excel in fencing. 1 2 3 4 5 _____
2. Really want to become an outstanding athlete. 1 2 3 4 5 _____
3. Never give up (in training or competition). 1 2 3 4 5 _____
4. Take personal responsibility for mistakes and work hard to correct them. 1 2 3 4 5 _____
5. Give 100% effort in training. 1 2 3 4 5 _____
6. Give 100% effort in competing. 1 2 3 4 5 _____
7. Put in extra preparation time or training time, before, after or between training sessions. 1 2 3 4 5 _____
8. Push hard even if it hurts. 1 2 3 4 5 _____
9. Feel committed to improvement. 1 2 3 4 5 _____
10. Feel more successful in fencing than in anything else. 1 2 3 4 5 _____

Total Self-Control Score

Tournament Format

Most of the tournaments in Canada are run using a standard format that is used in most parts of the country and] the world. This standard format is one round of “pools” (a pool is a group of 4-7 fencers who fence each other in a complete round-robin), followed by “DE” (Direct Elimination) rounds. Once you lose a DE bout, you are done for the day. Some tournaments run two rounds of pools or use preliminary rankings to qualify for the first round of DEs.

Pool bouts are to a maximum of 5 hits or 3 minutes of fencing time. DE bouts are to 15 hits or 3 periods of 3 minutes separated by 1 minute breaks. DE bouts in Under-14 and veteran events are sometimes fenced to 10 hits.

Depending on the size of the event, the organizers create any number of “pools.” This is the first round of the competition. Fencers are assigned a number (some referees call fencers by numbers), and the competition begins. The DT announces the pools so once fencers hear names being called they need to listen for their name to know which numbered piste to go to.

After the pool is finished, fencers must check their score for the number of victories and points scored/received and sign the pool sheet. This means that the fencers are responsible to make sure all recorded bouts, points, wins and losses have been recorded correctly. If they are not correct, the fencer must tell the referee and the referee will correct the error. It is up to the referee to make this correction on the pool sheet.

Based on the number of victories and indicator, fencers are seeded into the “Direct Elimination” table. The second seeding list of fencers is posted after the pools are completed. Fencers are responsible for checking the indicator and making sure that they have the same indicator as they signed for in the pools. If a fencer notices any inconsistency they should report it to the DT before the DE rounds start.

The seeding table works like this: the fencer with the highest pool result meets the fencer with the lowest result. Every time a round of DEs is fenced, half the competitors are eliminated until only one, the winner of the event, is left. These can be referred to as the rounds of 64, 32, 16, 8, 4 and the “Final.” This all depends on how many people are in the competition.

Developmental Youth Circuit (DFC)

Aside from the obvious health benefits that come with activity and exercise, research shows that there are strong physical, social, and psychological rewards associated with competition. Most fencers begin competing in youth circuits, entry level competitions. Youth circuits are competitions held at local fencing clubs, and every coach/club should consider organizing them (3-5 times a year). Youth circuits are extremely valuable for youth development at the yellow and orange armband levels as they introduce young fencers to competition in a familiar and safe environment.

The emphasis in a DFC is placed on *fun, team building, and gaining competitive experience*. It’s a great opportunity for fencers to practice their refereeing skills. Coaches, fencers and parents can work together to organize the event. DFCs also introduce parents to watching competitive fencing in a familiar environment where they can observe and ask questions to better understand the rules and etiquette of fencing. This will help parents to be better prepared to support their children in their first regional tournaments.

Competition readiness: Self-Assessment

Name _____ Date _____ Tournament _____

Rate each statement from 1 to 3, where 1 is “no” or “almost not”, 2 “yes” and 3 “I did my best”.

Before the tournament

I prepared my equipment the night before

I packed the team’s wear

I had two foils and cords

I packed a water bottle and snacks

I did mental preparation drills

I slept enough (6-8h) before the tournament

I had a good meal the night before

Total points _____

During the tournament

I came on time, checked in and tested the equipment

I warmed-up properly

I fenced a warm-up bout before the pool started

I was focused on fencing

I was mentally strong (self-talk, positive images, breathing)

I was drinking water throughout the tournament

My parents made a video of me for video analysis

I was eating healthy snacks (carb-based), min 4 throughout the tournament

I was a team player, offering a support to my teammates

I was wearing the team’s wear

Total points _____

After the tournament

I had a cool down

I stayed to support my teammates

I learned something about fencing

I had protein and carbs for dinner

I took notes in my fencing diary, reflecting the experience

Total points _____

The total number of points: _____

Coach’s comments:

Competition Classification and Selection Process

Canadian

- In-club/Youth Circuit and youth league.
- ON: Just for Fun (JFF), OFA, ON Summer Games and other local competitions.
- Outside of ON: QC youth circuit, BC Provincials, etc.
- Nationals: Canada Cup & National Championship.
- Team: University Circuit, ON Provincial Teams, Canada Games.

International (www.fie.ch):

- European Cadet Circuits.
- FIE World Cups and Grand Prix, Junior & Senior.
- FIE World Championships, Cadet, Junior & Senior.
- Olympic Games.

USA (www.usfencing.org):

- USA regional, open and super youth circuits.
- Youth, Cadet, Junior and Senior NACs.
- Pan American Zonal Championships and Qualifier.

Age Eligibility/Criteria

Domestic: The following age groups are defined as of December 31st of the current license year (August 1st to July 31st of the following year).

- U15 or Y14: fencers of 14yo or younger.
- Cadet: any athlete under 17 years old.
- Junior: any athlete under 20 years old.
- Senior :any athlete 12+ years old.

International: FIE rules require that athletes must be 13 years or older on the January 1 immediately preceding the next World Championships to compete in any FIE official competition, individual or team.

Selection Process

In Canada most selection processes are done the same way. Basic criteria are a membership (internationally it is a citizenship) and a selection of designated competitions (and camps) that accumulate points. In some cases the coach can select the most appropriate athlete within a top 4 ranking. The selection process for the Team Canada (Cadet, Junior and Senior) is posted on www.fencing.ca

Rankings each have a specific purpose-limited value. *The High Performance (HP)* ranking is the key selection tool for the National Team and for funding. The Junior and Cadet HP list includes all athletes that participate in the designated tournaments, whereas Senior HP only lists people registered in the HP program. HP includes a domestic portion of the tournaments, plus an international component.

The Domestic/National ranking tracks the results of tournaments within Canada. It's used to ranked people at tournaments within Canada (except the top 4 ranked in the High Performance Program, HPP). These rankings are used in some circumstances, i.e. the Vancouver GP.

The Ontario ranking is based on the best five out of seven results from designated competitions and counts toward the Ontario Summer Games (OSG). The Ontario Youth/Cadet Program Guide: <http://fencingontario.ca/storage/downloads/flyers/1314/OYC.OCDGuide213-14.pdf>

Parent Code of Conduct

The parental code is intended to provide standards of ethical conduct for fencing. It covers both general principles and the decision rules relevant to most situations encountered by coaches in interacting with parents. The Code also provides a common set of values. It is the individual responsibility of each coach to aspire to the highest possible standard of conduct.

The essential elements of character-building and ethics in sports are embodied in the concept of sportsmanship and six core principles: *trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, fairness, caring, and good citizenship*. The highest potential of sports is achieved when competition reflects these principles. Below are the statements coaches can use in writing their Parent Code of Conduct:

- ✓ I will not force my child to participate in sports.
- ✓ I will remember that children participate to enjoy the sport and that the game is for youth, not adults.
- ✓ I will inform the coach of any physical disability or ailment that may affect the safety of my child or the safety of others.
- ✓ I (and my guests) will be positive role models for my child and encourage sportsmanship by showing respect and courtesy, and by demonstrating positive support for all players, coaches, officials and spectators at every game, practice or sporting event.
- ✓ I (and my guests) will not engage in any kind of unsportsmanlike conduct with any official, coach, player, or parent such as interrupting bouts, or using profane language or gestures.
- ✓ I will teach my child to play by the rules and to resolve conflicts without resorting to hostility or violence.
- ✓ I will demand that my child treat other players, coaches, officials and spectators with respect regardless of race, creed, color, sex, or ability.
- ✓ I will teach my child that doing one's best is more important than winning, so that my child will never feel defeated by the outcome of a game or his/her performance.
- ✓ I will never ridicule or yell at my child or other participants for making a mistake or losing a competition.
- ✓ I will emphasize skill development and practices and how they benefit my child more than winning. I will also de-emphasize games and competition in the lower age groups.
- ✓ I will respect the officials and their authority during games, will never question, discuss, or confront coaches at the game field, and will take time to speak with coaches at an agreed upon time and place.
- ✓ I will demand a sports environment for my child that is free from drugs, tobacco, and alcohol, and I will refrain from their use at all sports events.
- ✓ I will refrain from coaching my child or other players during games and practices, unless I am one of the official coaches of the team.

By signing this document I agree with the Code and I understand that if I do not follow this Code, I may be asked to leave the club activity (such as a tournament or practice) or I may be asked to withdraw my child from the club.

Parent's Signature: _____ Date: _____

Sherraine Schalm, Success Story

“A winner is just a loser who tries differently one more time.” – Sherraine Schalm.



Q: Why did you become a fencer?

A: Fencing was only an excuse to spend time with the coolest guy ever: Alan Nelson. He was a teacher at my school and also happened to coach fencing. I wasn't in any of his classes so I joined the fencing club just to hang out near him. I did not like fencing at first, but my dad made me stick with it and after a year it became enjoyable. Also I had lots of friends in the club so it was easy to go to training. Alan was possibly my greatest coach ever because he gave me skills to become good enough to develop a lifetime love of the sport. Also he motivated me to believe I could really accomplish something beyond what I imagined. I started fencing at 12 and then by the time I was 15 there was the chance to qualify for the Canada Winter Games so I did my best, changed from epee to foil and started doing competitions.

Q: What's your biggest accomplishment in fencing?

A: Two things: my consistency being in the top 16 in the world (1999-2010) and my qualification for the London Games after having a baby in 2011.

Q: What were your main challenges in fencing?

A: Having enough money and support for my career was the most exhausting and discouraging challenge of all. For this, Ontario was a fairly welcoming place. They offered help when it was needed and had the Ontario Quest For Gold program.

The other challenge was overcoming a fear of failure so that I could perform at international competitions. I worked successfully with Andre Wojcikiewicz to get a plan that gave me consistent, maximum performance.

Q: How did fencing help you to become a better person?

A: Fencing gave me more than I can count: a world-wide education, meeting my husband, going to 4 Olympics, understanding the media from both sides, learning how to set goals and work to achieve them, physical health from a lifetime of good training, the chance to contribute to the world instead of just taking from it. But the MOST important thing I got from fencing was the chance to fail. So often in life we do what is comfortable and for what we have a high percentage to be successful but with fencing I learned how failure does not kill you! In fact, how you train yourself to react to failure determines more than any talent level, coaching or funding you could have. If you react well, it can lead to change, a lifetime of joy and a possibility of future success.

Q: Any advice you could give to a fencer's parents?

A: Make sure your kid sticks with something long enough to decide whether they truly like it or not.

To read more about Sherraine: "Running with Swords: The Adventures and Misadventures of the Irrepressible Canadian Fencing Champion", Sherraine Mackay, 2005.