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Canadian Domestic Competition Circuits and CFF HP Programme Selection

The Board of Directors for the Canadian Fencing Federation has recently adopted a revised domestic and Canadian Selection Circuit (CSC) competition structure and format that will strengthen fencing competitions in Canada.

Until the National Championships in 2006, the Canadian Fencing Federation had tried several different competition structures to enable the best athletes to be selected for the high performance programmes (HPP) of the organization. Most recently, this structure consisted of two CSC events, one in eastern Canada and one in western Canada plus the Canadian National Championships. The growth of this selection circuit has been at the detriment of the Canadian Domestic circuit, the competitions hosted across the country by provincial organizations and clubs. The demise of the domestic circuit is associated with a decline in the number of competitors reported to the CFF over the years which is now at an all time low. Consequently, the Canadian Fencing Federation through ad hoc discussions with participants and within the Board of Directors has reviewed the competition structure and developed a new structure based upon the following principles:

- The more athletes competing in competitions, the stronger Canadian Fencers will become due to more experience.
- Growth in competitors requires the revitalization of the Domestic circuit events hosted by provincial organizations and clubs.
- CSC events should focus on HPP selection from the best athletes across the country.
- National events, CSC's and Nationals, should be planned two to three years in advance to facilitate planning, sponsorship and marketing and have a known format to make media friendly.

With these principles in mind, the CFF has moved to a competition structure that will be implemented over the next two seasons in the following manner:

2006 / 2007 Fencing Season

- All domestic Cadet, Junior, Open and Masters competitions will be eligible for a National Domestic Ranking managed by the CFF.
- Each event ranked will be assessed a \$25 sanction fee.
- CSC events will no longer be ranked in the Canadian Domestic ranking, results will only be used in the HPP selection rankings.
- National Championships will be ranked in both Domestic and HPP selection rankings.
- Format Change:
 - Super-pools will be retained for Junior and Open events
 - 20 to 30% elimination after first round pools.
 - Top 4 seeds from first round of pools promoted directly to super-pools
 - DE table of 16 fence with repechage to select 12 athletes for super-pools.
 - Super-pool results ranked from 1 to 16 (combined from both pools) and top 8 seeded into a direct elimination final.
- Re-assignment of competitions within the three competition cycle as follows:
 - September – CSC #1 Cadet, Junior; CSC #2 Senior
 - November – CSC #2 Cadet, Junior; 06/07 Nationals Senior
 - May – 06/07 Nationals Cadet and Junior; CSC #1 Senior
- Elimination of Provincial team events at CSC's

2007 / 2008 Fencing Season

- CSC events become limited to the top 48 Open ranked fencers, top 32 Junior ranked fencers and top 24 ranked Cadet fencers (Domestic ranking). Competition format as introduced in 2006 / 2007.
- Senior Nationals: Maximum of 64 athletes per event selected as follows:
 - HPP Athletes

- Top 48 in Domestic open Ranking
 - Provincial Champions
 - Top 4 from each regional event (westerns and easterns)
 - CFF assigned wild card to a maximum of 64 athletes if places available.
- Regional events must be held a minimum of 4 weeks prior to May competition date.
 - Size of Cadet, Junior and Masters Nationals assessed at start of season based upon size of domestic ranking for these categories.

Ongoing:

- Automated system for allocation of sanction numbers and ranking to be implemented on the CFF website.
- enGuarde results files will be uploaded at the completion of competition and ranked immediately.
- Automated validation that competitors hold CFF licences valid in the current season.
- Implementation of a membership system based upon smart-card technology allowing athletes to 'swipe' themselves into the competition (or course etc.) – see membership structure for greater detail.

Common Questions and Answers

Why is the CFF now Ranking Cadet, Junior and Masters events?

To foster competition in these additional age categories which are experiencing a growth in participation across Canada. Also, to allow the identification of fencers qualified to compete in the CSC and Nationals events.

Why is the CFF assessing a Sanction fee for competitions?

There is an ongoing cost to maintaining the support for competition ranking and to providing results in a timely manner. Whether this is by the current slow manual system or by the proposed automated web based system, there is an ongoing service cost to completing these tasks. The sanction fee charges those that use the service a charge for its use.

Why is there a change in competition format?

The super-pools were added to the CSC and Canadian Nationals to create an opportunity to give our better athletes more competition at a higher level. The past format has been found not to challenge the top athletes until post-super-pools. The new format has two performance based selections. First, there will be increased competition in the first round pools as the top 4 athletes have a bye to the super-pools. Second, only the top 8 of 16 athletes from the super-pools continue to the final 8. This is now based upon a combined pool ranking, so competitors will need to compete for a greater number of bout victories to ensure promotion in comparison to gaining a minimum number of victories in a super-pool to avoid elimination as number 7 or 8 seed at the end of the super-pool round.

Why is there a change in date for the Senior Nationals events?

There is an ongoing problem that has impacted Senior Nationals for over 20 years, usually resulting in the absence of our best fencers at this event. In 2007, there will be 5 World Cups the same weekend as our events in May. A Senior Nationals in May would mean that once again our best athletes would be absent, as they will be competing in World Cups to qualify for the 2008 Olympics. The change in the competitive calendar will not impact upon the current 'Canadian' fencing season, yet this change will ensure that our best senior athletes can compete in the National Championships, since there is no conflict with any important international events in November or December.

What benefits will be gained from Smart card technology?

There are benefits to the licence holder, competition organizer and to the CFF from the future use of this technology. Imagine a scenario where as an athlete, your name is no longer misspelled, that once you receive your CFF licence card you have the ability to show up at a competition and rather than stand in line, you can confirm your arrival by swiping the card through a reader. For the competition organizer, there will be access to a validated electronic membership list from the CFF that directly imports into enguarde for competition set up. No more typing and trying spell checking. If the name is misspelled, it is the athlete that registered it that way and it will correspond to the athletes smart card. There could be several card readers around the gymnasium making athlete check-in easy and scratch easy to implement. No more inconsistencies in names and licence numbers when submitting the results for ranking, which you will now be able to do when the competition ends, right from the gymnasium floor if there is internet access available.

There are also benefits to the CFF. Competition results will be available for viewing shortly following upload, the Domestic ranking will be updated upon submission of results and the competitors licence information and name will be consistent throughout the membership and competition system. Any non-licence

holder competing will be quickly identified and appropriate penalty action taken with the competition results or competition organizers.

Linking Competitions to CFF Licenses and to Ranking

There is an intimate link between competition management, results ranking and validated CFF licence holders that requires the ongoing planning and development of an integrated database licence system. The changes to the competitions can proceed without these automation steps; however, the proposed automation will make the competition system an active and dynamic environment which will foster ongoing challenges in competition to gain a higher ranking in all age categories. This excitement will be lost if we remain with a slow manual process that takes weeks to complete.

The ability to show competition results quickly with updated rankings (as is currently practiced on the FIE website) will not only serve the fencers of today effectively, but provide a publicity and marketing tool for the future growth of our sport.

CFF Board of Directors and Staff