

Fencing Reports, 1973-1979

1973

Without any doubt, Fencing at Sherborne reached a high point in the 1972/73 season. This may not be as great a claim as it appears if one compares our successes with a school such as Millfield, where Fencing is a major sport, but it is nevertheless an important milestone for us.

Credit for our improvement last season must go to Mr N.P.M. Timmins, the School's instructor, who trained the team in its early years, and also to Professor J. Sanders, our part-time professional coach. Mr Timmins left in July 1971 and Professor Sanders has recently retired.

Our Captain, D.A.B. Smith (a), supported by r. Pertwee (a), J.H.H. Tillyard (a), P.H.R. Jones (m) and M.J.W. Sparks (a) did well both in School matches and in the competitive team and individual foil competitions organised by the South West Section of the Amateur Fencing Association. For the first time, the names of Sherborne began to be talked about in the Fencing world alongside Downside, Millfield and Queen's Taunton. Smith and Pertwee were both accepted for the annual Schoolboys Under-20 International Competition in London, and though they did not win honours, they acquitted themselves creditably. There will be some promising younger fencers this season; in particular, M.S. Davies (a), E.M. Belbin (m) and S.A. Nelson (b). A.J. May (c), although young, is to be appointed Captain in January 1974. He should prove a steady and reliable influence for the future. A new professional (Mr Webster) has been engaged, on a part-time basis. He has come to us upon the single condition that a full winter season (September-March) is accepted as necessary for the teaching and improvement of Fencing standard.

In conclusion I would like to thank the Bursar, Major General Cordingley, Mr R.A. Howard, who helped during my absence in the Easter Term, and our interim Captain, M.R. Waller (a), for their support and help. D.A.B. Smith, now at Dartmouth, was an indefatigable worker for Fencing, and he will be difficult to replace.

J.C.C. Holder.

1975

If all goes well, 1975-76 should see the rekindling of fencing at Sherborne. Under the leaderships of Captain Brian Nelson and the tutelage of Prof. Mike Webster, the team hopes to perform well in its Michaelmas fixtures (Dauntseys, Clifton, Downside and Taunton). Only last week I was informed of the tentative selection of Andrew May and Max Belbin to the South-Western under 23 squad). The general turnout to practices has been encouraging and with time some good fencers should develop out of the lower school.

A.D. Chandler.

1976

There have been no adequate facilities available for the Fencing club, but because of the keenness of a hard core of boys, a weekly session took place throughout the year in the Methodist Hall. It is hoped that now the new Sports Centre is ready, that new equipment can be purchased for these patient boys. The Modern Pentathlon is becoming very popular at the School, and fencing is, of course, one of the five events.

A.M. Davis.

1977

New facilities and new equipment has injected a new urgency and spirit into this club. Also R.J.G. Wailling has kindly volunteered to be master i/c fencing.

The Modern Pentathlon squad has boosted the membership and the future looks brighter now. Professor Webster continues to give expert tuition for 1 ½ hours on Thursdays.

A.M. Davis.

1978

Although fencing in Sherborne is a minority sport, and the main sports inevitably take priority in deciding fixtures, there have still been a number of matches during the past year.

Apart from competitions against other schools such as Downside, Milton Abbey and Leweston, we have also provided a team for the SW Epée and Foil Championships at Taunton, where three of our boys came in the top eight. J. Love of Abbey House came third in the Epée competition, thus becoming a standby for the

National Championships at Birmingham. In addition to this A. Spink of School House and H. Barker of the Digby were entered for the Public Schools Fencing Championships held at Dulwich College last March. Spink, in spite of the severe competition, arrived at the semi-finals.

Mike Webster continues to come to the Sports Centre to coach on Thursday afternoons, except during the summer term, when fencing does not function.

This year we have about twenty fencers, but if we are to continue to fence at all effectively, some of our equipment is in need of replacement.

The items which we need are as follows, in order of priority:

1. Electric foils (3 min, 5 max)
2. Electric jacket (2 min, 4 max)
3. Foil bodywires (3 min, 5 max)
4. Gloves (3 min, 6 max)
5. Spare ordinary foil blades (3 min, 6 max)
6. Spare electric foil blades (1 min, 3 max)

The total cost at current prices varies from £118 to £228, although we may be able to obtain some discount.

R. Wailling.

1979

The Fencing team had a very satisfactory season. Five matches were played, most of them in the Lent Term. The two most notable achievements were to draw against Milton Abbey away, and to beat Clifton at home. The former team are regarded as being one of the strongest in this part of the world, while Clifton also have a high reputation, and, indeed, they had little difficulty in beating us when we visited them in the Autumn. The other two results were more pleasing than this one, for we beat Leweston and Blundell's. The competition work has this year been dominated by Spink of School House. Not only did he come fourth in the Foil at the South-West Championship held at Taunton, but he also won the Devon County Championship, and came eleventh in the National U.18 Championship at Darlington.

The improved performance of the fencing team has been greatly helped by the new equipment provided early in the season. This has enabled more people to practise more intensively. However, at the moment our most serious problem is that the regular coach has left the area rather suddenly, but we hope before long to have engaged the services of another.

R. Wailling.