

# Australian Open Championships



SYDNEY 2011

2/6 December



## NSW HC REPORT

The overall trophy, the Cyclone Cup, after four long years is back in NSW! Our State has shown all along the Championships to be the best. Some numbers: 5 gold, 6 silver, 3 bronze medals; 5 victories over 12 Open events (40%); victories in all weapons and both genders; 3 teams successes out of 6 (50%); 2 teams entered in each event (only State to do so!).

A short analysis behind and beyond the results.

In MF we had two u15, one u17 and two u20 in the top 16, some of them at their first experience at open Nationals. The team won again, but let's remember that we had lost two members of last year's team (one injured and one now in Epee) and it's not to forget that Frank Bartolillo, the most extraordinary Australian foilist ever, has not been fencing with us in the last 3 years!

In WF we had almost four possible teams while the other States struggled with one. Most of our fencers are very young, under 17. At National level we have a present and, for sure, a future, however the girls must improve further to compete well at the international level.

Epee is in NSW a consequence of foil, right now especially with men. The victorious team in the final against Queensland was all composed by foilists or ex foilists who have recently changed weapon. This system has clearly shown to be dangerous: a) because foil gets constantly deprived of its athletes, b) because there are no young u15 epeeists. Surely it cannot be enough to always expect the best foilists to change weapon. NSW's goal is to change this incorrect path and put more effort into developing epee with coaches focusing on bringing up young fencers who have the potential to become good epeeists. Sabre has in the past years made a significant step forward. We now have a team, a good team ready to win soon, a young and numerous team (nobody has anything similar to us) at Open level. Behind we have a "bunch" of young kids u13, 11, 9 coached by several young coaches. We can only improve.

I think all coaches and clubs are doing a good job – the numbers and results confirm it. The overall development of NSW is contributing to this success. The way is still long but we are on the right path.

## NATIONALS COMPETITION DIARY

### Day 1

**WS:** The opening day of the Championships "saluted" the return of Jess Brooks to success. The 26 years old sabreur, after a pool and a quarter with not many problems, fenced some tough bouts in the four. She beat the American/Australian Caitlin Taylor in the semi, avenging last year's defeat, and Sam Auty from Victoria 15/11 in the final bout. Cheryl Chan was also in the top 4 and a "bunch" of NSW teen agers competed, some doing well, like Natalie Molen Grigull, for the first time at Nationals.

**WS Teams:** Unfortunately the team who won last year broke literally in to pieces. Both Jess and Cheryl didn't fence due to severe injuries and the "American" team, two Taylor sisters both in the AFT, dressed up as Victoria, beat NSW A (Grigull, Du, Andre) 45/29.

**MF:** In the men's foil comp, NSW had a day that might be remembered as a definitive generational change. We didn't win a medal, in fact our best result was Joe Slowiaczek's fifth place, but we had 7 fencers in the 16 including 4 under 18s (2 u15s), all at their first or second Championship. Joe Slowiaczek unfortunately lost in the quarters to Marek Jamrozy. The victory went to the British/Victorian Glaister.

### Day 2

**WE:** Sarah Osvath almost did it again! The experienced NSW fencer lost by one point to Joanna Halls in the final bout for the gold medal after she had earlier eliminated her sister Evelyn, both from Victoria.

Our other female epeeists had finished their "run" in the round of the 16 or even earlier.

**MF Team:** A fantastic success! Another gold victory after the one in WS individuals. NSW actually had two teams, the B one, extremely young, almost beat Queensland, silver in the end, in the quarters after leading the whole match until the second last bout. Slowiaczek, Cotman, Yeng and Douglas, the A team, simply performed great all day and found no obstacles in getting another gold for NSW. A victory with a special "flavour" considering we had nobody in the top 4 individuals.

### **Day 3**

**WE Team:** After a thrilling victory over the B team from Victoria for 45/44, our team that included Osvath, Nutt, Fordham and McAlpine ended second against the too strong Victoria A team.

**ME:** An all NSW final after many years took place at the PCYC Centre. Romain Courtois beat, after recovering from a bleeding cut, Joe Slowiaczek in extraordinary epee clothes. Both of them fenced well all day and beat one by one all the strongest athletes on the field, including the favorite Seamus Robinson. Another Gold to keep the momentum of a victory a day.

### **DAY 4**

**ME TEAM:** Fourth gold for NSW! In a "revenge" match from last year in Brisbane, the team composed by Downes, Slowiaczek, Osvath and Hargreaves beat, in a very tactical final, Queensland. Both teams got to the last match with no problems, proving to be best in the Country. The final started very slowly, 9/9 at the fourth bout! Then, something changed. NSW decided to attack more and score more hits, the

opponents could no longer keep up. The last bout between John Downes, always a perfect captain! and Zac Casagrande was entertaining but the score didn't change. NSW is epee champion again!

**WF:** We all expected Lishan Sung to win but this time the young and talented fencer lost in the final to Emma Ryan. An awkward match because of the very defensive behavior of the Victorian. However, Lishan's technical superiority should have prevailed. In the top 8 some good surprises for us, Leah Mangion (still only 15), Anna Kovacs and Jackie Budniak.

**MS:** The title went to James Walsh as expected but local sabreurs have shown to be ready to bring it back to NSW. In the final Fred Jaccard lost 13/15 while Jasper Rowley (just 16) gave away his semifinal by 5 points. In the top 8 we also had Adam Wilcock, Luke Mansfield and Mitch Fox.

## **DAY 5**

**WF TEAM:** NSW had two good teams. A decent third one could have been made, and even a fourth one of very young girls could have fenced too. The main team with Lishan, Anna, Leah and Jackie easily beat Queensland in the final with a large score. Fifth Victory!

**MS TEAM:** This is the victory that NSW is missing the most in ten years! However, in the last two seasons our State team got finally closer. The final versus Queensland showed once again the strength of our opponents but the difference is now much smaller. The team included Fred, Adam, Jasper and Luke. A good silver to finish the Championships and crowned by winning back the Cyclone Cup.

**VETERANS:** I should not finish without mentioning our veterans who won 7 golds (Sarah Osvath in VWE, Alex Andre in VWS, Julie Seggie in VWE 50+, Charles Gwynn in VMS 50+, Richard Purdie in VME 60+, Peter Witkop in VME 70+ and Volker Hrovat in VMF 70+)), as well as 2 silver and 6 bronze medals.

*Antonio Signorello*