

Canadian Fencing Federation Instructional Program

Introduction:

As the CFF moves towards its transition to the Competency Based Education and Training (CBET) model of coaching training and sport delivery, we are putting into place an instructional stream. This stream will develop fencers with; strong technical knowledge, good tactical observation skills and, through this, a capacity for adaptation, and a more complete general knowledge of fencing (which will lead to better fencers, coaches, and officials).

The program is divided into five separate, but related, performance factors; technical, tactical, rules, refereeing, and at the higher levels coaching. Though the actual competence in each of these performance factors is important, it is the delivery of the information that is of greater importance. This document will delineate the actual armband program, an outline of the exam procedure for the levels, the minimum time spent preparing for each level, and a short discussion on age categories. The actual delivery of the program information will be related to the coaches in short workshops directly following the CFF's "Selection Circuit Events".

Armband program:

The full Armband Program is attached to this document below.

Exam procedure:

Before speaking of the exam procedure itself, note must be made of the following. It is required to have the fencers demonstrate these skills in two different contexts;

- 1) within the regular practice of the club,;
- 2) within the context of a "formal" exam.

These two contexts assure the acquisition of the skills under different conditions. The club environment will allow the coach to assess the ease with which the fencer is able to demonstrate the skills in a comfortable, non-"threatening", environment. The exam environment will allow the coach to assess the fencer's ability to perform these skills in a more "pressured" environment (likened, somewhat, to when a coach asks a fencer to perform a certain action on the piste). Education theory has shown these to be quite different aspects of the total acquisition of skills.

For the first two levels (yellow and orange) the club coach is responsible for the exams. Each of the five streams is tested and given a ranking as follows: acquired, being acquire, not acquired (or 3, 2, 1). To be promoted to the next level, a fencer must attain a minimum of two "acquired" marks (3's) and no "not acquired" marks (1's).

For the next two levels (green and bleu), the assessment process must include the club coach and one other coach (preferably from another club, or at minimum one from the same club who is not directly coaching the fencer)¹. In this case each coach will use the same scale as above and the average of the two rankings will constitute the final assessed mark. The club coach must present the marks for the club environment assessment to the second examining coach.

The final two levels (brown and black), will be assessed at the regional training camps hosted by the CFF. For purposes of this assessment the examining board will consist of three coaches, one of who must be the senior camp coach, in the given weapon. The personal coach can be present at the exam but cannot participate in the examining process. The personal coach must submit the "club environment" assessment to the senior camp coach prior to the board exam. At these levels a more stringent marking scheme is to be used. The fencers will be assessed along a scale between 0 and 10 (for each of the performance factors), and must not receive a mark lower than 5 in any of these to be promoted to the next level.

As the fencers progress through the armband levels, s/he must demonstrate a progression through the stages of skill development. The first table below gives you an outline of the stages, the second table shows you the progression through these stages.

¹ Two clubs could "share" a training session at which the armband exams for both clubs could be held.

Stages of skill development

Recommended practice/test conditions	Initiation First contact	Acquisition Movement patterning	Consolidation Correct execution in variable conditions	Refinement Minor improvement	Creative variation Using movements in creative ways
Surrounding environment	Stable and predictable, free of distractions	Stable and predictable, free of distractions	Increased variability and distractions in the environment, but not to the point where movement patterns deteriorate	Competition conditions	Conditions similar to those encountered in the highest level of competition
Decision-making or uncertainty of situations in which the athlete is involved	No decision-making or options to choose from	Simple decision-making, maximum of 2 options	More complex decisions to make, increased frequency of decision-making, and more options (3-4)	Complex decisions, as many options and at the same frequency as in competition	Conditions similar to those encountered in the highest level of competition
Speed of execution	Slow and controlled	At the athlete's own pace	Increased, variable, and close to competitive demands	Similar conditions to competition	Similar to highest level of competition
Importance of being precise and consistent	Not overly important (demonstrate ability)	Moderately important	Precision and consistency are sought	A high degree of precision and consistency are sought	Perfection is sought at all times
# of repetitions, or opportunities to execute movements	As needed, depending on athlete's general motor development	High	High	As many as possible	As many as possible
Risk factor and consequences of error	Completely safe conditions, errors of no consequence	Low risk conditions	Less than or similar to what is encountered in regular competition	Similar to a high level of competition	Similar to the highest level of competition
During training the emphasis should be on...	Basic stances and positions; getting the idea of what the movements are about, look like	Global execution and general form of the movement	Maintaining the form of the movement and some performance consistency under varying conditions and under stress	Creating conditions that stress the specific elements that need adjustment	Generating new and unfamiliar situations

Relationship between skill development and Armband level

Armband / Stage of skill development	Yellow	Orange	Green	Blue	Red	Black
Initiation	X	X	X	X	X	X
Acquisition		Yellow	Orange	Green	Blue	Red
Consolidation			Yellow	Orange	Green	Blue
Refinement				Yellow	Orange	Green
Creative Variation					Yellow	Orange

If desired, a coach could continue with this pattern of increased skill development till the athlete achieves the creative variation stage. This would be similar to “Dans” in oriental martial arts.

Preparation time per level:

It is up to the coach to determine the time necessary for the athlete to attain these levels. The coach should assure that the athlete is challenged by the program but not intimidated by it, especially at the earlier levels. Remember that at the early levels we are trying to produce a FUN environment for the athletes, while giving them the basics to encourage continuing participation and eventually to compete.

Age categories:

Some research was undertaken to determine whether or not this program should be divided into or proscribed for certain age categories². The conclusion is that there is more to be gained by having this program opened and mixed as opposed to closed or divided. The program measures performance factors that transcend age categories.

² This research was undertaken in France as a fencing specific study. There has also been research of this, as used for karate kata competitions, in Japan and the US.

FOIL PROGRAM

Armband	Technical	Tactical	Rules	Refereeing	Coaching
YELLOW	Fundamentals (basic footwork). Simple attacks (in / direct). Engagements and beats Parries (4, 6, 7, and 8) with transitions. Ripostes and counter- riposte: simple direct.		Valid target The dimensions of the piste Method of scoring hit	Corner Judging: Movement, attention, correct responses	
ORANGE	Simple attacks: with preparations. Circular Parries. Ripostes and counter- riposte: simple indirect. Compound attacks: with feints and disengages.	Observation of others Differentiate between the attacker and the defender	Conventions Role of the Referee (succinctly)	Referee 4 bouts using the correct commands and call the initial offensive action. Keeping a pool sheet	
GREEN	Simple attacks on the preparation. Compound attacks. Compound parries. Prise de Fer attacks: opposition, liement.	Self-observation. The ability to explain ones action (both offensively and defensively).	Explain the fencing phrase.	Referee 4 bouts analyzing the action, using the correct hand signals Time keeping.	Ability to demonstrate the technical aspects of the Yellow and Orange armbands for beginner fencers.
BLUE	Attacks on the return on guard. Compound attacks: multiple feints. Compound ripostes. Prise de Fer attacks: croisé, enveloppé. Ceding parries.	Observation of the opponent. The ability to explain the opponents action (both offensively and defensively).	Rules about the field of play: boundary rules and sanctions.	Referee 4 bouts analyzing the action (complete analysis). Demonstrate ease and self-assurance of analysis.	Teach Yellow armband to the initiation stage of development.
RED	Compound attacks with Prise de Fer. Counter-time. Simple and Compound Dérobement. Renewed attacks: remise, reprise. Point in Line and Derobement	Explain ones choice of actions.	Limits and extensions to the target area. Rules regarding corps à corps and in fighting. Judging: only the attacker is hit	Referee a full pool of 5 fencers.	Teach Orange armband to the initiation stage of development.
BLACK	Stop hit with the blade: opposition, interception. Chaining.	Adaptations to all bouting situations (discussion).	The sanctions.	Provincial refereeing exam	Obtain Aide-moniteur accreditation.

EPEE PROGRAM

Armband	Technical	Tactical	Rules	Refereeing	Coaching
YELLOW	Fundamentals (basic footwork). Direct offensive and counter-offensive to body. Parries (4, 6, 7, and 8) with transitions Remise and Reprise (chaining of actions); also with beats and engagements.		Valid target The dimensions of the piste Method of scoring hit	Who is hit?	
ORANGE	Attacks and counter-attacks to the advanced targets (e.g. arm). Prise de fer attacks: opposition. Circular parries. Dérobement de prise de fer. Compound attacks; feint to the advanced targets	Observation of others Differentiate between the attacker, the counter-attacker, and the defender	Role of the Referee (succinctly) Role of the Floor Judges.	Referee 4 bouts using the correct commands.	
GREEN	Simple attacks on the preparation. Compound attacks on arm and body. Actions on the retreating arm. Angulated counter attacks.	Self-observation. The ability to explain ones action (in offense, counter-offense and defense).	Rules about the field of play: boundary rules and sanctions. Hand gestures	Referee 4 bouts applying the field of play rules Keeping a pool sheet	Ability to demonstrate the technical aspects of the Yellow and Orange armbands for beginner fencers.
BLUE	Attacks on the return on guard. Prise de Fer attacks: croisé, enveloppé. Compound counter-attack. Simple counter-time.	Observe the opponent. The ability to explain the opponents action (in offense, counter-offense, and defense).	Rules regarding the annulment of hits.	Referee a full pool of 5 fencers (with weapon checks)	Teach Yellow armband to the initiation stage of development.
RED	Compound and double Prise de Fer and the defense. Ceding parries. Indirect and compound counter-times. Counter stop-hit.	Explain ones choice of actions.	Rules regarding the validity or priority of hits.	Referee a full pool of 5 fencers: using all checks and keeping both time and score.	Teach Orange armband to the initiation stage of development.
BLACK	Stop hit with the blade: opposition, interception. Chaining.	Adaptations to all bouting situations (discussion).	The sanctions.	Provincial refereeing exam	Obtain Aide-moniteur accreditation.

SABRE PROGRAM

Armband	Technical	Tactical	Rules	Refereeing	Coaching
YELLOW	Fundamentals (basic footwork). Simple attacks to the body, also with beat. First defensive triangle. Ripostes and counter- riposte: simple direct.		Valid target The dimensions of the piste Method of scoring hit.	Corner Judging: Movement, attention, correct responses	
ORANGE	Simple attacks to body and advanced targets. SAA with preparations (e.g. beats). Ripostes and counter- riposte: simple indirect. Compound attacks: with feints to head.	Observation of others Differentiate between the attacker and the defender	Conventions Role of the Referee (succinctly)	Referee 4 bouts using the correct commands and call the initial offensive action	
GREEN	Simple attacks on the preparation. Compound attacks: with 1 feint to all targets. Second defensive system Successive parries. Chaining footwork	Self-observation. The ability to explain ones action (in offense and defense).	Explain the fencing phrase. Hand signals	Referee 4 bouts analyzing the action (summary only), using the hand signals. Keeping a pool sheet	Ability to demonstrate the technical aspects of the Yellow and Orange armbands for beginner fencers.
BLUE	Attacks on the return on guard. Compound attacks: multiple feints. Compound Parries. Compound ripostes. Counter attacks. Point in Line and Derobement	Observation of the opponent. The ability to explain the opponents action (in offense and defense).	Rules about the field of play: boundary rules and sanctions.	Referee 4 bouts analyzing the action (complete analysis). Demonstrate ease and self-assurance of analysis.	Teach Yellow armband to the initiation stage of development.
RED	Simple and compound attacks on the blade. Counter-time. Simple and Compound counter-attacks. Renewed attacks: remise, reprise.	Explain ones choice of actions.	Rules regarding corps à corps and in fighting. Judging: only the attacker is hit	Referee a full pool of 5 fencers. Time keeping.	Teach Orange armband to the initiation stage of development.
BLACK	Chaining.	Adaptations to all bouting situations (discussion).	The sanctions.	Provincial refereeing exam	Obtain Aide-moniteur accreditation.