



CONFEDERACIÓN PANAMERICANA DE ESRIMA

Newsletter CPE

Oct - Nov 2016



CREATIVE EVOLUTION

Aftermath of Rio... Groundwork of Tokyo

Now that we are starting the road to Tokyo is time for a reflection on how our journey should be in the midst of increasingly complex global environments. The road should start by clearly setting a vision of goals and of the process to reach them, but always keeping in mind the commitment to the Olympic Movement and its Charter, yes, for the sake of Fair Play, but also for the need of preparation for the modern challenges and tremendous pressures athletes, and societies in general have to face nowadays. But why should we care, right? Let's see...

Celebrating the Rio 2016 magnificent expressions we all witnessed of fair play, courage, skillfulness, and so on, is natural, however, like it or not, we must be aware of the fact that international sports are part of a very complex system of interrelationships where the unexpected is always likely to happen due to the links to social,

economic and nearly all sort of contexts, creating situations telling us that Olympic records and medals are not all there is.

Still, Fair Play, sportsmanship and messages of hope and opportunity should be the persistent behavior and language of the global culture of Olympism which is defined by the International Olympic Committee as

"Olympism: A philosophy of life, exalting and combining in a balanced whole the qualities of body, will and mind".

The key word, in life as in the fencing piste, is balance, in all its meaningful expressions. Under the light of Olympism and balance, training and developing Olympic Champions is a much more complex process than perfecting physical strength and fencing technique.

IN THIS ISSUE



Decision Making on the Fencing Piste

Page 2

3 COMPETING COUNTRIES



Barbados Independence Challenge Cup

Page 5



Training for Coaches in Colombia

Page 7



From School to Olympic Games

Page 8



Dominica National Championship

Page 9

Perhaps the need for a wider curriculum is in order for fencing evolution to continue. The review of work plans when starting a new Olympic cycle, will surely benefit of a more balanced set of goals stressing the importance of balance itself, for the qualities of will and mind developed through years of training and competition become a real asset of athletes only if those can be used in a balanced way. The highlight here is that the concept of Olympism brings awareness to the complexity interrelationships shading every aspect of sports planning, not only to the inside context of fencing where performance is directly related to the qualities of technique, tactics and strategy, which in turn are also related to the qualities of body, will and mind. However, in order for this to happen it is obvious the need for an infrastructure existing at the outside context of fencing where connections to the social, economic and other environmental aspects take place affecting sports practice, both, at the national as well as at the global levels. These inner and outer contexts of fencing should also be

balanced because of the undeniable interactions of people and systems in them.

Clearly Olympism should provide the balancing principles for both of these contexts because balance in fencing is just as important as balance in the relationships of fencers and their support team, with their surrounding contexts outside of fencing. Thus, athletic performance is not a closed system but rather the outcome of interactions of its inner and outer contexts, therefore,

when we develop the qualities of body, will and mind of athletes, because of those interactions we are also developing or at least affecting, the same qualities of people in society, since athletes have a voice always spreading the message of Olympism and Fair Play throughout the world. This kind of interaction between sports and society should, in time, make things more productive for both.

So, in the aftermath of Rio 2016, why not make room in Tokyo's groundwork for more awareness of inner and outer balance, for it might be a key aspect of fencing's evolution, amidst of our complex and demanding world?

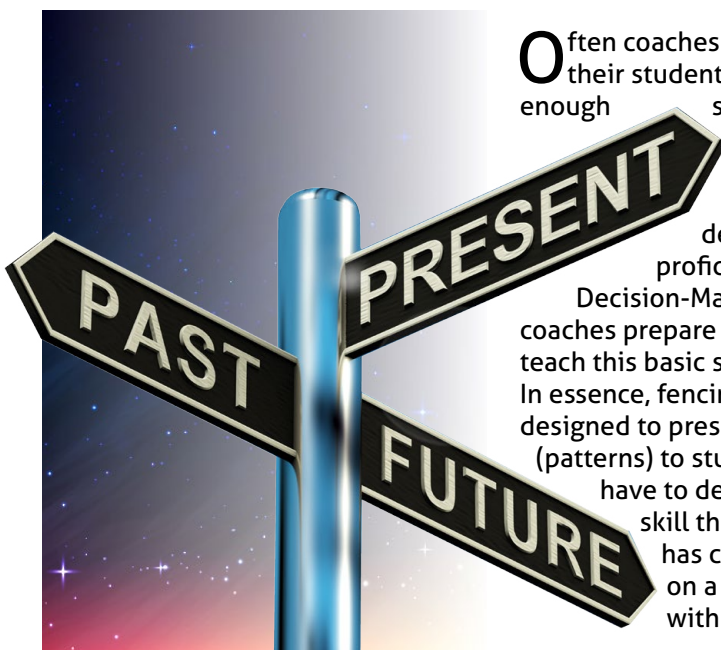


Decision Making on the Fencing Piste

Often coaches realize that once their students master a wide enough set of technical skills, their real opportunities for victory actually depend on their proficiency for Combat Decision-Making, so how can coaches prepare themselves to teach this basic skill?

In essence, fencing classes are designed to present situations (patterns) to students where they have to develop a particular skill the fencing coach has chosen for them on a personal basis with the purpose of

correcting, preventing or adapting his/her reactions when faced with the posed situation. The coach knows his teaching purpose has been accomplished if the student is able to recognize during combat, the learned pattern fast enough to neutralize his/her opponent's intentions and scoring a point. We focus now on the Pattern Recognition Process, in which we gather information through our senses, process it by comparison with our fencing knowledge base and then decide about the proper course of action. As critical as this moment of decision is acknowledged to be by coaches and fencers, still it remains so hard



to grasp that every help available to make it more effective should be pursued. Most likely, fencers will have to make the hardest and most critical decisions in only fractions of a second hence the need to have a clear and educated mind able to process information in an optimal way. Psychologists approach the study of this human processing by referring to Working Memory which "is a term that was used by George A. Miller in 1960 to refer to memory as it is used to plan and carry out behavior" (Cowan, 2008). Likewise, in computer science working memory is the physical amount of central bytes used to load from peripheral units, like the hard drive or any sensors connected to the real world, all the information necessary, at a given time slice, to solve a problem. In a bout, fencers use their working memory to retain the information gathered about execution of actions



of her/his opponent, which then is used to decide on how to proceed by combining current premises and previous experiences to create tactical action amidst the challenge in turn. Thus keeping working memory free of clutter and focused in what's really relevant at a given time and situation is particularly hard for most people, not just fencers, because this basic skill of focusing attention is not part of the curriculum in fencer's training nor it is in academic settings. However, most countries have ongoing efforts in what's been called Educational Reform, with the purpose of determining what basic skills students need to develop and how curriculums need to change in order to make them competitive in the new millennium. Perhaps the world of fencing could benefit of a similar initiative, for the sake of its own evolution. In fencing optimal decision-making



IN A BOUT, FENCERS USE THEIR WORKING MEMORY TO RETAIN THE INFORMATION GATHERED ABOUT EXECUTION OF ACTIONS OF HER/HIS OPPONENT, WHICH THEN IS USED TO DECIDE ON HOW TO PROCEED BY COMBINING CURRENT PREMISES AND PREVIOUS EXPERIENCES TO CREATE TACTICAL ACTION AMIDST THE CHALLENGE IN TURN.

is rather part of what is called natural talent, or perhaps something that most coaches expect for it to be developed by students themselves in time. Of course the fencing class' structure comprehends this objective as well, but the issue arises when we review the pedagogy and didactics of teaching optimal decision-making and its parts, focused attention, critical thinking, creative thinking and the mother of all these skills, being present, or mindful, as current psychology has rebranded an ancient practice of Zen Buddhism, being here and now. Certainly this is the territory of "the qualities of body, will and mind", or Olympism, precisely because the body performs with excellence when the mind is educated to

dwell in the present moment, the time and place where will is forged and becomes unbreakable. Are these not natural connections to make?

Probably they are not as natural or obvious as they should be, just because more often we encounter the opposite situation where the fencer is overwhelmed by so much irrelevant information or unhealthy self-criticism or even the ghost of past unsuccessful combats that he/she might just choke and perform under their real capabilities or even get paralyzed. In these cases the fact is that the mind wanders and starts making bad decisions leading to failure. Sort of what happens to students in academic settings when taking

tests in Mathematics or Physics or whatever subject they might find challenging. But, how should we train the mind for optimal decision-making? We will start and try to provide an answer to this question, by reflecting about how coaches themselves learn about Decision-Making in Sports.

How do Coaches Learn of the Qualities of Mind?

Researchers from Singapore, Han y Koh (2016), carried out a study with the purpose of investigating how and where coaches from individual sports learned their skills in decision-making. Their sampling population was eight successful coaches, between 28 and 38 years old with at least five years of coaching experience

at the competitive level, males and females. These researchers interviewed each coach to try and discover learning pathways which lead them to pinpoint three main sources from which coaches acquired and developed decision-making skills:

(1) Past athletic experience and the understanding of game rules,

(2) Personality traits such as self-reflection, resilience, and curiosity, and

(3) External learning situations such as having a mentor and past coaches that provided guidance and logical thinking processes, as well as exposure to cultural norms of the sport. (Han & Koh, 2016)

These findings confirm the premise that there is no formal curriculum or pedagogical and didactical resources for learning decision-making skills in sports, and we can use this

enlightening fact to lead Fencing Evolution. If the main teaching asset of the coach, regarding decision-making, is his logical thinking process, we would be better off if we start formalizing our understanding of what this actually means and how to seize the wealth of knowledge in the great fencing masters' minds. Past athletic experience of fencers and their coaches must be managed if a real culture of fencing is to be acknowledged, preserved, nurtured, and transmitted. It is not only about the history of the sport and our heroes, but a real "knowledge base" that we really need, so that knowledge is not lost when coaches or athletes finish their careers or simply leave. Fencing related multimedia and bibliography are an excellent start; however, something similar to an educational reform might be the breakaway milestone for the Future of Fencing. There must be a way to do this.



Past athletic experience of fencers and their coaches must be managed if a real culture of fencing is to be acknowledged, preserved, nurtured, and transmitted.



By definition decision-making is the essence of Management which is the Science that uses mathematical models and analytical paraphernalia, to try and improve this process. Why cannot fencing benefit of decades of research on this field? We shall explore on this.



Bibliography

Cowan, Nelson (2008). *What are the differences between long-term, short-term, and working memory?* Prog Brain Res. 2008 ; 169: 323–338. doi:10.1016/S0079-6123(07)00020-9.

Han S., Koh K. (2016). *Factors Associated with the Development of Decision Making Skills: A Case Study of Individual Sport Coaches.* Asian Journal of Physical Education and Sport Science, Volume 4 No. 1, 1~17.



Barbados Independence Challenge Cup

The beautiful islands held in Barbados the first ever inter-island fencing competition. This invitational competition, The Barbados Independence Challenge Cup, took place at the Pirates Cove, Bridgetown on November 19 and 20, 2016, celebrating the joy of friendship and of course of our beautiful sport with fencers from Barbados, Antigua and Barbuda, Martinique and Dominica. Under the paradisiacal sun, palm trees and beaches, this region continues its impetuous and decisive development deserving congratulations on the successful culmination of this bold Invitational competition as a landmark for the present and future development of Pan American Fencing.



Celebrating the joy of friendship and of course of our beautiful sport with fencers from Barbados, Antigua and Barbuda, Martinique and Dominica.



Results

Men Individual Epee

Gold: Martin Jordan (Barbados)
Silver: Charly Gros-Dubois (Martinique)
Bronze: Linvor Ambo (Dominica)
Bronze: Teague Cumberbatch (Barbados)

Women Individual Epee

Gold: Tamesha Thomas (Antigua and Barbuda)
Silver: Haania Bulbulia (Barbados)
Bronze: Alleyna Robin (Dominica)
Bronze: Umsebe Simmons (Barbados)

Barbados Independence Challenge Cup

Men Individual Foil

Gold: Charly Gros-Dubois (Martinique)
Silver: Kurt Straker (Barbados)
Bronze: Marcel Maurice (Antigua)
Bronze: Corey Rogers (Barbados)

Woman Individual Foil

Gold: Tamesha Thomas (Antigua and Barbuda)
Silver: Alleyna Robin (Dominica)
Bronze: Haania Bulbulia (Barbados)
Bronze: Umsebe Simmons (Barbados)



Team Epee Results

Gold: The Invincibles

Haania Bulbulia, Charly Gros-Dubois, Martin Jordan, Matthew Jordan

Silver: The Elder Statesmen

Umsebe Simmons, David Hart, Royce C, Ryan Rodriguez

Bronze: Youngs Guns

Linvor Ambo, Marcel Maurice, Teague Cumberbatch, Teal Clarke



Team Foil Results

Gold: A Frenchman and Two Young Ladies
 Alleyna Robin, Tamesha Thomas, Charly Gros-Dubois

Silver: The Elder Statesmen

Umsebe Simmons, Corey Rogers, David Hart, Ryan Rodriguez

Bronze: Three Bajans and One Dominican
 Haania Bulbulia, Linvor Ambo, Royce C, Teague Cumberbatch



Training for Coaches in Colombia

In the city of Bogotá from October 16 to 22, 2016, took place the course for national trainers in the specialty of foil. This course was attended by 35 coaches from different regions of the Republic of Colombia, who were under the direction of the renowned Master Petru Kuki, World Champion and trainer of outstanding fencers, Olympic and World medalists. Master Kuki earned the title of Sport master in 1974, then Emerit Sport Master 1981 and Emerit Coach in 1987.



Attending Master Kuki, the assistants were supported by the Sports Director of the **Pan American Fencing Confederation**, Mr. José Gregorio Benavides. Together, Masters Kuki and Benavides taught pedagogically the curriculum for the development of national coaches who in turn will pass these lessons to their students in an effective scheme to promote the best development of Colombian fencing at the national level as well as of the Pan American Region.



We don't just develop coaches but also friendship in international collaboration.



From School to Olympic Games

FSTO Program in Colombia and El Salvador



In October 2016, the implementation of Phase 1 of the Program "From School to Olympic Games" was carried out in Colombia and in November in El Salvador, in which 1500 and 500 students participated in this first stage respectively. Throughout these months several work sessions were held in which students from

The Pan American Fencing Confederation will continue with the administrative support for the development of the following



phases of the FSTO program in coordination with the Fencing Federations of Colombia and El Salvador, as well as with their respective Ministries of Education and Sports.

schools had their first contact with fencing in a creative and fun videogame-like approach, encouraging more children and teenagers to practice fencing formally. The FSTO Program seeks to have national coverage in which schools may include fencing as a sport in the educational system hence the first stage includes training for coaches in order for the program to progress.

“ ONCE AGAIN, FENCING PRACTICE IN OUR REGION HAS BEEN SUCCESSFULLY MASSIFIED WITH THIS INNOVATIVE INITIATIVE IN THE PAN AMERICAN REGION ”



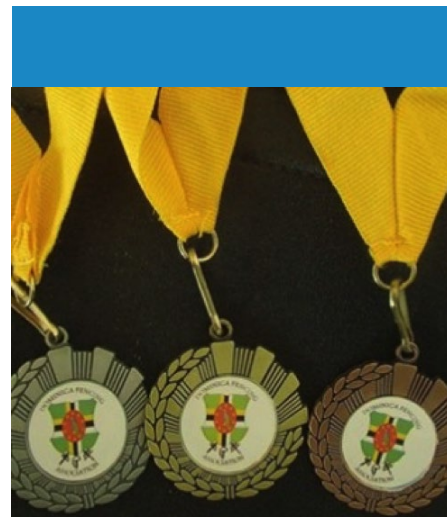
Children are exposed for the very first time to fencing with the aid of electronic devices with an air of video games thus catching their imagination and attention to the elegance of our sport



Dominica National Championship



A hot wind blew on the beautiful island of the Commonwealth of Dominica bringing fencers from Barbados to join the Dominica's athletes to celebrate and promote their very first formal National Fencing Championship. This invitational competition is one of the important regional events taking place on the last quarter of the year, carried out on November 4 and 5, 2016. The Dominica and Bermuda fencers are working collaboratively, like other islands in the region, to develop joint experiences on their starting road to Tokyo. Congratulations for this successful effort on behalf of the Pan American Fencing Confederation.



A close look at Dominica's First National Fencing Championship's awards

Newsletter CPE

Issue V.1 - 6

Photography:
Devin Manky
Creative Commons
Plus other
Digital Compositions:
CPE



Gold, silver and bronze, a medal for dreamers to keep on!