



■ From left: Michel Erasmus, Paul Swartz and Hout Bay's Jacques Viljoen will take part in the national fencing championships, at UCT, this weekend.

PICTURE: DUNCAN VAN NIEKERK

Hout Bay fencer gears up to make his point

Don't be fooled by his piercing blue eyes and ready smile, you wouldn't want to meet Hout Bay fencer Jacques Viljoen on the fencing piste; well, not if he had a sword in his hand, reports JOHN ADAMS

It was Saturday morning at the Italian Club in Rugby and it was filled with the sound of metal crashing on metal. Dramatic shouts of the varied age range and skill level of fencers communicated the intensity of the group.

They participate in their training regimen because of their love of the sport and the possibility of becoming the next standout fencer in South Africa.

One student voluntarily helped a junior fencer and calmly coached the prodigy on his technique. This player coach is no novice to coaching or fencing competition.

He is 21-year-old senior division fencer, Jacques Viljoen, South Africa's number one fencer in foil.

"For beginners, you have to pass on your knowledge. I want them to be good," explained Viljoen. "I want them to be able to beat me in a few years because the better they get the better I will get."

Viljoen has used his skills in fencing to take him all over the world for competitions and the opportunities to teach other up-and-coming fencers. In 2007, Viljoen spent a year in the UK teaching students fencing techniques and competing on the junior circuit.

Upon his return to South Africa, Viljoen decided to continue his fencing career but also to take an active role in giving back to the country's fencing programme by involving himself in administrative roles in organisations such as University Fencing South Africa and the UCT Fencing Club.

"There is no point in complaining about what we don't have in fencing in South Africa, rather make it better."

For all he does to increase the popularity of fencing, Viljoen

continues to set his sights on his goals; including bettering his second place finish at last year's senior nationals.

"Last year, I came in second. This year all I want to do is win," said the determined top-ranked fencer.

No matter the outcome this coming weekend, Viljoen's schedule will keep him busy in the coming weeks.

After the senior nationals at UCT, he will compete in the University Sport South Africa Championships next weekend also hosted at UCT.

At the end of the month, Viljoen, fellow SA fencer Jay New, from Noordhoek, and coach Misha Galoukin will head to Belgrade, Serbia, to compete in University World Championships, considered by many as the most prestigious competition outside of the Olympic Games.

Viljoen loves the opportunities fencing has provided for him, including the ability to see new places and meet new people.

"The friends I have made all over the world will be my friends

the rest of my life."

As the students cleared from the practice area and went home, Viljoen tried once again to promote the sport he loves and said, "Anyone can pick up a sword. Go for it. It is so fun. Anyone can do it." With a big grin he

added, "Sure it is a sport and it is very sophisticated but it is so enjoyable."

"There is nothing more exciting than a sword fight, and everyone should do it at least once in their lifetime." ● For more information about the national champs, call 072 194 1926.



PICTURES: DUNCAN VAN NIEKERK

■ **Touché...** Cape swordsmen during a training session at UCT. The senior national championship takes place at UCT, on Saturday and Sunday June 13 and 14. For more information, call 084 554 4566.

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