

excelsior



Athletic Development Club

Rocky Road To Success

Case Study: Chris Hay age 27



Chris competing in the Birmingham International (2018).

Photo credit: Alexander Sallons



Chris with his BUCS Gold Medal, on the piste in Budapest

Athlete Profile

Chris Hay is one of our older club members at 27. He won bronze medal at the 2014 Commonwealth Games, competing for Scotland in epee.

Club members will recognise him from weight lifting and adult gym. He also designed our club logo.

He has competed in 4 European Championships, 4 World Championships at senior level.

Chris' journey has been far from smooth and reflects the experiences of many keen sports people who compete in minority sports.

Chris grew up in Clayhidon on the Blackdown Hills. He went to Court Fields school in Wellington, then Richard Huish College in Taunton.

He played a lot of activities before suffering from a viral illness at the age of 11 that led to being off school for 6 months with Chronic Fatigue .

Chris decided to limit his activity to one thing a week. He chose fencing because it "had been fun" and the coach had told him he could be good if he wanted to be.

Chris was fencing 4 times per week and competing almost every weekend. He made the GB under-17 squad at the age of 13

He applied to the South West Talent programme at age 17, where he met James. He was one of many young athletes from different sports who trained for 2 hours a week working on strength, co-ordination, speed, agility and structural integrity.

Obstacles

Chris went to Bath University where he was exposed to different training philosophies. Every sports person was told to get stronger by lifting heavier weights. Chris' fencing performance and motivation suffered.

This is where many athletes stumble. Many parents and athletes are impressed by big facilities. But a 'One-size fits all' approach to every athlete and every sport rarely works.

Many of our club athletes have experienced similar problems at big universities. Luckily Chris' fencing club was excellent.

13 years

COMPETING INTERNATIONALLY

Chris resumed training at our club, doing the athletics in the summer. He left university and dabbled with Modern Pentathlon for a while, before returning to epee.

This coincided with a period of turmoil within British Fencing, who have subsequently lost their funding.

Many fencers who had been receiving training support had to fund themselves. Squads and training camps had to be paid for out of their own pocket.

Travel to competitions and accommodation are expensive and Chris worked full time to fund himself for several years on the circuit.

Most athletes are in similar situations, there are very few who are paid, despite the headline figures.



Chris working with Physio Sarah

Chris has now transitioned into coaching. He is a coach on the GB Athlete Development Programme, as well as at local clubs.

"I still fence, but I am now much more interested in exercising for enjoyment and health rather than performance to get to another world championships. There were times when I was younger where fencing felt like a job that I, or my parents, were paying for me to do - I do not want to get that feeling ever again."

It is great to see Chris still participating, learning and helping others.

£4.2 million

SPENT BY BRITISH FENCING FOR RIO 2016. NO MEDALS WON