

# 2011 FINAL REPORT

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NSW Head Coach, Antonio Signorello





## **NSW at World Champs**

In October Sicily hosted the main event of the fencing season, the senior World Championships. The Australian Team sent 16 athletes, all looking for a good performance and possibly for an Olympic qualification. NSW had almost half of the whole team; we had 7 athletes (NSW based) proudly representing the Country. In fact the

national sabre team is almost all trained in Sydney and they did well, the best ever!

## **Results of the season**

Let's start from the end. NSW has won back the Australian overall "Cyclone" Cup at the 2011 National Open. The trophy was missing from 2008 and although since then NSW has "lost" some very important fencers who have retired, the new mix of experienced and some very young athletes finally managed to win back the "best State award".

Perth hosted the U17/U15 Nationals. NSW's young fencers showed something important in WA: they can win in all weapons, genders and age groups. We had the best teams in Men's Sabre and Women's Foil; the best Australians in Women's Foil (both groups) and Men's Foil (Cadet) individuals.

In Melbourne U20 our State won the Men's Sabre individual and several podium medals.

## **NSW and AFF**

NSW is supported by a very solid fencing structure built in co-operation with the Australian Fencing Federation.

The objective is to increase numbers and quality of coaches and athletes through an organized central plan that, although respectful to clubs, gives everybody the chance to improve regardless their fencing background.

We are following what has been done in the rest of the world for many years – the "prevalence of common interests over the individual ones". Consequently, the link between the State and the Federation is very strong for the goal is the same. In fact the High Performance National Plan mixes perfectly with the NSW development program.

### **Australian Fencing Team**

AFF has recently introduced a structured National Team. NSW is today proudly "providing" half of the AFT athletes of the entire country. A sign of technical improvement and constant commitment, a sign of quality.

The AFT is based on a very logical ideal – a "National Team". Every good fencing country has it. Such teams can't simply be the sum of individuals who keep pursuing their own plans and interests. The "individual way" is illogic; it goes against the common interest. The Australian team instead is following an effective path:

- 1) Growing technically in the country through National competitions and camps guided by AFF Coaches;
- 2) Competing in the highest World and Asian events as well as training with the top world ranked teams;
- 3) Establishing a National Team plan. Highest quality with the minimum cost possible in a team environment.

## **NSW Structure: Update**

The State structure consists of: A) Permanent weekly Squad; B) Technical selected weekly Squad; C) Coaching Courses; D) Regional Development System; E) Referee System; F) Schools System; G) Weapons Equity; H) Age Development.

## **Permanent Squad**

On Tuesday evenings in Marrickville is held a development training session that includes all age groups, weapons and levels. The goal is to improve individual skills in a large group session where all athletes interact regardless of their level. Fencers are invited to participate on a six months basis to work with the State coaches from 5pm to 9pm. In 2011 we had an average of 50/60 athletes per night training on 11 floor strips. The HC is excellently

assisted by 3 sabre, 3 foil and one epee coaches who alternatively come to training.

## **Technical Squad**

Every week NSW also offers a selected squad that aims at a more detailed technical improvement. Smaller numbers and higher intensity. Friday in Marrickville it has been sabre and foil, while epee had until early August a session at the Southern Highlands club. In 2012 we will try to reestablish the epee squad and possibly split the foil and sabre squads for a better quality of work.

## **Coaching Courses**

A Level 1 course just finished and six new coaches have been successfully assessed. Since 2009, NSW has gained over 30 new coaches; some are already Level 2 today. The system is composed by cycles of two/four (depending on the request) Level 1 and one Level 2 every three years: L1,L1,L2...Exceptionally have been added some Level 0 or school Level clinics/courses to increase the number of coaches in those areas far from Sydney. In 2012 at least another Level 1 will start in February.

## **Regional Development**

Great attention has been given to the Regional Plan. NSW is composed by 8 fencing regions; some of them are already operating according to the project. There are now regional championships included in the State calendar, regional squads will be run monthly next season and some State comps have been given to the regions to better involve them in the overall activity. In 2012 the goal is to enhance the existing plan. We are proud to be the only State with such project but the road is still long.

## **Referee System**

A referee system is being implemented in these current days. Basically the clubs (it's in their own interests) are being asked to help create a pool of independent and qualified umpires. The new State Officiating Director, Max Andrew-Kabilafkas, is recruiting the aspiring refs and DTs. The second step will be to train them through books, courses and presiding experience. In the end they will all be assessed according to the FIE criteria. At the beginning of next season a roster will be organized to cover all State junior events. The SOD will also propose to NSWFA the best refs who will represent the State at

Nationals. The ultimate objective is to create new international "president de jury" for Australia.

## **Schools**

NSW and schools are becoming a whole set. The State is constantly supporting the schools by providing competitions and quarterly camps with qualified coaches. The "soul" of the State calendar is based on the various schools events that in 2012 will be in three weapons in all age groups. A number of team events have also been organized to continue and enhance the schools' team tradition. NSW has only kept the State championship to simplify the season to students and clubs. NSW will also qualify athletes going to National Schools Championships, both individual and team.

## **Weapon Equity**

NSW has reached complete weapon equity in accordance with AFF plans. All competitions, both School and State, have sabre, foil and epee events. Both genders and all age groups have the same number of comps in all weapons.

All State squads have 3 weapons plans although numbers are different due, at the present, to the lack of young

epeeists. To solve this problem are being organized epee "trial" camps and some coaches are being introduced to teach epee in some schools.

## **Age Development**

Competitions for U13/U11 have started already and in 2012 we'll experiment with U9, aligning NSW to the rest of the world. The State U13 championships have been so successful that will become a National event from next season. NSW also promoted the acceptance of sabre and epee in the U15 Nationals. All NSW camps are mainly organized for very young fencers and the P-Squad has a section especially organized for U13 and U11.

## **Special Thanks**

I would like to thank the Executive Committee of NSWFA, especially the President Duncan Fairweather, who are great supporters of the whole system. Special thanks go to all the State coaches, Richard Emmerick, Michael Howard, Hugh Cotman, Angelo Santangelo, Oreste Gentile, Alex Andre, Tony Watts, Sam Hughes and Dave Hoffman. They are all doing extraordinary work! Leslie Witkop and Pam Zopf are giving an amazing contribution; we couldn't function without them. Alex

Andre has done an exceptional job as State Coaching Director, perfect maybe. The new State Officiating Director Max Andrew-Kabilafkas, although young, has already shown his potential. Last but not least, a special thanks to an extraordinary man, Peter Witkop – we could not have a better armourer.

*Antonio Signorello*