

John v Thom Round 5 ... Fencing

ROUND 5 in the battle of the Free Press reporters sees John Edwards and Thom Kennedy having a go at fencing. You can read all about the previous rounds on the Bridlington Free Press website www.bridlingtontoday.co.uk



CHALLENGE 5: Fencing
VENUE: Bridlington School
MENTOR: Former Yorkshire fencing champion Terry Davies
THE RESULT: Thom 5 John 2
JOHN V THOM SCORE: 4-1 to John

Out and thrust



Fencers young and old, old and new: Front row, from left, Ellis Marston, 11, Nathan Davies, 11, Jacob Ashby, 12, and Leon Lok, 13. Back row, from left, Joshua Smelt, 12, Thom, coach Terry Davies and John, Alex Gartshore, 14.

IT IS time to get physical as John and Thom cross swords in a fencing duel. After the briefest of coaching sessions, and a bit of safety advice, the boys did battle, dressed in protective gear and masks and wired up to an electrical scoring system. Keep a close eye on the action was Terry Davies, who had already passed on his petanque skills to John and Thom in an earlier challenge. Terry has been fencing for more than 50 years, coaching for 30 and became Yorkshire Fencing Champion in 1965, on the day his son was born. He has also seen five of his students make England squads so he had plenty of experience to pass on to the Free Press' budding musketeers. "I started fencing because of the Errol Flynn stuff. It's an ancient and historic sport and it's very exciting." Cheered on by a group of youngsters who all learn the sport under Terry's guidance, John and Thom fought with the first to five points being the winner. An exciting start saw a 'double hit', both men hitting their opponent

simultaneously and scoring a point. They shared the next two points before Thom took control, claiming the next three points to take victory, his first in the John v Thom series. Terry said: "To say you only had 10 minutes of coaching you performed well. Often when you get fencers who are beginners, they try to do it like you see on TV, slashing about, but you two were very cautious and didn't clash into each other. "There are lots of moves you can be taught, but you didn't have time to learn many so you had to be quite instinctive." Someone hoping to follow in Terry's footsteps is 14-year-old Alex Gartshore, who is from Hornsea but comes to Bridlington to learn fencing. He was also impressed with John and Thom's efforts, saying: "You were good. I expected it to be quite boring because you were beginners but you did very well." So how come Thom was able to get off the mark in this challenge? Terry said: "Thom was clever in the way he was cautious but was able to catch John off guard. He was also more nimble." *Many thanks to all the young

fencers at Bridlington School for their kind tuition, and for allowing us to eat into their fencing time last Thursday.

FENCING FACT file

- * Three weapons survive in modern competitive fencing, foil, epee and sword.
- * **Épée fencing, which was the type John and Thom tried, was started at the beginning of the 16th century in Spain as full suits of plate armour became less common.**
- * Young fencers can receive tuition in classes at Bridlington School, from 3.45pm until 4.45pm every Thursday.
- * **Adults can join the Wayne Mainprize's Bridlington Blades at the Young Persons' Club in Thorpe Street from 7.30pm until 9.30pm every Friday. Alternatively, Terry will be running classes at Bridlington Sports Centre in Gypsey Road after Christmas.**

Time to prove a point John put to the sword

HAVE-at-you sir! I am Zorro! I am the count of Monte Cristo! I am D'Artagnan! Heck, I am even Albert the Fifth Musketeer, and if I am not, at least I could take him in a sword fight. Finally, John versus Thom has taken off for me, after a whirlwind bout of fencing allowed me to parry and harry my way to a hard fought opening point.

Fencing always sounded like the kind of challenge to get me going, and it turned out to be hugely enjoyable (and not just because I finally won a round). It was fast-paced, frenetic fun, as John and I finally had a chance to take our contests man-to-man, face-to-face, sword-to-sword.

Nobody knew who was going to take the plaudits in the fencing. John obviously had a longer reach thanks to his height, while I benefitted from fleet of foot and sleight of hand.



And a double hit, as we simultaneously collected points from each other, did little to lift the tension. Despite John taking an offensive stance from the off, I was soon spinning, swerving, jabbing and stabbing my way to victory. I aimed a hit to John's shoulder to poke my nose in front, despite John lashing me round the head, but was quickly pegged back after some combat at close quarters. After that, however, I marked my authority on the contest, and with some nimble swordsmanship, I swept into a four-two lead, meaning that I had a three round cushion to cement victory. It was important that I used my advantage, and, swerving a desperate onslaught from John, I lunged to slice my blade into his midriff. As the buzzer sounded, and John reeled away clutching his wound, victory was mine. And that was it. I win the battle, I get the prize, the slaves are freed and I get to marry Catherine Zeta Jones. Really, there was little more I could do short of slicing a large 'T' into John's vest. Maybe next time ...



ALL good things must come to an end. Thom had to win a challenge one day and I suspected this would be his chance. I might be able to win awards for my journalism, but I'm certainly not going to win anything for my fencing. And it didn't help that all but one of the youngsters who were watching had decided to support Thom. (Thanks to Jacob for going against the grain and sticking up for me! Sorry I let you down.) That's not to say I didn't enjoy my first experience of fencing. And it must be refreshing for you to read an article from someone who is able to lose with dignity, instead of making excuses and moaning about the judge's decision. It is not the most comfortable sport, getting strapped into a bright blue strait jacket and squeezing my head into a mask, and boy does it get hot inside there. But it does make you concentrate. Once I was toggged up, I was in 'the zone', and had tunnel vision, completely blocking out everything and focusing solely on my opponent. As for the battle itself, I got off to a decent start and at 2-2 I thought I still had a chance. But Thom had a new tactic which took me by surprise. Usually he is very gung-ho, all guns (or swords) blazing and throwing caution to the wind when we do these challenges. I had been expected to be pinned back into my own half of the piste. But he sat back and it was me doing the attacking. Maybe I was caught off guard. The sixth point was crucial, I went for him missed and he caught me as I retreated. Instead pulling level at 3-3, I was 4-2 down and it was a long way back from there. At least the office hasn't had to put up with his sulking this week. I just hope Thom's successes are not like buses, you wait ages for one and then three come along together.

You can suggest challenges by sending a text starting BFPEDITOR followed by a space, your challenge idea and name, to 84070, or by e-mailing newsdesk@bridlingtonfreepress.co.uk