

BVF Selection Process Working Group

Final Report

Section	Page
Introduction	01
Selection Process and Events	
Findings	02
Conclusions	04
Recommendations	06
Participation Opportunities	
Findings	08
Conclusions	08
Recommendations	08
Appendices:	
Appendix 1: Terms of Reference	09
Appendix 2: Selection Process: Option A	10
Appendix 3: Selection Process: Option B	17
Appendix 4: Membership Feedback	21

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Duncan Rowlands
BVF Selection Process Working Group Chairman
28 July 2017

Introduction

The Working Group was established by the BVF Committee in January 2017. Its Terms of Reference were published on the BVF website and are repeated at *Appendix 1*.

Its primary aim was to conduct a wide-ranging review to consider options for the future development of the BVF selection process, and the competition structure that would support the selection process. It is this aim that is the main subject of this report.

A secondary aim of the Working Group was to consider options for expanding the participation opportunities for BVF members.

Selection Process and Events

Findings

The Working Group has examined the selection processes and competition formats used by the FIE nations who are often at the top of the medal tables at the Veteran European and World Championships; Italy, France, Germany and the USA. The main points identified from this review are:

- All of these countries select the fencers to represent them internationally from a ranking scheme in which fencers acquire ranking points from a circuit of events.
- Each has a slightly different method of establishing the points to be awarded at a competition, although they do follow a trend of being a function of the number of fencers in an event and the final placing of a fencer in the event.
- Each country holds a different number of selection events in their circuits, which includes their National Championships, and counts the results from some or all of the events on the circuit. For example, Italy counts 5 results from 8 events and Germany counts 3 results from 5 events.
- All of these countries use a competition format of pools followed by direct elimination, with the direct elimination being held in separate age categories, following the FIE format.
- Italy, Germany and the USA follow the FIE format for the pools, holding these in separate age categories except where there are fewer than six entrants in a category (when that category merges with the next category for the pools).
- France organises the pools with fencers of all categories together, but applying a handicap to the younger fencer where there is a bout between fencers of different age categories.
- All of these countries allow members of other FIE federations to enter their selection circuit competitions, with the exception of their National Championships.

In addition, following the BVF Nationals Selection Event in Manchester in March 2017 the membership was asked to forward feedback on that event, and subsequently the Summer Selection Event, as well as any comments or views on selection and competition format, to the members of the Working Group. The deadline for submitting comments was 19 July 2017.

The Working Group has received over seventy items of feedback during this time. These are available at *Appendix 4*. There has been a wide range of views expressed, which in several respects are diametrically opposed, although there are a few factors that do appear to enjoy substantial support.

A review of the feedback has identified the following important aspects:

- A considerable number of members providing feedback expressed a desire for an 'old style' national championships, in common with the motion passed at the 2017 AGM.
- However, the majority of these members desiring an 'old style' national championships said that it should not be included in the selection process.
- A large majority of respondents support using a format in which fencers compete within their respective age categories for selection events. There was significant criticism of the merging age categories in the pool stage of the selection events.
- While a majority of the feedback indicates approval of using pools followed by direct elimination format for selection events, the feedback indicates that a number of members may prefer an 'old style Age Groups' format of a pool unique.
- It is clear that small pools of 5 fencers are not acceptable to respondents if only one round of pools are used. Pools of 6 or more fencers were, however, acceptable to a majority of respondents.
- A significant proportion of the feedback supports the development of a circuit of selection events.
- Conversely, there were several members who indicated that they did not want to incur the financial and time commitments required to attend a circuit of events.
- A number of members indicated that fencers should be able to have a meaningful opportunity to qualify at all three weapons.

Conclusions

Having considered how other major fencing nations conduct their selection processes and competitions, together with the views expressed by many members, the Working Group has reached the following conclusions:

- Selection competitions should be of a format where fencers compete within their own age category. This precludes the use of competitions where some or all age categories are combined at any stage of the competition. Similarly, the use of BF senior circuit Open competitions would also be precluded.
- There are two possible methodologies of basing selection events on this premise;
 - a single selection event for each international event with the highest placed fencers being selected, or
 - a circuit of selection events generating a ranking list with the highest ranked fencers at relevant dates being selected for international events.
- If the methodology to be used is that of a single selection event for each international event the best competition format for this would be a pool unique.
 - This would ensure that any issues relating to seedings, which would be critical in a 'stand-alone' event, would not be a factor.
 - However, due to the time required to run such an event, and the physical demands upon fencers, there would need to be an absolute cap on entrants to each weapon category of 24 fencers.
 - For logistical reasons, lower caps on entries for some weapons may be necessary, and fencers in the younger age categories will not be able to enter all three weapons.
- If the methodology to be used is that of a circuit of events the best competition format for this would be a single round of pools followed by direct elimination, following the FIE format.
 - This would ensure that fencers are measured in competitions that match the format of the event for which they are being selected.
 - This will enable a timetable to be constructed that will allow a fencer to enter all three weapons over the course of a 2-day weekend without entries being capped.
 - An option can be included to allow the use of two rounds of pools where feasible at the discretion of the event organiser.
 - The format must be applied consistently across all events in the circuit.

- The ranking scheme generated from such a circuit of events must be simple to both administer and for the membership to understand and have confidence in. This can be achieved by using a system almost identical to that used by the BF Senior Ranking Scheme, with which the membership is familiar.
 - The placing factor to be used would be the same as that used in the BF senior ranking scheme.
 - The grading multiplier (NIF) would be the number of fencers competing in a competition.
- The appropriate size of such a circuit of competitions is a finely balanced judgement call. To minimise the economic impacts of the new selection process the circuit should, at least initially, consist of three events; a National Championships plus two others. From these, fencers would count their best two results for ranking points. Additional competitions could be added to the circuit in the future if the committee considers this to be appropriate.
- In common with other FIE nations, and to increase participation, entry to the two non-championships events should be open to fencers of other FIE nations.
- There are a few members who are resident overseas. It is important that these individuals should be able to have a fair opportunity to qualify for selection without facing excessive financial costs to do so. This can be achieved by allowing these members to substitute one competition in their country of residence, subject to some conditions, for one BVF competition. This strikes a fair balance between requiring these members to travel to the UK to compete against other members and enabling them to have a fair opportunity to be selected with incurring excessive costs.

Recommendations

It is important that the 2018 scheme can be shown to enjoy the support of the majority of the membership to enable the association to move forward without the friction that has been present in 2017.

To this end the Working Group recommends that the membership be given a choice between two options of competition format and selection process. These options are outlined below and detailed in full at *Appendix 2* and *Appendix 3*. To ensure the largest possible participation in this decision, and subsequent 'buy-in' from the membership, the vote on this matter should be conducted electronically across the entire BVF membership.

In addition to these two options, the Working Group also considered the use of mixed age category competitions, such as the 'old style' national championships, in the selection scheme. We agreed that age category specific competitions are the fairest way to get a true result on which to base selection. We therefore decided that we could not recommend a selection scheme that includes mixed age category competitions. This view is in line with the majority of the feedback that commented on this matter.

The Working Group recommends that the new selection process should be implemented for the 2018 season. Further, this selection process should be used for a minimum of four years (2 Veteran European Championships cycles) without significant alteration to allow it to 'bed in' and for the membership to become accustomed to it.

After this period, the process should be reviewed in a spirit of calm reflection to ensure that BVF is always ready for the ever-changing challenges of the future.

Option A - Ranking Scheme with a Circuit of FIE format events

The main points of this option are:

- A competition format in line with the FIE rules for the Veteran World Championships, being fencers competing within their specific age category with one round of pools followed by direct elimination.
- Fencers are awarded ranking points depending on the strength of the competition and their final placing. The strength of the competition is represented by the grading factor ('NIF'), which is equal to the number of fencers taking part in that specific age category competition. The placing factor assigned to fencers' final placings are the same as those used in the BF Senior Ranking Scheme.
- Fencers are placed on a ranking list in order of the sum of the ranking points awarded from their best 2 results from a circuit of 3 competitions.

- Selection of fencers for international representation will be in accordance with the order of fencers on the ranking list for each specific weapon and age category.
- Each event will take place over a Saturday and Sunday.
- Fencers will be able to compete in all 3 weapons in their category over the weekend.

Option B - A Single Selection Event for each International Event using the Pool Unique format

The main points of this option are:

- The competition format will be pool unique.
- There will be one selection event for the World Championships each year, with fencers competing within their specific age category.
- There will be one selection event for the European Team Championships every two years, with fencers competing within their specific Veteran / Grand Veteran age section.
- Selection of fencers for each international event will be in accordance with the order in which fencers were placed in the appropriate selection event.
- Each event will take place over a Saturday and Sunday.
- Entries to each competition will be capped to ensure that the events can all be completed within the available time.
- In the European Team Championships Selection Event fencers in the men's Veteran age section will not be able to compete in all 3 weapons. Fencers in the other age sections will be able to compete in all 3 weapons over the weekend.
- In the World Championships Selection Event fencers in the men's 50-59 category will not be able to compete in all 3 weapons. Fencers in the other age categories will be able to compete in all 3 weapons over the weekend.

Participation Opportunities for BVF Members

Findings

Due to the time committed to its primary task, the Working Group has not been able to fully develop robust views on how BVF can increase the participation opportunities for its members. However, the following factors have been identified:

- As stated previously, a considerable number of members have expressed a desire for an 'old style' national championships, although it was widely recognised that this form of competition is not appropriate to use for selection purposes.
- This desire was recognised by the BVF Committee, who arranged for the BVF Open Championship to be held at the Leon Paul Centre.
- This event benefitted from enabling members of other nations' veterans' associations to enter.
- In addition to the BVF Open Championship, BVF holds two events whose primary aim is participatory, being the West Midlands Open and the Veterans' Winton Cup.
- In addition to these events, the Hampshire Open holds a veterans' only section of competitions.
- All of these Open competitions normally use a format of mixed age categories fencing in two rounds of pools (of 5 or 6 fencers), followed by a single direct elimination tableaux.

Conclusions

- The Open competitions, while excellent, would benefit from an increased public profile.
- The Working Group hopes that this can be achieved by creating a 'Participation Ranking List', drawn from the results of these Open competitions, and published on the BVF website.
- If successful, this would encourage new members to join BVF, particularly 'recently started' fencers, by publicising fencing opportunities without the expectation of selection-aimed competitive performance.
- This ranking list could be used by organisers to seed fencers entered in the Open competitions.
- Other Open competitions could be added to the circuit of participatory events in the future.

Recommendations

The Working Group recommends that:

- The BVF Domestic Fencing Officer continue to develop the details of the Participation Ranking List and a schedule of events for inclusion in a participation circuit.
- The BVF Open Championship should be organised so that the social aspects of the old national championships much loved by the membership, such as a dinner, are maintained for the enjoyment of the membership.

Appendix 1

Working Group Terms of Reference

The Working Group is established to conduct a wide-ranging review to consider options for the future development of the BVF selection process, and the competition structure that would support the selection process.

As a secondary matter the Working Group will also consider options for expanding the participation opportunities for BVF members.

The membership of the Working Group is:

- Duncan Rowlands
- Ev van Gemeren
- Lindsay Watkiss

The Working Group shall present an interim report to the BVF Committee by the end of April 2017, with its final report to be made to the Committee by the end of July 2017.

Appendix 2

BVF Selection Process - Option A

Definitions

Season

The 12 month period starting on the first day of January in each year.

Veteran

A person in their 40th year or older who is a member in good standing of British Veteran Fencing (BVF) or an equivalent organisation of another FIE member federation.

Eligible to Represent BVF

A Veteran is eligible to represent BVF if they hold British Nationality, including those holding multiple nationalities, provided that they do not hold an FIE licence issued for a country other than Great Britain.

Category

The Category in which a Veteran will compete in a season is the age range (40-49, 50-59, 60-69, 70+) in which they are placed in the season in question.

BVF Selection Event

A competition or set of competitions, held within BVF's geographical area that any Veteran, subject to eligibility conditions, is permitted to enter on payment of the appropriate fee, that is used to select fencers to represent BVF at the European or World Championships.

Calendar of BVF Selection Events

Number of BVF Selection Events

There will be three BVF Selection Events held in each season.

Each event will take place over a Saturday and Sunday, and the timetable will enable a fencer to compete in all three weapons over the course of the weekend.

Schedule

The following table details the BVF Selection Events and the events for which selection is made.

Date	Event	Eligibility
Late January	Winter Selection Event	All Veterans (both members of BVF and other FIE Federations)
Early March	Closed Category National Championships	Restricted to BVF members who are eligible to represent BVF
Mid / late May*	Veteran European Championships	BVF members; team event restricted to selected BVF members
June [#]	Summer Selection Event	All Veterans (both members of BVF and other FIE Federations)
September / October	Veteran World Championships	Restricted to selected BVF members

* Ascension week.

[#] The Summer Selection Event will be held at least 2 weeks after the end of the Veteran European Championships.

BVF Selection Events - Competition Format

Pools

Constitution

All fencers entered in a competition will fence within their respective age category, except as provided below.

Where fewer than 6 fencers are entered in a category then these fencers will normally combine with the fencers in the other age category within their associated EVFC Team Championship Veteran or Grand Veteran age section. Thus, categories 1 and 2 would combine into a group of pools, while categories 3 and 4 would combine into a group of pools.

Alternatively, if a majority of the fencers in the category affected are in favour, they may fence within their age category in a short pool.

Fencers will fence in a single round of pools. The constitution of the pools will be in accordance with the table below. Where there are uneven pools, the higher seeds will be allocated to the larger pools.

Alternatively, where the number of fencers warrants it, and there is sufficient time, pistes and referees to enable it, the event organiser may decide to use two rounds of pools. In this instance pools of 5 or 6 fencers will be used.

Ranking

In the round of pools fencers will be ranked in the order of their position on the appropriate *BVF Ranking List*. Where two categories of fencers are combined into a single group for the pools the event organiser shall decide the appropriate ranking of fencers.

Fencers who do not appear on the *BVF Ranking List* will be allocated a ranking of 999.

Fencers of the same club will be allocated to different pools, as far as is possible.

Promotion

All fencers will be promoted to the Direct Elimination.

Direct Elimination

Constitution

Fencers of each category will form separate DE Tableaux.

Ranking

Fencers will be ranked within their category in the order in which they were placed from the results of the round of pools.

Where two rounds of pools have been used the results from these rounds will be combined to establish the ranking of fencers.

Placing

For each category, fencers will be placed, within each round of the direct elimination, in accordance with their ranking for the composition of the relevant Direct Elimination Tableau.

Medals

Each category and gender shall award a gold medal to the winner of the final bout, a silver medal to the loser of this bout, and a bronze medal to each of the losers of the semi-final bouts.

BVF Selection Events: Constitution of the Pools

No. of Fencers	Pool Structure
3-7	Single pool
8-10	Single pool (2 pistes)
11	Single pool (3 pistes)
12	Two pools of 6
13	One pool of 7, one pool of 6
14	Two pools of 7
15	One pool of 8 (2 pistes), one pool of 7
16	Two pools of 8 (4 pistes)
17	One pool of 9 (2 pistes), one pool of 8 (2 pistes)
18	Three pools of 6
19	One pool of 7, two pools of 6
20	Two pools of 7, one pool of 6
21	Three pools of 7
22	One pool of 8 (2 pistes), two pools of 7
23	Two pools of 8 (4 pistes), one pool of 7
24	Four pools of 6
25	One pool of 7, three pools of 6
26	Two pools of 7, two pools of 6
27	Three pools of 7, one pool of 6
28	Four pools of 7
29	One pool of 8 (2 pistes), three pools of 7
30	Five pools of 6
31	One pool of 7, four pools of 6
32	Two pools of 7, three pools of 6
33	Three pools of 7, two pools of 6
34	Four pools of 7, one pool of 6
35	Five pools of 7

- Pool of 6: 15 bouts
- Pool of 7: 21 bouts
- Pool of 8: 28 bouts (14 bouts / piste)
- Pool of 9: 36 bouts (18 bouts / piste)
- Pool of 10: 45 bouts (23 bouts / piste)
- Pool of 11: 55 bouts (19 bouts / piste)

BVF Ranking Scheme

Eligibility

All BVF members are entitled to a place on the BVF Ranking List for their respective age category irrespective of nationality or FIE federation affiliation. Non-BVF members who compete in BVF selection events will be included in the Ranking List to assist in ranking BVF events.

Qualifying Results

Fencers may score ranking points in any BVF Selection Event run to the prescribed format.

Calculation of Points

Points are awarded to fencers who reach the last 64 in their category of a competition provided that they are placed in the top 75% of those competing in their category. The 75th percentile limit shall be rounded down to the next lowest whole number. In cases of equality at the 75th percentile limit both fencers shall be included.

The points scored in each competition are calculated by taking the grading multiplier (NIF) and multiplying this by the factor assigned to each final placing (taken from the BF senior ranking scheme).

A fencer's overall points total is the sum of their best **TWO** results.

Timing

The BVF Ranking List will be updated after each BVF selection event.

Each competition shall be counted only once in any ranking. The results of a competition are included for a period of twelve months or until the date of the same competition in the following season, whichever occurs first.

Where a fencer moves to a new category at the start of a season they will carry the ranking points from competition results from their old category into their new category until these expire as detailed above.

Ranking Method

Fencers will be ranked within their category in descending order of total points scored starting at rank number 1. Where two or more fencers have the same number of points they will be assigned an equal ranking.

Overseas Resident Members

BVF members who are resident outside of BVF's geographical area may count one domestic veteran event in their country of residence as if it was a BVF selection event so long as:

- their country of residence's fencing federation is a member of the FIE, and
- the competition is recognised by the host country's federation's veteran's body, and
- entry to the event is restricted to veteran fencers, and
- the direct elimination stage is held in separate age categories.

The maximum ranking points that may be acquired at such an event is limited to the ranking points that were awarded to the winner of the largest BVF Selection Event for the fencer's category in the preceding season.

A BVF member wishing to have such an event included in their ranking competitions must email the *BVF Ranking Coordinator* with a link to the website where the result of the event is published.

Grading Multiplier (NIF)

The grading multiplier (NIF) for each category at an event is equal to the number of fencers competing in that category.

Final Placing Factor

The final placing factor assigned to each position is the same as that used in the BF senior ranking scheme. The table of these factors is reproduced below.

Place	Factor	Place	Factor	Place	Factor	Place	Factor
1	20.00	17	6.80	33	4.05	49	3.61
2	17.22	18	6.74	34	4.02	50	3.58
3=	14.76	19	6.68	35	3.99	51	3.56
3=	14.76	20	6.62	36	3.95	52	3.54
5	12.81	21	6.56	37	3.92	53	3.52
6	11.98	22	6.51	38	3.89	54	3.50
7	11.80	23	6.46	39	3.86	55	3.48
8	11.65	24	6.41	40	3.83	56	3.45
9	9.52	25	6.37	41	3.81	57	3.43
10	9.40	26	6.32	42	3.78	58	3.42
11	9.29	27	6.28	43	3.75	59	3.40
12	9.19	28	6.24	44	3.73	60	3.38
13	9.10	29	6.20	45	3.70	61	3.36
14	9.02	30	6.16	46	3.68	62	3.34
15	8.94	31	6.12	47	3.65	63	3.32
16	8.87	32	6.09	48	3.63	64	3.30

Example Calculations

- A fencer that finishes third in a competition with 13 fencers in their category will score $13 \times 14.76 = 191.88$ ranking points.
- The fencer that finishes tenth in the same category has not finished in the top 75% ($13 \times 0.75 = 9.75$), and will score no points.

BVF Selection Scheme

Overview

Selection for all representative individual and team places will be in keeping with the rules of eligibility for the event under consideration.

In exceptional circumstances not covered by these selection rules, the BVF Committee will be the decision-making body.

Selection of both individuals and teams will be announced in time for an appeal to be processed prior to the event in question. Any fencer wishing to appeal should send a written outline of their case, with details of all factors that they wish to be considered, to the BVF Chairman. A closing date for appeals will be announced with all selections.

Any selector having a personal interest in the selection procedure must declare it and withdraw from that part of the selection process. A disinterested member of BVF will be substituted.

EVFC Veteran European Team Championships

Veterans

For each weapon, a team of 4 or 5 fencers is selected using the following criteria:

- Two category 2 (50-59) fencers will be selected in order of their placing on the BVF Ranking List immediately following the BVF Closed Category National Championships.
- Two category 1 (40-49) fencers will be selected in order of their placing on the BVF Ranking List immediately following the BVF Closed Category National Championships, provided that they are placed in the top three fencers on the BVF Ranking List.
- Where two places have not been allocated from the top three fencers in category 1, the unfilled places will be allocated from the fencers from either category 1 or 2 at the discretion of the selectors. Within each category fencers will be selected in order of their placing on the BVF Ranking List immediately following the BVF Closed Category National Championships.
- Where a fifth fencer is to be selected, this place will be allocated from the fencers from either category 1 or 2 at the discretion of the selectors on the same basis as above.

For each weapon a Team Captain will be appointed at the discretion of the selectors, who may or may not be one of the fencers in the team.

At the Championships, the Team Captain shall decide, in consultation with the appointed Team Manager, which fencers are to start and which fencer is to be the reserve for any given match at the event. The final decision shall rest with the Team Captain.

Grand Veterans

For each weapon, a team of 4 or 5 fencers is selected using the following criteria:

- Two category 4 (70+) fencers will be selected in order of their placing on the BVF Ranking List immediately following the BVF Closed Category National Championships.
- Two category 3 (60-69) fencers will be selected in order of their placing on the BVF Ranking List immediately following the BVF Closed Category National Championships, provided that they are placed in the top three fencers on the BVF Ranking List.
- Where two places have not been allocated from the top three fencers in category 3, the unfilled places will be allocated from the fencers from either category 3 or 4 at the discretion of the selectors. Within each category fencers will be selected in order of their placing on the BVF Ranking List immediately following the BVF Closed Category National Championships.
- Where a fifth fencer is to be selected, this place will be allocated from the fencers from either category 3 or 4 at the discretion of the selectors on the same basis as above.

For each weapon a Team Captain will be appointed at the discretion of the selectors, who may or may not be one of the fencers in the team.

At the Championships, the Team Captain shall decide, in consultation with the appointed Team Manager, which fencers are to start and which fencer is to be the reserve for any given match at the event. The final decision shall rest with the Team Captain.

FIE Veteran World Championships

Individual

For each category up to 4 fencers who are eligible to represent BVF will be selected in order of their placing on the BVF Ranking List immediately following the BVF Summer Selection Event.

Team

For each weapon, a team is selected from those fencers who have qualified for the individual event.

The team at each weapon consists of up to two fencers from each of the categories A (50-59), B (60-69) and C (70+). Only teams with at least one fencer from each category will be entered.

Up to two fencers from each category will be selected from those fencers selected for the individual event in order of their placing on the BVF Ranking List immediately following the BVF Summer Selection Event.

For each weapon a Team Captain will be appointed at the discretion of the selectors, who may or may not be one of the fencers in the team.

At the Championships, the Team Captain shall decide, in consultation with the appointed Team Manager, which fencers are to start and which fencers are to be a reserve for any given match at the event. The final decision shall rest with the Team Captain.

Other International Team Matches

All places are allocated to the highest placed eligible and available fencers on the relevant BVF Ranking Lists at the selection date that comply with the age restrictions for the event.

Where fencers from different categories are eligible for a place that place shall be allocated at the discretion of the selectors.

Domestic Team Matches

For UK domestic team matches the selectors defer the selection to the appointed Team Manager.

Appendix 3

BVF Selection Process - Option B

Definitions

Season

The 12 month period starting on the first day of January in each year.

Veteran

A person in their 40th year or older who is a member in good standing of British Veteran Fencing (BVF) or an equivalent organisation of another FIE member federation.

Eligible to Represent BVF

A Veteran is eligible to represent BVF if they hold British Nationality, including those holding multiple nationalities, provided that they do not hold an FIE licence issued for a country other than Great Britain.

Category

The Category in which a Veteran will compete in a season is the age range (40-49, 50-59, 60-69, 70+) in which they are placed in the season in question.

BVF Selection Event

A competition or set of competitions, held within BVF's geographical area that any Veteran, subject to eligibility conditions, is permitted to enter on payment of the appropriate fee, that is used to select fencers to represent BVF at the European or World Championships.

Calendar of BVF Selection Events

Number of BVF Selection Events

There will be one BVF Selection Event held in each season where the Veteran European Championships are an individual event, and two BVF Selection Events held in each season where the Veteran European Championships are a team event.

Each event will take place over a Saturday and Sunday, and the timetable will endeavour to permit a fencer to compete in all three weapons over the course of the weekend where possible. This will not be possible for the men's Veteran section in the Veteran European Team Championships Selection Event, nor in the men's 50-59 category of the Veteran World Championships Selection Event.

Schedule

The following table details the BVF Selection Events and the events for which selection is made.

Date	Event	Eligibility
Early March (even years)	Veteran European Team Championships Selection Event	Restricted to BVF members who are eligible to represent BVF
Mid / late May*	Veteran European Championships	BVF members; team event restricted to selected BVF members
June [#]	Veteran World Championships Selection Event	Restricted to BVF members in Categories 50-59, 60-69 and 70+ who are eligible to represent BVF
September / October	Veteran World Championships	Restricted to selected BVF members

* Ascension week.

[#] The Veteran World Championships Selection Event will be held at least 2 weeks after the end of the Veteran European Championships.

BVF Selection Events - Competition Format

Veteran European Team Championships Selection Event

For each weapon, fencers will compete within their associated EVFC Team Championship Veteran or Grand Veteran age section. Thus, categories 1 and 2 will combine into one competition and categories 3 and 4 will combine into another competition.

Entries will be limited to no more than 24 fencers in each age section, with a number of reserved places for fencers from each of the age categories within each age section.

Fencers in each age section will compete in a pool unique with bouts to 5 hits.

Each age section shall award the three highest placed fencers a gold medal, a silver medal and a bronze medal respectively.

Veteran World Championships Selection Event

Only fencers in categories 50-59, 60-69 and 70+ may enter this event.

For each weapon, fencers will compete within their respective category.

Entries will be limited in certain age categories, as tabulated below:

	MF	ME	MS	WF	WE	WS
50-59	24	24	16	12	20	12
60-69	12	24	12	12	16	12
70+	12	12	12	7	7	7

Fencers in each category will compete in a pool unique with bouts to 5 hits.

Each age category shall award the three highest placed fencers a gold medal, a silver medal and a bronze medal respectively.

BVF Selection Scheme

Overview

Selection for all representative individual and team places will be in keeping with the rules of eligibility for the event under consideration.

In exceptional circumstances not covered by these selection rules, the BVF Committee will be the decision-making body.

Selection of both individuals and teams will be announced in time for an appeal to be processed prior to the event in question. Any fencer wishing to appeal should send a written outline of their case, with details of all factors that they wish to be considered, to the BVF Chairman. A closing date for appeals will be announced with all selections.

Any selector having a personal interest in the selection procedure must declare it and withdraw from that part of the selection process. A disinterested member of BVF will be substituted.

EVFC Veteran European Team Championships

Veterans

For each weapon, a team of 4 or 5 fencers is selected using the following criteria:

- Two category 2 (50-59) fencers will be selected in order of their placing at the Veteran European Team Championships Selection Event.
- Two or three fencers from either category 1 (40-49) or category 2 (50-59) will be selected in order of their placing at the Veteran European Team Championships Selection Event, ignoring the fencers selected under the first criteria.

For each weapon a Team Captain will be appointed at the discretion of the selectors, who may or may not be one of the fencers in the team.

At the Championships, the Team Captain shall decide, in consultation with the appointed Team Manager, which fencers are to start and which fencer is to be the reserve for any given match at the event. The final decision shall rest with the Team Captain.

Grand Veterans

For each weapon, a team of 4 or 5 fencers is selected using the following criteria:

- Two category 4 (70+) fencers will be selected in order of their placing at the Veteran European Team Championships Selection Event.
- Two or three fencers from either category 3 (60-69) or category 4 (70+) will be selected in order of their placing at the Veteran European Team Championships Selection Event, ignoring the fencers selected under the first criteria.

For each weapon a Team Captain will be appointed at the discretion of the selectors, who may or may not be one of the fencers in the team.

At the Championships, the Team Captain shall decide, in consultation with the appointed Team Manager, which fencers are to start and which fencer is to be the reserve for any given match at the event. The final decision shall rest with the Team Captain.

FIE Veteran World Championships

Individual

For each category, up to four fencers will be selected in order of their placing at the Veteran World Championships Selection Event preceding the Veteran World Championships.

Team

For each weapon, a team is selected from those fencers who have been selected for the individual event.

The team at each weapon consists of up to two fencers from each of the categories A (50-59), B (60-69) and C (70+). Only teams with at least one fencer from each category will be entered.

Up to two fencers from each category will be selected from those fencers selected for the individual event in order of their placing at the Veteran World Championships Selection Event preceding the Veteran World Championships.

For each weapon, a Team Captain will be appointed at the discretion of the selectors, who may or may not be one of the fencers in the team.

At the Championships, the Team Captain shall decide, in consultation with the appointed Team Manager, which fencers are to start and which fencers are to be a reserve for any given match at the event. The final decision shall rest with the Team Captain.

Other International Team Matches

All places are allocated at the discretion of the selectors, ensuring compliance with any age restrictions for the event.

Domestic Team Matches

For UK domestic team matches the selectors defer the selection to the appointed Team Manager.

Appendix 4

Membership Feedback

The following comments are the full range of feedback received by the Working Group following the National Championships held in Manchester. The comments have been redacted to prevent the individuals making the comments being identified and for evidential reasons.

1) The timetable for the day did call for an early start and check-in for the different events was staggered throughout the day, this did cause some competitors to 'hang around' for some hours before being allowed to check-in. Allowing check-in from an earlier time could allow the events to start earlier than the stated time (assuming that there are sufficient referees).

There were less competitors than previous years and the poule rounds finished relatively quickly and with DT being run by one person and therefore needing the keep things ordered to prevent things getting out of hand, some pistes were empty for quite a long time and fencers waiting relatively long periods of time between poules and DE rounds. The lower number of fencers and the splitting of the events into age categories meant that the events finished earlier than the timetable but the finals were not held 'en gala' and on occasions more than one final was fenced at the same time.

There does need to be a definitive rule for the size of poule rounds, one category had two poules of five and one round so each fencer had 4 fights and then the DE. I do not think that 4 fights is enough to rank a fencer for the DE round and some fencers will be eliminated in the first DE round and will only have 5 fights for the entire championship.

These observations are my opinion and although these comments may appear negative they are areas which I think need re-visiting and there were many aspects of the weekend that were fine and I left with some positive thoughts.

My personal opinion on the championships is that we do need an overall championship and a selection event. If some fencers automatically qualify in this event and do not attend the second event and a different set of fencers also automatically qualify from the second event, how will this situation be resolved. Having an overall champion and a master of arms does provide an interesting conclusion to the weekend.

2) I felt it was good to separate the age groups for a qualifier competition as I shouldn't be knocking out people in categories above me.

However two rounds of fencer were needed. It was a long way to go for four fights and a DE tableau of 7 in the ladies 40-50 age group.

Maybe we should have a traditional British Vets championships and then 2 qualifying competitions of this format.

3) Problems with the format:-

Only one round of poules; this meant for me only six fights!

Emphasis on selection of two fencers from each category. My round of poules was fenced against five fencers from the 60+ age category. Despite fencing well I ended up at the bottom of the poule and 17th out of 18 fencers. After waiting over one and a half hours we were called to the piste for my one and only fight with with a Cat 4 fencer! I lost this fight 6-10 and therefore ended up fifth out of 5 - a result in no way reflecting my fencing and decided chiefly by my performance of fighting fencers in Cat3! How can this be?

I am lead to believe that the competition in June will be with exactly the same format - for me a very pessimistic situation. Will we have the same seeding or a new seeding? With two of the places already allocated I foresee a very tense situation.

So what would I like? I feel selection and the Nationals should only be minimally involved with each other.

Nationals - an attempt to bring together as many Veteran Fencers as possible to have fun and LOTS of Fencing! An event where we can invite all the newby Vets emerging from Adult Beginner classes all over the country. If 70s don't like fencing 40 year olds, then adopt a handicapping system, it works very well and levels the playing field. Prizes, for National Champion (all categories) and selection of only ONE fencer per age group for World Champs.

Selection Events - TWO - one in the North, one in the South. Open to fencers interested in representing GB. All separate categories This would allow everyone in each category to have a fair crack at selection. Format two rounds of poules!

4) I have been quietly reading the posts on the Facebook page but felt that offering an opinion would be better done quietly rather than on an open forum. I would first like to congratulate everyone on the running of the competition as even though it didn't quite work for everyone this time lessons will undoubtedly have been learned.

I do agree with XXXX in that the format is not particularly interesting for the 40s age bracket but only for the National Champs. I think having the age groups separated for other competitions is the way to go for selection purposes or for the implantation of a ranking scheme. I do however think that the National Champs should be done as an Open style format to find the best Vet in each weapon.

To that end I would like to propose an idea. If the idea is to improve team selection for the Europeans or Worlds then we need to consider using the British Champs as a good warm up event for either of those competitions. To this end I would have 3 age group competitions during the year, Winter, Spring and Summer with the British Champs done before the Worlds as a good warm up. I think this would perhaps alleviate some of the dissent that some members are currently voicing.

5) Just a quick note to thank you very much for an enjoyable event this weekend. I do appreciate how hard it must be to organise and introduce new ideas.

I felt it ran very well. It was lovely to meet up with everyone again and to be inspired by such wonderful fencing. We're very lucky to have such a veterans organisation. Venue, refereeing, organisation - all spot on.

Only grumble would be that it would be great to have 2 rounds of poules. It would mean we get a good fence even if knocked out of the DE early on. Also, I would have loved to compete in sabre and foil and have had even more fun!

6) Firstly I would like to say that I thoroughly enjoyed the Manchester event. I fully support the new format of pools (mixing the 2 categories) with DE in your own age category as this is a much fairer way of selecting.

2 rounds of pools would give everyone more fencing but in the smaller categories this would potentially mean fencing the same people all over again so not sure much would be gained from that. So it gets the thumbs up from me and I am looking forward to the next event.

Also with the West Midlands Open and the proposed new vets open event in July all veteran fencers, whether seeking selection or not, have plenty of opportunity to enjoy more veteran events.

Personally in the future I would like to see more of the vets events being drawn into the selection process to provide a vets ranking system but fully appreciate that this kind of change is always going to be controversial.

7) As requested my opinion of new format for 40-50 in Men's foil is not worth attending as now we only get six fights in rounds followed by a last eight tableau which took five hours to complete. Looking at age group qualifiers previous years this has low attendance also and I have been told because nothing to qualify for this means low entry.

Talking to a variety of fencers at competition from all age bands we are disappointed we cannot compete against each other only in rounds. The title of competition is British Veterans Champion. Myself and many others would like to be able to see who best Veteran is across all age bands.

As a relative new Veteran as only my third year the first two years reminded me of my younger years competing in opens and trying to beat everyone there.

I understand what is trying to be achieved and sending strongest team to World Championships and other competitions but from what I can see our best fencers had been sent in previous years.

I think the argument that a 40-50 fencer is too tough for other bands is incorrect as last year's finals saw most bands in last eight in Men's and Ladies Foil.

I reserved my judgment for competition day and was left disappointed with new format.

I would understand a situation of say 2 age group qualifiers competitions to make sure people selected were consistent with results and not just having a one off good day. I do think everyone still wants to see a National Veterans Championships within Men's Foil anyway.

I am passionate about sport and have fenced since I was 14 years old and spent many years on circuit. When I started competing in Vets I discovered old friends and made new ones. The problem we have is many of us in younger years spent endless weekend on circuit and do not want to do that again. I do think making a couple of competitions people would be happy with.

I don't think we can truly compare our circuit to Mainland Europe as it does seem they have gone to another league in participation. If you look at some of countries at ET16 and their members competing for instance Elvis Gregory for Italy world Cup and Olympic Fencer. It really is a different league and other countries have taken Veterans Fencing to another level. The French Foil team many members of Senior Foil squad had never stopped fencing at high level straight from senior squad and into Veterans team.

Looking at the Epee entries yesterday it does look like there is higher attraction at first age bracket and does seem from comments it works for this weapon. It does look like difficult to please everyone but within Men's Foil we would like chance to see best Men's Veteran foil champion.

I thank everyone for their hard work at weekend and I hope a way forward can be found to meet everyone expectations.

I do know this is a hard job and very difficult and appreciate effort everyone has gone to host event. The venue was well laid out and very good pistes. Presidents were very good and people helping in background made event well run.

At present the new format makes us in age bracket 40-50 question weather to attend for such little fencing. Maybe wait to participate when in 50-60 age group as this is when it matters for selection. The entry for this level was very strong and I watched some really good fights.

8) Firstly I just wanted to say a big thank you to you and the team of organisers who all helped to pull off a great weekend's fencing for the BVF members.

Whilst I had some reservations about the location, venue and format I felt it all came together in the end. The new format may not be popular with everyone and personally I would have preferred a few more fights but I understand that the size of the venue made it difficult to fit in 2 rounds. There was also a long gap between the round and the DE on Saturday but understand this was due to IT restrictions and no doubt this will be put right for next time.

I also understand people's affection for the old style nationals and in an ideal World it would be nice for this to continue even if it was not a selection event but obviously this would have to be in addition to the new style 2 qualifying events and requires more work for the organising committee.

I think what saddens me the most is the relatively small number of people who attend these events. I can't believe there are only a dozen or so women fencing foil and epée up and down the country in my age group (50-59). Perhaps once the dust has settled and we agree to move forward with a format everyone is happy with, OK the majority as you are never going to please everyone, we need to consider a massive recruitment drive.

9) Time between DEs. A little longer than usual but we were kept informed on timings. And it was to be expected given the 3 weapons and split DE categories.

Format. Makes no difference to me. I adjust to it and prepare accordingly. If I felt strongly against it I would address to the committee or boycotted the event altogether.

I would have liked the poules to have been larger or to have had 2 rounds. I didn't think 4 poule fights was enough.

10) I liked the venue and feel that if being there we help them to upgrade the facilities that is good for British fencing. Better than being in a centre that British Fencing does not gain from. The two day format is a no brainier. As retirement age goes up more veterans are going to be working, thus they can only get there over two days. The middle of the country helped.

Having been last year I felt the one round versus two was a loss. For me the BVF has a role to encourage more veterans to fence and two rounds does that. The nationals have a prestige that the Age groups which is focused on qualification does not have. I missed the staged final of last year and the format may always make that difficult but they could improve that next year.

If qualification and better teams are the issue it all needs to be within the age group as I think some of the women in group 2 felt they lost their seeding due to the group 1s who cannot go to the worlds. I think an overall champion is a bit of a red herring and we will all adapt.

11) I liked the format and thought it worked well. Hearing the views of others, {Third party hearsay redacted}.

12) My drive home on Saturday was only slightly less exhausting than the drive up. However I would say that the venue was good (apart from no showers!) and far better than Cheltenham. I hope the Vets committee will use this and London as the two preferred sites going forward which gives the fencers a nice North/South balance.

13) We were told the timings but I would have preferred another round before the DE or less of a gap. I wondered about having one round with all 4 age groups, dividing off to the second round with 1&2 together then 3&4 then going to age groups for the DE.

I liked the fencing off in age groups better. makes much more sense in my eyes. So overall I really liked the new format, just would have loved more fencing and less hanging around. Venue was fab and I realise they are work in progress re showers etc. Doing the comp over 2 days has also opened it up to a greater number of Scottish sabreurs who made it down for the first time ever!!.

14) I do not like the venue in Gloucester as it requires a very long drive, or a flight and either a lift or car hire, all of which is added expense. Manchester was still 4 hours but infinitely better than that. As an aside I have a big issue with the cadet and junior epee competitions as the furthest north comp is Birmingham!! So I am delighted that Manchester was the venue this year. I appreciate it may be politically correct to move it around the country but there should always be one in the North. Any event that is run over 3 days should make the Friday session a different weapon every year to make it fairer.

15) It is worth noting that Chris Hyde (president of Scottish Fencing), Paul Vaughn, Mark McKenzie, Lorna Smith, Gareth (can't remember surname? Cobb), Keith Davidson, Andy Pearson all came for the first time. Great news for vets fencing (and Scottish fencing too). A combination of being teachers/lecturers, self employed means that Fridays are not an option for these people.

16) Oldham was a good venue and the format worked really well for women's sabre. We had pools of 7 and 8 followed by the split DEs into last 8s. I actually fenced 10 bouts so it was great. In women's sabre the selection was spot on. I was sad not to attend the gala dinner but it was important to be in the best condition possible for this competition. The format made me take it really seriously - unlike me I know! Well done everyone, looking forward to seeing many of you at The Four Nations in Ireland.

17) I really liked the tournament and will definitely go again. I think separating the age categories is probably the fairest way for selection purposes. Personally, I would have liked 2 rounds of poules and I think we had the time and space to allow for that. Perhaps the first round could be for all age categories and the second round could be streamlined. I love the venue and it's well located as a central point for all nations to travel to.

18) The new format competition came in for a good lot of flack before it had even happened...The overall entry numbers will be down perhapsBut trying to have 3 weapons on 2days meant that you only had one round of poules followed by DE and this meant that some people especially in small DE, groups had to wait up to 3 hours for their first DE fight.

The structure of the competition is a lot better in my opinion.....I did not see any gold or silver medalists who did not deserve to be there.....Whereas in previous years people have won a gold medal in their age group category and who perhaps did not deserve to be there. Having a competition to select your ideal representative in the GB team at the world's and select teams for the Europeans has to have priority over selecting one overall individual winner.....But there is nothing to stop having another competition again just surely for that purpose.

19) My first BVF and I agree with XXXX as to the format - they should stick to this new format. Having it over the weekend is much more consistent with all other events of this scale and a lot easier just to travel on the Friday than having to take 2 days off work. Third time I've fenced at Manchester in the last few months and the venue is great.

I expect once they've improved the changing and showers then it really should become the home for the championships, if not then they might want to look at moving around the country so everyone experiences some issues with travel over the period BUT somewhere in Lancashire is supposed geographic centre of U.K. so surely Manchester makes sense. Might want to look to improving the catering at the venue.

20) It being my first BVF champs I can't compare formats. I understand the desire for there to be an outright Vets champ, but I think the category system works well; It's just not what people are used to. At the youth end we wouldn't expect the cadets and juniors to all fence together and pull two winners out. There are also at least 9 more medallists than there would be with a single event. I think that might actually attract people to the event. They should stick to their guns. I also heard many people saying it was great that there was no fencing on Friday as they couldn't attend when there was.

21) I am unable to call the event the British Veterans Fencing Championships because it was not, despite what Duncan tried to argue at the AGM.

I entered the Women's Epee and Women's Foil 60-69 events. In both events I was in a pool of 5 so had 4 fights and 2 DE fights. In the epee I hardly broke into a sweat I had so little fencing! This lack of fencing makes me feel that perhaps a refund is in order. I paid £20 for each event. I come to what used to be the National Championships to fence as much as possible. I enjoy fencing (and sometimes beating) all ages. It was suggested at the AGM that Equality was an important issue. I think being allowed only to fence my age group is Ageist.

This is quoted as a selection event. I feel that having only had such a small amount of fencing that this is hardly a true reflection of the ability of the fencers. Although my event flowed reasonably time-wise I am aware that in at least one event there was a 2+hour wait.

I noted there didn't seem to be any fencers from Jersey or Guernsey. Is this because the expense of travelling for 1 round of pools wasn't worth it?

There was no finals piste and presentations were very low key. On the positive side this did mean that we didn't have to wait around but it didn't give the finals the gravitas they should have.

The venue worked reasonably but this was because there was so little fencing. Whist I appreciate that there were problems with venues I don't think that the event should be tailored to fit the venue. On the positive and personal side it wasn't far for me to travel. Given the search for Equality Veterans championships should be moved around the country. I am aware that there were several fencers there who entered because it was in the north of England and wouldn't have travelled to Gloucester. There are a lot bigger venues in the north of England.

I understand that one of the original reasons for changing from a 3 day to a 2 day event was to enable sabreurs who work to enter. On my reckoning the number of sabre entries for men was down from 47 in 2106 to 40 this year whist the women's entry remained the same.

Given the vote at the AGM the BVF Championships should be brought back with 2 rounds of pools and DE for all ages so we get a national champion at all weapons, with master at arms for men and women. This should be held at a time of year (not during the summer) to encourage entry. Whist the AGM indicated it shouldn't be a selection event I agree with the points made in Graham Paul's briefing note and feel a selection place from the resurrected event would be a positive thing.

22) I feel compelled to write following the competition in Manchester over the weekend It was bitterly disappointing that we now have another age group competition meaning that there was no chance of fencing the over 60's in my case, a category in which there are some excellent fencers.

I found it difficult to summon up the enthusiasm to fence at my best in the finals as I had already qualified. It would have been massively different had those finals meant I would have been national champion!

Overall I really wish the committee would revisit this comp and revert to a competition which is a national institution and highly thought of by all. In the past I have collected silver medals by the bucket load! Will I never now get the chance to get a gold!

The committee do a marvellous job and maybe we don't recognise this enough but on this occasion I wholeheartedly disagree with their decision.

23) I hope you don't mind me sending in a few thoughts following the fencing on Sunday. I decided not to wait until after the June event as I am unlikely to compete then.

Similarly I confess to feeling rather underwhelmed by the weekend: the U50 category is so small and not nearly as strong as the U60s and while I got to fence both gold and silver winners in cat 2 as they were both in my first round, I did not get to fence top challenging fencers like Gillian and Jane. In relation to category 2, I am not convinced that the one round of poules system worked to produce the strongest fencers for the World Champs in Cat 2.

The multiple finals and semis made for a much less special atmosphere and I managed to miss watching the Baxendale / Worman semi-final entirely, which was a real shame.

I appreciate it might be hard to complete two rounds of poules across all six events, but if we were to go back to a three day, two rounds of poules event, maybe we could consider rotating the Friday weapon(s) so that every third year, people had to miss a Friday (not applicable to those clever people who can master more than one weapon, clearly).

I also do not believe there are enough veteran women foilists to use a points based system - it would make for very repetitive events given the very small group of women we are: even combining all the categories there were fewer than 30 women foilists.

I accept that it may well be that we need different rules or formats for different sexes/weapons.

I do appreciate that it is worth experimenting with different things sometimes, but we must be prepared to listen to fencers before and after the event and respond accordingly, including with a complete reinstatement of the original format if that is what the majority desire.

I hope these comments are taken in the way in which they are intended - a fencer who has tried the new format, but having experienced both, would prefer the old. As always, we are all grateful for all the hard work you guys do on our behalf.

24) I was not competing last weekend, and therefore I chatted to many fencers. {Third party hearsay redacted}

25) A personal view on the British Veterans fencing championships and recommendation of future steps.

First I would like to offer my thanks to the commitment of the committee and to Manchester Fencing centre for the hard work and dedication all put in to ensure we had a championships this year.

May I applaud the committee for the bold move in trying to change the format of competition. Improvement can only come about through change. I know speak only for the weapon I fenced in which is women's epee cat 3. I am sure there are enough eloquent fencers that can speak up for the other categories and weapons.

I do not think this present format worked mainly because of the lack of fencing that we achieved. I am sure you have heard this many times but a trip to Manchester for just 8 fights is not seen as value. The format would have been improved if 2 rounds of pools had been possible but I understand this was out of the committee's auspices.

AGM

I have to express frustration around the AGM. Mainly I could not attend because I was stuck in endless traffic and thus arriving too late (having set off at 2pm!). Not that this was the committees fault! However, I would like to point out that I was one of quite a few who could not attend such a significant meeting. Please could the committee discuss how people who have been disenfranchised through no fault of their own be included in the future if such circumstances should arise again.

Recommendations

Format

The old format while giving more fencing did through up anomalies and it needed improvement. International competitions do not require fencers to fence outside to their age groups so having an all age DE risked good fencers in their age group being put out by younger ones and not qualifying for worlds unnecessarily.

Younger fencers will always physiologically recover quicker than an older fencer putting them at an advantage. However, age separation in the first round could lead to fewer fights due to the low numbers – particularly in women's fencing.

In February, a group of WE went over to Paris to participate in the French Veterans Epee Championships. This consisted of two rounds (with all age groups together) and then DEs in age categories. However, the French have a handicapped system for the two poule rounds. We were all a bit skeptical at first with this handicap system but having experienced it first-hand we would all support it.

So using Graham Paul's discussion point around appropriateness of using same selection across all weapons and genders I would like to suggest the following but around competition format.

Successful change management is difficult and can be very contentious. There are various strategies that can be adopted to ensure change occurs with the least pain. A slower approach may be beneficial. Can I suggest that for the next championships WE adopts the French system. Fencers can then see the change first hand and then decide if appropriate for their weapon. I would also suggest that we reciprocate the kindness that the French should do to us in their invitation and invite them to compete. Provided we have a suitable venue of course!

I hope the committee accepts these ideas and recommendations in the vein that they are written which is working together to improve and expand veteran fencing.

26) I am a Cat 1 sabre fencer who lives in XXXX. I went to the BVF championships in March for the first time. There are 2 reasons why it was my first time (age not being one of them) firstly, the sabre was not held on a Friday which meant I did not have to take annual leave from work and secondly, it was in the North which meant I did not have the expense of an overnight stay.

I really enjoyed the competition and the venue was overall excellent, although showers would have been preferred.

I would love to see the competition retain sabre being run at the weekend and I would like the competition to tour so that it is accessible to different parts of the UK. I do understand why most fencers want to go back to the old format as depending on your age there was not much fencing.

27) My thoughts on the format at Manchester, I believe we should have age group selection. At least two competitions to determine who goes to the Worlds or European teams.

The USA have three tournaments a year and at each you receive ranking points. Top four per age group are selected a straight forward simple process.

28) First I did enjoy Manchester event. It is good to have something up North and also fairer. The venue was a little rough round the edges but it is a project in the making and the plus points far outweighed the negatives.

Selection is something I have felt strongly about for many years. I thought it was ridiculous to select two people for the Worlds from a competition run on the poules system when the Worlds run on DE. The wrong people could be selected eg people who were not fit enough. There is no reason not to run a competition on the poules system for fun but not for selection purposes.

GB's medal tally has been slowly dropping over the years. To win medals a fencer has to train hard and enter plenty of competitions. To have more than two selection competitions is a good idea it will help raise the standard.

I know the original idea of Vets was to have fun and fence and everyone still does but we are representing GB and have a responsibility to do as well as possible.

I fully support the BVF's proposal to modernise the competition structure.

29) I have to say that I was really impressed with the job the organiser and his team did both in organising the gala dinner and, of course, the competitions. The youngsters who stayed at the venue all day to carry bags, up and down stairs, etc... deserve some real praise (I wouldn't have done that, certainly not so good naturedly, at their age).

It was a lot of different events happening at once, but given that I thought things ran very well and having the presentations quite quickly after events finished worked well. It would have been nice to have had showers, but not a big deal. All said though I would prefer a reversion to the Gloucester tennis centre because it is ultimately a better venue and much more convenient from a travel perspective for me and I suspect a lot of people.

On selection and competition format and I don't have a preferred solution. I do appreciate it is a really tricky conundrum as the circumstances of different weapons and age groups are not the same.

In principle, I do see the argument for age group selection to be based on events within one's age group, as getting knocked out early by a much younger fencer in an 'Open' event can distort matters. That said the number of entrants for some of the older events means they may not get much of a day's fencing with age

group competitions – I think this is mainly a problem with the 70+ category and I think the initial grouping of two categories for the initial round of poules was a good way of trying to mitigate this issue.

I do think it is a shame to lose the Open Vets competition so perhaps one should consider having this event in addition to two selection events (but not in July / August when people are on holiday).

I recognise that the Age Groups poule unique format was quite a reliable way of selecting 3 of the 4 available places, but I have always disliked fencing in this format so I am interested to see if this year's 2 and 2 approach produces what I would consider to be reliable results. The poule unique system punishes a slow starter and fights to 5 are much more of a lottery than fights to 10. However, the FIE DE format with only the top 2 qualifying leaves no room for error (as Richard Cohen, among others, discovered).

I wonder whether we shouldn't just be pragmatic and re-introduce DE with recharge to address this issue as the purpose is simply to select the best fencers and this would help ensure that we get that result. The recharge system was only discontinued due to 'deals being done' in big 400 person World Cup events, but otherwise worked great IMO.

Good luck with your deliberations. There isn't a perfect system that will make everyone happy so I commend your willingness to grapple with this. And I do think the old system was due reviewing and probably updating.

30) In my opinion the Manchester Fencing Centre has some serious flaws and should not be used by the Vets until they are sorted. On the positive side were the good condition of the metal pistes instead of us having to use the Leon Paul supplied pistes for our previous competitions which were generally full of holes and the quality of the referees I encountered.

As regards the Championships themselves there are 2 mentions in the Minutes of the AGM that the format is the same as the Europeans and World Championships. I am amazed that no-one contradicted this at the AGM as they are both completely segregated into age categories from the pool round, as should be the case for a championships.

The BVF Championships has always been an anomaly since separate age categories were introduced by the EVF in the early/mid 1990s in that they are declaring one National Champion in the very unfair circumstances of 40 year olds fencing 50, 60, 70 and 80 year olds.

When you have age categories each category has the right to its own National Champion and an overall National Champion is a nonsense in a multi-category organisation. This was acceptable in the early years of the NVA when the numbers were small but when the numbers rose the NVA should have changed the format, particularly at mens' epee.

Although until last year the different category winners were awarded medals they could not claim to be British Veterans Champions as that title rested with the overall winner and anyway somebody else in their age category may have been eliminated earlier in the DE by a "youngster" thus depriving them of proving amongst their peers that they are the best (and possibly depriving them of World Championship selection).

The format this year went some way to addressing this but the seedings for the DE were still affected by having mixed category pools. The men's epee certainly could have been run as 4 separate age category competitions with category 4 being a pool unique and the others perhaps with a pool and then DE. Graham Paul's suggestion that each weapon and gender may have to be considered and organised differently could be correct because of lack of numbers in some categories.

I am rather surprised that a lot of people wanted to fence all ages as before and to have the competition as a social event.

It is first and foremost a National Championship and should be regarded and approached as such. It is interesting and should be noted by your working party that these comments are exactly the same as 5 or more years ago when the membership were surveyed about competitions and they asked for more competitions and social events.

So more competitions were added and these same people did not enter them so all except the West Midlands event have been scrapped I think. They ask to fence all ages but don't enter when presented with a competition and they like the social side which should be better placed within the non-championship environment.

I think your working party should be concentrating on producing a logical and fair National Championship and "Age Group" competition to provide the best selections for the World Championships and telling the membership to organise their own social veterans competitions and if these are really wanted they will happen

by those who claim to be enthusiasts for them. I don't believe at our age that a selection circuit is wanted and viable.

31) Congratulations; the Centre is a major achievement.

The Veterans Championships were well organised and fencers well cared for.

I liked the fact that the format of the Championships allowed me to win more fights than usual but appreciate that the consequent levelling of results may not be to everyone's liking!

32) Per conversation, I have written out a few thoughts on some of the changes. There are clearly as many different views as there vets, and it will never be possible to make everyone happy. I do think that the approach taken is an improvement, but I think we could make it even better.

Refereeing

Eliminating self-refereeing is a major step forward. I think the referees had to work very hard, and there seemed to be pauses due to shortages. I would gladly pay double the entry fee to have more refs - it would save at least as much in time and hotel costs if the competitions finished earlier. I would add that it is vitally important that the sabre referees are right up-to-date with the current FIE thinking - this is how the worlds will be refereed - and we may be selecting the wrong fencers otherwise.

Format

I understand that there is upset in some quarters because the new format does not allow three weapons, no master at arms, reduces the social side and it is difficult to select for non-age group events. However, it is vitally important that the format for selection for the worlds individuals follows the same format as the worlds. Anything else is crazy - we will be a social organisation rather than looking for medals. This also needs to run on two separate dates to allow for the odd illness or other absence. Where requirements for selection for teams or other events conflicts, these must take second place to the requirements for selection for the worlds individual places.

Therefore we must have two events with pretty much the same organisation as we have this season - i.e. one round of poules followed by a DE. Ideally this will all be in age groups (no mixed poules as we had at the weekend) but we must recognise that some age groups are too small. We should therefore have a clear rule like the Italian system - any age group with 5 or fewer entries may be (must be?) merged with an adjoining age group.

Discretion is always a problem. Places for the worlds individual should not be discretionary. Award two places in each age group at the first event and fill all remaining places at the second (a barrage may be required). Only in extremis should selectors be involved.

This leaves the teams. Give priority to the gold medallists at the selection events, but allow selection if it is the same person. Selectors can work out the Europeans.

Finally add a third event with the same format as the nationals used to be. This is used to confer the vets national champ title and master at arms titles. It is NOT used for selecting for events with a different format. We can still run one in the Autumn if we are organised enough. Truro anyone?

Location

Loved the salle, can we move it 300 miles south please? There used to be a map showing vets locations around the UK, I think the centre of gravity was Bristol/Gloucester. Why are we going to Manchester?

Circuit

Be careful - running a circuit and rankings will advantage those who have time money and energy to pursue these things. It is fine when you are 40, but this is a less interesting proposition as you get older.

33) Here is my personal feedback from the Manchester event: -

The venue was ok if a little cool at times. The 2 flights of stairs were a concern in advance but on the day, I was very pleased with the "helpers". As for no showers, I have experienced many changing facilities over many years as a fencer and the showers are always a bit hit and miss. Too cold, too hot, not enough water pressure etc. So, in this case not a deal breaker.

The metallic pistes were in good working order. Unlike the pistes we have from Leon Paul for other events such as the Vets Winton Cup which are inconsistent which is especially crucial at Epee.

The format was fine but unfortunately for me I only had a pool of 5 (4 fights only) in both my events (WE Cat 3 Epee and WF Cat 3 Foil) due to the number of entrants.

Going forward: -

Happy to go to this venue again.

Hopefully pools of 6/7 will be possible in the future as the numbers of women fencers in Cat 3 increase especially at Foil.

To have 2 selection events using the current format and a National Championships using the "old format".

34) I thought the Vets in Manchester went quite well. Thank you and the team for all the work involved in putting on the event.

What might make some people happy though is a slight change in format. The complaints seemed to be around:

Lack of amount of fencing

Taking too long

People wanting to do three weapons.

Randomness of poules then straight into DE.

Solutions:

Have two rounds of poules. The problem with having one round is that a 999 fencer could be someone who has not fenced Vets before, I can think of three wonderful men vet epeeists, at least two of whom have not fenced vets that I am aware of, Greg Allen and Quentin Berriman, and also Jason Scrimshaw (I think Jason has fenced some vets?) All of these 3 are quite capable of [easily] winning the event they enter. At the other extreme you could have three 999s who have just finished a beginners course and fancy having a go at the event because it is local to where they live. Then you might have someone who had two great results in the previous two ranking events but has been injured or sick since those two events, and is now a poor fencer. All these could lead to very skewed poules due to them being imbalanced at the start.

Having two rounds of poules should help to iron out these anomalies, and placate those fencers who want to do more fencing at the event. The seeding for the DE is from only the second round of poules.

I accept the Vets Worlds is also only one round of poules, which can have a certain degree of anomalies, but I believe we are trying to get the strongest GBR fencers winning our qualifiers. I think neither Graham Paul nor Bill Osbaldeston qualified in epee, they are both very strong, but of course have a second chance in June.

Spread the events over three days. Everyone can do three weapons, or the two of their choice. Raised income. Less fencing going on at one time. Therefore potentially more referees available (?). Therefore events run faster, or if not faster, there are not large gaps between rounds.

Problems and suggestions.

Finding a sports centre available over three days, and the cost involved (to BVF, passed onto fencers?) of the extra day.

Maybe use one or two of the purpose built fencing centres, and pump some money back into fencing rather than into an unconnected public sports centre. No need to hire pistes, boxes, and set them all up.

Maybe different format competitions for different age groups?

Conclusion

We all want different things out of the event/s, some enjoy the social aspect, others treat it purely as a necessity to fence in the Worlds, some want to try to win the Vets National Championship, and for lots of people maybe a combination of these and other things.

35) Selection

When the new process for selection was put forward, the plan was that competitors would compete in two or more competitions (preferably), and progress to a ranking. This was to be a fairer selection system. It is unacceptable for a fencer to be selected from one competition only.

After many changes we are now in a worse position than when we started. Selection is being made of two fencers from each of two competition. Some combinations of results will make selection a case of random choice by selectors.

I know due to the change of venue that the format for the National was changed at the last minute, which meant some people were totally confused about the format.

I feel that nothing has changed, a fencer can still qualify from just one competition. No progress has been made and in the process we have lost an enjoyable competition.

I'm not sure that fencers want to fence within their age groups all the time. It is positively detrimental in some of the groups where numbers are low.

Competition

I like many people liked the format of the old National Championship where all age groups fenced together. I was not sure that selection from this competition was ever fair but it was only for one of the places.

I'm am still fencing a full season at both veteran and senior levels in two weapons, and when possible sabre as well. The new format precludes fencing all three weapons. I hope this is not the case at Bletchley. It is short sighted to say that fencers should concentrate on one weapon. It is essential that there are enough fencers at all weapons for building teams. There are have been shortages in the past necessitating doubling up for teams in the higher age groups.

This years' competition ran more or less smoothly. Although there were great chunks of time between rounds.

There was an issue which arose is the Women's foil (60+, 70+).At the last moment we were asked to decide whether we wanted two poules or a poule unique. Although I didn't think we had that option as there were 10 fencers (the format published said less than 10 fencers then a poule unique). It was not clear if after a poule unique there would be DE as well, due to it being mixed age groups. Also we were told if we chose a poule unique it would be fenced on two pistes with back to back fights with no recovery breaks. This is contrary to the rules of fencing and not an attractive proposition for a veteran. Interestingly the 70+ fencers voted for a poule unique, but there were only two of them so they had selection already and they would enjoy more fencing (was it worth their while travelling all that distance for 4 fights and one DE). Whereas in a very competitive 60+ group we wanted to conserve energy for the DE.

Refereeing

It is essential at a selection competition to have referees throughout at foil, and preferably those qualified at foil. Inconsistencies do not even out (as example the 3 hits I should not have had scored against my opponent, to the 1 she did not score on me!).

Competitors should not be refereeing their own poules at any weapon, when seeding depends on it.

During the competition I did not have any of my weapons checked for travel or weight, nor do I remember this being done at any time. This is a selection competition and these rules should be applied.

Venue

I am aware that the venue was chosen at short notice and may not have been the preferred choice for the organisers.

I will state the short comings although I am sure you are well aware of these.

The Venue is very cold with inadequate heating. The only competition I have been to which was worse was the Cambridge Winter Open prior to 2016, they have now changed their venue.

The facilities are inadequate, toilets, changing rooms, showers etc. Although thankfully porters were supplied and they did a great job, unfortunately there were times when they were not there.

The most important concern I have about the Venue is one of Safety. The pillars adjacent to the piste are an accident waiting to happen, soon or later someone is going to impact at speed on one of these. Also Weapons hit or were stopped by these pillars several times increasing the possibility of broken blades and arm injuries.

It was obviously seen as a problem because the scoring boxes were placed at a level where they would not be damaged by stray hits! (This caused a problem for me because they were so high they were not in my field of vision. Also I could not reach the box to switch it on or off!).

Conclusion

In conclusion the best way forward would be a fair points system for selection. Qualifying competitions should be open to all Veteran fencers. There should be more than two qualifying competitions.

The National Championship should be reinstated in its original format

While the numbers of fencers are so low, particularly in women's categories, fencers should be encouraged to fence more weapons.

36) Events

My personal opinion is that points should be earned from a number of events:

- the BVF Championships (the old one with no age categories); Master-at-arms back to the BVF Champs
- several age group events held in London, the Midlands and the North
- open events like the WMO and Hampshire
- the European Veterans Individual champs
- the World Champs (but only where an excellent result is achieved, not just for being selected).

This gives a total of 7 competitions where anyone can earn points.

I would retain the WMO and Hampshire Open formats as it gives fencers a choice of format.

The age group events should be run on the same formula: 2 rounds of poules followed by D/E in age groups.

Points

EVF have points tables in place already. BF also has a points table. I prefer that we should adopt the EVF table.

The points earned in competitions can be adjusted eg

Open competitions – points from the table multiplied by a factor to reward an older fencer getting a good result eg a multiplier of age/30.

European and World results having their own multipliers

I wouldn't like to see a NIF system in place. Without a NIF a weak competition becomes very attractive as points come easily. The word soon gets around and the entry improves.

The number of results used for ranking are a subset of the points accumulated. For an age category the formula is fixed but between age categories it could be different eg

Age Category	Take the best # of results
0 (30-39)	4
1 (40-49)	4
2 (50-59)	3
3 (60-69)	2
4 (70-74)	1
5 (75+)	1

Category 0 and 5 do not currently exist but we should be thinking towards the time when they do.

The ranking points accumulated over the last 12 months can be extracted and the ranking tables published with a click of a button.

Selection

Selection can use the ranking data.

The World Championships Individual – use the ranking table to select.

The World Championships Team – select from the fencers attending the Individual and performing well.

European Team – use the ranking table to select.

There is no discretion, selection is transparent.

The BVF Championships is downgraded as far as selection is concerned. I am OK with this as in the past fencers who have won their age category medal often haven't bothered to turn up to any other events.

Now, what to do about Richard Cohen? The chances are that he will not get sufficient points from his one competition to be selected. Is this worth discretionary places and the political hassle? Should he be sacrificed on the altar of one-rule-fits-all?

37) Please find below a working document that I believe offers a robust selection process for International / World championships and other representative competitions.

The full season would compile of four Veteran Open competitions one held in England, Wales and Scotland (If the National governing bodies will organise a competition) all held over two days, so competitors would only be able to fence Epee and or Foil / Sabre.

Open Competitions from the Senior National Circuit, Ideally with a NIF factor of under thirty.

Foreign Competitions.

The four open competitions would be held last weekend in October, first weekend in February and the last weekend in April, the last open would be held on the last weekend in June and be the National Championship held over three days and incorporate the Master of Arms Event as well as giving a National Champion.

Formula.

For Example if a men's Foil Competition had forty fencers each fencer would score points 40 down to 1. If a 40/49 fencer came second he would receive 39 points multiplied by the NIF factor of the competition. If a 50/59 fencer came second he would receive 39 points, plus 25% = 48.75 multiplied by the NIF factor of the competition. If a 60/69 fencer came second he would receive 39 points, plus 50% = 58.5 multiplied by the NIF factor of the competition. If a 70/79 fencer came second he would receive 39 points plus 75% = 68.25 multiplied by the NIF factor of the competition.

Annual Veterans League

From the above formula a league can be set up for each weapon and gender. Each fencers best five results over the season would count, at least one of these must be one of the four Veteran Opens. The first three in the league table for each age group would qualify for the World Championships.

Also the National Champion / best placed fencer in each age group at the National Championships Event would qualify.

NIF

I think for the Veteran Opens / Foreign competitions should be 15, and we should adopt the NIF set for each open by the British Fencing system.

Conclusion.

This system would allow people to qualify who could only fence in one competition per year, also gives all fencers an incentive to compete as anyone can win National Championships and or the Annual League. Also by having the age category multiplier i.e. 25% etc it levels the playing field somewhat. With Veterans entering the Regional Opens it show our organisation's support for grass roots fencing throughout the United Kingdom. Finally I would like to see our committee lobby the FIE to see if they would consider allowing the Veterans World Champions to defend their titles at the following years tournament without it affecting the number of entrant's each federation is allowed.

38) Having fenced for many years at BVF comps. I was happy in the way that it has evolved over the years. However having recently fenced in March at Manchester I was not at all happy with the way the event was organised for the following reasons:

1. I like many others spent a lot of money on travel, hotels and food and only got to fence in 7 fights in foil and Epee, due to my age group. (70+)
2. The venue was cold and had no showers.
3. The venue is not large enough to lay out more pistes, therefore allowing for a second round of poles.
4. I would prefer to revert back to a BVF National event where we all fence each other regardless of age. It would not put me off from entering having to fence 40+ fencers. I would welcome it as it would help me to work at being more fit and active.
5. It doesn't matter one iota that as someone stated at the AGM that 'we are trying to bring our comps. in line with how the World Champs. are organised'. That in my view is an irrelevance in how we as an organisation decide what we should do to try promote and encourage fencers to get involved with our competitions. I want a good weekend's fencing for my time, effort and money spent. If we continue with running the event as happened at Manchester then I think in the long term fencers will opt out rather than in.
6. We have only three vet competitions to enter and I would not be adverse to seeing a - or + points system based on age, similar to the French system being organised but based on 2 rounds of poules and DE.

I hope my views will be considered along with those of others who have taken the time to write.

39) I have been meaning to email you since the Manchester event so many apologies for this very late input. I know you are probably up at Bletchley now but I wanted to send this before I compete there tomorrow so you can see that my comments are not influenced by my performance at the Summer Selection event, however well or badly I do!

I wasn't able to go to the Manchester event so cannot comment on the format tried there for the first time.

My main comment is that I would like to see a veteran's ranking scheme, rather than using just two events for selection. I did think the original purpose of looking at the competition and selection format was to change from selecting from just two events; the end result of all the upheaval doesn't seem to be much different from where it was. I know you as a group and the wider BVF committee have worked very hard on this and have received a lot of grief/hassle for your efforts; this I think is very regrettable and undeserved.

I think a ranking scheme could work well and be fair. I would see it having 3 or maybe 4 tiers:

1. All veteran's events in the UK, to include:
The National Championships
Bletchley (in some format, whether in separate age groups or all together)
The West Midlands Open
The Hampshire Veterans' Open
Hopefully some other stand alone veterans' events in other parts of the country, to get a wide geographical distribution
2. Selected Senior Open competitions to be nominated as 'BVF ranking' events. The cadet and junior rankings work in this way, with nominated ranking events.
3. European and World Veterans' Championships. (Although for events that you need to qualify to be able to attend this might be rather self-perpetuating, i.e. once you've qualified once, you are likely to gain more points to be able to qualify again; how do you get there in the first place...?)
4. Possibly other European Veterans' events which have open entry, e.g. competitions on the French Vets' circuit.

There could be different weighting to these different types of events.

The advantages of a ranking scheme over selection from just two events include:

1. Less pressure on performance/attendance at 1 or 2 events. If an individual is unable to attend due to injury or personal circumstances, this wouldn't necessarily deny them a chance to qualify.
2. Wider participation in more events with increased numbers at competitions such as the WMO. This would increase the enjoyment of those attending and the organisers and help to keep these events going by increasing their viability.
3. Encouraging regular participation in competitions in general which may enhance performances and again help with the viability of competitions.

These are some of my thoughts. Sorry if this has all been discussed to death already!

Best wishes to all and keep up the good work!

The following comments are the full range of feedback received by the Working Group following the Summer Selection Event relating to the format of the BVF Selection Events held in 2017. The comments have been redacted to prevent the individuals making the comments being identified and for evidential reasons.

1) As promised, I have given some thought to the selection process which are:

For the men's selection I believe that because numbers attending competitions are generally good with a high calibre of fencers, the final 8 fencers will always be the very good ones, with the DE process weeding out the weaker fencers early on. Generally, the men chosen to fence are very good fencers.

The problems really arise with the women fencers in that the numbers to choose from is that much limited, and once a weaker fencer has eliminated a good fencer then there is no further chances of that weaker fencer being eliminated before the finals because generally that elimination has happened in the semi finals. Is it possible to change the selection criteria that says if the numbers attending a competition are low (say less than 16 but more than 4), the finalists will no longer be selected automatically unless they have a proven track record based on the previous year's results? This would mean that new comers who have won would then have to attend the second competition in order to prove that their original result was not a fluke?

Just a thought.

2) You asked me to put down thoughts on vet's comps:

In order of preference:

- a Revert to the old format for the 2 competitions (nationals and age-groups) and use pre 2017 selection criteria (1 from nationals, 3 from age groups).
- b Have 4 or 5 national format events with World Cup points system (ie no NIF) – but with no rolling ranking.
- c Have 2 or 3 veteran specific events and a couple of nominated opens – the problem with this though is that opens are often not confirmed until a couple of months in advance and they may be off putting to “new” vets.

Whatever happens. There must be clear selection rules that eliminate any discretion in the selection process - with a 4 or 5 comp series you are likely to get several fencers on equal points so there needs to be a transparent way of separating the top 4 from the rest in the event of tied positions.

European individuals should not count as it is only really open to people who can afford at least £1k and take time off in mid May – if they do count then you should only get GB vet points for coming in top 8.

Previous Worlds points – I don't think so, – this is to stop one trip to Worlds at age 50 resulting in an advantage for all future years. If someone is good enough to perform well at worlds then they should be good enough to qualify via the domestic comps (and also means that they can't not show up at the domestic events because they have a pile of W/C points “in the bag”. If they do count then only a top 8 finish should get UK Vet's points.

3) About the format, I thought yesterday was fine, really, all very efficient, and I enjoyed the day. I can see the argument for having all categories included in one competition, as it used to be, though I can also see the argument that this might produce some lopsided seeding when the categories get separated after the pools. So, essentially I am very happy with things as they are. (I did notice, though, that there were rather few of the 40-49 age group at the Manchester event.)

4) I spent most of the drive home thinking about what we discussed (the joy of that being the last conversation before I left)...

Today I hunted back through my emails to see if I could find the early documents and conversations but failed, so the following is a collection of my thoughts, impressions and suggestions but please forgive me if I have mis-remembered something in the process. I hope to make a constructive contribution to the debate based on my 53 years of experience as a fencer and as a fencing administrator.

First of all, I am 110% in favour of the change to our system and voted for the proposals we were offered in the original survey. Without writing a book, the following are my reasons for wanting to embrace the changes:

* The sole purpose of our selection events is to establish a team to represent GBR.

* The World Championships are no longer 'a holiday with a bit of fencing' and all nations take them seriously with the aim of winning maximum medals.

* We need to take a step up in terms of a more professional approach to our team selection in order to have the best possible fencers getting the best possible results.

* The previous system of National Championships and Age Groups did not necessarily achieve the strongest team.

* The Nationals could and did produce unrealistic results due to the mixed ages and how that might impact within an age group. This meant that it was not a clear indicator of the best in each age group.

* There is pent-up demand for higher standards and participation as shown by informal weapon groups forming to train and compete together.

When the new system was mooted I understood that it offered the following:

* A group of competitions for which Veterans would earn points and therefore ranking status.

* Replacement of Nationals and Age Groups with two competitions comprising 2 rounds of poules with all age groups fencing, followed by D/E in age groups. The team to be selected based on these competitions, and taking into account the other competitions suggested (say, 3 best results...)

* I voted in favour of this as it opened a ranking system and gave fencers the option to compete or not compete to obtain ranking points.

* I also understood that the team selections would be made after these competitions had been completed. (as I said, I cannot find the old docs so am hoping I remember correctly)

The system that we have used this year is as follows:

* One round of poules with two age groups only, followed by D/E in age groups.

* Two team members selected at the end of the first competition and one team member selected at the end of the second competition. One discretionary team place selection to be made by BVF.

* I was too ill to get to Manchester but from the feedback I heard one round of very small poules was not well received and I would agree with that.

* This week-end we had one round of two very large poules which was much better and did help to overcome the very strange seedings.

The outcome of this is that we have made a positive change to the competition format but we have not improved the selection process!

* A fencer can win the competition in March and be selected for the team. There is then absolutely no compulsion for them to do any further training or competing - they can still turn up at the World Championships in October, some six months later, and we have no idea if they are still the best fencer for the overall team.

* This issue was highlighted at the week-end with few of those who got selected in March bothering to come and fence.

* While there is now a Nationals offered it does not have any implications on selection and it is understood that it is a political compromise.

For those that did fence over the week-end there was formidable extra pressure to get a result in order to claim a single team space or be in consideration for a discretionary space. Selection, therefore still rests on a single result.

I am fully aware of the factions and views that have prevailed but if we want to really take the best possible teams to the World Championships I would be suggesting that we explore the following thoughts as we need to encourage serious training and continuous development:

* We develop a formal ranking system where fencers may get points in a range of competitions both in the UK and overseas. This system can be structured and weighted to encourage participation in our selection events.

* We stop the process of selecting teams based on one single competition at the beginning of the season + one other competition in the middle of the season and establish a selection date after all the competitions where the ranking system is used to guide selectors.

* We could offer three National Competitions to contribute points towards ranking and selection (supported by points from Opens and Internationals):

* National Championships in the 'all in' format. Towards the end of the season.

* Early Season selection event (two rounds of poules all in, D/E by age groups).

* Late season selection event as above.

* Points and ranking earned at these three events may be weighted and then used to select the team only after all three events have been completed. Fencers will then need to participate in all the competitions

throughout the season - thereby reaching the World Championships at some level of known readiness. Other results can then be captured to assist the selectors.

While I applaud BVF for taking up this challenge this year I am a little concerned that it has been compromised too much. We fete our Worlds medal winners and set store by our standings in the medal tables. We are one of the 'big' fencing nations in terms of numbers along with France, Italy, Germany but we need to do everything we can to push our fencers to raise and maintain standards as well as keep our status.

I don't pretend that it is easy but I do say that it is imperative that we move forward and do not allow ourselves to be dragged backwards. I make all these comments because I care passionately about fencing and I want to be part of a team that wins medals!

5) ... please may we go back to having proper age groups? For a 77 year old fencing a 60 year old is very hard and not right...

6) I can only reiterate what I have said before and that is, for me the cost of travelling, hotels, meals has to make my entering worthwhile with a good weekends fencing being offered, not just 7,8 fights. *{redacted as conjecture as to other fencers' opinions}*. One round of poules and direct DE does not offer that!

Some alternatives suggestions are:

1. That the events go back to how the competitions were run previously, that is two rounds of poules and then DE and offer fencers at least one opportunity at an event to fence all age groups.

I noticed that some of the fencers who did not come had already qualified.

2. One way to get around this is not to make it automatic selection by coming in the first two places of the two events but give everyone ranking points, say over 3 or 4 competitions.

If all fencers compete against each other regardless of age then some sort of point advantage needs to be considered, as do the French in their competitions.

I am pleased that our BVF committee look to fencers for feedback and I am doing just that, I do not wish to sound as if I am moaning, but wish to see as many veteran fencers as possible supporting our events and not put the emphasis on running it like the 'World Championships'.

7) Comments on the Bletchley Veterans:

Sabre in the afternoon ... excellent

Organisation of the event ... excellent

Venue ... excellent

Chances to win ... excellent

Final personal result ... not so excellent.

Keep up the good work.

8) On the whole I had positive competition experiences.

My comments are about weights & gauge testing.

At the 2 competitions that were world championship qualifiers at no stage in the event's did any testing of weapons take place. With the importance of these competitions I would have thought it would be mandatory. Also, and I know space is an issue, the box on a chair right next to the piste? Fencers obtained an advantage by using this as cover from a fleche. On 2 occasions people ran into them. At Manchester the pillars were an issue, I brushed them a couple of times.

Hope this is helpful.

9) Just a belated thank you to the organising committee for the age group championships. It was so well run with very little delay. I liked the new format as it resembles the World's set up and I feel gives more dynamic fencing as you have to adapt to a DE. Please pass on my thanks.

10) Just a note to say that the Age Groups (Summer selection Event) appeared to be a very efficiently run competition. It is lovely to be in a comp which does not require any self reffing, so a huge thank you to organisers and refs for that. Also from a selection point of view - in my opinion the "correct" people finished first and second in my age group (WE 50 - 59) so no complaints there.

My only complaint was that check in was advertised as 10:15 to 10:30 with fencing starting at 10:45. I arrived at 10 and our poule started without any warning at 10:25 - before I had finished warming up and before the end of the advertised check in period!! I am all for competitions running to time - but starting early is not OK.

11) I have been asked if I would like to send feedback on my experience of the BVF selection event. As this was my first BVF selection event, I entered Men's Epee, here are a couple of points:

1. I thoroughly enjoyed the day. I know there were a few difficulties for the organisation team and they handled these well and this in no way affected my positive experience.
2. Thoughts on the format. I understand there is a view that the format should be one round of poules plus DE to reflect an international (World Cup?) format. I generally prefer two rounds of poules in order to get more fencing. If the reason for one round is to get experience of that format or perhaps to replicate 'exam conditions' these seem pretty marginal to me - we get tons of that at other comps e.g. the Elite epee, British Nationals.
3. Have said point two I think I would still come again whatever the format.

All feedback intended constructively.

12) The Summer Selection Competition ran smoothly and efficiently and I appreciated all the hard work put in by the organising committee.

I must say I preferred the old style competition with a poule unique and fencers from only one category. If we are to have poules then DE, there should be two rounds of poules to sort out inconsistencies in the seeding (there are always fencers who miss competitions who throw out the balance of the seeding).

I have been upset that unlike previous years there would have been two opportunities to qualify at all three weapons. I think it is essential that this is reinstated, particularly for category 60-69 and 70+ women. It is important to have the most and best people available for Grand Veteran teams.

It has been said that Individuals should concentrate on one weapon! Evidence from the recent European championships indicate that this is not the case for older women.

60-70 category: 28% fenced two weapons and 8% fenced three weapons

70+ category: 46% fenced two weapons and 11% fenced three weapons

This was not to the detriment of the fencers achieving a medal, of the 28 medals awarded only 5 were to single weapon fencers.

I have found this season's fencing very difficult with lots of last minute changes to rules and formats. This year we need to decide a system before the season starts. We seem to have been making it up as we went along.

Overall the old system seemed fairer and produced less anomalies and difficulties.

However I believe that selection should be done from a ranking system over several competitions.

13) I am sure you have already had a lot of comments, but I would like to express my opinion on the current selection rules as I feel very strongly about it, hence I did not enter the summer selection event.

When I was reading about the changes a few months ago, I had my doubts but urged myself to be open minded. I think the new rules caused a negative effect on the selection for the World Championship. This was very much highlighted in the WF competition. The most consistent fencer who achieved 2 bronze medals in the 2 selection events and another bronze in the European Championship did not qualify for the World Championship.

I think a one off good result is not equivalent to consistency.

I think separating age groups in the current format is wrong, choosing the first 2 in the selection events is wrong.

I would support a ranking list or 2 selection events:

Selection event One - old format BVF with all age groups involved in one competition, 2 rounds of pools, one fencer qualify from each age group.

Selection event Two-all age groups fence separately, one round of pool followed by DE. Fence off for 3rd place. 3 fencers qualify.

14) Please pass on my thanks for those involved in organising the recent summer selection event in Milton Keynes.

I thought the new format was a good change and significant improvement to the old format, (even if it did mean a round trip of 440 miles to fence one round of poules then a DE!)

15) For what it's worth, my thoughts, I'm in Cat 3:

I preferred the poule unique format we used at Bletchley last year, rather than the poules +DE. It makes it a good day of fencing.

I am always surprised that weight and gauging isn't done at BVF competitions. I think it would level the playing field if we did it.

16) I am writing to you as I understand you are considering the way forward for selection events etc for the BVF. I am not sure that what I have to say is directly relevant to selection, but it is certainly relevant to BVF events as a whole and I ask that you bear it in mind when making your recommendations. I am copying in the Committee as I would like everyone to be aware of my comments as I believe they represent the views of many of the membership.

I write from the point of view of a Cat 1 woman sabreur - probably the most underrepresented category of fencer at the moment. I have no interest in selection - primarily because I am too young to be selected, but also trips abroad are probably beyond my means even when I am old enough. I am not alone. I would say 90% of the membership at least have no desire or chance of being selected to fence for GB and I believe that our voice is going unheard.

When I first joined the vets at 40, I was asked to compete as a bit of a 'ringer' for my region at the Vets Winton. However, when I attended the event I found that not only did I enjoy fencing people of my own age group, but the social scene at the vets was warm and inclusive and made for a very entertaining weekend. Despite the considerable cost of staying in the fairly expensive recommended hotel and attending the dinner, I was hooked and considered it well worth the effort, expense and time.

After a couple of years of attending the Vets Winton I decided to take it a step further and go to the Nationals. Sabre was on a Friday - not a problem for me - and again I really enjoyed fencing such a wide and friendly range of people. Two poules made the event thoroughly worth going and the opportunity to fence everyone was a great attraction. And - as I performed reasonably - I had the bonus of being asked to fence for England at the Quadrangular and GB in Germany. Both totally worth it for the friendliness and social nature of the events.

I have to confess I have never attended an Age Group competition as women's sabre is such a small group and when you can't qualify for anything, there doesn't seem much point in going to a competition where there is much less fencing.

Then came the changes.

What was a nice, social event with plenty of fencing and the opportunity to fence every category (ie the Nationals) became a rushed event over two days, with only one round of poules and with the age groups divided. It appeared that everything had become about selection and the attraction of the event for the majority of the members had been forgotten. I found it such an unattractive proposition on paper that I didn't attend. Unfortunately I haven't heard many good things about it from those who did attend. They all travelled a long way and had much less fencing than was previously offered under the old system.

I list below what I see as disadvantages in the current system:

a) 3 days to 2 days means 1 day sharing 2 weapons which leads to:

- i) no master-at-arms competition which was very important to some people.
- ii) Problems with selection if you wish to qualify in both weapons but can only compete in one
- iii) not enough time for two poules and consequently less value for money/effort

b) 1 poule gives minimal fencing and reduces chances to meet and fence different people.

c) Age Groups sabre has women and men fighting on different days so now the Cat 1 fencers can't all fence together (which made it worth their while going)

d) The sense of occasion for the National Champion finals has now been lost

e) I do not acknowledge that the old system failed to select the best fencers. I can't see any amazing fencers who have suddenly come out of the woodwork using this new selection system.

f) If you want to attract more younger fencers (in order to keep your supply going) you need to offer them an attractive event because they are unable to qualify for the Worlds and need a different incentive to go.

g) Encouraging fencing in the older age bracket is supposed to be an aim of the BVF and the new system is not doing anything to enhance this.

h) Vets events are an expensive hobby and should give best value to all members.

NB. Fencing over 3 days means that each weapon is accorded the same importance. There is an argument that some people cannot take time off work to attend on a Friday, but then how will they be able to go to the World Championships if they can't take time off work? A rotation of weapons for the Friday - realistically probably between sabre and foil may be acceptable. And you have to balance upsetting a few people who can't make a Friday against upsetting those people who can't compete in the Master at Arms competition and those who can't compete in both their chosen weapons as they are on the same day. I think fencing reasons (ie the latter two) should prevail over personal circumstances.

I am not resistant to change, but I cannot see anything good which has come out of the recent changes. Unfortunately the changes also appear to have stirred up dissent in the membership and even the most mild-mannered friends of mine are unhappy with them. I wish you luck in finding a compromise, but I do entreat you to bear in mind the broader picture - encouraging people to join and to putting more emphasis on the fun and social side will please the membership and does not have to preclude being effective for selection.

Thank you for your time

17) I enjoyed the weekend of the summer selection event but would prefer to have two rounds of poules before the DE so that I could have the chance to fence more people within my age group.

I am sure it would not affect who is selected but it would make it a more enjoyable weekend.

Many thanks

18) Thoughts on this year's selection events

In order to select the strongest members of an Age Group to represent Great Britain it is necessary to for them to fence each other.

The format of this year's events has meant that you could have taken part in both competitions and still not fenced members of your own Age group who were there but were separated by the arbitrary selection of poules and the "luck of the draw" of the Direct Elimination.

Surely the best method of finding who is the strongest in an Age Group is to allow them to fence each other in a Poule Unique as has been done in previous years in the Age Group event?

Veteran fencing has always been about interesting and enjoyable fencing - seeing how you fared against other Vets even if they are not in your Age band.

The format of previous years' Nationals promoted this and I believe has kept so many people interested in and enjoying the Sport!

These people can be found organising at Club and County level and putting so much more back into the Sport.

The Gala finals at the end of the day were much enjoyed – this facet was completely lost at the first selection event. Fragmented finals and presentations happened during the day and you left with little idea of who had achieved what.

I do hope that the Gloucester venue has been booked and confirmed for this year. Many people who made the trek up to Manchester have vowed not to repeat it. Venue was not suitable for Veterans – so cold – poor changing facilities – poor parking –up so many stairs – poor refreshments. Those lovely ladies did their best but it was no substitute for hot meals and most of all good tea and coffee!

19) Summer Selection event at Milton Keynes

The format was fine and although the numbers of entrants in my events (WF Cat 3 Epee and WE Cat 3 Foil) were still low, having only one round but a pool of 6 and a pool of 8 respectively was much better than the pool of 5 in each that I had at Manchester. With reference to the pools of 8 and 9 for the Women's Epee Cat 3 and 4, having enough pistes and Referees available for this to run smoothly, and was a good warm up for the DE.

20) First, I know the committee have a tough job, puts in a lot of time, and is trying to serve many people with different agendas , and perception varies by gender, weapon, age group. I appreciate it's a thankless task

as so many people want different things. But I think in the last year the focus on selection process has resulted in changes to our competitions which have proved unsatisfactory for many of us compared with the two well supported events we had that were not really that broken in the first place.

I came to both events this year to give them support and to give the new format the benefit of the doubt. However I came away from both feeling they were no different to any other event I could go to, Whilst I enjoyed meeting up with old friends as usual, I came away from both events with a slight feeling of 'so what'.

But, the events we have are well run, well refereed, extremely friendly, enjoyable events, and suitable for any veteran fencer to take part in, no matter how confident they might be. They are inclusive, we just need to encourage more people to realise that and take part. I think just a few tweaks will vastly improve the experience even more and increase attendance.

So feedback on a number of issues as follows :

Selection

Please can we stop fixating on selection. 90% of the members, myself included, are not interested in selection or are in the selection zone, and we just want a good days fencing and decent value for money/time. The events should facilitate selection, not be the be all and end all of it, otherwise many fencers will get disenchanted, not attend, and when that happens BVF will go down a slippery slope. It is obvious the more social fencers and Cat 1 fencers are no longer coming.

By calling the event a "Selection Event" it almost says "this is not for you" to many people. It was clear that at Milton Keynes the entry was down on previous years and many of these social fencers were not there. The people who want to be selected will turn up and fight in a pub car park if that is what it takes, but the rest of us don't have to.

You do need to engage the less serious fencers – as they may well form the teams of the future - I can point to a lady from my club who was a social fencer for many years, stuck with it, but has now graduated to being selected for the worlds in the each of the past 3 years.

Format

The biggest change you can make will be to have two proper rounds of pools – one round basically gives very poor value for money, and the more social fencers – who BVF has some duty to serve will not come. It was clear that at Milton Keynes the entry was down on previous years and many of these social fencers were not there. A pool of 7 or 8 is not an alternative to two rounds. Where the entry is 10 fencers it should be a pool unique followed by DE. Two rounds also enable a better seeding for the DE, as there were several 999 ranked fencers who should not be lurking in the pools.

I know some people will say that two pools is too much fencing – but if you want to fence at the worlds and win it you will need to be fit enough to go through at least 4 DE fights so an extra 5 pool fights is not that bad. My other issue with a one round format is that we just end up fencing the same people over and over. Two rounds means you get some variety. In Manchester I found myself fencing my warm up partner in the pool and then in the DE. Having fenced this person at 3 opens already this season, you can see why I was not impressed to go to Manchester for 3 more of the same!

We seem to have settled in the UK (not just Vets, but widely) for one round and a single DE as the default fencing experience - it is not good value for money - and its why the less keen social fencers are not going to competitions and events are struggling. You could also run a plate event for those knocked out in the first DE round across all the groups – the more fencing that is on offer the more people who may come. It's no coincidence that the event which offers the most fencing (Winton) is the best supported despite being in a difficult location for some teams.

Location & Start Times

I am very supportive of using venues like Manchester – we do have to spread the travel load, and it kept money within the fencing community. Manchester has a few wrinkles to smooth out, but I would be supportive of using it again, subject to a better format. I thought it was a great venue and a bit of atmosphere.

It was a long way to go, and more expensive – unjustifiable for only one round of pools – I don't go to open events in the north which already offer two rounds, so I need a good reason to come, and Manchester turned out to be the most expensive I event have been to in the UK this year by quite some margin. As a contrast I went to fence in France the following weekend and it cost me half what I spent to go to Manchester.

So whilst I agree we should use the venue, and if more fencers from the north can attend that would be a big result for BVF, I would probably regrettably give it a miss. I know quite a few people who feel the same way, who went and will not go back, or who did not go at all. BUT it all depends on the format ! Give me 2 rounds, and let me fence sabre and epee, and I will be there.

I am in favour of a circuit – around the UK and Scotland – and the development of a ranking system. Just need more events, but with more people.

More sensible start times please – the events in Manchester and Bletchley started way too early. Even with two rounds a 9:30am check in for 10:00 start is manageable to run. If people have to stay the night before they will start to question coming – esp for just one round of pools. Most people will tolerate a 2 hour drive on the morning before check-in – start times should allow for that, and allow sufficient time for people getting to the venue on public transport. Similar comment about WMO which always starts too early to enable travel on the day from the SE.

Like many people I can't justify staying away 2 nights for every event - I am away enough as it is and Mrs XXX's patience is wearing very thin. Cat1 and Cat 2 fencers may have wives, husbands, and children who call on their time, and can only do a competition if they can get there and back in a day.

Two weapons

You should allow people to enter two weapons, and if they are knocked out early enough from the first event then they can fence. If they are still competing when the second event starts they scratch or choose to swap and potentially lose the entry fee. the choice should be the fencers not the organisers. At Both Manchester and Bletchley there was 90 minutes between me going out of one event and the second event starting. I could have gone one round further in each and still been ok to fence the second weapon. BVF needs every penny it can get so preventing people from fencing and getting entry fees is just plain silly. There are not that many of us who would try and fence epee and sabre on the same day but I am sure it can be fixed.

Cat 1

The two selection events were not good experiences for 40 year olds – there was a reasonable turnout in Manchester but it should be no surprise that nobody turned up in Bletchley. You need a format that encourages 40+ to come but that has been a problem ever since I joined the Vets. Perhaps a reduced entry fee might encourage them?

Nationals

Please don't call one of two identical selection events 'the Nationals' again. No one was really convinced of it were they? Have two qualifying events and one nationals.

Great to see the event at LPC come up – although July is not a good time, and I think for many the location is not good (perfect for me though), it is a great addition to the calendar. We just need to market it better next time, both home and overseas. Nice to see two foreign entrants.

Entrants

Please allow foreign fencers who are based in the UK and are members of BVF the right to enter all our events. Otherwise why would they bother being members? Every entry is money in the bank, and BVF needs the cash. Yes they might knock someone out of contention. Tough. If that person can't beat a "foreign" fencer at home why should they go to the worlds/euros? I think we'd know if there were world class foreign veteran fencers lurking among us so I really don't see this being a problem.

Again, those of us outside selection just want to fence as wide a group of people as possible – not just the same few people. At my club in London we have Spanish, Italian, French, Dutch, and Malaysian fencers who have all lived here for over 10 years, who could make a good contribution, but are excluded. I would go further and allow entries from abroad, but accept that may be a step too far for some. I am all for making the competitions bigger and harder, so that a higher quality enhances the BVF brand - keeping the entry closed will not achieve that.

Other Events

I have fenced a few times in French vets events, and clubmates have been to Dutch ones. All have a minimum of two rounds before the DE, the Dutch ones had pool uniques of up to 18. All are part of a wider circuit of events. All welcome overseas and domestic foreign fencers and do not care that they may disrupt their rankings. They all give a good days fencing for the effort of going. Really good to see an event at the LPC – would be good to see the more social events that were around when I first joined the vets make a comeback –

Middlesex epee, Oxford unisex foil – both very well supported – obviously the organisers of these have moved on but can BVF encourage anyone to take on organising a small scale regional events?

More team matches like the German one would be a good idea – but extend it to have a B team or an intermediate team to allow more to take part.

That being said we have 6 events now (2 selection, 1 at LPC, WMO, Winton, Hampshire) – for a small competing membership in a packed calendar, that may be as much as we can support. Add in worlds/euros, 4 Nations, Celtic Challenge and that makes one event a month over the season. I know many Vets only fence in vets events, but the younger of us are still active elsewhere – opens, region, county, Excalibur, and other events UK and overseas, which makes a packed year. Just reinforces my earlier point that if push comes to shove, Vets events with a poor format could be the events dropped.

What are our events for? What is Vets Fencing about ?

A bit of a deep question to finish, but I think it is at the heart of the issue. On the one hand BVF wants a professional selection system for sending teams to the Worlds/Euros, on the other it has a membership of 500 people most of whom don't give a fig about selection, but many of whom don't come to the events we have either. Among the members we have a group who perhaps see the BVF events just as a stepping stone to fencing at the Worlds, and those who just want to have a good days' fencing. Hard to satisfy everyone .

Overall

- Happy to use Manchester again – though for me it is too far and too expensive for too little fencing on current format
- We have to have 2 rounds of pools
- We must have a proper National Championships again
- We must admit 'foreign' fencers
- We must allow people to enter 2 weapons on the same day

21) I have the following observations.

Can we please stop pretending that we are interested in sending the strongest possible team to the World and European Team Championships? On the basis of seeing this since 2014 it seems clear that what we are really interested in is avoiding difficult choices which require judgement and deep fencing knowledge, and which can be controversial precisely because they are judgements. Personally I am entirely comfortable with trusting selectors to do their job impartially but the consensus view of the majority of the veterans community seems to be the contrary.

Given that the objective has become avoiding people taking decisions, a fully automatic system with no discretion whatsoever is unavoidable. If such a system is to come close to selecting the strongest fencers it should:

involve multiple competitions to reduce the effects of bad luck, injury, or the grandmother of a good day; best 4 out of 6 nominated events seems ideal; the minimum in any such system should be best 3 from 4; include a requirement to fence foreign opponents (after all, that is what the World Championships involves): I suggest participation in the European Championships be made mandatory for World Championship selection alongside one other nominated overseas event. A second event would need nominated in years where there is no European Individual.

I accept reluctantly that this requires us to have more veterans competitions. Personally I still prefer to fence in open events but I accept that for older fencers and weapons other than epee they are less attractive.

Do not use direct-elimination formats in single competitions which determine the allocation of places. There are too many variables: a single hit the wrong way at 4-4 in a poule can cost you five or six places in the tableau, even if there are only 25 in the competition and many more in a bigger event. Regardless of the seeding you can draw the one person whom you never beat, or vice versa. The draw can put the two strongest fencers in the same half of the draw, and so on. The argument that we want to select fencers who can win DE bouts is spurious. Fencers who win lots of five-hit fights tend to win lots of ten-hit fights.

Can we please ignore any argument which claims to be based on giving everyone an equal chance of selection. You could only achieve that if you selected by drawing lots and even then your chance would be greater if you were a 70-year-old women sabreur than if you were a 50-year-old epeeist.

My most important plea, however, is to cease allocating places for the World Championship team events on an automatic basis. If the consensus of the membership is that the four individual places at the World Championships should be determined automatically by whatever system, at least allow ourselves the ability to consider the team as a unit. A good team has complementary styles and strengths so that it can analyse opponents in advance and adopt different roles in response to the course of a match. It should be selected to maximise those opportunities. If it must be determined automatically then we should do use the results of the individual competition the day before. At least that maximises the team's seeding. If someone is not prepared to stay an extra day unless they are guaranteed a team place they haven't got much faith in their own ability to perform or much team spirit.

22) Thanks for taking the time to review the competition format and selection criteria. I offer these views for consideration.

I am happy to see two (rather than one) age group qualifying events, with the top 4 highest placed fencers being invited to represent GB at the World Championships, with the top 2 in each age group being invited to represent GB in the team. I'm not keen on mixing the age ranges in the seeding rounds. Moving to two qualifying events is a step towards our European colleague's systems who have a veteran's series. That said I think two qualifying events is enough as we also want to encourage people to enter senior opens and filling the calendar with too many vets competitions would discourage people from entering senior events.

I feel strongly that there should be two seeding rounds at our competitions. Firstly, to encourage people to enter, offering two seeding rounds makes the event much more attractive, people are reluctant to travel for what might only be 4 or 5 fights and a DE. Secondly, only one seeding round makes the DE seeding somewhat arbitrary, particularly if the age ranges are mixed in the seeding rounds. I do not accept there is insufficient time for two seeding rounds. There was lots of time (well over an hour) waiting around at Oldham between DE rounds. Furthermore the Leon Paul event this weekend started at 09:00 and was over by 13:30 with two seeding rounds. I have also experienced two seeding rounds comfortably in a day at the French event in Lille with Duncan earlier this year.

If entry is small, say less than 18, then we should consider a poule unique rather than seeding and DE.

I would also like to see a national championship where everyone over the age of 40 competes together, as at the Leon Paul event this last weekend. I would like this to be open to foreign veterans with national medals going to the highest placed GB fencers.

I hope this contribution is useful and thank you again for taking the time to canvas views and review the competition format and selection criteria. I look fwd to hearing your views.

23) Just my thoughts while there is still time for them to be considered.

Firstly, bearing in mind the membership numbers, I'm not convinced that for the purposes of selecting a strong team that there was much wrong with that we had. ie A Nationals (Gloucester) over 3 days with sabre on the Friday, and an Age Group. It seemed to cater for selecting a strong team and, in the main, threw up strong candidates for the Worlds. So I would be happy to return to that system. If not Gloucester maybe somewhere more central like Nottingham.

Having sabre on a Friday has obviously caused a couple of people some concerns but I believe the majority of people understand that it is the obvious weapon to choose for practical reasons. Rotating with foil and epee is unlikely to work.

The alternative is squeezing 3 weapons into 2 days which is the old quart into a pint pot problem. This year it meant that some people could not do some weapons. This has definitely cost, at least, one person a World qualification. I seem to recall a while back, trying to reduce the Senior Winton from 2 days into 1 caused similar problems and they have now gone back to the original format. Maybe a reference to the Winton isn't exactly comparable (because I'm not sure of the details) but I do know that many people - I would be as bold as to say the majority - feel they have lost something special in the 3 day National Championships.

On the other hand I do believe that using just 2 selection events could be a lot fairer. Anyone can have an off day, be ill or otherwise unable to attend one of the events which leaves them just one other chance to qualify. OK we could say 'tough' but if one of the 2 main objects is to select the strongest fencer this could be tough on us.

I believe the Americans use 3 events and take the 2 best results. This would be fairer. Also I was involved in a discussion with about 6 female epeeists at MK, and they were suggesting 4 events and taking the best 2. This also seems a touch fairer.

I mentioned 2 main objectives. Selection being the obvious one. Enjoyment and value for money being the other. It's important to allow people to compete in all 3 weapons should they so wish. It's also important to note that the vast majority of vets want two rounds of poules, not just one and DE. 2 poules obviously evens out some of the inevitable anomalies in vets seeding as well.

I was concerned that this weekend's event at the Leon Paul Centre would be a damp squib due to a London venue being difficult to get to and lack of qualification incentive. To an extent I was right, the numbers were predictably down across all weapons. However having 2 poules made up for this and the venue was superb. I wouldn't object to going back there. Not sure how this could figure in your thinking.

Other thoughts -

* Automatic Selection is both simple and non controversial. *{redacted to protect anonymity}*

* With the possibility of Appeals against selection and the Worlds taking place in October, it's important that places are decided fairly early (Accommodation, flights etc need to be done sooner rather than later). If we do consider more than 2 selection events it might be an option for the first one to take place the year before - say November/ December. This would lend itself to a rolling ranking system.

* Only events that UK fencers can reasonably get to should be considered for qualification. European Vets events are obviously of a higher standard and it certainly shows commitment travelling to them, but not all vets have either the time or the money to do this. So I don't believe it fair that they should count for qualification points in any way.

* Long term it may be worth considering that the different weapons or the different age groups don't all have to be treated exactly the same. There is a huge variance in numbers and ability across the age groups and genders. This needs to be taken into account and different approaches in certain circumstances might make for a fairer and more enjoyable experience, especially for the older groups.

24) Here are my comments (for what they are worth).

Please consider treating every age category separately as the different ages want, and can cope with different things.....e.g. if you are considering a circuit the older ones should not be expected to do as many competitions as the younger ones.

You must bear in mind that the majority of the membership are not expecting to qualify for anything and just want a good days fencing.

Do not be too rigid in your instructions as to how competitions should be run. Guidelines yes but the final decision should not be made until all the entries are in. In Manchester some people had very poor value for money but with a little flexibility that could have been improved.

As much as I enjoyed the London Open it was not the Nationals and did not have the feel of the Nationals about. That was a great weekend please reinstate it.

Remember that we need to encourage the younger vets. This year we have given them nothing.

Finally *{redacted to protect anonymity}* please allow the timings so that we can do 2 weapons in 1 day. Quite possible with the numbers which we had this year.

25) My feedback on the competition and selection format is as follows:

Two selection competitions OK but need to be two rounds of seeding poules, to give a reasonable amount of fencing for those that enter. At present there is no encouragement to enter the competitions if you are not seeking selection.

I like the split between age groups, as this is fairer. Maybe winner only has automatic selection, to encourage more to attend.

Better if selection is on a points basis, as this would encourage all to enter both / all competitions.

London competition a must. Needs promoting more, could be included in a points based selection?

Hope this helps.

26) Firstly, thanks for all the work you put into organising the selection events – it is very much appreciated.

While I understand the logic behind changing the format to more closely match that of the European and World championships, I think the competitions have lost something of their appeal as a result. It just seems that we

are doing a lot less fencing and a lot more waiting around between fights and rounds. The latter point was particularly prevalent in Manchester, but it also happened at Bletchley. One point that I found particularly difficult was when in the foil we were sent over to start a pool of 8 on two pistes with only one referee. We were fortunate that Tony Bartlett volunteered to referee when he wasn't fencing (and he did a fine and completely unbiased job) otherwise it would have been interminable, but no fencer should have to referee in a pool for a selection competition. It's not fair on anyone.

Graham Paul made a fair point about us needing to bring in more younger vets and it seem to me the way to do that is to make the competitions as much fun as possible, consistent with getting a fair result, and for that I feel we need lots of fencing, otherwise we're potentially spending a lot of money and spending a lot of time for six pool fights and one D.E. If your two weapons happen to be the ones that run simultaneously that problem is enormously exacerbated; I really think you need to find a way to allow people to enter all weapons.

I was cheered to hear that you brought back the 'old' format for the Vets' Open, and I'm sorry that I was already committed that weekend so I couldn't make it. I hope it went well and that you get a lot of positive feedback from it – many thanks for arranging it.

27) **2016-17 Season**

This year's competition system has been disastrous for veterans fencing. Most of the drawbacks were predicted, but with the added problems surrounding selection. Unless this situation this can be remedied for next season I believe many fencers will say 'why should I renew my membership?'

Drawbacks included-

Deserving fencers being left out from the Worlds.

No atmosphere for the finals.

Total confusion as to who was British champion, with trophies being awarded to winners of the Open competition, and one fencer refusing the trophy in protest. (Not me!)

Fencers wanting to fence more than one weapon were disadvantaged.

The killing off of the real British championship, with the poor substitute of a competition in the middle of July etc.

The possibilities for next season are-

Hold a series of age group competitions to determine the selected fencers.

This implies, as a minimum, selecting 2 results from 3 competitions. This is because if you selected from only 2 competitions (without a third competition), you are doubling the chances of someone being unable to be selected because one of the dates clashed with an important event or injury and it would not be possible to qualify from 1 competition.

However if you looked at some of the events with as few as 3 competitors, then 3 competitions would be a nonsense.

It also means the BVF would have to organise 3 selection events plus the Nationals as mandated at the AGM.

BVF lost £2700 on the 2nd selection event. It is going to be difficult to eliminate all of this loss in future. Entry fees and entry numbers need to rise, but if there are 3 identical competitions it is certain that the entry numbers per competition will fall, perhaps by as much as a third. If entry fees rise significantly then numbers will fall further. The competitions are very unlikely to be financially viable.

Go back to last year's system.

This usually selected the strongest team for the Worlds, and could also, with a minor tweak, do this for the European teams.

For the Worlds we should continue by taking the first 3 from the Age groups plus the top fencer from the Nationals. This gives added atmosphere for the Nationals and an opportunity for any fencer unable to attend the age groups.

I propose the age groups are returned to a date earlier in the year, and could then be used to select 1 fencer for the European team. The other team fencer could be discretionary taking into account the age groups and the Nationals. The second fencer for the Worlds team event had been a discretionary selection for a long time without any issues that I am aware of.

I am confident that this would give a much better chance of selecting our strongest teams for the Worlds and European teams.

Ranking list.

We need a Veterans ranking list. This would encourage participation and be a motive for joining the vets for fencers who are not contenders for the team.

The ranking list would not be used for selection, at least for the time being.

Points could be scored from a number of competitions-

Vets Championship

Age Groups.

West Midlands

Hampshire

2-3 Opens

It is difficult to measure the strength of the Opens, although the NIF count could be used. An alternative would be to score positions relative to other veteran competitors. Hence if there were 20 veteran competitors taking part in a competition and you were the best veteran fencer you would score 20 points etc. The best 3? results to count (This means that no one would have to fence in an Open to be successful in the ranking system).

To encourage older fencers I would suggest that a handicap system is used, the points are multiplied by the fencer's age divided by 40. I have tried this formula on the results from last year's Nationals and it produced some sensible looking numbers. I would suggest that the winner of each ranking list after the Nationals would be presented with some sort of annual trophy.

The optimum numbers, competitions, handicap values etc could be determined in the light of experience, but as the ranking would not be used for selection, at least in the first instance, this would not be too much of a problem.

28) The only comment I have is that I was more than happy with the Championships as they were conducted at Cheltenham, until 2016.

I realise this year's competition had to be unexpectedly relocated to a venue which could not cater for the number of pistes required for the normal format.

So I'm hoping that everything's on track to return to Cheltenham, and to the 2015 format.

29) Please find my comments below. I've set out my understanding of the 'context', as this is the first year I've experienced it in full. Then 'observations', and a couple of 'suggestions' just to throw in to the mix. Good luck!

Context

It is my understanding the change from the old to new format was driven by a number of factors, including;

- a desire to achieve a transparent selection process based on merit/results, and in part;
- issues over team selection for ET16, where in some weapons individuals qualified or were eliminated from nationals without fencing other individuals within their own age group, and so unable to be considered for selection.
- If I understand correctly, the old selection process was 'age group winner' from Vets Championships in March, and then remaining places from Age Group Championships, run as pool unique, therefore clear placings/positions available.

Observations

- The issue with ET16 selection is understandable (if correct).
- The issue with ET16 selection could have been addressed in the old format, if the dates for the 2 competitions; Age Group and Vets Championships, had simply been reversed.
- The old format had the potential for a clear, transparent selection process. The new process would need to deliver similar levels of clarity.

Observations specific to New Format & selection process

- The new format removed the 'all comers' national Vet Championships, which from the AGM there seems to be a feeling of loss for. I too, liked that competition format.
- The new format does give clarity IF you have two different sets of finalists from the March and June events, AND they are all free to attend the World Championships. This has not been the case this year in some weapons, and introduced a degree of uncertainty in to the selection process.
- The New format does NOT necessarily make the next European Team selection any easier, as the selection criteria does not (I believe) identify how the 5th team member is selected. Assuming teams are still 5 fencers per team as in ET16.

However;

- I liked the new format of the age-groups being by pool followed by Direct Elimination.
- I also liked the old format single national Championships, with all ages fencing together, and the option to fence all three weapons.

Suggestion

- retain the age group format of pool & DE
- reinstate the old national championships format (all ages together)
- make selection explicit on;
- highest placed individual in nationals within each age group
- all other places in order of final placings from Age Group championships - as many as required.

Then;

- If Euro team is early in the calendar, the nationals and Age Groups should be switched, so Age group in March, and nationals in June. Euro team could be based entirely on Age group champs, and Worlds could include National Champ results also if available in time.

Good luck, I appreciate you have a difficult time ahead. We will all learn to work with whatever format and selection process is put in place.

30) I would like to reiterate my comments made before that the current selection process of two events is inappropriate and not fit for purpose. I am aware that many membership would prefer

only a two event qualifier because there is the off chance that they may get lucky and qualify. This is NOT a good reason to keep this and every reason to change it.

We should, I believe as a governing body, try to send the best qualified fencers to international events such as the Europeans and Worlds. More recently we have done so and this has yielded significant results in both podium places and world championship winners.

I would suggest we have 4 qualifying events. These all ready exist so there is no need to re invent the wheel. These are The Age Groups, Nationals, Midland vets, and Leon Paul vets.

In terms of format I would have the Nationals under the old format, as speaking personally I want to fence better younger (!) fencers. The age groups should be a pool unique if possible, and the Midlands and Leon Paul run under the existing system of two rounds plus DE. I would take the aggregate placings and use these for selection. This way the better fencers will qualify and we can overcome the unseemly issue currently being seen on selection and appeal process for World Cup selection.

If this is not deemed suitable then I would reluctantly go back to the old system of Nationals and Age groups

Just my take and I hope this can be given due consideration

31) First of all I'd like to say how much I enjoyed the event in Manchester in March - great facilities with metallic pistes, everyone was friendly and helpful, although the journey back to Plymouth was a bit of a nightmare! A larger number of fencers in my group (women's epee group 1) would have made it even better.

My thoughts on selection and competition format:

- a. I like the idea of one big competition every year where all ages (that want to) can fence each other.

(I very much enjoyed the BVF Open Competition last weekend. Despite being seeded 2nd after the poules I was knocked out by someone in an age group above me - I actually find that quite inspiring!)

b. If you are trying to select the best fencers in a particular age group I believe that a separate competition for that age group is probably best - either a poule unique or standard competition if too many entries for a poule unique.

c. I would be happy to have a number of nominated events each season in order to gain points to work out an overall ranking for each fencer.

d. From a purely personal point of view - If at all possible I would be very grateful if competitions could be timetabled to avoid last week in May to the third week in June when I might need to be around to help with shearing (depending on the weather)!!

e. It would be good to know in advance if age groups would be amalgamated for competitions. (I did not attend the BVF 2017 Summer Selection Event in June this year because there were only 2 entries in my category and last June Group 1 Women were combined with Group 1 Men. Had I known that I would have had the opportunity to fence the Group 2 ladies I would have taken part.)

I hope that my comments are helpful.

Many thanks for all the hard work that goes on behind the scenes.

32) I thought I might summarize the views I heard and add my 'two penneth'

First and most important and often overlooked - the objective of the qualifying event(s)

- to pick the strongest possible team to represent GB. It is not to a) increase the number of participants in vets fencing or b) to give people competition practice a particular format.

These are worthy of consideration when looking at developing Vets fencing, but are not related to selecting the strongest teams for the Worlds.

I'm only looking at the individual worlds, not the team event or European Team Championships. I'm told that one of the reasons behind the plan to change the selection scheme is that the wrong team was automatically picked for the European's team. Maybe so, I wasn't there, but if there is a problem with selection for the European Team, then let's look at this, but this is not a reason to change the selection system for the individual Worlds.

For the Worlds, the current poule unique system has worked well for as long as I can remember.

What better way to find the strongest fencers for the Age Group Worlds than to have everyone in the Age group together to fight it out. If you want to be in the team you have got to have finished ahead of the current top four (or three if you pick one from the nationals as at present).

If the event got too big, it would be a problem, but at the moment, in Mens and ladies Foil, all I know about, this is not the case.

So....the proposed new format is one seeding round with mixed ages. 40s, 50s, 60s 70s, all together, with 40s seeded higher than 50s; 50s higher than 60s. 60s higher than 70s, followed by DE in age groups.

Firstly, 40s are irrelevant as there is not a 40s event in the Worlds, but to have 40s in the qualifying event would affect and could skew the results.

Secondly, to seed by age as is proposed is unrealistic. Graham Paul (70s) for example should be seeded above most (nearly all) all 40s and 50s. Ditto Tony Bartlett (60s)

It is likely that seeding in this way for the an age group only DE, with a mixed seeding round, will give a result in which the seeding is virtually random and, in a DE with random seeding, anything can happen.

The problem is the DE, however you seed it, especially where numbers are low, as is the case. There is a 50/50 chance that any two fencers will be on the same side off the draw.

The problem is that the top 3 or 4 fencers in an age group can end up on the same side of the draw and eliminate each other.

With only first and second qualifying i.e. one from each side of the draw, then only one of the top 4 qualifies.

Which puts at least one, maybe two in the team who has never beaten one of the top 4.

Two events are proposed and this could easily happen in both events, meaning two weaker fencers go to the Worlds at the expense of two stronger. But the objective of selection is to pick the strongest team.

You might think it is unlikely that the top four end up in the same side of the draw ??

Not so, it can easily happen. In the Worlds this year, 60s foil, three Brits, all medal winners at previous World Championships and before the first round all seeded in the top 8, were on the same side of the draw, with two meeting in the L32, the winner meeting the third Brit in the L16. So only one medal chance from three 'top 8' ranked fencers.

No problem in the Worlds where the objective is to find the World Champion. But a big problem in a selection event where the objective is to select the 4 strongest fencers for the Worlds.

An example,

Take 70s men's foil. Two fencers are streets ahead of the others. Graham Paul and Brian Causten. Graham will beat everyone in the 70s, including Brian, but Brian is still no. 2 by a big margin (he and Graham were gold and silver in the Worlds in 2011, (60s). Both are potential medalists in the 70s worlds.

But in a DE qualifier, there is a 50/50 chance they will end up on the same side of the draw - so no Brian at the World Championships.

I think it is easy to lose sight of the objective of selection i.e. to select the strongest team for the worlds, and to confuse this objective with some of the other things that have been raised from time to time like increasing participation and increasing the number of events etc. (important, but not as part of the selection issue).

The conclusion I draw is that

- a) that the proposed system is less likely than the current system to produce the strongest team for the worlds,
- b) the current system works well, why change it.
- c) not directly related to selection, but important, is that the mixed age National Championship should not cease, so that there is a Veterans National Championship rather than four age group events.

I would like to add

Re: Manchester - nothing wrong with moving the venue, but I don't think using a new (unproven ?) team to run it was a success - shown by the 3 hour wait between the pools round and the DE.

There were more than enough referees from other age groups who would have helped if referee shortage was the problem.

Re: 2 days instead of 3. No problem with this, or rotating the Friday weapon, as long as everyone can enter three weapons. Denying people the opportunity to enter a selection event by restricting entries to, in the case of Manchester Foil or Sabre is absolutely wrong.

In Manchester, three weapons, could easily have been run in the one day, using referees from different age groups.

Likewise, Manchester winners cannot realistically be the called National Champions when e.g. sabre entries were denied to anyone in the Foil and vice versa.

Conclusion

This year, a new system was tried, nothing wrong with that, and clearly it was done with the best of intentions.

However, having tried it, it seems that there is a strong body of opinion within the membership that the previous system was better, having consistently selected the strongest teams, and as it is purely a results based qualified eliminated contentious appeals, and having a true National Championships.

Looking to the future, I think a return to the National Championship to select one team member and to give everyone the a good days fencing and a pool unique for the other three places, and an equally good days fencing is the the best plan.

There is no downside to having tried a new system and having tried it, and it showing that the previous system was 'better' and going forward reverting to the previous system.

33) I would like to make the following points on the current selection system and then seek to propose a simple means of improving it with the minimum of fuss and dislocation.

a. The current system with 2 competitions run on DE after 1 round of poules is unnecessarily random and will frequently result in selection of a team not made up of the most capable individuals. This is especially true for the team positions. The random effect is due to the potential impact of illness or injury on a single day, the vagaries of seeding and poules that has a 50% chance of the 2 best fencers meeting in or before the semi-finals, and the possibility of being knocked out by the same fencer twice.

b. Nearly all other countries use a system that incorporates more competitions, uses a points system, and permits at least one adverse result to be dropped. These countries include Italy, USA, France, Hungary, Russia, and Germany i.e. all the best veteran fencing countries.

c. The loss of the National Championships with a single national champion across all age groups is a great shame, was at the heart of the formation of veteran fencing, and has been a major attraction for 40-49 year old vets. Fundamental to its importance was its use as a ranking event. Its loss has removed the major incentive for 40-49 year olds to become veterans. This view along with the reinstatement of the competition was overwhelmingly supported at the last AGM in Manchester.

My practical suggestion to improve the current system in an evolutionary way, with the minimum of disruption is as follows. Move to a system with 3 qualifying events.

a. Reinstate the National Championships and use it as a third selection event, ranking people in the order they finish in their age category. It would be best to reinstate it in March as was previously the case. Retain the other 2 qualifying events.

b. Use a points system across the three qualifiers, with the best 2 of 3 results counting for selection, allowing for injury, incapacity, or pure bad luck.

c. Select down the ranking list with no discretion.

d. Revert with one of the qualifiers to the system of poule unique as in the Age groups previously. This is a less random format than DE.

This has the merit of a more balanced and less random system, achieves the reinstatement of the National Championships with its importance as a selection event, and retains at least one qualifier under the one poule, DE format used in the World Championships. It also removes discretion and any of the controversy currently experienced in selection decisions.

I believe it is urgent and imperative to improve the current system which I believe is flawed and worse than the system previously in place.

I hope you will give my suggestions due consideration.

34) First up I don't envy the committee the task of trying to come up with a selection and competition strategy and you'll never satisfy everyone (or even close to it). Nevertheless here are my thoughts and feedback:-

Both the BVF selection event at Bletchley and the BVF Open National Champs at the LP centre were very well run. I was unable to attend the March selection event in Manchester due to other commitments but plan to do so next year especially as I want to be considered for the European teams.

The attendance at the summer selection event was very low for Cat 1 which is a shame but not really surprising as it doesn't appear to actually select for anything for Cat 1 fencers. Numbers were also relatively low for the recent BVF Open National Champs compared to past turnouts at Gloucester but I think will increase once folks grasp what is up for grabs there. However I don't know if numbers will ever get super high because again as it doesn't select for anything. Nevertheless the opportunity to fence good veterans from abroad is attractive and offers much needed practise - I think this should be pushed harder for this event (possibly even offering subsidised or free entry to fencers coming from abroad, I would be happy to pay a few extra quid in the knowledge that I would get to fence some tough competitors from abroad).

As a Cat 1 fencer I think the lack of competitions to be selected for doesn't encourage or help would-be veterans to get the experience they need to make the transition over to veterans fencing, which is very different especially with the DEs to 10. Consequently I suspect many turn 50 and suddenly find themselves with a steep learning curve to deal with in the first few years when they ought to have the best opportunity of doing well aboard. Certainly I'm having to make a special effort to get myself ready before moving to Cat 2 but am finding it difficult to get the appropriate competitive practise in the UK on a regular basis.

There are no easy answers here short of having more selection competitions to build up a ranking and then selecting for European teams, home nations etc from these. But somebody still needs to run these and the

argument will be made that a good result 10 months ago should not out-weigh somebody in good form much closer to the event.

Perhaps we need to encourage British Cat 1 fencers to compete abroad on a more regular basis. The European individuals were great and left me keen to do more, but is not frequent enough. We obviously can't subsidise folks to go to these event but perhaps we could club together to organise travel to a nominated event or 2 each year (perhaps in the process negotiating a discount in some way), maybe even nominating a couple of events abroad as alternate selecting competitions. e.g. if you get a Last 8 or L16 etc. at a particular veterans event abroad that will be classed the same as winning a selection event at home.

Those are my thoughts, please get back to me if anything above is not clear and many thanks for all your efforts.

35) I fence all three weapons. Because of this I mix with all three weapon groups and hear fencer's views on competition formats as well as experience them first hand. What I am hearing is discontent across all weapons.

The aim of the changes:

“maximise GBR's medal tally at the European and World Championships while also providing more opportunities to the whole of our membership to participate in fencing.”

I consider that BVF have failed in both this season.

In December 2016 I sent you an email with my thoughts about the new competition structure. This was before any of the competitions had taken place. I am sending it to you again as I think what I had to say then is relevant today.

I can now include my opinions after the 2017 events.

The Manchester and Milton Keynes selection events.

- A clash of weapons meant people had to choose one weapon over another even if they wanted to fence both of them.
- Bit like paper, stone scissors, you had to guess which weapon would clash at MK and therefore which weapon you would opt to fence in Manchester to better your chance of qualifying.
- Some talented fencers failed to qualify in all age groups.
- Numbers were down in every weapon as fencers were missing doing other weapons.
- Entries in some weapons was so low you only had to pay your £25 stand on the piste and get hit and qualify.
- There was no thrill of winning it was just, job done.
- There was nothing for 40+ fencers.
- The competition was rushed through, often splitting a large poule to hurry it along.
- Fencers who were not interested in selection were short changed with one round of poules and small entry lists.

The BVF (Leon Paul) Open (international?)

At the AGM in March 2017, John Crouch proposed we revert to the previous format of an Open event for all ages fenced as two rounds of poules followed by a complete DE and to be held over three days . 37 were in favour, 4 against and 6 abstentions.

The BVF committee in an attempt to appease fencers staged an Open at the LP centre. Excellent venue, extremely well run and quite fun for the small number of fencers who turned up compared to the numbers who would normally attend a Nationals in March.

Why was this?

- Friday parking nightmare at LP centre. (Saturday and Sunday easy).
- July start of holiday season, not fencing season.
- Competition did not mean anything, not a qualifier, no prize money.

- Competition not the National Championships.
- Clash with Norfolk Open, popular Open for Vets.

The awarding of the National Championship trophies for this event was, I consider, an error of judgement.

Guidelines

- Do your homework thoroughly first before changing things.
- Do not change things if they appear to be working well.
- Do not change things if the majority are happy with the status quo.
- Changes should be introduced gradually with constant feedback being taken into account.

The future

- I want the National Championships in its original format of an open event for all ages fenced as two rounds of poules followed by complete DE to be held over three days.
- I want the Age Groups reinstated as a poule unique event.
- I want a third competition introduced which again could be an Open Event followed by a DE. This can be a weapon specific day run on separate weekends like the LP event.
- I would like to see a series of ranking competitions. Not to be used for selection but to encourage more participation. These can be spread throughout the year. They can include the three selection events and three other competitions to be decided but I would suggest, minor opens. I am no good with scoring but I'm sure someone could come up with a ranking scheme that would work. Jim Pilkington has been very successful in the South West with introducing a ranking scheme across the Counties resulting in a big increase in participation across the region.
- I want to see the mixing of cat 1 and cat 2 in the poules abandoned for selection events. This does not mimic either the Worlds or Europeans. Same for the cat 3 and 4 fencers.

The future of selection

- The winner of each age group at the Nationals has a world place.
- The top two fencers at the Age Groups have world places.
- The winner of the third selection event qualifies unless the winner has already qualified from either of the other two.
- The Age Groups is always taken as the default competition. If fencers drop out then they are replaced by the next available fencer from the Age groups.

36) Apologies for the lateness of this feedback - I wanted to wait until after the BVF Championships were done and see what the entry was like.

It was dire as predicted but that's by the bye as that was expected due the late change of plans.

After the discussions at various points and meetings I would like to offer the following feedback and suggestions;

- a) Separate age category events for selection - mixing of age groups depending on numbers though.
- b) BVF championships to be run over 3 days and in the existing OPEN format. I would like to suggest that a MAY Bank Holiday Weekend would be more appropriate than Friday, Saturday, Sunday.
- c) The BVF Championships be held at the Leon Paul Centre.
- d) There needs to be rotation of events/weapons over the three days.
- e) A creation of a BVF Ranking Circuit with events held around the country - Events to be age grouped to allow proper ranking systems to be implemented.

Hope this helps