



# The stick this fencer carried around as a child has turned into a formidable epee

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Local fencing star Christiaan Bester appears to have mastered the art of winning medals with an epee in hand.

At the recent African Junior Fencing Championships in Lagos, Nigeria he increased his medal collection by three.

Bester won a silver medal in the Cadet-category (under-18), bronze in the Junior-category (under-20) and then teamed up to take silver in the epee team competition.

If the Tuks fencer has his way, this is not going to be the last medals he wins internationally.

He is leaving soon for Verona, Italy, to compete at the Junior World Fencing Championships.

Bester vows that he won't just be there to make up the numbers.

"I believe I am good enough to be in contention to medal.

I am certainly not just going for the sake of competing," he said confidently.

Bester also hopes to get the nod to represent South Africa at the Youth

Olympic Games in October in Buenos Aires.

Judging by his international ranking, Bester has reason to be confident.

Although he is still a Cadet-fencer (under-18) he is already ranked as the 49th best junior in the world.

There are more than 650 fencers in the junior rankings.

Bester said he had always been attracted to fencing.

When he was still young, he was often walking around with a stick in hand doing some sort of sword fight manoeuvres.

One day his dad heard a discussion on fencing on the radio and he decided that his son should give it a go.

That was it. Bester got to change the stick in his hand with an epee and never looked back.

According to him, it is easy to get addicted to a sport where self-focus is of the utmost importance and whatever happens, depends on one's moves. Fencing

has also got a proud tradition.

It is one of only four sports to have featured in every modern Olympics. It made its debut in 1896.

He relishes the challenge to outwit his rivals.

"Your success or failure in fencing will depend on your ability to overcome your opponent both physically and mentally," he said.

"The quality of your decisions always depends on what your opponent is doing, and so being a good fencer means being observant and good at recognising patterns in your opponent's tactics," he said.

"Fencing is 'physical chess' and having a sharp mind and mental fortitude is very important."

His sister Natania is also a talented fencer.

At the African Junior Championships she got to the final eight before being eliminated.

She is currently ranked 81st in the world.



Christiaan Bester is currently ranked as the 49th best junior in the world. Photo: Reg Caldecott

