

Look sharp

► Olympic hopeful Jo Hutchison is aiming to represent the UK at the 2012 London Games

TIM HARRISON

WHILE other eight-year-olds were watching telly or playing with My Little Pony, Jo Hutchison was swishing a sword through the air and trying to skewer her brother.

Fortunately, no one called social services, because now, at 22, Jo is being talked about as a serious medal prospect in fencing at the 2012 London Olympics.

After 14 years of honing her technique in sports halls, Jo, of Sinclair Road, Olympia, aims to be one of Britain's elite competitors at the ExCeL centre in Docklands, where the fencing will be staged in four years' time.

"I want to win gold at 2012," she declared as she adjusted her protective clothing at a practice session on Tuesday evening last week. "That's my target. Whether it's attainable or not, time will tell. It could be realistic, but it's so hard to say."

She has already proved herself a worthy winner of tournaments in the UK, although she just missed out on



Thrust, parry and riposte sound like solicitors but are all part of the fencing lingo

the chance of competing in the Beijing Olympics after a fiercely fought qualifying event.

With backing from British Fencing, the UK sport's governing body, Jo is on a 'world-class performance pathway' to reach a physical and mental peak in 2012. It's a demanding journey.

"I haven't much of a social life, and I spend most weekends competing," she said. "I was in China last week, taking part in a competition there."

Fortunately, Jo's equivalent of a 'Wag' – boyfriend Gildas Braine – is also a fencing enthusiast. "I met him through fencing, and he's very supportive," she said.

Jo became involved in fencing when her brother and sister took up the sport. Opting for the sabre rather than the foil or épée, she progressed through the junior ranks, moving to West Kensington in 2004 and linking up with UK national coach Ian Williams, who runs the Scimitar Fencing Club and holds evening training sessions at St Paul's School, just across Hammersmith Bridge in Barnes.

Sabre fights can be over in a matter of a few seconds, making it much more fiery and dramatic, while épée contests can go on for eight or nine minutes.

Now professionally focussed on fencing, Jo is supported by sports grants, augmented by part-time secretarial work. "It all became really serious when we won the Olympic bid, and UK Sport gave British Fencing money to increase the elite squad," she said.

The sport has a language all its own, with numerous French words dotted around. Competitions take place in a



A FLASH OF THE BLADE: Jo Hutchison and her coach Ian Williams

PICTURE BY DAVID TETT

salle d'armes, the 14m metal-surfaced track on which fencers compete in a piste, while appel refers to a tactical foot-stamp. Thrust, parry and riposte might sound like a King Street firm of solicitors, but are all part of the lingo.

In sabre fighting, everything above the waist is considered a fair target – including the head, encased in the rather sinister mesh mask – and the whole of the blade can be used for scoring, rather than just the tip. Fencers are wired up to a system of indicator lights, so hits can be registered.

For what may appear a rather violent pursuit, fencing is remarkably civilised and chivalrous. Each duel begins with a formal salute and ends with a sporting handshake. Because of rigid safety rules and hi-tech protective equipment, injuries are rare – although Jo did have a colourful shoulder bruise from her recent China outing.

The sport appeals to all ages. One of the regulars at the Scimitar Fencing Club, which meets just over Hammersmith Bridge at St Paul's School, is in his 70s, proving that there's no foil like an old foil.

● **INTERESTING** in finding out more about fencing? Visit: www.britishfencing.com, the website of the sport's governing body in the UK, and click on 'New to fencing'. For information about Ian Williams' club, visit: www.scimitarfencingclub.org. There is a stock of clothing and masks for beginners to borrow, and 10-week introductory courses start at regular intervals.

There's a swashbuckling glamour to fencing, something the recent Bond film *Die Another Day* exploited, featuring Madonna as an instructor.

Fencing's proud boast is that it is one of just four sports to have featured in every modern Olympic games.

"The atmosphere will be fantastic at London 2012, no matter what happens," said Jo. "People will be really enthusiastic about fencing; it will be an unusual and

different sport to watch."

Jo's a member of the 37 Degrees health club in Beaconsfield Terrace Road, Olympia, round the corner from her home, where she swims to boost stamina.

So how does her coach assess her chances... and her style?

"I'm very positive," said Ian, 40. "We've worked together now for four years, and she's made good progress in the transition from junior [under 20] to senior. If I had to describe her fencing style in a single word, it would be 'explosive'. Some fencers use speed, others may have advantages in reach, but she is explosive! Different people with different strengths is what makes the sport so exciting.

"This year Jo has taken some good scalps among people in the top 10 placings, but we need to improve that level of consistency," added Ian. "It was bitterly disappointing that Jo didn't make the China Olympics as she was very capable of doing it, but you have to move on. We refocus and look to 2012."



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KWIK CRICKET COMPETITION >>



BAT AND BOWL: Danny Collet from New King's, left, and Dammy Abolarinwa from St Paul's, above, at the Hurlingham Park event
PICTURES BY LEIGH QUINNELL



AERON DELACRUZ, 10, of St Mary's School, Masbro Road, said: "Well, it is fun because hitting the ball gives you the feeling that you have achieved something. But playing today was also kind of scary and exciting because I am the captain."

REBECCA CHRISTIE, 10, of St Mary's, said: "It is fun and a good sport, but I like other sports as well like football. We have played in school and practised a lot. This is my first time in a tournament and it is fun. I have never done that before."



ARTHUR MORGAN, 10, Brackenbury School, Brackenbury Road, Shepherds Bush, said: "I was the wicket keeper and it was fun because I did a lot of catches so I was quite good at it, and we got to the semi-final. My dad taught me to play. He was better than me in the start, but now I can beat him any day."

LOUIS PRIOR, 11, of Brackenbury School, said: "It is a fun sport to play because it is basically for everybody. I played an all-rounder and I think I played it well. Cricket is my number one sport, number two is rugby."



AJAY DHINDSA, 11, of Brackenbury School, said: "It was fantastic and it was a bit mysterious because we did not now what was going to come out of the game. The ones we played against were doing pretty good, but we got through to the semi-final. My favourite position is square leg."

TOBY HALL, 11, of Greenside School, in Westville Road, said: "I played as the captain because I am good at cricket. I go to a cricket club in Acton to play once a week, but I probably like football more. The funniest thing was when we won in the last match because then we won the whole tournament and our teacher said we were getting ice-cream!"



Kids quick to enjoy a cricket day

▶ North and south teams battle it out to represent borough in finals
▶ Shortened version of the game used with innings of eight overs

HUGO FILDES

THE Indian Premier League and Twenty20 competitions have shown the attraction of 'quick' cricket.

It was Hammersmith & Fulham's turn on June 11.

The Kwik cricket event saw teams from schools in the north of the borough battle it out in Ravenscourt Park, while those to the south met in Hurlingham Park. The eventual prize will be to represent H&F in a London-wide tournament taking place later this summer.

Kwik cricket is a shortened version of the game, in which the batting side is divided into pairs with each pair being given two overs to score as many runs as possible, while trying not to lose runs by getting out.

THE IN THING: Ben Yousef in bat for Greenside (right) and Amy George scoring for Good Shepherd (far right) at the Ravenscourt Park cricket day

Each innings lasts eight overs, and every member of the fielding team sends down at least one over each.

Eight teams in each section, made up of a mix of boys and girls, took part in a round robin to find four teams to go through to the semi-final on June 25.

In the northern half of the draw, Greenside, John Betts, Brackenbury and St Stephen's made it through, which will take place at Shepherds Bush Cricket Club (SBCC).

There, they will meet Sullivan, Sir John Lillie, Peterborough and New King's for the right to represent the borough at the final of the competition, which will take place in Regent's Park on July 2.

Ollie Gibbs, from SBCC, umpired the games in the southern competition, while his counterpart at Ravenscourt Park was Mark Mason, from Middlesex County Cricket Club.



● Melcombe Primary



● Sir John Lillie



● Peterborough



● All Saints



● Brackenbury



● John Betts



● Bentworth

SPORTING LIFE

Gera is Hungary for Fulham action

THE eyes of planet football may be fixed on Austria and Switzerland, but south-west London is still a hot-bed of footballing activity. The borough's clubs have been busy stepping up their preparations for the big kick-off in August.

CHELSEA: Unless you have been under a rock the size of Cristiano Ronaldo's ego, you will have noticed that Chelsea have a new manager.

Luiz Felipe Scolari will take over at Stamford Bridge on July 1, after his Portugal side finish their Euro 2008



campaign. The Brazilian World Cup-winning coach has reportedly been promised a huge war chest as Roman Abramovich seeks to bring both style and trophies to his corner of SW6.

FULHAM: The Whites have continued to add to their squad as manager Roy Hodgson looks to overhaul his side in an attempt to avoid a relegation scrap next season. Zoltan Gera, the highly rated Hungarian winger, has signed on a free transfer from newly promoted West Bromwich



Albion. The 29-year-old, who has 53 caps for his country, will bring pace, trickery and width to Fulham's attack next season.

He will be joined by Andranik Teymourian, who has arrived at Craven Cottage on a free transfer from Bolton Wanderers.

Teymourian is a box-to-box midfielder, and Hodgson will be looking to combine him with Jimmy Bullard and Danny Murphy, who has recently signed a new contact with Fulham that will keep him at the club until June 2009.

Hodgson has also bolstered his goalkeeping options, given the

uncertainty surrounding Kasey Keller and the release of Tony Warner.

Having already signed Australian number one Mark Schwarzer, the manager has brought in Darlington keeper David Stockdale.

The 22-year-old enjoyed a fine season in League Two last year, and is seen as one of the brightest young English goalkeeping talents.

QPR: Hoops have continued

to revamp their squad, as new manager Iain Dowie looks to build a promotion-winning team. Their bid for Blackpool's Latvian defender Kaspars Gorkss signals their intent to add to a defence already boosted by the arrival of Czech Republic keeper Radek Cerny from Tottenham and defender Peter Ramage from Newcastle.



An early test of QPR's challenge will come in the first round of the League Cup on August 11, when they will travel to Swindon.

With new signings, a new manager and the promise of greater things to come, it is not surprising that chairman Flavio Briatore is so popular. **Hugo Fildes**

'A' team top class

► Henry Compton's B team step up at last minute but reach final against A team at Wormwood Scrubs contest

HUGO FILDES

A FULHAM school went from A to B in its efforts to host a football day at Wormwood Scrubs.

Henry Compton, from Kingwood Road, invited Hurlingham and Chelsea, from Fulham, and Phoenix and Burlington Danes, both from Shepherds Bush, to take part on June 12.

On the day, however, Burlington Danes had to pull out, leaving their place to be filled by Henry Compton B team. Despite the late notice, they managed to claim a place in the final against their A team counterparts.

In the end, the final was a comfortable 5-1 victory for the A team, with Jevagne Brown (2), Samy Balal, Sam Wilder and Mohammed Belamoudi scoring. Samim Akhbar grabbed a consolation for the B team, while Jordan Maher-Morgan was named man-of-the-match.

The winning team were presented with the trophy by tournament organiser Nessir Emadi.



SUCCESS: Henry Compton A team (above) – (back, left to right) Nessir Emadi (coach, Mohammed Belamoudi, Sam Wilder, Saleem Masir, Jordan Maher-Morgan, Raheem Keane, Osman Farah. Front: Ahmed Hachich, Ryan Khalil-Hall, Jevagne Brown, Charlie Plant, Samy Balal, Brian Rodriguez. PICTURES BY DAVID TETT



Fulham lads win 6-a-side

The Brunswick Club's Under 11s triumphed at their latest tournament. They won their section of the Hillingdon Youth six-a-side tournament, held over the weekend of June 7-8 at Cranford Community College. The boys will now travel to the St Joseph's football tournament on the June 21, looking to continue their winning form and bring back another trophy to Fulham.



WINNERS: Brunswick Club U11s (back row, left to right) Sam O'Brien, Khristian Rangeet, Leon Reid and Bobby Daly; (front row) Zac Kavanagh, George Pitsialis and Sean Allen

Nadal adds the Queen's crown to French Open

AN EXCELLENT final saw Spain's Rafael Nadal win the Artois tournament at Queen's Club in West Kensington just seven days after lifting his fourth French Open title.

The 22-year-old beat Novak Djokovic 7-6 (8-6) 7-5 and now hopes to be the first man to win at Roland Garros and Wimbledon in the same year since Bjorn Borg 28 years ago.

Nadal is the first Spaniard since 1972 to win a grass court title.

Be a penguin for water polo fun

IT'S time to get goggles and flippers out of the cupboard and into their right element as a new season of junior water polo is launched in Hammersmith.

Sessions are run by Penguin Water Polo Club and will take place at Fulham Pools on Sundays from 10-11am (for 8-15-year-olds) and at St Paul's School Saturdays from 12.30-2pm (for 10 and above). Sessions are priced £3 and give the opportunity to participate in London's Mini Youth Games in July.

For more information visit: www.penguinwaterpolo.co.uk/juniors.

You could join Chelsea squad!

CHELSEA Utd are offering trials to under 12s to bolster the current squad and compete for first team football for the coming season 2008/9.

Trials will be held at South Park, in Peterborough Road, Fulham, at 10am on Saturdays, June 28, July 5 and July 12.

For more details contact Alex 07949 792395 or Steve 07958 026471.

SPORTING LIFE



RACHEL LOKOLE, eight, of Peterborough School, Fulham, said: "It was a good day. My brother is a show off so I want to prove to him that I am good at football as well. I like kicking the ball around with the others."

ANNABELLE GALVIN, eight, of Greenside School, Shepherds Bush, said: "I played in the defence and I liked it. When a boy was running up I tackled him before he could score so I think I was quite good at it."



MIA NICSTRO, nine, of St Johns School, Fulham, said: "It was really good that we to the final and I was really enjoying it! I like playing football because we get to mix with both boys and girls and do fun things like go on trips."



ABUBAKAR ABDIRAHAMAN, nine, of Peterborough School, said: "I played centre mid and I liked that. The funniest thing was when we scored. I set him up for the goal. Or not really, but I sort of touched it a little bit!"



RHIANNA LINDSAY, eight, of St Stephens School, Shepherds Bush, said: "It was quite fun when we were trying to score goals. At school I play a lot of football. I played in the defence at the side and we got 10 points all together."



CASPER MAYES ADAMS, nine, of Peterborough School, said: "It was fun. Although we did not win it was still good for training and it was quite exciting to play together for the last time because our school is going to close soon."



BABATOMIWA ADEBIWI, nine, of St Stephens School, said: "Football is my favourite sport. The best thing is scoring but I did not score any today because I was the goalkeeper."



DAVID OWA, nine, of St Stephens School, said: "I was in the defence but I did not like that much because I had to stay behind close to the goalkeeper. My favourite position is striker. It was fun anyway."



BRADLEY DWYER, seven, of St Johns School, said: "This is a fun game I played with all my team from the school and that was really good because we went through to the semi-final. I think football is my favourite sport."



AARON WORONKOWICZ, nine, of Greenside School, said: "I liked playing today because I was the striker and that was really fun. I play a lot in the school and sometimes downstairs where I live. I would like to be a professional player."



GLORY: Brackenbury captain Frank Vincent celebrates with the cup and his teammates Frank Beere, Osama Benaly, Tyley Murphy, Kane Brosens, Zainab Talib, Jerrell Cumberbatch, Amy Dhindsa, Kevin Palacios, Archie Softley-White, Aisha Amari, Charlie Morgan and Tyra Mills

PICTURES BY LEIGH QUINNELL

The hot shots

► It was a washout in April but a Football Funday finds sunshine
► Brackenbury school win the final against St John's

HUGO FILDES

A FOOTBALL tournament that had been washed out by torrential rain in April kicked off again this month in the sunshine.

The Football Funday, for eight and nine-year-old boys and girls,

took place on June 5 in Hurlingham Park. The teams from Years 2 and 3 were mixed, and were split into four leagues, before the league winners entered the knock-out stages to determine the winner.

It proved a welcome break for both the parents, who were able to picnic in the park, and the children.

League one was a close affair, with little separating the top two teams, St Mary's and St Stephen's. In the end, St Mary's came out on top, by just one point, by virtue of their victory over Greenside, after St Stephen's could only muster a draw against the same opponents.

Brackenbury beat nearest rivals Holy Cross 2-0 to secure their place at the top of league two and their place in the semi-finals.

In league three, St John's finished just one point ahead of

Bentworth. The two teams had drawn in their fixture, but in the end St John's victory over Sir John Lillie A proved decisive, as Bentworth could only draw their corresponding game.

The final semi-finalist came from league four, where Flora Gardens topped the group by beating Kenmont after second place Old Oak drew with the same opposition.

In the first semi-final, St John's took on St Mary's, beating them 2-0. A single goal was enough to put Brackenbury through against Flora Gardens, earning them a place in the final.

This proved to be a tense conclusion to the day's football. A single goal, after a rebound off the St John's goalkeeper, was enough to crown Brackenbury as champions, continuing the school's run of footballing success.

The winners, runners-up and league winners will all receive medals at a presentation being held at Hammersmith Town Hall on July 4.



CLINCHER: Brackenbury's Frank Beere (left) is congratulated by teammate Tyler Murphy after scoring the winning goal in the final

SPORTING LIFE

CLUB OF THE WEEK



PRESENT ARMS: (Left to right) Claire Bonnefous, Frauke Lehmeier, instructor Emma Hynes, Danny Godfery, Kim Curran, Wing Kei Wong, Maria Maughan and Neeta Patel from London Thames Fencing Club. Below: Wing Wei Wong
PICTURES BY DAVID TETT

On your guard

CLUB NAME: London Thames Fencing Club

'HOME GROUND': Ravenscourt Theatre School, Galena Road, Hammersmith, or The Fencing Salle, St Paul's School, Lonsdale Road, Barnes

DESCRIBE YOUR CLUB: We may be the longest established fencing club in England, with a great tradition of high achievement, but our mission is to sustain and welcome fencers of all ages (current members are aged 12 to 75) and ability, from beginners to experts, and give them the best coaching and experience of fencing that any club could provide.

We want as many people as possible to experience this great sport at any age and join a welcoming and friendly club.

WHEN WAS THE CLUB FORMED AND WHY? Formed as London Fencing Club in 1848 to allow military officers to exercise and practise fencing skills. First woman member, Miss Blaise Fitzroy, elected 1866. See history details on the website: www.londonthamesfencingclub.com for more. The club merged with Thames Fencing Club in 1977.

WHICH LEAGUES DO YOU PLAY IN? Our cadets and juniors start competing in the Leon Paul Junior series. Open competitions can be entered by any fencer of 13 or older. There are regular regional and county competitions for teams and individuals. You can find a competition to test your skills on almost every weekend of the year.

We are also in the process of founding a London League for epee with other London clubs.

HOW WELL ARE YOU DOING THIS SEASON? Really well. James Allen, 15, won his first open competition, Alia Chatterjee 14, in sabre, and Freya Petty 14, in epee, have

continued to get excellent results. At senior level we have three members each in the GB senior men's and women's epee teams and one in the women's sabre team. At veteran level we have the current men's and women's epee national champions, Howard West (55) and Kate Smith (52).

WHAT ARE THE CLUB'S BIGGEST ACHIEVEMENTS? Too numerous to mention but a few highlights: Gillian Sheen (Olympic gold medallist 1956), numerous team and individual champions in all weapons.

WHAT MAKES YOUR CLUB STAND OUT FROM THE REST? We are a friendly bunch. Despite the obviously competitive nature of the sport and the outstanding achievements of the club, off the "piste" we welcome and support all fencers of all abilities, experience and age.

We also have the best coaches in the country and any member can take a lesson with them.

WHO ARE THE UNSUNG HEROES AT YOUR CLUB AND WHY? The coaches who will work with any member to help them improve their skills and the members of the committee, who give a considerable amount of time and commitment to make the club an enjoyable and fulfilling experience.

ANY MEMBERS WHO HAVE GONE ON TO BE PROFESSIONAL? Aside from coaching, fencing is an amateur sport.

However, several of our top junior and senior fencers are supported by the Sport UK and British Olympic Association's

TASS scheme, providing funding to support coaching and training needs.

ANY POTENTIAL STARS FOR THE FUTURE? Several – including five boys/men and girls/women who could be representing GB at the 2012 Olympics!

ANY FUNNY STORIES? Howard West, our national veteran champion, tends to train in an old fencing jacket the club presented to him some time ago with the words "DISTURBED, GBH" on it as opposed the standard "WEST, GBR" most international fencers would wear. A recognition of his unique personality and style.

ANY EVENTS YOU WANT TO PLUG? We have beginners' courses running all through the year. The next adult beginners' courses start on June 23 and 25 (six weeks).

CONTACT: Call 0845 094 4057 or email: info@londonthames-fencing-club.com **Iain Rugheimer (the chairman)**

LOOKING BACK



• Morgan Phillips, author of *From St Andrews to Craven Cottage*, looks at the pleasure and pain of away games watching his favourite team



GOAL: Fulham's Clive Walker scores

SOME away matches instantly become part of our collective memory, like the 1975 tie at Everton or the three successive victories that led to the Great Escape of 2008.

Others, less momentous, can still impart pleasure (or pain) to those recollecting them.

The perfect away fixture combines an easy journey, a pleasant destination and a meaningful match – like Fulham's visit to Oxford in August 1989 for the second leg of a Littlewoods Cup tie, the Whites having lost 1-0 at home.

On a balmy evening both teams appeared lethargic, but as the goals flew in the tension soared. With 10 minutes left the teams were drawing 3-3, putting Oxford 4-3 ahead on aggregate. The only calm person in the stadium was Fulham's Justin Skinner, who scored a superb goal. Then Clive Walker set up a fifth goal for Fulham, rendering extra time unnecessary and placing the delirious supporters back in London by 11pm.

Two years later we enjoyed another eight goals in Fulham's Autoglass Trophy encounter with Maidstone.

The 'Stones played their home matches at Dartford's stadium. Maidstone's deficiencies made a high-scoring game inevitable.

Someone shouted: "Remember Huddersfield!" to recall an 8-0 Fulham away win in 1969. Could this happen again? The home side were certainly dazzled by young Andrew Cole on loan from Arsenal. He crafted two goals each for Gary Brazil and Kelly Hagg and one for Martin Pike. A fine contest ended 6-2.

The FA Cup tie at Ashford (November 1994) is remembered more for the weather. Some fans who travelled to Ashford, Middlesex, by mistake were luckier than those who trudged three miles through a Kent monsoon to the Homelands ground, where the pitch resembled the Thames at low tide.

After 80 sloshing minutes and with Ashford leading 2-0, Fulham won a penalty which Micky Adams converted. Two minutes later the referee spotted a handball and again Adams scored, to the dismay of the home fans.

At the final whistle an Ashford defender searching the touchlines for his discarded shinguards applauded us for watching a match in such conditions – great sportsmanship on his part.

Why wasn't the match postponed? Surprisingly, the FA answered my enquiry. On arrival the referee had deemed the pitch playable. Continuous rain then affected it badly but with a record 3,363 (rain-drenched) spectators present he decided against disappointing them. This considerate official also gave us two face-saving penalties.

Three cheers for ref Andy D'Urso, not normally a Fulham favourite. And oh yes, the replay was another eight-goal thriller!

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The pitch resembled the Thames at low tide

GOT SOMETHING TO SAY?

Email: handfnews@lbhf.gov.uk