

THE SWORD

BRITISH FENCING MAGAZINE
OCTOBER 2024



PARIS 2024 OLYMPIC FLASHBACK PP5-10

TEAMGB PARALYMPIC GLORY PP11-19

GBR 2023-24 REVIEWED PP24-28

BRITISH
FENCING

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WELCOME TO THE SWORD



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PARIS 2024 PARALYMPIC SUCCESS

PP11-19



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Looking Ahead

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EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

Karim Bashir

How good was Paris 2024? We begin the magazine by celebrating the success of what has been dubbed "the greatest fencing event ever held". Everyone that saw the 2010 World Championships knew that the Grand Palais was going to be a special venue but the French organisers went way beyond all expectations. It appeared that this was not lost on the fencers, who all stepped up their levels of talent.

As for the crowd, I've certainly not witnessed anything so raucous before. There was even a conversation to consider whether the venue announcer should call for hush in the venue so the fencers could hear the referees' "Allez". The result? A resounding "absolutely not", led by the fencers themselves who were prepared to lose the odd hit in exchange for the incredible atmosphere.

Whilst it was disappointing that there was no British representation at the Olympics, our Paralympians quickly replaced that with unprecedented success. With only four fencers, the British team outdid their performance at Tokyo 2020, returning to huge celebration with six medals - two gold, three silver and one bronze. You can read all about it in the coming pages.

The merry-go-round continues to revolve with the U14 and Cadet EFC circuits and FIE Satellite series beginning in September. What a start for Great Britain too! Kyle



Abay kicked things off with Reykjavik sabre bronze with Davis Sosnov going on to collect silver and Jaimie Cook bronze at the Bucharest foil event. There was double sabre success for Hui Xin Sezille and Caitlin Maxwell fencing to bronze medals in Ghent followed by Kamal Minott winning silver at the Amsterdam foil event. Kamal lost out to teammate Jaimie Cook who claimed the title, thirteen years after his father Keith won the same event in 2011. It's certainly a promising start to the new season and for sure a season of transition but with athletes already focused on the start of the Los Angeles 2028 cycle.

There has also been transmission in the administrative world with elections taking place within the European Fencing Confederation. Luxembourg's Pascal Tesch was voted in as the new EFC President with the promise of leading the organisation for fencers. Great Britain will remain well represented within our zonal federation

with Hilary Philbin elected to the Comex and nine BF Board commission and council nominations submitted to the EFC. Best wishes to them all.

British Fencing also welcomes new Chair of the Board, Sara Pantuliano, who brings a wealth of experience to the position, with a strong track record in global affairs and international development. At the same time, we say goodbye to President Hilary Philbin. First elected in 2013, Hilary has retired to focus her attention on her role on the EFC Comex. A strong supporter and regular contributor to The Sword, we all wish Hilary the best on her latest fencing adventure.

Sadly, we've also had to say goodbye to a number of members of our fencing family in recent months. For those that knew James Williams, they will remember his desire not only to lift a sword and a microphone but also his ability to lift the mood in any room he walked into. Perhaps less well known was BF's Finance Director, David Moseley. A true professional, David revolutionised the organisation's finance operation and did so with passion and no small amount of cheek and personality.

They and others will be sorely missed by many; their unwavering values and zest for the sport should inspire us all to push forward with passion and purpose on our fencing journey.

Do you have a regional/club story you want to share?

Submit your stories to the editor:

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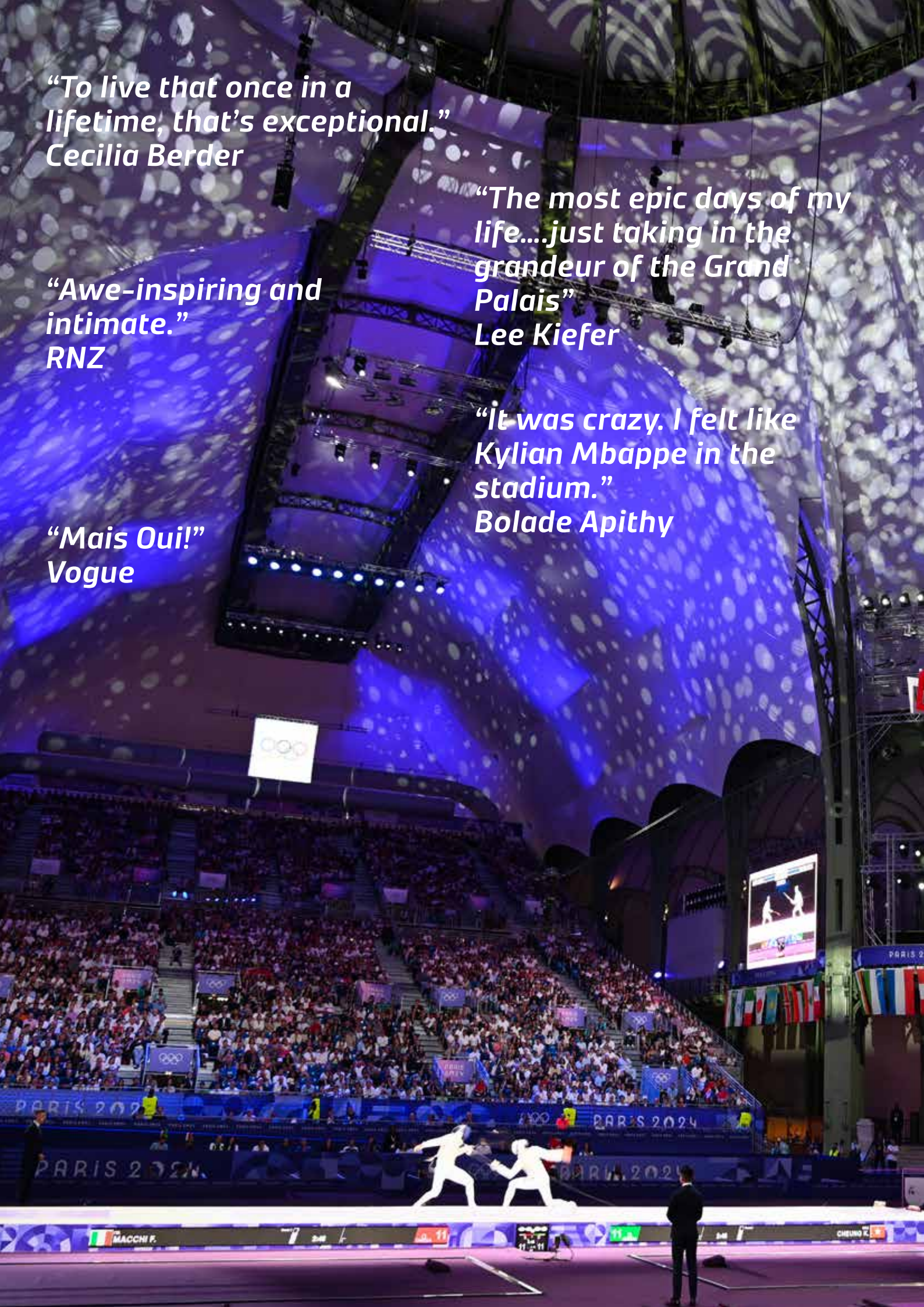
**“To live that once in a
lifetime, that’s exceptional.”**
Cecilia Berder

**“Awe-inspiring and
intimate.”**
RNZ

“Mais Oui!”
Vogue

**“The most epic days of my
life...just taking in the
grandeur of the Grand
Palais”**
Lee Kiefer

**“It was crazy. I felt like
Kyllian Mbappe in the
stadium.”**
Bolade Apithy



PARIS 2024 OLYMPIC REPORT

The Paris 2024 Olympics drew to a close on Sunday 11th August 2024, with the fencing competition finishing on 4th August, and the extraordinary venue made for a spectacular showcase for fencing in the City of Light.

Much praise (and importantly, TV time) was lavished on the spectacular Grand Palais venue, which was previously used for the 2010 World Fencing Championships. The same venue was also used for the taekwondo competition, and the same two sports were also held at the Paralympic Games - wheelchair fencing and para-taekwondo.

With the stage in the very centre of the exhibition hall and the stained glass dome curving overhead, it made a beautiful venue for spectators as well as the photographers and the all-important TV shots, part of a deliberate strategy by the organisers to showcase the grandest Parisian landmarks where possible.

The historic Beaux-Arts exhibition hall and museum complex, very close to the right bank of the Seine, was built in 1897 for the 1900 Universal Exhibition world's fair, and is best known to modern Parisians as the site of major arts exhibitions. In 2021 the Grand Palais closed for major construction work to restore certain sections and bring the building up to modern standards ahead of the Olympic Games, which included building seating capacity for 8,000 inside the historic building. The distinctive dome was covered with a tarpaulin to stop natural light from reaching the field of play.

One of the better site-specific features that the organisers employed was using the grand staircases in the north wing of the main hall as an entrance for the athletes; lit by spotlights, competitors descended the stairs for an entrance that matched anything in the athletics arena.

The sheer volume of noise generated inside was remarked upon by almost everyone who visited. The full houses and echoing glass roof amplified the energy generated by the crowd - especially when a French competitor walked onto the piste - into

what was described as the loudest and most raucous audience for fencing ever seen.

Rhiannon Kinnear, a sabreur from Glasgow visiting as a spectator told the Associated Press: "It's just incredible. I don't think I've seen a fencing venue like it. The glass everywhere, the pillars. It's an amazing contrast as well with the lighting. Nowhere better for fencing, I don't think," she said.

Many have said that the majesty of the setting raised everyone's game on the piste, and here we celebrate the victories in a weapon-by-weapon breakdown of the action.

Women's Epee

The only shock in epee these days (perhaps always) is if there are no shocks. Five supreme performances stood out in the round of thirty-two as Cebula (USA) defeated number 11 seed, Fiamingo (ITA), Kryvytska (UKR) overcame ninth seed Ndolo (KEN) 13-12, Xiao (CAN) took down eighth seed Moellhausen (BRA) 15-11, Klasik (POL) beat fifth seed Rizzi (ITA) 12-11 and Yoshimura (JPN) eliminated third seed Sun (CHN) 14-13. The round of sixteen saw Muhari (HUN) take seventh seed Song (KOR) apart 15-6 but Yu (CHN) caused the biggest upset beating second seed Candassamy (FRA) 15-10, bringing a hush to the Grand Palais. Only one of the top five seeds remained by the time the medal matches began, as Differt (EST) edged fourth seed Santuccio (ITA) 10-9.

An incredibly tight bronze medal match saw Muhari (HUN) and Differt (EST) having to decide the outcome in a priority minute.



Muhari Clinches Bronze



Kong Title Joy

Muhari bravely attacked to secure her place on the podium - Hungary's first individual medal in the discipline since Szasz won gold at Rio 2016. Top seed Kong (HKG) was the only top five fencer to make the semi-finals and faced the next highest ranked, Mallo-Breton (FRA) for gold. In the battle of the left-handers Mallo-Breton was three hits up in the third period but Kong levelled before going on to become Hong Kong's first woman to claim an individual Olympic medal and the Paris 2024 Olympic title. Mallo-Breton's silver was the first French individual medal in this discipline since Athens 2004.

The host nation provided all the surprises in the team event as the French team first beat second seeds Korea 37-31 in the quarters before taking out third seeds Poland 45-39 in the semi-finals. Poland rallied in the bronze medal play-off against China, beating them 32-31 to claim the country's first ever women's team epee Olympic medal. France were unable to fully capitalise on a great day, losing to top seeds Italy 30-29 in the gold medal match. The silver was France's first women's team



The Podium Selfie



Podium

epee Olympic podium since Athens 2004 with Italy winning their first ever Olympic team title in the weapon.

Men's Epee

As in the women's event, the upsets came early in the men's individual epee. Santarelli (ITA), experienced but ranked outside the top 16, beat seed number seven Freilich (ISR) 15-13 in the round of thirty-two along with eighth seed Midelton (FRA) falling to Alimzhanov (KAZ) 15-14 and top seed Koch (HUN) going out 15-10 to Lugo (VEN). Three more big names went out in the following round as Yamada (JPN) removed Di Veroli (ITA) 15-11, Kurbanov (KAZ) ended the defence of reigning Olympic Champion Cannone (FRA) 15-10 and Loyola (BEL) surprised number two see Siklosi (HUN) with a 14-13 victory. It wasn't all bad news for Hungary though as Andrafsi saw off Vismara (ITA) 15-13 to make the semi-finals.

Elsayed (EGY) levelled the score at 7-7 against Andrafsi (HUN) with 14 seconds left on the clock in the final period of the bronze medal match, forcing overtime. A brilliantly timed counter from the Egyptian earned him the podium place as he became Africa's first athlete to medal in the discipline. Kano (JPN) took on home favourite Borel for the gold and edged ahead with a reactive counter game. Opening the lead through each period Kano delighted the Japanese



Mission Borel Complete



Silver Celebration

fans claiming gold 15-9, the country's first ever individual title at the Games. Borel finally claimed an individual Olympic medal after years of being at the top of the game.

The Czech Republic starred in the team event, boasting 42 year old Jiri Beran. First they beat the second seeds Italy in the quarterfinal 43-38 before losing in the semi-finals to Japan 45-37. Meanwhile, Hungary beat the top seeds France 45-30 to make the gold medal match, leaving the



Kano Olympic History Maker

Czech Republic with some task to make the podium. A remarkable performance saw them do just that, claiming bronze with a 43-41 victory for the country's first ever place on the men's team epee podium.

An edgy final followed which Hungary won 26-25 to clinch their first gold medal in this discipline since Munich 1972. They beat Japan who had to settle for silver after winning gold at the last edition of the Games.



Gold celebration with flag



Podium

Women's Foil

The women's foil landscape is arguably the one that has changed the most since Tokyo 2020 and expectation was high that higher seeds would not have it all their own way. Canada's strides forward continued in Paris as Zhang took out the seventh seed Chen (CHN) 15-7 in the thirty-two. Dubrovich (USA), the tenth seed went out to Pasztor (HUN) 15-12 and Chan (HKG) defeated eleventh seed Azuma (JPN) 15-14. Also the



First All-USA Olympic Foil Final



Kiefer Defends Olympic Title

top seed Errigo (ITA) survived a big scare, eventually winning 15-12 against Catantan (PHI).

Walczyk-Klimaszuk (POL), having survived a tough draw against Thibus (FRA), fell to Harvey (CAN) in the sixteen and the surprises continued in the quarterfinal. Harvey's form continued as she defeated fourth seed Favaretto (ITA) 15-14 and Errigo's luck ran out against Scruggs (USA) who beat her by the same score.

There was a big billing semi-final contest and one that had featured in many World Cup and Grand Prix finals since the last Games. Kiefer (USA) dominated Volpi (ITA) in her title defence to make the gold medal match 15-10. Volpi failed to recover for the bronze medal match as Harvey won a hard-fought contest to claim the podium spot and Canada's first ever Olympic fencing medal. Only the second ever all-USA Olympic final lay ahead - Zagunis faced Jacobson in the women's sabre final at



The North American Podium

Beijing 2008. Despite going behind early, Kiefer fought back against Scruggs in a lightning fast gold medal match. In the end she eased to victory 15-6, becoming the first woman to defend the Olympic foil title since Vezzali did it, also in Beijing 2008.

In the team event Canada were unable to convert their incredible 38-36 victory over third seeds France in the quarterfinals. Facing Japan for bronze they were edged out 33-32 for a place on the podium - Japan's first in the discipline. The top two seeds battled it out for gold with the USA winning their first ever Olympic women's team foil title 45-39 against Italy who made the podium for the eighth consecutive time in the weapon.

Men's Foil



Itkin Bronze Salute

After an amazing run of form Hamza (EGY), ranked third, survived a big scare in the thirty-two of the men's foil event, narrowly beating Jurkiewicz (POL) 15-14. The shocks came in the following round as Macchi (ITA) eliminated sixth seed Matsuyama (JPN) 15-11 and Pauty (FRA) delighted the home crowd with victory over favourite and number one seed Marini (ITA) 15-14. It's worth noting that in the battle between the top nations, the USA lost Massialas and Meinhardt whilst Italy's Macchi and Bianchi progressed by the quarterfinal



First Defence in 68yrs

stage. In fact, Macchi did the damage in the following rounds, taking out Hamza (EGY) 15-9 and then second seed Itkin (USA) to make the gold medal match.

Itkin recovered in the bronze medal match against Iimura (JPN) converting an early lead to a convincing 15-12 victory to claim his first individual Olympic medal after winning team bronze at Tokyo 2020. The gold medal match between the left-handers, Macchi (ITA) and defending champion Cheung (HKG) was a thriller. Cheung attacked his way into the lead only for Macchi to level at 14-14 in the second period. After two abstentions from the referee - arguably one for the Italian and one for the Hong Kong fencer - Cheung became the first man to defend the Olympic men's foil title since d'Orsola (FRA) did it at Melbourne 1956. Macchi's silver followed teammate Garozzo's at Tokyo 2020.



Three Continent Podium

In the team event the quarterfinals went by seed resulting in a huge semi-final matchup between the USA and Italy. The two teams had been in a torrid battle over the past two seasons for weapon supremacy but disappointing results for them at the World Championships led to an earlier than expected contest in Paris. A surprisingly conservative approach from the USA saw Italy take advantage, making the gold medal match 45-38. The USA were unable to recover for the bronze medal match as France followed up gold at Tokyo 2020 with bronze at home, winning 45-32. The top two seeds Japan faced the Italians for the gold medal - a repeat of the London 2012 final. The Italians, battle worn from



Cheung Flick to back in final

the semi-finals, couldn't get into the match and had to settle for silver, their first medal since winning gold at London 2012. The Japanese deserved their first ever men's team foil Olympic title.

Women's Sabre

Athletes recovering from injury time-out and thus with lower rankings than expected created some tasty draws in the thirty-two. Bashta (AZE) took out twelfth



Olympic Medal #5 for Kharlan

seed Yang (CHN) 15-9 and Marton (HUN) dispatched fourth seed Martin-Portugues (ESP) 15-8. However, there were a couple of genuinely lower seeded athletes that performed above expectation in the first



Brunet Paris 2024 Bliss

round proper - Szucs (HUN) surprised the experienced Criscio (ITA), winning 15-10 and Hafez (EGY) took out high-flying Tartakovsky (USA) 15-13. Szucs and Marton continued to impress in the next round beating eighth seed Ilieva (BUL) 15-10 and thirteenth seed Pusztai (HUN) 15-7. However, the surprise of the round was number two seed Emura (JPN) succumbing to Choi (KOR) 15-7. Choi went on to beat teammate Jeon 15-14 in the quarterfinals.



Dream Podium

The semi-finals went to seeding resulting in Kharlan (UKR) facing Choi (KOR) for the third step on the podium. Choi went 11-5 up and looked in control but Kharlan, using all her experience closed the deficit, levelling at 14-14 before going on to claim her fifth Olympic medal. A mouth-watering gold medal match lay ahead with the first two French fencers, Balzer and Tokyo 2020 bronze medallist Apithy-Brunet, ever to make the women's sabre final, facing each other. Apithy-Brunet got off to a flying and attacking start to lead 8-4 at the break, sealing her first Olympic title with a stop-cut, 15-12. After recovering from her initial disappointment, first-time Olympic medallist Balzer joined Apithy-Brunet for an emotion-filled lap of honour in the Grand Palais.

Hungary fell to the apparent curse of being seeded second in the team event, losing 45-37 to Japan but that was not the only surprise of the day. Top seeds France could not stop a determined Korea, losing 45-36 in the semi-finals. The French were unable to recover from that loss and fell 45-40 to Japan in the bronze medal match as the Japanese trio collected their country's first ever women's sabre team medal. That left the third and fourth seeds, Ukraine and Korea to battle it out for gold. Korea led through the first six legs and headed into the ninth and final leg with a three hit lead. Cue Olga Kharlan. An incredible 8-2 run from the Ukrainian took the country to their



All French Final

second gold medal in this event, having won at Beijing 2008. Korea upgraded to silver having won bronze at Tokyo 2020.

Men's Sabre

There were stellar performances from lower ranked fencers early in the men's sabre event. Four 'big' names fell in the round of thirty-two. Shen (CHN) beat twelfth seed Gallo (ITA) 15-6, Gemesi (HUN) took out fourth seed Dershwitz (USA) 15-10 and Park (KOR) knocked out Heathcock (USA), the fifth seed by the same score. However the biggest surprise came as Szilagyi (HUN) going for his fourth straight Olympic title in a row was knocked out 15-8 by Arfa (CAN). The Canadian continued his giant killing in the next round, disposing of eleventh seed Apithy (FRA) 15-8 but perhaps the biggest surprise of all the individual events came with the exit of Bazadze (GEO). The two-time European Champion and 2023 World Championship silver medallist was edged out 15-14 by Amer (EGY) who had never previously beaten him - note their last meeting was in 2016.

The quarterfinals went with seeding before the final big result in the event came in the



Ferjani African Silver



Samele Bronze

semi-finals as Ferjani (TUN) eliminated top seed Elsissy (EGY) 15-12. Elsissy didn't recover fast enough to claim bronze as Samele (ITA) earned his fourth Olympic medal with a 15-12 victory after a close battle.

After storming onto the scene in 2016, winning his first World Cup and then going

on to claim the 2019 World Championship title, the Olympic title was in Oh's (KOR) destiny but had eluded him until Paris 2024. In the gold medal match, he finally delivered under the lights in the Grand Palais in a masterclass of sabre against Ferjani (TUN). Getting out to an early lead, Oh's dominance was magnificent. Ferjani's silver was Africa's first medal in men's



Podium Emotion

sabre whilst Oh produced Korea's first golden moment after Kim's back-to-back silvers at Rio 2016 and Tokyo 2020.

In the team event, Iran's promising trio produced the shock of the quarterfinals, beating the USA 45-44. The semi-finals went with seeding pitting France against Iran for bronze. A dominant 45-25 victory brought more joy for the home crowd and gave France their first medal in this discipline since winning gold at Beijing 2008. The 'dream' final saw Korea facing Hungary and after a thrilling encounter Korea delivered their third successive title winning performance, edging out Hungary 45-41 - the Hungarians converting Tokyo 2020 bronze to silver at Paris 2024.

PAT AIYENURO ELECTED PRESIDENT OF THE BRITISH FENCING BOARD AS PHILBIN RETIRES.

After an open recruitment process, current board member Pat Aiyenuro has succeeded Hilary Philbin as BF President, who has stepped down after three terms to focus on her European responsibilities. Philbin was re-elected onto the EFC executive committee in September 2024 and decided to devote more time to her work in European fencing.

Pat will serve an initial presidential term which expires at the AGM after the LA 2028 Olympic and Paralympic Games.

Elected onto the British Fencing board in 2020, Pat has also served as a member of the International Relations committee, working alongside Hilary building relationships across the international community of Olympic and Paralympic fencing. This follows seventeen years of volunteering experience at all levels of the sport, including roles as the Chair of Camden Fencing Club and GBR Head of Delegation for multiple major championships.



She has also been active in community projects to make fencing more accessible and was awarded a British Empire Medal for services to sport in 2017. In 2023 she took part in the UK Sport International Leadership Mentoring Programme.

Speaking of her appointment, Pat said, "I am delighted and honoured by this appointment. I look forward to continuing the work led by Hilary, extending relationships across the international fencing community and further strengthening the positive contribution that British Fencing can make to the future of our sport globally. I'd like to thank outgoing president Hilary Philbin for all her support over the years and the BF Board for placing their trust in me."

PARIS 2024 PARALYMPIC REPORT TEAM GBR SECOND IN MEDAL TABLE



(imagecomms)

In just sixteen days the local organising committee for Paris 2024 converted every venue for every sport from Olympic to Paralympic-ready. From a spectator and TV audience point-of-view very little had changed but a lot did elsewhere. Behind the scenes, all the facilities were made accessible, the call-rooms enlarged and technical areas adapted to check the equipment being used was safe and conformed to the rules. Where fencers entered down the stairs for Olympic fencing, wheelchair fencers accessed the field of play via two central ramps to dramatic music and flashing lights – every bit as spectacular as a few weeks earlier and right in the same location that had grabbed everyone’s attention during the Olympics, the Grand Palais des Champs Elysée.

During the Olympics fencing occupied the first nine days of competition followed by the taekwondo events. For the Paralympics the schedule was switched resulting in an additional week’s agonising wait for the fans and stress-inducing one for the athletes.

Taekwondo gold medals for Matt Bush (men’s K44 +80kg) and Amy Truesdale (women’s K44 +65kg) set the benchmark for Great Britain’s team of four. Hopes were high for Paris success after finishing third in the medal table at Tokyo 2020 with one gold, one silver and three bronze medals plus the incredible performances across the team at international events between the two Games.

Day 1 - 3 September

The first British athlete to compete in the Grand Palais was Gemma Collis in the **Women’s Cat A Sabre** individual event. The difference between the empty venue in Tokyo and the raucous rowdy atmosphere was stark. Despite an early loss, 15-7 to Ukraine’s Natalliia Morkvych, Gemma’s lifeline was the repechage – the route to the bronze medal match. A 15-0 win over Carminha Oliveira (BRA) was the confidence boost she needed and she went on to beat Yu Chui Yee (HKG) 15-9.

She faced Brianna Vide (FRA) as well as much of the sell-out crowd next and in the charged environment Gemma lost 15-10 to finish seventh. Vide went on to



Gemma Sabre A (imagecomms)

make the bronze medal match and whilst missing out on the podium, 15-11 to Nino Tibilashvili (GEO), was already emerging and the French People's Champion with her charismatic on-piste emotion there for all to see. Gu Haiyan (CHN) claimed the title by beating Kinga Drozd (POL) 15-10 in the final.

The second event saw Dimitri Coutya taking to the piste for the individual **Men's Cat B Sabre** which saw him convincingly beat the well decorated Anton Datsko (UKR)



Dimitri Sabre B (imagecomms)



Gilliver in Sabre Action (IWAS)

15-2 before narrowly losing 15-13 to Adrian Castro (POL). Like Gemma, his route to the podium came through the repechage which began with a 15-5 victory over Noah Hanssen (USA) before defeat 15-13 to Dmytro Serozhenko (UKR) resulting in eighth place.

Castro missed out on the bronze medal, losing 15-7 to Zhang Jie (CHN) as Feng Yanke (CHN) claimed top spot on the podium, just beating Michal Dabrowski (POL) 15-14. Dabrowski's silver medal came only after he'd received special medical provision to fence, given that he was undergoing treatment for cancer.

Great Britain's first medal of the Games did come on the first day though, through Piers Gilliver in the individual **Men's Cat A Sabre**. A bye through the round of sixteen was followed by a comfortable 15-8 win against Matteo Dei Rossi (ITA) before the tightest of victories, 15-14 over Artem Manko (UKR) - a reverse of the result at the last World Championship final.

That victory guaranteed at least the silver medal for the 29-year-old. On a day beset by lengthy delays to competition, Gilliver eventually took the stage for the gold medal match at 11pm in Paris. He started solidly against Maurice Schmidt - the only German in the competition - with both trading points until the score was 8-8. Schmidt's incredible speed combined with excellent decisions saw him gather momentum and streak away to win 15-8.



Gilliver Sabre Podium

While the result was not a huge shock, as the German had been regularly making the sabre podium on the circuit in the last few years, it was hard to lose the gold. A frustrated Piers said after the bout, "I think for me once the Games come to a close, you can really look back and be proud. Having a medal is a big deal and I never thought I'd get to this position in my life. I think at the moment, to be honest I'm really gutted. But in time, I think I'm going to be proud of this."

Edoardo Giordan (ITA) had previously beaten Andrii Demchuk (UKR) 15-7 in the bronze medal play-off.

Great Britain had no representation in the final event on the first day of the wheelchair fencing event. Saysunee Jana (THA) began her history-making journey in Paris by taking the Paralympic title in the **Women's Cat B Sabre** beating Xiao Rong (CHN) 15-14 in the final just after Olena Fedota-Isaieva (UKR) claimed bronze with victory over Ao Lanzhu (CHN) 15-3.

Day 2 - 4 Sep

Oliver Lam Watson was the last of the British contingent to begin his assault on the podium on the second day of the fencing competition in Paris. A bye through



Gilliver Sabre Celebration



Lam Watson - Foil v Osvarth

the incomplete round of thirty-two in the **Men's Cat A Foil** was followed by a heavy 15-2 defeat to Sun Gang (CHN) - a particularly tough draw!

Repechage victories against Byron Branch (USA) 15-7 and Michal Nalewajek (POL) 15-10 were followed by another tough draw against four-time Paralympic medallist, Richard Osvath (HUN). Oliver ran the Tokyo 2020 silver medallist close but was edged out 15-14 to finish eighth.



Coutya Foil Gold Surprise Look

Bronze went to Zhong Saichun (CHN) who beat Emanuele Lambertini (ITA) 15-3 in the play-off as Sun Gang (CHN), who had knocked Oliver out, took the title with a 15-3 victory against Matteo Betti (ITA).

The highlight of day two for British fans came in the individual **Men's Cat B Foil** event as Dimitri Coutya went after his first medal at Paris 2024. His seeding afforded him a bye through the round of sixteen preceding dominant victories over



Coutya Foil Champion

Visit Kingmanaw (THA) 15-5 and Dmytro Serozhenko (UKR) 15-4. These victories elevated him to the gold medal match where he faced sabre champion Feng Yanke (CHN) who had taken this foil title at Rio 2016 and Tokyo 2020.

Dimitri led from the off but both were twitchy and received cards for starting early. Whilst Yanke retained his repertoire of fake attacks and parry ripostes Dimitri continuously probed and attacked, not giving his opponent thinking time. He put the pressure on, combining sharp attacks with killer defence. That combination and variety, executed perfectly, flummoxed the Chinese athlete. By the break, he seemed rattled, with Dimitri leading 8-4 and looking increasingly in control of the fight. In the second period Feng was failing to land hits he normally might have and appeared bereft of ideas. Dimitri kept up the pressure and it was soon done 15-7. Coutya was the new Paralympic champion!

Speaking after, Dimitri said, "[Feng] had perfect distance control, and I know his speed. So I knew I had to be spot on with how I set myself up to give myself the right timing to make those hits. Whether I was

attacking, defending or counter attacking, I basically always was looking at where he was to try and really set myself up for the best possible opportunity to score the hit."

Adding, "Fencing... it's been something that I've dedicated my life to, especially for the last few years. It's been all I thought about, especially after Tokyo. I really wanted that gold medal, so I really dedicated the last few years to making that happen."

"The work that I've been putting in for the last few years about being as consistent as possible and my final match, I'm proud to say, was my most consistent of the day. We all helped each other - coaches, friends, family, athletes. So much has gone into this. Looking into the crowd tonight and seeing so many familiar faces, coming and supporting me - I can't believe how lucky I am."



Coutya Foil Gold with Paralympic Mascot Phryges



Legend Bebe Vio (World Abilitysport)

Great Britain was not represented in either of the women's events on day two. Zou Xufeng (CHN) claimed the individual **Cat A Foil** gold with victory 15-12 over teammate Gu Haiyan as Judith Rodriguez Menendez (ESP) secured the bronze with a 15-11 win against Yu Chui Yee (HKG). It was two from two for Saysunee Jana (THA) who claimed her second individual gold in the **Cat B Foil** with victory 15-11 against Xiao Rong (CHN), picking up her second silver medal. Legend of the sport, winner of the prestigious 2017 Laureus Sports Award for Sportspersons of the Year with a Disability and double Paralympic Champion, Beatrice Vio (ITA) claimed her fifth Paralympic medal with a bronze medal win over Cho Eun Hye (KOR) 15-2.

Day 3 - 5 Sep

There was a change of pace on day three as the focus turned to the team foil events and there was more to celebrate for Great Britain as Dimitri Coutya, Piers Gilliver and Oliver Lam Watson came together in a formidable trio.

Teams must feature at least one Cat B fencer and Great Britain's Dimitri filled that role with aplomb. A bye through the round of sixteen and despite the lack of a reserve, the British team dominated first Brazil 45-17 and then the host nation France 45-25, to secure their place in the gold medal match.



Well Framed

It was always going to be a tough task against the most successful wheelchair nation in the history of the Paralympic Games, China. However Great Britain had a dream start with the first three bouts, leading 15-12 and with China looking cowed. A superb bout from Oliver saw him put in five points against Feng Yanke, living up to the position that Piers and Dimitri set for him. Unfortunately Dimitri then had a



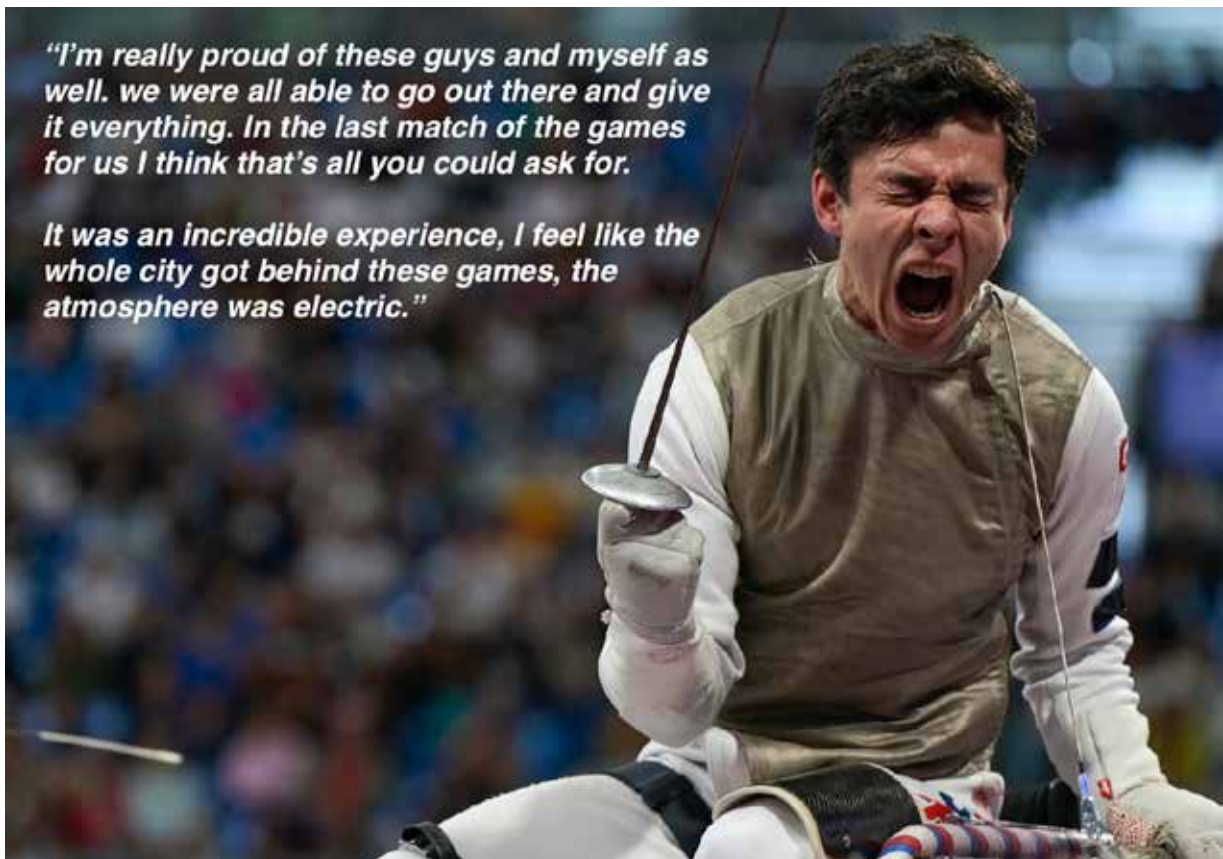
Team Foil Final Secured with victory over France



Team Foil Silver for Lam Watson, Gilliver and Coutya



"Paris will certainly always hold a special place in my heart amongst the Games I've been fortunate enough to go to. It meant the world being able to look up and wave at so many people that have been pivotal to my success - I'll never forget it!"



"I'm really proud of these guys and myself as well. We were all able to go out there and give it everything. In the last match of the games for us I think that's all you could ask for."

"It was an incredible experience, I feel like the whole city got behind these games, the atmosphere was electric."



Gilliver Foil Celebration

difficult bout against veteran Cat A fencer Sun Gang where the Chinese athlete took ten points in a row.

It pivoted the match. China took the lead from the fifth relay, and took care to slow the match down, carefully working out what the British team were doing. A gutsy last rotation from Piers pulled a few points back, but the match had gone with China winning 45-34.

However, no one could have made China work harder. "In the team events in fencing, every match is different. Different opponent, combinations, there's some



Team Foil Podium

where you can do better than others. It's always an interesting dynamic." said Piers.

"We were able to come out strong in the first few, then some of the guys I struggled with I fenced later on, and the last match was the toughest."

The defeat was still raw for Dimitri Coutya. "It was a tough loss, but honestly I'm so proud. We put so much work into this and it was a very good performance, even if we didn't win the match." he said afterwards. "I'm so proud of us and this team and the work that we've put in. It means a lot to us to still come away with a

medal. The enjoyment I've had from today, especially fencing alongside these guys, is something that I'm taking into tomorrow and just trying to enjoy what I do. I spend so much time, we all spend so much time, sacrificing a lot, trying to get better at this, and I'm just looking to put in a consistent performance tomorrow in such an incredible environment."

Oliver added, "Silver always feels a bit bittersweet. It's winning a medal but losing a gold. We left it all on the piste but it was a real struggle. They just bested us on the day. It's still an incredible medal to show for all the work we put in."

Great Britain did not take place in the women's team event which China also won, beating Hungary 45-34 with Italy completing the podium with a 45-33 victory over Hong Kong.



Gold #2 for Coutya

Day 4 - 6 Sep

The penultimate day of competition began with Gemma Collis having a bye through the round of thirty-two in the **Women's Cat A Epee** individual event before going on to beat Zsuzsanna Krajnyak (HUN) 15-12. A 15-7 loss to Krajnyak's teammate, Amarilla Veres plunged her into the repechage where she lost to Yevheniia Breus (UKR) by the same score to finish ninth.

Chen Yuandong (CHN) claimed the latest Paralympic title with a comfortable 15-6 win over Kwon Hyo Kyeong (KOR) as Gu Haiyan (CHN) claimed bronze - after gold in the sabre and silver in the foil - with a 15-12 victory against Marta Fidrych.



Epee Gold Just out of reach for Gilliver (IWAS)

Great Britain had Oliver Lam Watson and Piers Gilliver competing in the individual **Men's Cat A Epee** event with both progressing through the round of thirty-two with a bye. Next, Oliver defeated Zainulabdeen Al-Madhkhoori (IRQ) 15-14 whilst Piers took out William Schoonover (USA) 15-1 before beating Tian Jianquan (CHN) 15-12 to make the semi-finals. Oliver fell at the quarterfinal stage 15-9 to Emanuele Lambertini (ITA) and thus moved into the repechage.

Vying for his first individual medal, Oliver beat Hayder Al-Ogaili (IRQ) 15-12 before losing to Artem Manko 15-11, finishing



Men's Cat A Epee Paris 2024 Podium (imagecomms)



Coutya's Epee Final - Destiny Gold

eighth. Meanwhile, Piers made his second Paris 2024 final beating Hakan Akkaya (TUR) 15-6 in the semi-finals. The Turkish fencer beat Emanuele Lambertini (ITA) 15-13 to claim the bronze medal before Piers had a third crack at gold in the French capital - the defence of the title he won in Tokyo.

In a tense and tactical match, Sun, who had previously defeated Gilliver in the Rio 2016 final having lost to him at Tokyo 2020, took an early lead and held on to reclaim his title. It was a difficult match to watch, with Piers emotional in defeat. Paying tribute to Piers, a gallant Sun said, "He's very hard to beat. He's one of the top guys in this category, and he's won a lot of gold medals." Despite the loss, Gilliver's silver medal represented the 100th won by ParalympicsGB in Paris, hitting the target set by UK Sport with two days of competition still to go.

The last of the individual fencing events saw Dimitri Coutya targeting gold in the **Men's Cat B Epee**. Dimitri took a comfortable 15-7 win over Noah Hanssen (USA) before beating teenager Michele Massa (ITA) 15-10. In the semi-finals, Dimitri took his time working a way through Michal Dabrowski (POL) but made the gold medal match winning 15-13. Dabrowski went on to edge a very tight bronze medal match 15-14 against Zhang Jie (CHN).

In the final against Kingmanaw - who he had already defeated in the foil competition earlier in the week - the match was cagey and tight. But tied at 7-7, Coutya rapidly surged ahead, eventually winning 15-10.

Dimitri's second individual gold medal was another landmark for ParalympicsGB, taking them past their gold medal tally at Tokyo 2020 and speaking afterward said, "At one point in my first match, I thought I was out. I was struggling and wasn't feeling it. But we've worked hard to be consistent even when things aren't going

your way, and as the day progressed, I found my form. To end it with a gold medal is incredible."

He also credited his success to the support of his team, adding, "This medal is a testament to the hard work of so many people - teammates, support staff, friends, family. They've all pushed me to be better, and they're a huge part of my success."

Great Britain did not enter the individual **Women's Cat B Epee** where Olena Fedota-Isaieva (UKR) beat Tong Nga Ting (HKG) 15-6 to claim the bronze medal before another historic moment in the Grand Palais. Having taken Paris 2024 gold in the sabre and foil, Saysunee Jana (THA) became the first Paralympic fencer in history to claim all three individual titles at a single Games beating Kang Su (CHN) 15-7 in the final.

In her post match interview, aware of her achievement, 50 year old Jana said, "I am going to become the queen of fencing." Of that, there is no doubt!

Day 5 - 7 Sep

With no British representation in the **Women's Team Epee** event Saysunee Jana guided her Thailand team to the bronze medal with a 45-40 victory over France and China claimed their eleventh gold medal out of a total of twenty, beating Ukraine into silver, 45-37.

However, the final day of competition offered the final chance for a British medal with Dimitri Coutya, Piers Gilliver and Oliver Lam Watson lining up in the **Men's Team Epee** event.

After a relatively straightforward quarterfinal match against France, who



Team Epee Bronze to go with Foil Silver



The People's Champion Brianna Vide (World Abilitysport)

they beat handily 45-20, an exceptionally tricky semi against Iraq proved their undoing, with their Cat A epeeist Zainulabdeen Al-Madhkhoori scoring powerfully and fast against Oliver and Dimitri. Despite the team's epee specialist, Piers, having a strong match and winning every one of his bouts, Iraq opened up a lead in the sixth and never let it go. Iraq would face China in the final, and eventually win the silver medal.

Great Britain went on to secure their sixth wheelchair fencing medal of the Paralympic Games on the closing day of competition, when the team faced Poland. The opposition did not have much in their bag of tricks to counter the well-honed British team's movement and bladework. Dimitri performed exceptionally well against the Polish Cat A fencers, although their top Cat B fencer Michal Dabrowski, who Dimitri had already faced in the individual epee competition, proved a little more difficult. But exceptional bouts from Ollie and Piers pushed Great Britain ahead and sealed the deal fairly early on, going on

to win the bronze medal 45-27, matching their result at Tokyo 2020.

It capped a triumphant set of performances for the squad, who added a sixth medal to the previous tally from Tokyo to finish with two golds, three silvers and a bronze, podiuming on every day of the competition and cementing Britain's position as a major wheelchair fencing nation.

Speaking after the match, Oliver said, "Sometimes we get focused on 'the only thing is gold'. We aim for that, and when you don't achieve it it's really really tough. To lose that fight (the semifinal against Iraq) and then turn it around for the bronze medal fight psychologically is really difficult sometimes. I'm really proud of these guys, and myself as well. We were all able to go out there and give it everything. In the last match of the Games for us that's all we can ask for."

Great Britain finished second on the wheelchair fencing medal table behind China by total medals, and third on gold count behind China and Thailand - the latter



Jana's Three Golds (Facebook)

thanks to the extraordinary performance of Sainsunee Jana in the individual competitions. They were also very much part of a deep and wide performance for ParalympicsGB, who significantly improved on the totals from Tokyo.

"I think it's really nice thing to be a part of the bigger Paralympic GB team, because I think for us, you know, we always think about the next competition, the next World Cup, and you kind of end up in a quite small bubble, just within the sort of fencing bubble," said Piers. "It's not until you come to the Games, you see the medal tally on the wall, you realise actually what you do has a bigger impact. And I think to feel that you are part of something bigger really is fantastic."

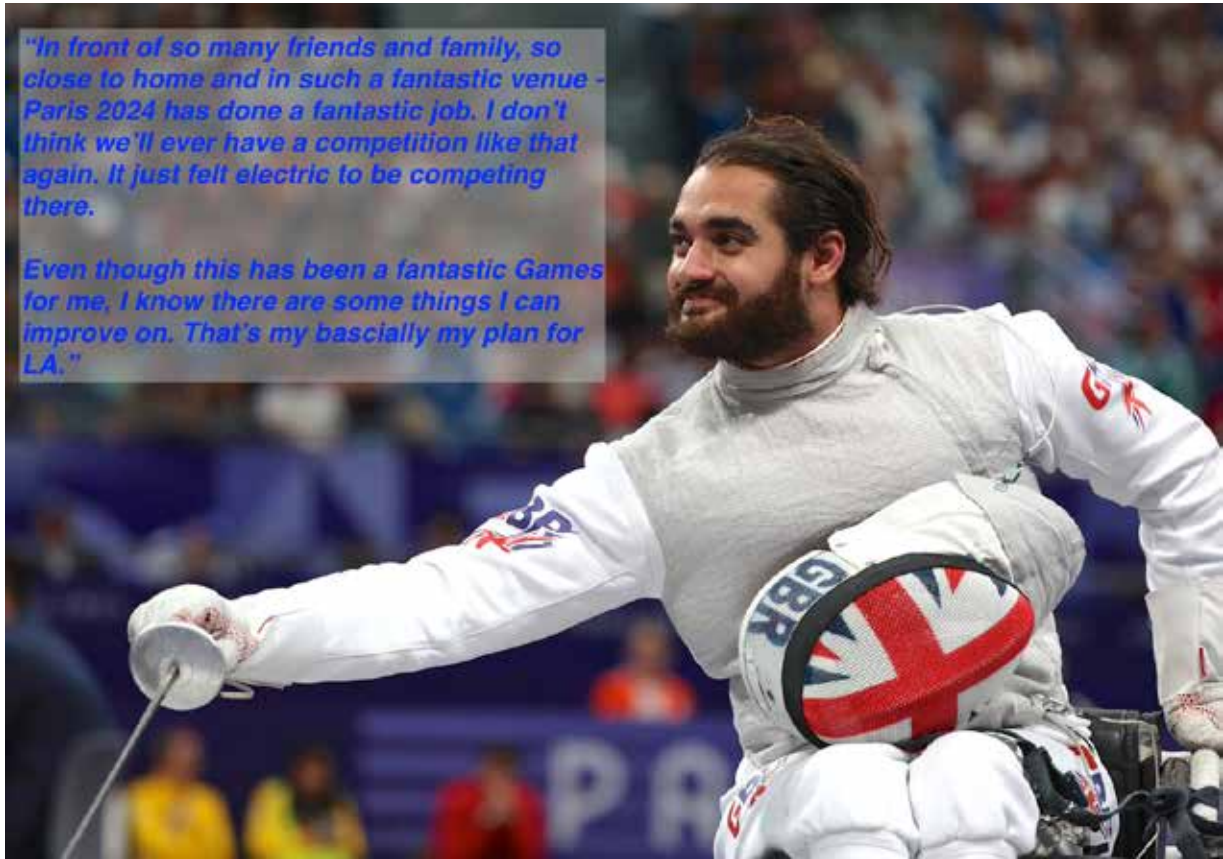
Dimitri, with an amazing medal haul across the five days of two golds, a silver and a bronze, had the final word. "I always find the Paralympic Games so incredible. This has been a three-year cycle, but generally four years of your life has just been put into five days of competition. Horribly gruelling but I'm really proud of the work that my team and these boys in particular have put in," he said. "It's really tough to come away with a Paralympic medal, and to have such consistent performers on a team over so many years is really a feat that we should all be proud of."

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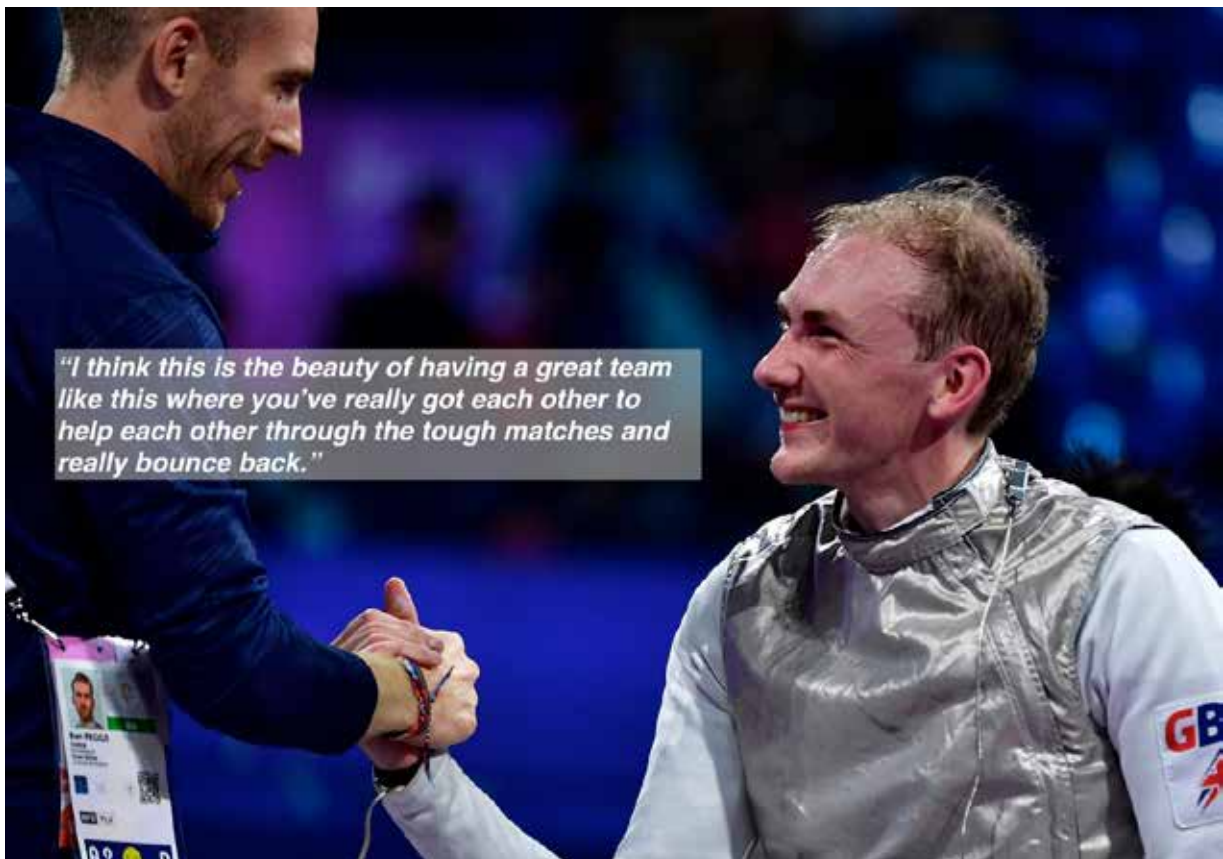
Email the editor: karim.bashir@catchsport.com

"In front of so many friends and family, so close to home and in such a fantastic venue - Paris 2024 has done a fantastic job. I don't think we'll ever have a competition like that again. It just felt electric to be competing there."

Even though this has been a fantastic Games for me, I know there are some things I can improve on. That's my bascially my plan for LA."



"I think this is the beauty of having a great team like this where you've really got each other to help each other through the tough matches and really bounce back."



2014 EUROPEAN CHAMPION JAMES-ANDREW DAVIS OFFICIALLY RETIRES

Based in the USA for a number of years, he spoke to BF just after returning from the USA Nationals where he was coaching athletes in July.



You're calling time on your career as an athlete. Tell us when you made that decision?

Speaking with Marcus at the end of the Tokyo 2020 cycle, we both decided, yeah, look, we want to give it one last go. We want to leave no stone unturned. The Olympics had been pushed back to 2021 so that was also another big factor - it was only a three year commitment, not four. And yeah, I decided that day, this is what we're going to do - we're going to go for it. So I committed to it, got back in shape and got back into training hard again. Unfortunately, more injuries were a big factor. That's just part of sports, part of getting older.

Of course, I wanted to qualify. Of course, I wanted to win the Olympics but I have a very different feeling in 2024 than I did in 2020 and can say, 'Yep, I'm happy to move on. I feel like I've done everything that I could have that was in my ability.'

What are you up to at the moment?

I'm working and coaching for the Massialas Foundation. I've been working for them

for almost ten years now. I moved to San Francisco in 2013 to train with them and I stayed. Every year you have summer nationals, the biggest event I think, in the world for fencing.

Working with the kids you get to see the ones that are very talented and maybe just need a little bit of guidance. But then you get the kids that are very, very quiet and not confident. They just need a little coaxing out. And I've loved working with those kids as well - you really get to draw it out of them and see them blossom. It's been really, really fun. I have a lot of parents also sitting in on the meetings and you get some really cool questions. Sort of out there, thinking about different ways of looking at it, from people who don't understand the sport so well.

On his beginnings.....

I started fencing when I was four years old. That was at RLF fencing club, which no longer exists now. I believe Fencers Club London, is sort of like the remnant of it. I really like what they've done, really building the club up, and they've very much taken a professional mindset into the club base, which I think a lot of clubs throughout my life have not had.

Do you see yourself as a black athlete? How has that changed your experience?

Yeah, both negatively and positively. So I'm mixed race, my mum's black, Dad's white, and so it wasn't something that ever was an issue. It was a predominantly white sport, I would say especially in the UK, less so now than it was when I was growing up.

I never grew up with anybody being racist to me in the UK. Never experienced that I was being cheated because of the colour of my skin. You know, that's just sport. You do experience things unfortunately based on the colour of your skin. It does exist. I don't believe it exists to the extreme that people

think it exists. I think if you go looking for it, you will find it. I haven't lived my life like that.

I do, however, realise that being a young ethnic minority, I have been a role model to others coming through I know from my mum's side, who were very, very proud to see me come through. And I hear it more from other parents who are proud of me, proud to see me doing this.

How would you sum up what you've done in fencing so far?

I've had an amazing career but it really hasn't been solely mine. You know, I've got to the top because of my ability in the sport, for sure. But without great coaching, without my parents from day one... I think a lot of people will have those stories of their parents that commit everything. Whatever sacrifices that we make, your parents are making even more sacrifices.

I don't believe that there's an athlete in any sport at the top level who has done it off their own back. They've done it with a huge amount of people behind them, supporting them. And I know I can't sit here today and thank everybody, but those of you who know me well will know I'm very grateful for what they've done and I appreciate everything that they've done for me. So I want to say thank you to them.

This is an extract from a longer interview which you can read at: thesword.britishfencing.com



EUROPEAN FENCING CONFEDERATION ELECTIONS 2024

Photos: EFC Facebook

Pascal Tesch (LUX) has been elected as the new President of the European Fencing Confederation (EFC), succeeding Giorgio Scarso (ITA), who led the organisation since October 2022. The election took place during the EFC Ordinary and Elective Congress held in Budapest, Hungary.

Tesch was elected in a close contest after a second round of voting, winning 22-20 ahead of respected colleague Marius Florea (ROU).

Pascal Tesch, from Luxembourg, is no stranger to the fencing world. His career in the sport began at age eight and culminated in his participation in the 1991 European Championship in Vienna. He has since dedicated himself to the administration and development of fencing, playing pivotal roles in the EFC SEMI commission and working as a senior consultant to the Confederation. Tesch's election brings a fresh vision and ambition to the presidency as he embarks on leading the EFC into a new era.

In his acceptance speech, Tesch expressed his gratitude and commitment: "Colleagues and friends of the European Fencing Confederation, I am honoured to take on this role and to work with the new Executive Committee for the future of our beloved sport. My colleagues and I are highly motivated and eager to start working for fencing and with fencers. You

will see us soon at competitions because fencing is for fencers. Our commitment will be unwavering, with the aim of supporting and growing our sport at all levels, always with a spirit of inclusion, passion, and dedication."



Congratulations from Outgoing President Scarso

Tesch also thanked his competitors for challenging him and offered to unite the efforts for the profit of fencing. He finished by thanking Giorgio Scarso for his guidance and great initiatives the former president started and which shall be continued, jokingly adding, "I may be taller than President Scarso but I am well aware of the size of the shoes I am stepping into".

Former President Giorgio Scarso, reflecting on the election, noted the significance of Tesch's victory. "It was a tightly contested election, but carried out with respect and

fairness. Pascal Tesch's victory ensures that European Fencing is well-positioned for the challenges of the next four years. Reorganising and setting the foundations for the future will not be easy but with enthusiasm and goodwill, much can be achieved. I am confident Pascal and his team will lead the EFC toward new successes." Scarso's tenure was marked by the reinforcement of European fencing structures, and his legacy will provide a strong foundation for the new leadership.

The election also saw the selection of new members to the EFC Executive Committee (COMEX). Czech representative Vilem Madr received the most votes for the committee with 26, followed closely by Vincenzo De Bartolomeo, Vice President of the Italian Fencing Federation, who earned 23 votes. Other newly elected members include Zsolt Csampa (HUN), Nuala McGarrity (IRE), Nikolay Mateev (ISL), Jacek Slupski (POL), Etienne Van Cann (NED), and Martina Zmaic (CRO), alongside Great Britain's Hilary Philbin, the outgoing President of British Fencing.

Tesch, who had announced in his program to proceed analytically with an evidence based approach, has started talks with the other members of the executive committee - new and old - in order to determine the final attribution of the roles. The new team will focus on fostering the growth of fencing across the continent, including efforts to promote historical fencing and establish new partnerships and programs aimed at advancing the sport's presence at all levels.

Congratulations to Hilary and best wishes to Great Britain's nine EFC commission and council nominations submitted by British Fencing's Board.



EFC President - Pascal Tesch



New EFC Comex

LA28: LOOKING FORWARD

By John Stanley, BF Communications Manager

In 2024, for the first time, TeamGB did not send any fencers to the Olympic Games at Paris 2024. Ensuring that British fencers attend the Games in Los Angeles in four years time will take a steely and honest approach to the progression of British fencing athletes.

Qualification for the Olympics requires working within a system that is particularly tough for the many European nations against some of the biggest global Olympic fencing talent, all looking to peak in the qualification period in 2027 and 2028.

GBR has a great deal of talent in the cadet and junior ranks in several weapons, but with fencers' peak performance years, as a rule of thumb, estimated to be around age 26-28, it requires a pathway looking soberly at several Games ahead, up to and including Brisbane in 2032 and the yet-to-be-chosen venue for 2036.

Several older fencers who represented GBR at the Olympics from 2012 to 2020 are now moving into the retirement phase, and the goal is to carefully track the performance of the current crop of international athletes against a measured trajectory. With performance increasingly focused on data drawn from international competition, there is an increasing emphasis on performing on the day at major competitions.

Steve Kemp, BF's former Pathway Director, said, "We have a weapon strategy to look at the different weapons and what their potential is in terms of four, eight and twelve years."

The season immediately after a Games is always a little less intense, with athletes retiring and taking time off before beginning the next hard cycle. "It's a good time to establish yourself. With our men's



(© bizziteam)

foil team, with David [Sosnov] and Jaimie [Cook] and Kamal [Minott], if they can establish themselves well in the top 50, it starts to position people well for the few years running into 2027 and the next cycle."

"So in the next 12 months we need to really see four to six fencers establishing themselves into their senior spaces with a little bit more robustness and making day two frequently."



(© bizziteam)

Much of the GBR talent in epee and sabre will be heading for university over the next cycle, a difficult transitional phase for athletes in all sports. One of GBR's brightest hopes, Carolina Stutchbury, is now starting at university in the USA. While fencers are usually thought to peak in the middle to latter half of their twenties, it's only a 'weather gauge'. "It's possible that something like women's foil is tracking a bit younger in age." says Steve.

The other things that can derail an Olympic cycle are life events and injury, something that has slowed the careers of several GBR world medallists over the past year. The training volumes required to compete at Olympic level depend upon an extraordinary level of robustness to deal with the physical and mental training loads, and sadly, an element of luck plays a part in many Olympic trajectories.

It is also difficult to know exactly what the fencing landscape will look like in three years - there are considerations of rule and format changes that might take place. The GBR Pathway Team carefully measures athletes' results against trajectory models and develops athletes on potential 'fast' and 'slow' track models. At some point: "You need to show evidence of an ability to



perform on the day, which is, quite simply, medalling at World Championships. The ability to be in the top four."

The pathway standard provides a level of athlete assessment to identify the key development areas within an individual Athlete Development Plan. Steve uses a 'technical, tactical, physical, and mental' model for athletes. "If you use those four buckets you can identify what needs to change over the cycle. Would a greater hit conversion rate in someone's attacking game increase the probability of success? Other nations will be looking at what we are doing and they will be looking at how to beat us. It becomes the ability to adapt to the situation and there's a lot of provocative questions that we're trying to get the coaches to think about."

The 2028 Olympic and Paralympic fencing is due to be held in the cavernous Los Angeles Convention Center in the downtown, central part of the city. It's a venue so large, it will also be holding the taekwondo, wrestling and table tennis events, and was due to hold the boxing as well, before the sport was dropped from the program. The area will also be the major 'live site' fan zone for the Games, putting fencing in a very central part of the Games. While perhaps no venue could top the Grand Palais in Paris for a spectacular backdrop, the return to a 'big box' venue will allow for a more theatrical 'blackout' presentation on TV, similar to that of recent Games of the 2010s.

GREAT BRITAIN'S FENCING TEAM AT STOCKHOLM 1912: UNSEEN PHOTOGRAPHS

British Fencing received an email from Carolyne Redmayne about a set of around 30 glass plates from the 1912 Olympics in Stockholm, which show the British fencing team in action and at rest. We have reproduced a selection of the images, with some of the team identified where possible (with thanks to Malcolm Fare.)

The 1912 fencing competition saw individual and team events for both epee and sabre, along with an individual foil event. A total of 184 fencers from 16 nations competed - all men. Women would not be admitted to the event until 1924, and it would be many decades before they participated in anything other than foil.

These slides, shot by an unknown photographer (or photographers) were inherited from Ms. Redmayne's father, who collected them on an unknown date - and not much else is known about them, but they appear to focus on the fencing team, who may have been involved in several other sports. The GBR team took a silver medal in the team epee competition on July 10th, 1912, held at the Ostermalm Athletic Grounds.

Carolyne added, "There are some cricket ones amongst them but I don't think it was an Olympic event so maybe the fencing team as well. There are photos of some athletics events - possibly the modern pentathlon which had its first outing at Stockholm - Douglas Godfee was a fencer and pentathlete (as well as having been awarded the Military Cross in 1918) so maybe the photographer was trying to



2nd from left - Percival Davson, 5th from left - Edgar Seligman (national epee champion in 1904 & 06, national foil champion in 1906 & 07, national sabre champion in 1923 & 24), far right - Edgar Amphlett (national epee champion in 1910). Sitting: 2nd from left - Arthur Everitt, 4th from left - Robert Montgomerie (5 times national epee champion & 4 times national foil champion), far right - Sydney Martineau



capture him running as well. They were clearly a team of incredibly talented and illustrious individuals.

Unfortunately I cannot tell you anything about their provenance - they were a box of glass slides found when clearing my father's home after he died a few years ago. He was a keen photographer so they would have been something he would have picked up somewhere because they were interesting."

Fencing in Stockholm included foil again after the weapon was not contested in the 1908 Games. More widely, the 1912 Olympics in Stockholm introduced several

significant advancements and milestones in the history of the modern Games.

They were also the first to include athletes from all five continents, showcasing a broader international participation. The event marked the debut of the decathlon and pentathlon, with Jim Thorpe famously winning both. Additionally, the 1912 Olympics were pioneering in their use of electronic timing systems.

If you know anything about the images or the individuals within, please get in touch: media@britishfencing.com



GBR INTERNATIONAL REVIEW 2023-24

The 2023-24 fencing season was a remarkably successful one for GBR, where fencers excelled internationally against high-level competition. We also saw the Olympic qualifiers for Paris 2024; though no British athletes secured a spot for the Olympics this time, the performances are a testament to the bright future of GBR fencing.

The journey began in Sao Paulo, where Brazil hosted the first foil Satellite event of the season in September 2023 and valuable points were available for the race for individual qualification for the Olympics.

GBR's Kamal Minott kicked off the first international event of 2023/24 season, taking a bronze medal. He ran riot in his poule, winning every match, dropping just four points, earning himself top seed for the elimination stages. A bye followed by victories over Souza (BRA) 15-10 and Oursler (USA) 15-5 ensured a place on the podium.



His semifinal opponent Guilherme Toldo (BRA) was ranked over 100 places above him in the world standings. Toldo proved too strong, taking a 15-10 win over the British fencer. Toldo had to settle for the silver medal, losing 15-12 to Leopoldo Alarcon (CHI) in the final as Minott shared third place with Lorenzo Mion (BRA).

Speaking after the event, Minott said, "I was cool, calm and collected throughout the poules which allowed me to execute and defend well. Ranked first I felt very confident going into the direct elimination fights. Despite feeling a little jet lagged during my first fight, I managed to gather myself and execute well in the latter stages."

The action continued with Carolina Stutchbury earning a valuable ranking point by finishing sixth in the women's event which was then won by Maia Weintraub (USA). This was followed by Alexandra Powell's bronze medal at the FIE Senior Epee Satellite in Belgrade. Powell took down the number two seed and a double Olympian on her way to the podium, a personal triumph that left her beaming with pride.

David Sosnov's breakthrough was another highlight, as he won his first senior medal - bronze at the FIE Senior Foil Satellite in Timisoara, Romania.

"It felt really rewarding to break through to the podium for the first time in a senior competition, and I'm grateful to everyone who helped me achieve it." he said.

As the season continued, more stars emerged. Finn Keen won his first ever cadet international, taking home a gold medal at the EFC Cadet Foil event in Warsaw, Poland in September and Caiti Maxwell earned a bronze medal at the FIE Senior Sabre Satellite in Ghent early in October.

Our cadet women's sabre team of Keira Donnelly-Sallows, Hui Xin Sezille, Maya Sutton and Ava Davies won bronze at the EFC competition in Godollo, Hungary in mid-October - and it would not be the last sabre team medal to come.

On the same weekend, Tristan Lumineau won the bronze in the Individual Cadet Men's Epee EFC event in Budapest.



Photo: Luc Gevaert



JAIMIE COOK

"My season was very up and down. I had lots of good results and then some absolutely shocking ones. I think my standout performance is from the Junior World Championships when I finished seventh. Very close to a medal."

"This season, and last season, I've struggled with quite a few injuries in my forearm and ankle. I've had to change blades this season, so my forearm can hold the whole body of the sword. I've been slowing everything down; I've changed my pace a lot this season."

"I'm going into my last season as a Junior. For this season, for Juniors, I'm going to try and medal at every World Cup. That's more of a short-term goal. I would like to try and make the second day at the Seniors too."

"I'll be training full time this season. I coach children most mornings, then after that go to a facility to have a lesson, then go to a gym to spar during the day with other fencers. I train in the evenings too. I'm doing a lot more fencing. My main goal is to tolerate the load."

"I get to travel the world. I get to go to all these different competitions. Before Christmas, I'm going to Romania, Amsterdam, Greece, Istanbul, Tokyo and Bangkok."

"We get to go out and see all the sights. Bangkok is my favourite by an absolute mile."





HUI XIN SEZILLE

"Our proudest moment as a sabre team was probably our first gold medal. In Hungary, we won bronze and that was our first taste of a medal. But our first gold in Istanbul was our best moment. We worked so well as a team."

"A match I am particularly proud of I personally think we did well in Barcelona. Previously we had lost against Hungary 45-44. But we came back stronger and in Barcelona we beat them 45-28. It was a very big difference, we were all so proud because we fenced our very best."

"The team improved throughout the season I think because of experience. The season before we didn't have as many good results. But we came back stronger. At our first EFC, we won bronze, so we worked on that. With consistency, we medalled in five out of six competitions."

"This upcoming season we are missing Keira, she's moving on to Juniors. We've got Clara (Shimmin) instead. It's still a very strong team and our aim is to do as well as last season. We're not putting pressure on ourselves for this but that's our aim and we would like to reach it."

"We are going to be training a lot and learning to cope with the pressure. The aim is to be consistent and get some good results along the way."

The GBR medal haul didn't stop there with Stutchbury coming back even stronger, taking the gold medal at the FIE Senior Women's Foil Satellite in Tashkent, Uzbekistan in October. Kamal Minott also won the silver medal at the FIE Senior Men's Foil satellite at the same event.



Stutchbury won her second FIE senior satellite medal in just two weeks, taking home the bronze at the competition in Istanbul.

GBR cadets continued to compete fiercely, heading to Austria at the end of October 2023. Sameer Sunder-Rajan took gold in cadet men's epee at the EFC Klagenfurt tournament on the first day of the competition. The cadet men's epee team of Sameer, Fin Bennet, Tristan Lumineau and Casey Jones also took silver at the same competition.



A good start to the day saw him dropping just one poule fight and then going onto a string of victories in the direct eliminations. "I am pleased with my result. I finally settled the score in the last eight against the fencer who I lost to in the European Championships earlier this year in Tallinn," said Tristan.

"My semi-final was a little disappointing and I felt like I rushed my game a little, but overall, a good day and a major improvement from last year's result."

GBR then had a brilliant start to the new year at the Junior World Cup in Udine, Italy. David Sosnov won his first World Cup medal in January 2024. He took the silver medal in junior men's foil, taking 12 points off eventual winner Zhaoran Zeng of China in the final, with the two heading a 230-strong field.

In the junior men's epee competition, Cador Beautyman made the last eight in a field of 270. Just a week later, David Sosnov placed in the top eight at the Senior World Cup in Paris. For a junior to reach the last eight in a senior World Cup, at the prestigious Paris event, is a genuinely extraordinary achievement - even given the storied history of British men's foil. It took the current individual foil World Champion, Tomasso Marini, to stop his run.

Sosnov's coach, Ziemek, said, "A top eight result in a Senior World Cup during the Olympic qualification period by 17-year-old David Sosnov indicates that our David is on the pathway for Olympic gold."

"David is in a very dynamic developing phase, and he showed impressive levels of tactical adaptability, technical versatility and psychological resilience."

January also saw the cadet women's sabre team of Donnelly-Sallows, Sezille, Sutton and Tosin Ononaiye take a gold medal in the EFC Cadet Sabre event in Barcelona.

The quartet beat Hungary 45-32 in the final after getting past Germany 2, 45-38, in the quarterfinal, followed by Germany 1 in the semifinal 45-26. It was Tosin's first outing with the GBR 1 team ahead of the upcoming European Championships in Naples.

On the same weekend, the GBR cadet women's sabre 1 team took a gold medal at the EFC in Istanbul. The team of Davies, Donnelly-Sallows, Sezille, and Sutton beat the host's second team.

Dan Twine won the U23 Sabre Sokol Cup in Brno, Czech Republic in early November 2023, before GBR Cadets competed strongly again in November 2023 at the EFC Cadet Sabre event in Sofia.

Donnelly-Sallows, Sezille, Shimmin and Maya Sutton took the gold medal at the EFC Cadet Sabre competition in Sofia, Bulgaria, after beating Romania in the final.

"Today was an amazing experience. We worked really well as a team, it was a brilliant atmosphere with all the support we had," said Sezille. "Lots of people stayed for the semi-final and final. It really helped and made the adrenaline flow faster."

16-year-old Tristan Lumineau took his second medal of the season, winning the bronze at the Challenge Bertrand-Dedieu Cup EFC event in Grenoble on Saturday 25th November.



It was also the team's second EFC gold in less than two months, and they weren't finished there. Sezille and Sutton then returned the next day to both make the semifinals and pick up bronze medals in the individual competition, against a field of 157. Both put up strong showings against top Italian cadets, with Sutton falling to Vittoria Mocci 15-10 and Sezille taking 13 points off Brigitta Racz.

It was a performance that underlined the quality of GBR's cadet sabre women. At the end of January, the sabre team, this time with Ononaiye, Sutton, Sezille and Shimmin then took silver at the EFC Cadet Sabre event in Bucharest. This achievement made GBR 1 the number one-ranked team going to the Cadet & Junior European Championships.

Coach Bela said, "This season, the girls earned their most hard-fought medal, fuelled by extensive effort, adrenaline and teamwork. Despite numerous challenges throughout the day, the girls demonstrated remarkable team spirit, staying united and supporting each other. I am immensely proud of them."

Sameer Sunder-Rajan started 2024 off by claiming another victory in January, following his gold in Klagenfurt, taking gold at the EFC Cadet Epee event in Novi Sad, Serbia.

He met Kelemen (HUN) in the semi-final, defeating him 15-12, before turning his attention to Gula (UKR) in the final. With a final score of 15-9, Sameer claimed gold at the competition.



SAMEER SUNDER-RAJAN

"The beginning of the season didn't start so well for me, very up and down. But my second competition went really well, where I won gold in Klagenfurt."

"In Klagenfurt and at the Euros, I fenced the current World Champion. In Klagenfurt, I beat him 15-7 and at the Euros, I beat him 15-12. These matches meant good things for me because they helped my confidence. Knowing how good he was, it helps knowing that I am on a good level and doing well for myself."

"I have become more active in my fencing this season. Instead of relying on just my blade work, I've started incorporating my feet into my fencing a lot more and I am a lot more responsive."

"I have a few goals for my future. I am currently looking for an American university and on top of that I'd like to try and get to the Olympics if we work as a team - with Tristan (Lumineau) and Alec (Brooke) and someone else. If we can pull together and do our best maybe by 2028, otherwise 2032."

"To get there, it would take lots of work. Lots of work and more commitment."

"The ultimate dream is an individual medal at the Olympics. Teams would be nice, but individual is my dream."

On the 17th and 18th February 2024, GBR took two bronze medals at the Junior Men's Foil World Cup in Sabadell, Spain. Jaimie Cook, seeded 8th, beat Luao Yang and Daniel Zhang of the USA in the last 16 and last eight respectively, to set up a semi with Sarmath Kumbha, also of the USA, which he lost 10-15.

Coach Keith Cook said, "Absolutely stellar performance by Jaimie in Sabadell, clinching a remarkable third place in a fiercely competitive tournament. Despite facing the formidable American Worlds team and ultimately conceding 15-10 to the eventual winner, Jaimie's resilience and determination shone brightly."

"This outstanding performance serves as an inspiring precursor to the upcoming European and World Championships, setting the stage for even greater achievements ahead."

The GBR foil team of Cook, Maxwell Jones, Callum Penman and Nye Ulferts-Kilpatrick came through matches against Sweden and narrowly against Poland to face a tough Chinese team in the semifinal. It was not to be a win, but the team won the bronze medal fight-off against Slovakia.

In February 2024, GBR continued their strong run at the European Championships, taking home three medals.

Carolina Stutchbury clinched her second European Championships junior foil title, with Sameer Sunder-Rajan winning silver in Cadet Epee and David Kelly taking bronze in Cadet Foil.

The 18-year-old took her second European title after a win in 2022 in Naples. It was the highlight of a great week for GBR, which included some strong performances across all weapons and two other individual medals.

GBR opened their account on the very first day in the cadet men's epee competition, as Sameer Sunder-Rajan took a silver medal, in a close final with Italian Michele Queiroli that finished 15-13. The next day David Kelly took a bronze medal in cadet foil after the run of his life, including a giant-killing win over Frenchman Ulisse Parpeyrat Fournel, the second seed. "I have no idea what to say. This has been an unbelievable day," said David.

The cadet team events were tougher contests, but the women's foilists fought fearlessly to make the last four but couldn't get past the tough finals opposition of Poland and Ukraine, and finished in fourth place.

In the juniors all eyes were on Carolina Stutchbury who had come straight from the senior World Cup event in Cairo. After brushing past Petrova of Ukraine 15-5 to make the semifinal, she had a little more trouble against Molinari of Italy, before a superbly aggressive display in the final against top seed Volobueva saw her run away with the win 15-8.

All four of the GBR men's individual foilists made it through to the last 32 of the individual competition but couldn't push through to the latter stages. In the

women's foil team event, a stunning display of resilience saw them defeat the top seeds Italy 45-41 to make the last four, but it would be a fourth place finish for the team in the end.

Kaya Burrows then picked up a silver medal at the U23 Epee competition in Zagreb, in March 2024, before April saw the Cadet and Junior World Championships 2024 in Riyadh which brought even more GBR success.

Starting the Worlds off with a bang, David Sosnov demonstrated once again his impressive ability on the opening Friday, scything through the field to eventually win a silver medal in individual Junior Men's Foil. Alec Brooke then won silver in the junior men's epee on the Monday after a fantastic performance throughout the day.



In his first ever worlds, David Kelly also came top eight in cadet men's foil. This was a promising follow-up to his bronze medal at the European Championships in February 2024.

David fought hard against Jia Bao Xu of Canada in his last match and showed excellent sportsmanship and respect towards his opponent.

The junior women's foil team events were even tougher. GBR's women finished in fifth place, losing their final match against Italy. Carolina Stutchbury closed the gap to three points with her second fight against Vittoria Pinna, but the Italian team strode away on the last rotation to win 45-30.

British Fencing is particularly proud of the character shown by Reya Farlam in Riyadh, who was put forward for a FIE Fair Play white card award for honesty. She competed in cadet women's epee at the Worlds, where she finished in 106th place.

However, Reya noticed that a final result was incorrectly recorded on the scoresheet

after losing her last poule match. It was recorded as a win against her opponent, when Reya had actually lost the fight. In the midst of being disappointed with her performance and not quite getting the results she had wanted, without hesitation she immediately reported the error to the referees, after which she was then eliminated.

Reya demonstrated remarkable values of honesty, respect and excellence, which makes her a great inspiration, and an exemplar of the #CallItAttitude credo.

The final Olympic qualifying competition for European athletes to attend the Paris 2024 Olympic Games was held on the 26th-28th April 2024 in Differdange, Luxembourg, and finished in nail-biting frustration for Great Britain's athletes.

The Luxembourg tournament was the final 'Zonal' qualifying tournament, for European nations that had not already won a spot via the team or individual entry routes. The Zonal qualifier is a unique event under immense pressure and not all fencers were able to perform to their ability. A single athlete from each country (as yet without a spot in that weapon) is allowed to compete.

On the first day, Kristjan Archer finished thirteenth in men's foil amongst twenty-two participants. Julia Caron then had a superb run in the women's epee to the last four but was out-strategised by Dar Hecht of Israel in the semi-final.

Carolina Stutchbury, Britain's top female foilist of the past few years, was very close to gaining a place for Paris this year on World ranking alone; yet because of the complicated rules on continental qualifying, she needed to finish the World Cup and



Grand Prix season in a spot higher than Hungarian Flora Pasztor, an Olympian in 2020. Despite coming close several times, she didn't quite manage it against some excellent performances from Pasztor.

Stutchbury then entered the Zonal qualifier as the second seed of nineteen athletes, and scythed her way through the field, beating her first two opponents 15-1 and 15-3.

She had more trouble against Ukrainian Alina Poloziuk, but stayed the course to win 15-11, showing real composure and maturity to deal with an aggressive pushing attack and to come from behind to win.



TRISTAN LUMINEAU

"I am most proud of my consistency this season and my multiple medals. My bronze medal in the Budapest EFC as well as in Grenoble. A good result in the Cadet World Championships. I am also proud to qualify for a Junior World Championship and Junior European Championship. I am quite happy about that."

"In Grenoble, I am most proud of the match where I got vengeance on a French fencer that I had lost to in the previous season. I was determined. In the previous match against him he had caught up enough to win, but this time I kept the lead and won."

"My fencing has changed this season as I have been training a lot more. I am doing a French baccalaureate, so I have been training a little bit more around this. My mental strength changed too. I am a lot fitter this season, but that's subject to opinion..."

"My goals now: I'd hopefully like to medal at Junior international competitions. I would love to qualify for the World Championships 2025 in China."

"I don't want to put too much pressure on myself because that's not good. I did that last time, I still did well but not as well as I thought. I am trying to keep my expectations at a normal level."

This set up a final with top seed Malina Calugareanu of Romania. Despite some excellent attacking play and being five points ahead in the early part of the match, the Romanian edged in front and ran down the clock to eventually win 10-9 and take the Olympic place.

It was a terrible blow for Stutchbury, whose extraordinary achievements over the last few years did now, not result in an Olympic appearance, despite coming incredibly close.

The final international event of the season was the 2024 Senior European Championships which were held in Basel, Switzerland, from the 18th-23rd of June 2024. GBR arrived with a strong mindset, ready to face some of Europe's best fencers.

David Sosnov again excelled in the individual senior men's foil, achieving a last 16 result. This was David's first senior Europeans and joining him on this achievement was fellow teammate Jaimie Cook, who finished in ninth place, missing out on the top eight in a tough match against Maxime Pauty of France, 15-6.

David finished in twelfth place and this achievement is an impressive follow up to

taking home the silver medal in April at the Junior World Championships.

BF board member Pat Aiyenuro attended the European Championships. She says David's and Jaimie's performance was a standout moment:

"We have a relatively young team compared to a lot of other countries. Senior foil is so hard to break into. They are both still juniors. They were both so professional in their approach and outlook."

"It didn't matter to them the age or the experience of their opponent, they were fearless."

Stutchbury was back again as well; after coming agonisingly close to an Olympic spot, she gave an unforgettable performance on day two of the European



championships, where she won the bronze medal in the individual Senior Women's Foil.

She gave an excellent display of attacking strength in the semi-final, going toe-to-toe with Arianna Errigo of Italy - currently ranked fourth in the world. Carolina did not give up easily, with a final score of 14-15.

The season was marked by significant achievements, with GBR showcasing their skills on the international stage, setting the foundation for future success.

The season was filled with individual brilliance and collective determination. From the successes of rising stars like Stutchbury, Sosnov and Brooke, to the exceptional refereeing achievements of Deamer and McDermott, GBR showcased its growth and potential. As the team turns their focus towards future challenges, like the Los Angeles 2028 Olympics, the foundation for success has been firmly built.

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THE REAL-LIFE DUEL OF THE PARIS OLYMPICS

By Richard Cohen

Of the thirty-two sports featured in this summer's Games, one of the oldest is fencing. It was one of the nine sports included in the first modern Olympics, in 1896, and has been ever since. In 1924, when the Games were last held in Paris, 240 fencers from twenty-three nations, competed - oddly, given each Olympic cycle sees the Games getting ever bigger, this year only 212 fencers participated, although in 1924 there were seven fencing events and this year there are twelve (with the Paralympics bringing the count to twenty-four). No wonder many countries eye fencing as a rich source of medals - and thus propaganda.

Back in 1924, the fencing saw a bitter dispute, with one nation accusing another of cheating, which led to a duel. For years, before every final, which would usually be a poule unique of six or eight fencers (where each of the finalists fights all the others), the stronger nations would decide, secretly, who on its team had the best chance of getting the gold, and the weaker members would be ordered to throw their bouts accordingly.

This was, of course, against the rules, but the Italians particularly flouted them. In the men's individual sabre final there were, unusually, twelve competitors—among them four Italians, including the quartet's nominated front-runner, Oreste Puliti, from Livorno.

To make "arranged" fights harder (purely in the sense that the nation cheating had to put its money on the right man - and there have been many cases when they got it wrong) members of the same national team were required to fight off against each other first. Come the final, Puliti beat his three compatriots with ease. The judges were scandalised and, led by Imre Kovacs of Hungary, maintained that the fights were fixed. Outraged, Puliti threatened to cane Kovacs, at which point he was disqualified. The other three Italians, equally indignant, walked out in protest.

The rearranged final ended with the gold medal going to a Hungarian. In the following day's team event, Italy beat Hungary for the gold, although Puliti was still under suspension and so could not take part.

Two days later, Puliti and Kovacs ran into each other at a music hall. Both men insulted the other. Kovacs told Puliti he couldn't understand a word of Italian, at which the furious fencer struck the Hungarian in the face, saying that Kovacs surely couldn't fail to understand that. The two men were pulled apart, but further words were exchanged and a formal challenge issued.

By this time duels were long illegal in almost all European countries, certainly in France and Italy, and even in the United

States. The last such showdown was a shootout in 1859 that resulted in the death of a United States senator at the hand of a retired chief justice of the California Supreme Court. But Italians particularly continued to hold duels in secret, well away from prying eyes. One of the last duels fought in that country had been as recent as 1921, just three years before - between Benito Mussolini and Francisco Ciccotti, at the time an editor in Rome. The duel lasted an hour and a quarter and ended with Ciccotti unable to continue due to wounds received.

In the event, it took several weeks before the two Olympic participants, Puliti and Kovacs, faced off, swords in hand, just over the Hungarian frontier. On the call of 'Play' Puliti bounded forward and attacked, piercing Kovacs in the arm, and the referee immediately ordered both men to shoulder arms. Kovacs's wound was dressed and the two adversaries embraced, parting the best of friends.

What may have fueled Puliti's anger was that for years he had not been allowed the chance to fight for the individual gold medal cleanly - he was to end his career, spread over three Olympics, with four golds and one silver but they were all team medals. As his obituary recorded in 1958, "the politics of fencing, officially denied and declared mere fiction by all team captains throughout the centuries, kept him in second or third place at the height of his athletic powers."

Do you have a regional/club story you want to share?

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BOOK REVIEW

THE BOSTON STORY

Written by Steve Boston

Reviewed by Richard Cohen

In the history of British fencing, one person stands out as the most successful trainer of students and children, male and female, coaching all three weapons.

Steve Boston was born in northeast London in 1920 and died, at only 65, in 1985. He tried any number of other sports before taking up fencing and ended up as British Olympic sabre coach with a worldwide reputation. Of his pupils, four aspired to world-class: Teddy Bourne and Ralph Johnson (both of whom missed world epee finals by the narrowest of margins), David Acfield (four times in succession national sabre champion), and Rob Bruniges, who in 1976 won the world junior foil title. His list of junior and senior internationals goes on for pages.

All too long ago to be of interest? Think again. Steve's grandson, Nick Owens, looking around in his mother's attic, discovered a memoir by his grandfather, and has had it privately published under the title *This Is My Life*, printing a few hundred copies he will provide free, on request.*

The book, a robust 330 pages, is a bit rough around the edges, with plenty of repetition, too many recitals of his



students' successes and enjoyable holidays, and photos reproduced as if taken in a hall of funhouse distorting mirrors, but these are small quibbles. Overall, it gives a fascinating history of mid-twentieth-century fencing in London and - a real revelation - a charming, sometimes uproariously funny, and perceptive account of a life enjoyed to the full.

Steve's father was a cabbie. So were most of his uncles and male relations. His family were East-End poor, spirited, bound up in each others' endeavours, and up for anything, mostly legal. In Steve's case, the way up was sport, and here he excelled over a whole range of disciplines. In 1930, he won the Schools Hundred-yard Sprint Championship, and in 1938 a 25-mile cycle race; in 1942 he took the Northern Counties three-mile cross-country title. He played left wing for the Daily Express Football Club, cricket for his school's First XI, became a registered coach in boxing, swimming, gymnastics and ballroom dancing (he taught waltz and foxtrot, winning trophies including a dance marathon). During a five-year stint in the Army during the Second World War he taught unarmed combat, and there is a suspenseful anecdote of how, while training a battalion of tough French Canadians, he upended a cocky six-footer who suddenly came at him with a knife. As Steve's story gathers steam, we learn that knowing how to defend himself in awkward circumstances was a valuable skill he came to employ in India, Burma, Ireland, Belgium and back home in the backstreets of London.

People liked to pick fights with the slightly-built Leyton lad because they had heard of his reputation as a boxer. Here his record is remarkable: between 1932 and 1956 he fought (at four different weights) 226 bouts (roughly one a week), losing fourteen, drawing two, and winning sixty on knockouts - not bad for a kid who had taken up the sport to protect his prominent and vulnerable nose. These were the days of keenly watched and nationally reported amateur boxing, although Steve was good enough in 1943 to draw a six-round bout against Randolph Turpin, the future world middleweight champion.

Steve's footwork was exceptionally fast, earning him the nickname 'Speedy Boston'. "This was helped," he writes, "by a method of training I used. At the club I'd spar with three opponents, to help develop my footwork and improve my defensive reactions. I would also chalk a small square, which I had to keep within, the size of a large handkerchief and offer the boys a penny every time they hit me."

It soon earned him a new nickname: 'The Shadow'. But that still wasn't enough. One



day in 1942 he was watching people fence and thought he should try the sport to help his ringwork. He continued taking on new opponents till 1952, but even before the end of the war he had taken up coaching, and at the 1948 London Olympics was in Johnny Wright's corner when he lost in the final to the great Hungarian Laszlo Papp.

All this time, fencing was casting its spell and soon he opened his own establishment, the Spartan Boxing and Fencing Club, in West Ham. A year or so later, he was asked to coach women's foil at the Regent Street Polytechnic, then sabre at St Paul's Boys School. He began to take part in competitions himself, both at foil and sabre, reaching the semifinal of the Corble Cup.

Then, in 1959, during a school match against Brentwood, the St Paul's team won the sabre 9-0, and the master-in-charge of fencing at Brentwood asked if Steve would teach his pupils as well. St. Paul's had no objection - at that time they were so dominant that at the Public Schools Championships they had won the main trophy, the Graham Bartlett Cup (based on which school had scored the most points overall) for six years running.

So Steve was teaching at the Poly, St Paul's, Brentwood, another club in Ilford, coaching at an East End boxing club, while also working during the day for an insurance collection agency and enjoying newly married life and two young daughters. Then

an overbearing women's captain at the Poly made a mindless ruling that not only led Steve to resign, but six of the club's leading women foilists joining him. Urged on by them, in 1961 he took up the free evening space at Netley Street School off Warren Street: Salle Boston was born.

Although St Paul's was happy with him, Steve decided he had to break that public schools' record, and asked the Brentwood coach to give him just four fencers to train for a year and he would win the Bartlett Cup for the school. "It was putting my head on the block, and I realised that I was taking a great gamble that could affect my career and the loss of my job at Brentwood if I failed." He didn't. "With just these four pupils, in 1962 Brentwood won the senior foil and epee, had two finalists in the foil, a finalist in the epee, and won the junior foil: the cup was theirs."

From then on, the graph shows an almost unbroken record of success, as he produced not only a stream of schoolboy champions but presided over many of them developing into full internationals. He became coach to the GB Under 20 team, to Cambridge University, then to the senior British team. He was appointed to train the Olympic team and asked by federations abroad to give courses to their fencers as well, the memoir ending with his participation at the Montreal Olympics in 1976. Perhaps unavoidably, much of the last third of the book is a recitation of names and triumphs and competition results, although Steve's sense of humour is always there to enliven the narrative, as is his propensity to fall into the most ridiculous scrapes and misadventures.

This takes one back to the start of the book, with Steve's account of fixed boxing matches, street brawls, and the way-past-eccentric people he met as an insurance agent (along with a medley of often wildly varied jobs, ranging from sweeping factory floors waiter at a Pimms restaurant to selling ice cream at Croydon Airport - employment opportunities were scarce). During the Second World War he spent five years in the army, being moved around from country to country; the passages about his time in India are particularly memorable. Demobbed, he teamed up with his younger brother, Don, as a comedy song-and-dance act, playing the piano, ukulele, banjo and 'bones', touring the country and abroad with their routine, even appearing on television.

Throughout his adult life, Steve was lucky in the happiest of marriages to his Scottish wife, Jean. Not that it began well. His parents at first disapproved of the match, and their courtship was conducted as London was enduring the Blitz and Steve was serving his time in the army. Eventually, though, the knot was tied.

"The first night of our married life had been spent in a room too hot for the occasion and the second night aboard a train - so the third night was to be THE ONE. But we had no sooner got into bed when the bloody sirens went off. So the third night was spent in an air-raid shelter with about fifty people; poor Jean was the longest-suffering virgin there had ever been and I was certainly the most frustrated bridegroom. Hitler must have had me in mind because we had an air-raid every night of our stay in London."

For anyone who fenced at Salle Boston this book will be a delightful trip down memory lane. Others may just relish a host of stories from a remarkable life.

*Nick Owen writes: Anyone who wants a copy can email me at nick.owens@magnifypr.co.uk or write to me at Nick Owens, Soughton House, Chester, CH1 2NS. I am not charging for any copies of the book - I would only charge a small fee for postage and packaging but this can be dealt with when people contact me. I'll also be donating a fee to the British Fencing Charitable Fund.



BOOK REVIEW

A FENCER'S REVIEW OF THE DEVIL'S SWORD

Written by Douglas E. Richards

Reviewed by Igor Chirashnya

Here's my spoiler-free review of *The Devil's Sword*. You'll get some basics here, and you'll get my opinion, but the major plot points that are important for the reader are left out so that you can experience it for yourself.

Usually, I am sceptical about books with fencing - most of them depict fencing as inaccurately as Hollywood movies depict sword-fighting scenes. In most books and films, fencing is usually just a fleeting activity, a nice addition that shows a character's personality or gives a setting for the plot to move forward, but often it could easily be removed from the story and doesn't have much meaning. This is frustrating beyond belief, because I always want to have more than the usual plug-it-in-character device that media has for fencing.

To my huge surprise, that was not the case with *The Devil's Sword*! Doug's personal understanding of fencing is crystal clear thanks to his vivid descriptions and accurate portrayals of the fencing world. He is a writer who obviously knows what he's talking about. There's no way that someone on the outside would be able to do the in-depth kind of writing that we see in this book. The meticulous attention to detail in depicting weapon checks, pools, DEs, and bouts rang true immediately to my experience. This is totally different than most of the works out there about fencing, and it was refreshing to see. It was real fencing tournament! Sometimes I even had a de ja vu - explanations of weapon check, pools, DE's and bouts were so truthful and detailed that I caught myself thinking that this is a fantastic introduction to fencing.

In this book, fencing is the central theme. You cannot take it out, like you cannot take out Jedi from *Star Wars*. The main characters are fencers at heart, and the whole plot spins out from the world of



fencing. What's more, the plot itself is woven in with the whole world of fencing in terms of the themes and metaphors. It's unlike almost anything I've read.

Three fourteen-year-old foil fencers in San Diego are invited by their coach to attend an RYC in Las Vegas, held at the highly secure Nellis Air Force base. They don't know it, but the base is home to a top-secret military defence project. While there, a rogue faction of Black Ops agents turn the weapon into a dangerous offensive weapon called "The Devil's Sword". And international arms dealers are after this piece of tech with the potential threat to take down the entire country. The young fencers must use their wit, stamina, intelligence, and fencing skills to help them stop the internationally woven threat and save everyone from looming disaster.

The plot fits well within the action/thriller category, with tons of twists and turns that are exciting but also believable. Though it's definitely targeted at young adults, it's well-paced and engaging enough for someone well past their teen years to enjoy.

The RYC is actually the mechanism that allows the villains to get their foot in the

door and make their play against the lead scientist. The book does a great job of integrating the real world of the fencing tournament into the action-adventure of the plot. There are excellent depictions of the fencing competition, and it's fun to imagine how this experience would go if it were to happen at one of the real competitions we attend! Every fencer who has been to a regional competition will see themselves in the characters and events. It's a huge plus factor to the book. In fact, the depiction of the fencing event and everything surrounding it is so accurate that for the fencers this book would feel right at home.

As the coach says at one point in the book - going to Regionals is a totally different experience!

Especially for young adult readers, the story and writing style will keep them engaged and reading along throughout. It's a great way for them to see themselves in a piece of literature. It's important that they are able to find reflections of their experiences in the texts that they read - it helps them to understand their importance in the world around them.

For your child's summer reading, or especially as a book to take with you for the trip to Arizona for Summer Nationals, *The Devil's Sword* is a fantastic book. Highly recommended! Prepare to be enthralled and transported to a world where blades clash, secrets abound, and the fate of nations hangs in the balance.

Now for the real question that we need to know - when is Doug going to be releasing the sequel? We need more great fencing-related books like this one in the world.

For more from Igor, head to Academy of Fencing Masters (<https://academyoffencingmasters.com/>).

JAMES WILLIAMS, 1966-2024



James Williams, who has passed away at the age of 57 after a short illness, was perhaps the most talented sabreur Britain has ever produced.

He joined the army at sixteen and soon proved himself a fine all-round sportsman, making regimental teams in football and athletics, becoming an instructor in unarmed combat and the first non-commissioned officer to captain the army fencing team.

He went on to win the British Sabre Championship twice (1996 & 2000), was runner-up three times (1994, 1999 & 2002) and also bronze medallist three times (1992, 1997 & 1998).

James fenced in three Olympic Games (1992, 1996 & 2000) and nine consecutive World Championships from 1993 to 2003. He was the only British sabreur to qualify for the Atlanta Games in 1996, where he lost in the last 32 to Charikov of Russia when the referee gave Charikov three doubtful hits in succession at 11-all.

At the Sydney Games in 2000, James knocked out the world No. 5, Nemczik of Hungary to reach the last 16. It was the best British Olympic sabre result of his generation, but he subsequently lost to Frossine of Russia for a place in the last eight.

In his profile of James in the October 2003 issue of *The Sword*, Richard Cohen quoted Peter Frohlich, former Hungarian national coach, who coached James for more than a decade, saying, "If he had been part of the Hungarian system from the beginning ... he would have been in the top eight fencers in the world."

In 2020 he joined the British Fencing Board and took on a number of responsibilities to help and support BF and the fencing community. His decision in 2023 to take on the role of Olympic Team Manager was a reflection of how much he still passionately believed in the ability of our sport and our



athletes to deliver success for Great Britain on a global stage.

Mark Lyttle, Chair of the BF Board, said, "James was a passionate and enthusiastic member of the BF Board for the last four years. As someone who had reached the pinnacle of the sport, he was so ready to give back selflessly at all levels. We will miss him dearly. Our thoughts are with his family and friends at this time."

British Fencing CEO Georgina Usher MBE remembers, "When we competed in multiple European and World Championships together, James always brought joy and happiness into a squad space. Official bus transports would give him the captive audience that brought out the showman. My favourite memory is of him standing at the front of a large packed coach forcing everyone (including very confused international fencers) to join him in renditions of On Ilkla Moor Baht 'at, the unofficial anthem of Yorkshire (he was born in Huddersfield)."

BF president Hilary Philbin MBE said, "Very few fencers have achieved as much, and given back as much, as James. He was a hugely popular and well-respected figure at home as well as in international circles and was a truly excellent ambassador for British Fencing."

"James' contribution to fencing has been immense, with far too many achievements to be listed here. I first knew him when he was making his mark as a sabre fencer, reaching the top 16 of the Olympic Games and the senior World Championships, before carving out a career as a successful coach. James had so many strings to his bow, serving in numerous capacities over the years with the FIE, the British Olympic Association and British Fencing - including as a Director on the Board. Very few fencers have achieved as much, and given back as much, as James - and I have no doubt that he would have gone on to achieve even greater things.

James was a hugely popular and well-respected figure at home as well as in international circles and was a truly

excellent ambassador for British Fencing. On a personal level, it was always a great pleasure to be in his company. He will be very much missed by all who knew him, and I offer my sincere condolences to his family and his many friends.”

Outside of fencing, Williams was a major figure in local government as the Director of Public Health for Medway Council in Kent.

He played an instrumental role in tackling the Covid pandemic in Medway. The council leader Vince Maple described Williams as “an inspirational leader” who had left “an impressive legacy”. The deputy leader Teresa Murray said he was “an Olympian in all



senses... James’ leadership of Medway’s response to Covid-19 was extraordinary and exemplary. He will be incredibly missed.”

Three Kent MPs, Dame Tracey Crouch, Rehman Chishti and Kelly Tollhurst – described James as the area’s “greatest

health advocate”. In a joint statement, they said, “He championed public health improvements in every shape and form and he reached out privately when we have faced our own health challenges.”

He is survived by his wife Marie and his daughters Lauren and Amber.

DAVID MOSELEY, 1980-2024

David Joseph Moseley, British Fencing’s Finance Director, died suddenly in June 2024. His death came as a huge shock to the organisation and the wider fencing community.

David was born on 11th October 1980 in Crawley, West Sussex. On leaving college he started employment at a local accountant and trained to become fully qualified. David remained with companies in and around West Sussex before deciding to take a year off work to go travelling around New Zealand and Thailand.

In 2012 British Fencing was undergoing a number of changes and David joined as part of a ‘support team’. It was here that he met Margaret, who would go on to be his long-term partner. In 2014 he moved to Manchester and regularly commuted to London, until COVID imposed remote working.

David hugely enjoyed his time at British Fencing, especially meeting with competitors, officials and volunteers at the major competitions. He was known as a people person, loved discussion and debate, and was an active listener, exemplifying the phrase “some people listen, whilst others wait to talk”.

He was very conscientious about his work and held himself, and others, to very high



standards. He took the British Fencing values – honesty, respect and excellence – very seriously.

He loved the variety of his position and the work that British Fencing was doing. In his last days, he was discussing positive work moments including progress being made at all levels, as well as encouraging various members of staff and supporting them personally and professionally.

Outside of work, David enjoyed heavy rock music, going to the gym, yoga, gaming, and Brazilian Jiu Jitsu. He found martial arts particularly interesting because of the technical side of the sport and had recently been awarded a blue belt. David’s brain was described as working “at a million miles an hour”, and he was also an avid gamer, enjoying the fast challenges.

His funeral was held in Manchester in July, where tributes were read to him as a son, a

brother, a nephew, a work colleague and as a partner. In lieu of flowers, donations were requested for epilepsy research.

Georgina Usher, British Fencing’s CEO, said, “David deeply cared so much about British Fencing, the people in our organisation, the culture we have and the work that we do. He was particularly passionate about the growth of the sport – for example playing an instrumental role in the success of the Cardiff Wheelchair World Cup and the expansion of the We Are Forging Futures programme into state schools across the country.”

“He was hugely respected by staff and Board members alike and we are all struggling to come to terms with his sudden death. Our deepest sympathies are extended to his family.”

He is survived by his partner Margaret Nolan, his parents, Penelope & Stephen Moseley, as well as his brother, Adam.

Margaret, and his family, wish to thank everyone who sent messages of condolences and who travelled for the funeral. She said that while David would not have liked being the centre of attention, he would have enjoyed seeing everyone he cared about in the same room.

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Please forward all your suggestions for additional online fencing results to: events@britishfencing.com



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