

# SEACOAST FENCING CLUB

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## Children, Youth, Junior, and Adult Fencer's Guidelines

***What do I expect from you?*** Your job is to work hard and do your best at all times, listen to your coaches, learn from those more skilled, help those less skilled, and to challenge yourselves: your skills, fears, and aspirations. My coaches and I can help you reach your goals, whatever they may be, but the motivation to achieve them must come from within each of you.

***Athleticism is a matter of will.*** Anyone can become an athlete- no one is born one. Athleticism is *always* an expression of will, for it is obtained primarily by hard work, done repetitively, over a long period of time. To become an athlete, you must first have the desire, but to maintain it, you must also have discipline. I cannot force anyone to work hard at the various programs at SFC, but I will always praise those who do, and encourage everyone to do their best. I will never belittle anyone who is not doing well, so long as they are trying.

In the Manchester facility is a picture of a sprint, being run by women who have lost at least one leg. In the lead is Aimee Mullins, a double amputee, the only amputee in the country to compete in NCAA Division I track (for Georgetown University). She is the athlete I admire most in the world, for she embodies one of my core beliefs: *Athleticism is a matter of will.*

***A rising tide lifts all ships.*** This is the philosophy of the Seacoast Fencing Club. Many clubs focus on the top one or two athletes, and relegate all the others to a significantly lower level of training and attention. This creates a hierarchy among the fencers, and is not a very enjoyable environment. I always try to give each fencer the same level of attention, and help each achieve their best, regardless of their relative strengths on the strip. We expect each fencer to spend 1/4 of their time working with those above their skill level, 1/4 working with those below their level, and 1/2 of their time at their level. Now that the club has grown, adherence to this is critical to the continued success of the club, for if I am to be able to give private lessons, a system must be in place for everyone to fence safely and practice to improve their skills. An additional benefit: it works. In the past, Seacoast juniors have won two U-19 Team National Championships, finished second or third in four others, and created eleven different national champions (who have earned 30 gold medals at National Championships).

***The benefits are clear*** for those not at the top, but the benefits for the top fencers are more subtle, but still significant. First, a consistent problem with higher level fencers, is they only practice the more recent things they've been taught, geared to defeating the other top fencers in the country, forgetting to practice the skills that got them *to* that level in the first place. Those skills must be maintained, or the top fencer will do badly against less skilled. Second, if everyone does not try to improve the general level of fencing in a club, soon the top fencer will be all alone at the top, with no one of comparable skill to fence. Regular practice in the club with *several* fencers of a similar skill level is vastly more beneficial to the fencer than just private lessons and one (or no) comparable opponents. Third, there is a fairness to my practice strategy. At one time, everyone was a beginner, with every opponent in drills or bouts at a higher

skill level. Several people practiced with them and helped bring them up, so to me, it seems fair to expect the top fencers share their skills with others in the club.

## Discipline

Health and safety is the first priority in the club. Schoolwork is second, and fencing is the third priority. Therefore, there is to be no rough housing in the club. Masks are to be worn any time a tip goes above your waist. You are to be polite to all coaches, team captains, officials, *and your parents*. The rank in the club: head coach: Chris Pullo; assistant coaches: Buggy (David Rabor), Yvonne Walton, Ron Raiselis, and Dave Lake; team captains, footwork and stretch/strength leaders, and whomever is put in charge of the bout/drill/direct groups. If you feel one of these people is in error, come talk to me, the head coach.

## Junior/ Adult Training

***Stretch, strength, and conditioning:*** Twenty minutes of calisthenics, exercises, and stretching. To perform well in an athletic activity, one must be strong, fit, and flexible, or you risk injury. These sessions are designed to increase or maintain these traits. You are required to cooperate with the leaders, as they have my full support, and your best interests at heart. Please make an effort to include the new fencers in your conversations during this time, and make them feel welcome.

***Footwork:*** This is a 25 minute footwork session, normally led by the rated fencers present that evening. Every fencer is to do footwork every day they attend practice (unless taking a private lesson during that time).

***Advanced Class:*** This meets for 30 minutes, once a week, in each location. Thursdays in Rochester and Mondays in Manchester (starting at 7:45 pm). These classes teach advanced offensive and defensive techniques, and include strategy and tactical discussions and theory. Most fencers will take this class for several years, even if they are taking private lessons.

***Training Rotations:*** We then will break into groups for ten minutes of drilling, followed by 60 minutes of bouting (in three or four person groups) and directing (all fencers must practice their directing skills). The first 15 minutes will be a seeded group, with high, mid, and low level fencers in each group. During this time, we use a timed rotation system within each group: each fencer will bout twice for five minutes each time, focusing on improving their technique, and then direct once for five minutes. The remaining 45 minutes, everyone bouts in three person rotations, keeping score, and trying to win.

## Youth Training

***Stretch, strength, and conditioning:*** Fifteen minutes of warm up and stretching. Please make an effort to include the new fencers in your conversations during this time, and make them feel welcome.

***Footwork:*** This is a 10 minute footwork session, normally led by me.

***Training Rotations:*** We then will break into groups for ten minutes of drilling, followed by 30 minutes of bouting (in three or four person groups) and directing (all fencers must practice their

directing skills). The first 15 minutes will be a timed rotation system within each group: each fencer will bout twice for five minutes each time, focusing on improving their technique, and then direct once for five minutes. The remaining 15 minutes, everyone bouts in three or four person groups, keeping score, and trying to win.

**Final Footwork:** This is a 10 to 15 minute footwork session with the Junior/ Adult Group.

## **Children's Training**

**Stretch, strength, and conditioning:** Ten minutes of warm up and stretching. Please make an effort to include the new fencers in your conversations during this time, and make them feel welcome.

**Footwork:** This is a five to ten minute footwork session, normally led by me.

**Bouting:** We then will break into pairs for five minute bouts, with my assistants directing.

**Private Lessons:** During the bouting, five minute private lessons will be given by me or an assistant coach. Each fencer will get one private lesson each week.

**Final Footwork:** This is a 10 footwork session with the Youth Group.

## **Competition**

**While not required, fencers are urged to enter competitions. The benefits are many.** In addition to the opportunity to fence those trained by other coaches, competition will develop your ability to adjust to rapidly changing situations, to deal effectively, and without anger, to others trying to trick and defeat you, and show you how to ask for advice and tailor it to your own situation, and use it. Each of you will learn how to put winning and losing into perspective, and take pride in the quality of the effort as much as the status of their result. It will improve your ability to focus mental, emotional, and physical energy in moments of stress (we try to minimize it, but there is always some level of stress in a competition, as in life). For more on competitions, see the attachment on "**Competitions**".