

RESULTS OF THE 2009 SURVEY BY THE FENCING COACHES OF CANADA¹

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Introduction

In March 2009, the Fencing Coaches of Canada (FCC) invited all fencing coaches in Canada to participate in a survey. The survey was intended “to gather information that can be used by the FCC to document the needs of current coaches and to devise a plan for meeting those needs.”²

The availability of the survey was advertised on the website of the Canadian Fencing Federation (CFF). The survey was opened on April 7 and closed May 6, the data being captured electronically. The data file was converted to an Excel file and sent to the author on May 6.

This document reports the results of the analysis of these data. I begin with a brief description of how the data were treated, and then I report on the analysis of the quantitative parts of the survey. The qualitative results are presented next. The report ends with an overview of the results.

Procedures

Two factors affect the types of analyses that can be performed validly on the survey data: the kinds of responses permitted by the survey itself, and the number of responses captured. Many of the survey items call for a yes/no type of response. This tends to limit the kinds of statistical analyses to straightforward descriptive statistics: means, ranges, etc. Also, only 17 responses to the survey were captured, thus it is unwise to attempt any statistical analysis of comparisons (as in cross tabulations.) Given that the survey was intended to help the FCC Management Committee make decisions, I decided that the analysis should aim for data reduction, with some comparisons attempted by amalgamating data. To this end, one step in the treatment of data involved creating three groups of coaches based on levels of certification and experience, as described below. Data were also organized by province for additional comparisons.

¹ Submitted to the Fencing Coaches of Canada Management Committee on May 14, 2009.

² Fencing Coaches' Survey—March 2009, page 1

Who Responded to the Survey

Seventeen fencing coaches responded to the survey. This represented 63% of the FCC registered coaches (as of April 21, 2009), and approximately 10% of the 158 coaches holding valid CFF licences.³ The 17 coaches who responded identified their provinces as follows:

Alberta	1
New Brunswick	2
Newfoundland & Labrador	1
Nova Scotia	1
Ontario	5
Quebec	4
Saskatchewan	3

Years of experience ranged from 5 to 35 years (average = 9). NCCP (and other) qualifications ranged from Maître to level 1, and can be depicted as follows, with all weapons almost equally represented:

Maître	4
Prévôt	2
Level 3	6
Level 2	4
Level 1	1

The survey asked respondents for the highest level of athlete coached by weapon. This item contained a large number of variables making it difficult to represent. But it was possible to group together coaches with similar experience and credentials, as follows:

Group A coaches
(n = 6)
Qualifications between levels 2 and maître
Coached senior and junior national team members
Average coaching experience is 22 years
Generally coach all 3 weapons.

Group B coaches
(n = 5)
Qualifications between levels 2 and maître
Some coached cadet national team members, most have coached CSC and provincial medalists
Average coaching experience is 21 years
Coach 2 or 3 weapons

Group C coaches
(n = 6)
Qualifications between levels 1 and 2
Some have coached provincial medalists
Average coaching experience is 14 years
Coach 1 or 2 weapons

The expressed needs of these three groups tend to be different, as shown below.

³ This figure was provided to the FCC Management Committee by the CFF Technical Director, in an e-mail dated May 14, 2009.

Coaching Development Needs

The survey asked respondents to check areas of need as well as to their rate priority. The following table shows the priority (3 = high, 2 = medium, 1 = low) attached to each area of coaching development by the coaching group. The sum of each row is provided to show the relative interest in each area.

Area of Coaching	Group A	Group B	Group C	Sum
Advanced Technical Skills	3	3	2	8
Intermediate Technical Skills	1	3	1	5
Beginner Technical Skills	1	1	3	5
Tactical Application of Skills	3	2	2	7
Seasonal Planning	1	1	2	4
Conditioning/Strengthening	2	1	1	4
Mental Training	1	3	3	7
LTAD	2	2	2	6
Implementation of National Skills Program	2	1	1	4
Competition Selection for Different Age Groups	1	2	1	4
Coaching the Competitive Fencer	2	2	3	7
Coaching Different Age Groups	1	1	1	3
Club Development	1	1	1	3
Mentoring	2	2	2	6

Coach Learning Modes

The survey asked coaches to indicate preferred learning modes as either “preferred” or “no thanks.” Survey data suggest that:

1. Coaches rejected teleconferences and videoconferences.
2. Coaches preferred mentorship, seminar presentations, practical workshops, extended (4 – 7 day) camps.
3. Many coaches expressed preference for access to written and audio-visual coaching materials.
4. There were no differences among Groups A, B, and C.

Under “other,” a modest interest was expressed in web-based instruction.

Timing and Location of Educational Opportunities

Month

According to the coaches, the best months for offering coach education are

May	6
June	7
July	10
August	12

Other months were relative unpopular (range 1 - 3, median 2)

Day

Most expressed preference for a weekend (14) or for a full week summer camp (12)

Only 3 expressed an interest in a weekday following a CSC. (One remarked that food should not be provided to discourage attendance by those whose interest is food only.)

Willingness to Travel

A substantial majority of Group A coaches indicated a willingness to travel anywhere in the world. But this was generally not an option chosen by Groups B and C.

Also, those in Groups B and C who opted for travel anywhere in Canada were in the minority.

The ground travel time given by those willing to travel outside their local areas ranged between 5 and 8 hours.

Assessment of Current Coaching Education

Coaches were asked for their views on the availability of generic coaching courses, of fencing-specific coaching courses, and of mentoring opportunities in their areas of Canada. The grouping of data by coaches (A, B, and C) was supplemented by grouping by province, which proved revealing.

Generic Courses

Only one coach reported that generic courses were readily available. Most coaches, especially Group A, suggested more were needed. The following emerged when the data were compared by province:

1. Coaches in Alberta, New Brunswick, Newfoundland and Labrador, Nova Scotia, and Saskatchewan generally believed that generic courses were available regularly or semi-regularly.
2. Coaches in Ontario were divided on this issue; most saying that courses were not available even semi-regularly.
3. Coaches in Quebec indicated that courses were not available regularly or semi-regularly.

Fencing-specific Courses

Regardless of province or Group (A, B, and C), coaches rated the availability of fencing-specific coaching courses low. Eight coaches indicated that they would like to hear about more courses and camps.

No coach checked the item “We do not need any more courses/camps.” The evidence of expressed needs suggests that we can interpret this to mean that all 17 respondents believe that more are needed.

Mentoring Opportunities

Eleven coaches reported that either they have a mentor or that they would like to have a mentor. Five reported that they did not know how to get a mentor. Just one coach said there was no need for mentoring.

Other Coaching Issues

Respondents were asked to give open-ended answers to three questions about other issues:

- What other issues should the FCC address in the next four years?
- What would you like to see changed in coaching development in Canada?
- What do you require to reach your personal goals as a fencing coach?

The responses were varied and seemed unrelated to Group or province; rather, responses seemed to be directed at a small number of themes. These are described below using the responses in a manner designed to mask the identities of those responding.

National Team Coaches and National Programs

The FCC needs to promote collaboration between national team coaches and personal coaches. Personal coaches could be invited to work with national coaches at World Cups. Personal coaches could be more involved in developing and charting High Performance management and program, and should be involved in development and implementation of fencing’s LTAD. There needs to be improved communication between the CFF, PSOs, and coaches.

NCCP

The FCC should assist in the transition toward the new NCCP and should inform coaches of the progress being made in all provinces and territories. Steps should be taken to determine equivalence of former NCCP levels with the new model. FCC should ensure that standards of certification are met. NCCP materials and workbooks should be prepared and made available. The FCC needs to ensure that the CFF expeditiously reports changes in coaching qualifications to the Coaches of Association of Canada.

Coaching development

The FCC should be involved in systematic coaching development. This requires the development and maintenance of a calendar of coaching training, and the organization of workshops and camps including the availability of level 4 instruction. In addition, sources of funding for advanced training should be sought.

Mentoring programs need to be established and the FCC needs to assume responsibility for developing and monitoring mentoring relationships. Attention should be given to providing smaller clubs with access to qualified coaches.

The FCC should prepare and maintain a data base of all coaches. A newsletter should be regularly published, and a video library of international events should be developed.

Interest in Contributing to the Work of the FCC

This item revealed that most of those surveyed are prepared to help the FCC to advance coaching development. This part of the survey did not call for opinions and judgments, so the responses are not reported here. The Management Committee can refer to the raw data for this information.

Conclusions

Despite the relatively few returns, there is a high degree of consistency in the responses to the FCC's survey. Thus the FCC Management Committee may accept that the views represented above reflect those of the community of fencing coaches in Canada.

In particular, the community wants the FCC to assume leadership in developing programmatic coaching education and development. All areas of coaching should be covered except coaching different age groups and developing clubs. To those surveyed, this program would offer workshops and camps during May, June, July, and August. It would also include the provision of mentoring by qualified coaches. Furthermore, the instructional components of the program would be supported by various written materials and video recordings. The FCC is encouraged to join this program to the completion of the new NCCP.

At the same time, the Management Committee is expected to be developing collaborative frameworks with national team coaches and national programs so that the work of personal coaches and national team coaches is mutually supportive, and so that LTAD and HPP receive (and attend to) input from the FCC membership.

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