

Tips on Preparation to Train and Compete.

EAT, DRINK, SLEEP, KIT and MIND. All looked after in the right way and it's your route to gold. Timing is the key to making the hit and so it is with your body. What you will read may or may not suit you. Use all, some or none of it. Adapt it to suit you, your body, health, life style and time of life.

EAT carbohydrates i.e. pasta, potatoes, bananas etc. **Proteins** i.e. fish, chicken, green veg, fruit etc. It's simple balance diet at the right time. So let's start by saying it's a training day. Breakfast, porridge and fruits are good. Eat **Carbohydrate** based meals an hour or so before training restarts. After training or competing eat **Protein** based meals. This should be no more than 2 hours after training has finished. This is the optimum time window where the body is recovering and gets more nutrition out of what you eat. As you go through the day whether this is a training day or the competition day it's the same idea.

DRINK. You should drink water based drinks. This can be water and a powder based supplement i.e. it has a mix of salt and minerals that keep your electrolyte levels up to par.

NO fizzy drinks please.

It's always a bit tricky with any supplements as there have been reports of contamination with prohibited substances.

Most of the usual sports drinks are OK but check for taurine.

For normal training water is usually fine.

Nutritional powders are not recommended by sports nutritionists as a healthy, adequate diet is what athletes need.

I like the BOA book - Fuelling for Sports Performance by Dr S Stear

And I always advise international fencers not to take supplements - particularly in the period before a competition.

globaldro.com is the website for checking medications but it doesn't cover all supplements.

Sip little and often. Please note if you are thirsty, you are already dehydrated. Another point to note, you can become OVER hydrated by drinking too much. You know your body better than anyone. Drink enough first-thing in the morning and keep topping it up. Use your head, is the weather hot, is there air-con in the sports hall etc etc. You should nibble on bananas, protein bars, even Jaffa cakes and fruit. **NO** bars of chocolate please.

Energy output is a complex matter. We all need a certain amount of carbohydrates to ensure that our glycogen stores are fully stocked to ensure we can perform to our optimum ability during exercise. Slightly more complicated is the matter of pre-workout energy continuation and post workout glycogen replenishment. Different carbohydrate sources with different glycemic measurements are required to satisfy these varying requirements. It's additionally important that along with the triple-carbohydrates, amino acids that are vital to the muscle preservation process are also included. L-Glutamine for lactate acids and BCAAs to help prevent muscle tear by keeping them elastic for want of a better work. There are powder supplements you mix with water on sale in health shops or online.

Glutamine plays a role in a variety of biochemical functions including:

- *Protein synthesis, as any other amino acid.*
- *Regulation of acid-base balance in the kidney by producing ammonium.*^[3]
- *Cellular energy, as a source, next to glucose.*^[4]
- *Nitrogen donation for many anabolic processes including the synthesis of purines.*^[2]

- Carbon donation, as a source, refilling the citric acid cycle.^[5]
- Nontoxic transporter of ammonia in the blood circulation.

May become conditionally essential in certain situations, including intensive athletic training.

BCAAs. (branched-chain amino acid) In human nutrition

When taken into the human body from the diet, the standard amino acids either are used to synthesize proteins and other biomolecules or are oxidized to urea and carbon dioxide, very simply put, helps with energy and helps retain water and a few more things besides.

The training week before a competition should start with the first few days being hard and intensive, Aerobic to a point. The next day should be lighter, training based on skills and technic. The last day or so are short and sharp. So look at what you're doing. Eat and drink to suit YOU and the task ahead.

SLEEP

All the below is obvious. You know if you are tired you will not perform well at anything, never mind fencing. If you have to travel a long distance, can you go the day before? If not, leave in plenty of time, in case of problems. Go to bed a little earlier than normal. Please do not have heavy meals or chocolate drinks before-hand. If you are stopping in a hotel, take the below as you never know what to expect.

Normal toiletries

Your own pillow

Warm clothes

Ear plugs

Don't forget your kit.

KIT (Create your own list, check it is as it should be and have it packed and ready the night before). Please ensure whatever you buy fits you now, not is the months to come. Fencing kit is not for growing into. Make sure when buying a whole sword that it is SET for your balance in hand. This is done by bending the blade's tang slightly down and to the left or right. This will make the foil seem light or heavy depending on the angles of the SET. Your supplier should do this for you. It may take a little to Set and Reset but it is worth it. Ensure you always choose the handle or grip for the size of your hand. A glove must "fit like a glove" snug. Ask your supplier to help with clothing and sizing. If they care about the sport they will give you the time and advice needed. If not find one that does, it's your money. Now to start with your kit should the following.

Electric Foil x 2 (sized for your age group)

Mask 350/600n

Shoes

Glove

Breeches 350n

Plastron 800n

Jacket 350n

Lame jacket

Body wires x 2
Tool kit with foil tape
Plasters, bandage and cold spray
Spare T shirt and socks
Spare shoe laces.

MENTAL IMAGERY

- 1) You should adopt a comfortable position (sitting or lying) prior to the session. Your eyes should be closed, and ideally you should have a relatively quiet room in which to practice.
- 2) Athletes are conditioned to using a warm-up prior to the start of any physical session. Continue this theme in a **mental training session**. Start by spending a few minutes focusing on a slow, steady breathing rate and concentrate on relaxing your mind and body.
- 3) The mental rehearsal should be seen in the correct time - frame. Usually, slow motion or super-fast speeds are not very useful.
- 4) You should see the event as you do in real life. Rehearse the scene from an internal perspective - i.e. Looking through your own eyes. Try not to see the movement as if you were watching yourself on TV. The TV version is acceptable, but in the long term it would be better if you could move on to the internal style.
- 5) Visualization is a skill that needs practice. If you find it difficult persevere. as progress is made quickly with regular workouts.
- 6) Don't leave your visualization sessions to chance. They should have a place in your weekly training schedule. Three or four times a week for about 5-10 minutes would be a good start.
- 7) Always visualize yourself performing well and positively.

GUIDELINES FOR VISUALIZATION

Read through the points above very carefully, then find a quiet place and make yourself comfortable. Close your eyes and spend a few minutes getting really relaxed. When you feel ready, begin to visualize yourself competing . Visualize yourself performing very well and concentrate on how it feels. Concentrate on the feelings in your arms and legs, as well as your emotions and confidence. Continue this visualization for several minutes and then open your eyes again. Repeat this exercise several times per week and vary the content of your visualization. This is an important element of any athlete's mental preparation program.

REMEMBER

You fence the jacket in front you not the person, they have no name, and no rank.

You fence the hit you're on, not the one before or after. Fight for every hit.

So to summarise.

Look after YOU.

Prepare your own check list of things to do and take with you.

Eat wisely.

Drink water based fluids.

Train to suit the occasion.

Stretch and exercise daily.

Get adequate rest and relaxation.

Look after your Kit

Warm up before you fence, on your own or with a coach or partner.

Warm up your Brain too. Visualize being on Piste, parry riposte, beat flick, hit after hit, one hit at a time. **You see ONLY the jacket, the target area, NOT the person.**

Prepare your kit to fence the night before and pack it all in your bag.

Prepare your food and drink the night before.

DO NOT FORGET TO TAKE THE 2 ABOVE WITH YOU.

THE XSWORD'S STATEMENT

Become THE SWORD

Strong and Powerful

Flexible and Supple

Sensitive and Subtle

Bright and Sharp

Fit in body and mind

Winners make things happen, Losers let things happen.

Can you become the new ancient modern hero THE SWORD