

Cutting Edge Fencing

Submitted by Cutting Edge Fencing
Photos courtesy of Devin Manky Photography

When fencing coach David Howes moved to Kingston from Winnipeg in 2003, he wanted to create a program that would take children who were motivated to learn a new sport and develop them into champions. Twelve years later, it is safe to say that he and his wife Patricia, who is the head coach of the Royal Military College of Canada fencing program, have accomplished this at Cutting Edge Fencing.

Able to count many provincial champions across various age groups, numerous national championship medals, as well as athletes being named to national teams on seven occasions, Cutting Edge Fencing has become the premier fencing club in the region. Club members have also achieved some impressive international results. In 2011, Kerr Hutchinson finished in the top eight at the cadet (under-17) World

Championships. In 2014, Leonora MacKinnon won the Gold medal at the Junior Pan-American Fencing Championships, and this year she took home a Bronze medal from the Senior Championships in Chile. This last result has put her in a position to qualify for the 2016 Summer Olympics in Rio!

Not only has this excellent program developed many talented athletes over the years, the members of Cutting Edge are also very proud of their coaches. Head Coach David Howes is the national coach for the Canadian senior women's epee team, while Patricia is the junior women's sabre national coach. The past year has been a particularly busy one for this coaching duo. Patricia was selected to coach at the Junior World Championships in Uzbekistan and then as head coach for Team Canada at the Summer Universiade in Korea. David spent the year travelling to numerous World Cups on four continents, as well as Senior World Championships in Moscow, and finally the Pan-Am Games in Toronto.

There is much to be gained from participating in the sport of fencing, often referred to as physical chess. Not only is it physically demanding, the

problem solving, time management, and goal-setting skills developed through fencing are some of the greatest benefits that the participants at Cutting Edge gain from the program. For the competitive athletes, the experiences gained while travelling are also extremely valuable.

"There are not very many sports in Canada where you can start as a beginner at age 10 or 11 and within three or four years find yourself travelling across North America and the world to compete with the best," says Howes.

Competitive fencing however, is not the sole purpose of Cutting Edge Fencing.

"You can't have top competitive athletes in fencing without a strong beginner program," explains Howes.

Firm believers in the long-term development of young participants, the Cutting Edge coaches take a slow and steady approach when teaching the fundamentals of the sport. For the very youngest children age six to eight, there is the mini-musketeeer program, where participants learn general fundamental sport skills and fence with modified

foam and plastic equipment that is lighter and more suitable for small children. For the older children, teens and adults, Cutting Edge also offers learn to fence programs tailored to these specific age groups.

These introductory programs also provide an opportunity for the older competitive fencers to gain leadership and volunteer experience as they help teach the younger fencers.

"The culture in our club is one where the more experienced fencers share their knowledge with the newer members," says Howes. "You can't become a top competitive fencer without good training partners to fence with, so it's in everyone's best interest to help everyone else to improve."

While most members of Cutting Edge Fencing enjoy a break from training each summer, the competitive program members will resume training in August to prepare for the first national level competition of the season in September. All learn to fence and recreational programs will start later in September, and the coaches are hoping to attract some new recruits to the programs. As national coaches, David and Patricia work with numerous athletes from across the country, but they would love to see more local fencers qualify for national team positions in their programs. As a result, Cutting Edge Fencing will specifically be recruiting more girls to the program, with the goal being to see some of these new girls transition from beginners to national team members down the road.

"With a lot of hard work and the support of their families, making a national team can be a very realistic goal for a young fencer," says Howes,

"something that is not possible in many sports in Canada."

Anyone interested in joining one of the Cutting Edge Fencing beginner programs, or even just trying fencing, should go to www.cuttingedgefencing.ca for more information.

Gateway Gliders Square Dance Club

Submitted by the Gateway Gliders Square Dance Club
northbaysquaredancing.com

Modern square dancing is great exercise for body and mind; and good for the soul as well. It is not an expensive endeavour; the only special equipment you need is a comfortable pair of shoes. You will meet the nicest people and enjoy a couple of hours a week having lots of fun and fellowship. Some of the music is old-time country, but you will find yourself dancing to all sorts of songs, including modern tunes.

As for a dress code, it is no longer expected that women wear the short skirts and crinolines, but they are most welcome to do so if they wish. For lessons, people always dress casually; and at a special occasion get together, women often wear regular skirts and tops or dresses and the men wear pants or jeans and long sleeved shirts or sweaters.

These special occasion dances in the North Bay area are most often pot lucks or pizza meals, which again keeps this fun activity affordable for everyone, and the planning always allows for plenty of dancing for beginner dancers at the level to which they have progressed. Experienced dancers

join in to provide support and encouragement, and frequently demonstrate (unintentionally) that everyone makes mistakes! That makes for lots of laughs and further proves that this activity is all about having fun.

In North Bay, we have one of the more successful and progressive clubs around; and that is due to the fact that we love to dance and warmly welcome new members. We look forward to meeting you and introducing you to an activity that you are sure to enjoy!



Coach David Howes and Leonora MacKinnon at the 2015 Pan-American Fencing Championships in Santiago Chile



Kerr Hutchinson at the 2014 Junior World Fencing Championships



Leonora MacKinnon at the 2015 Pan-Am Games



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