

RESPONSE TO JUNIOR AND CADET RANKING AND SELECTION CONSULTATION

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1. PURPOSE OF DOCUMENT

Thank you to everyone that replied to the recent consultation.

<http://britishfencing.com/news/latest-news/?n=1863>

BF received 10 written responses. Additional feedback was received verbally through members of staff.

Of the 10 responses, 5 raised points relating to the Junior System, 7 raised points relating to the Cadet System

Much of the feedback contained queries about the rationale of the changes. We also received some extremely helpful feedback over missing or unclear text which will be taken into account.

Please note that we will be altering both the Cadet and Junior System as a result of some of the feedback received and the updated documents will be published online. The Selection policies will be put to the Board for approval in June.

If respondents feel that their questions are not adequately addressed by the points below, any individual responses they have had or the final published documents then they are welcome to contact headoffice@britishfencing.com.

2. RATIONALE/GENERAL THEMES

There were a number of themes that arose and rather than address questions about the rationale separately we have addressed the common themes.

2.1 REDUCTION IN DISCRETIONARY SELECTION

In light of the significantly reduced executive resource to support selection the bulk of administration falls on a small number of volunteers and executive team members. Discretionary selection causes a significant drain on these resources and has a negative impact on almost everyone involved. Therefore the Board, the Exec team and the volunteers are all of the view that reducing the amount of discretion is the most sustainable option for the organisation at this time.

Previously for Juniors 6 athletes were selected off rankings and up to 6 discretionary places were available to allow selectors to select athletes that were currently 'in form'. This allowed the selection of Cadets coming up from Junior's or athletes that had taken a break.

However every decision made on this basis was subject to lengthy debate and discussion which is not sustainable for the organisation or its volunteers.

The new system formalises the ability for athletes showing current form to be selected alongside established Junior fencers by only counting results from the start of the season when selection for the additional (previously discretionary) places. It allows cadets to finish their previous season or athletes to take time out to focus for exams, and train up through the summer and still qualify for selection.

2.2 AGE RESTRICTION/CADETS 'FENCING UP'

To clarify an athlete that is 17 on the 1st January 2019 (therefore no longer a cadet in that season) will be eligible for Junior International selection for nominated events from 1st September 2018.

There was some concern from respondees about how cadets would get the opportunity to 'fence up'. The evidence-based research across sports shows that competing up in age categories does not benefit long term athlete development.

<https://www.redsports.sg/2016/12/03/youth-athlete-development-conference/>

In addition there is a negative impact on young athletes expecting/expected to fence and perform in both Cadet and Junior circuits.

If a coach believes that the athlete's individual development is best served by the international experience (or for example the opportunity to gain FIE ranking points) afforded by a JWC then athletes can apply for a place at a non-nominated Junior World Cup (includes those JWCs categorised as Team Nominated where the Individual event is non-nominated). The minimum age does not apply to non-nominated JWC Individual events and selection will be taken straight down the Junior rolling rankings.

There are other exceptions to the age restriction included in the Selection policy – eg Eden Cup selection, and to cover circumstances such as if a cadet fencer is a repeatedly medalling in cadets and/or performing exceptionally well at (non-nominated) JWCs.

2.3 CALENDAR CHANGES

The FIE and EFC set the international calendar and we can only respond to these changes. Some of these changes were as recent as mid May. Some respondees proposed consideration of competitions that have now been moved well outside any reasonable selection time period. In most

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weapons fewer JWC competitions in Europe exist prior to a reasonable selection date compared to last seasons.

At the moment the primary purpose of setting out the tournaments and the selection dates is to support coaches and athletes in planning their season.

What the ranking and selection calendar cannot do is set out the development journey for athletes. It is not designed to be and nor is it suitable to be the competition plan of every athlete with GBR aspirations.

2.4 SHORT/CROWDED CADET SEASON

We have to take into account:

- Selection cut off dates for Euros and Worlds which allow enough time for fencers to respond and all the administration (for which we do not have a team of paid staff) including booking flights as early and cheaply as possible.
- Including enough domestic and international events for fencers who aspire to GBR representation to gain results in.
- The fencing season typically starting in September
- Squad selection dates for the EFC events to allow at least 6 weeks for travel bookings

We are very aware of the issues with regards to competing several weekends in a row and do our best to spread this out. In addition to the factors above we must:

- Try to find the optimum mix of BRC and EFC dates across all 6 weapons
- Try to avoid clashes with other BF events
- Fit in athlete development camps

2.5 EARLY SELECTION DATES FOR EUROS AND WORLDS

Athletes (parents) and coaches need time to build up and prepare for major events if they are expecting to get results. Last minute selection does not assist them in this planning and typically the later that selection is made, the higher the cost of travel and accommodation.

In addition BF does not have the resources available to organise Cadet and Junior Europeans and Worlds at short notice. We would have to draft in additional support which is likely place an additional cost burden on BF (and ultimately the athletes/members).

2.6 TOO MANY CHANGES/COMPLICATED

BF has to deal with a number of issues, for example:

- Significantly reduced executive resources due to the loss of the WCP, and year on year reduction in public funding to support services to members.
- Unsustainable amounts of pressure from coaches and parents where discretionary selection exists
- FIE changes to the calendar
- EFC changes to the calendar (last change 2 weeks ago)
- Changes in Sport England targets (which subsidises the administration and participation of athletes and coaches)

This inevitably results in a longer and more complicated Selection policy. Hence the addition of the table which is designed to show it in a simplified way.

All athletes attending the GBR Development Camps (formally known as Talent Camps) will have opportunities to discuss the Selection policies and to understand how it affects them.

2.7 LONGEVITY

BF cannot guarantee that the ranking and selection system will not change in the future. However, what will not change is that the best athletes will still be able to qualify and be selected to represent GBR. Athletes and coaches should be working on their own athlete profiles and working towards their personal athlete development plan. They should not be solely driven by a selection and ranking scheme which is primarily intended to provide a mechanism to select and compare athletes, not develop them. Over the next few years we will need to explore how we can improve the system to better support the development of our athletes.

3. SPECIFIC QUESTIONS

3.1 CLARIFICATION OF L128 POINTS (CADETS ONLY)

If in a Cadet nominated EFC there is a full 128 tableau a L128 result will score 2 points. The Cadet points document has been amended.

3.2 WHICH RANKING WILL SEEDINGS BE TAKEN FROM? (JUNIOR)

Seedings will be taken from the Junior Rolling Ranking.

3.3 HOW WILL REFEREES FEES BE CALCULATED AND PAID? (JUNIOR)

For any athlete competing in a nominated JWC individual event there will be a flat referee charge (currently £70 per athlete) and BF will source the referee and subsidise costs if required.

For any athlete competing in a non-nominated individual where a nominated team event is attached and a team competing the referee charge is £70 per athlete. BF will source the referee and subsidise costs if required. BF reserve the right to reduce the available athletes placed to 9 depending on cost and availability of referees (Phoenix, Sochi, Bangkok, etc). The number of available athlete places per event will be published on the BF website in advance of selection.

For events which are entirely non-nominated (individual and team) the athletes must arrange a referee if required and split the costs between them.

3.4 DEVELOPMENT CAMPS/COST

There is no requirement or expectation that athletes will attend every single camp.

There is a minimum requirement for athletes wishing to represent GBR in the Junior team events (at JWCs, Euros & Worlds) to attend the September 2018 and the 2019 pre-Euros camp.

There is an expectation (but unlike Juniors not a requirement) that Cadets who are looking to be selected for the Euros/Worlds will attend GBR development camps in September and February.

Attending GBR development camps is one way for fencers to demonstrate commitment to their own development and to the GBR team. Demonstrating this commitment is one factor of discretionary selection.

Participation continues to be subsidised however athletes must cover travel and accommodation costs.

Version History (can be placed at end)

| Version Number | Date Updated | Updated by | Comments |
|----------------|--------------|------------|---------------|
| V1.0 | 03/6/18 | GU | Final version |
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