**Category:** Low Budget Campaign

**Company:** Volpa

**Entry title:** IMCF World Championships: Let Battle Commence!

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**Brief and objectives:**
Scone Palace, one of Scotland’s most iconic visitor attractions, officially hosted the International Medieval Combat Federation (IMCF) World Championships in May 2018, the first time the global tournament has ever reached British soil.

While no stranger to large outdoor events, Scone Palace’s aim was to engage with the public and generate ticket sales for this unusual ancient sport where competitors from 32 countries across the world were set to descend on rural Perthshire to participate in sword-wielding duals and group battles not seen at Scone Palace for centuries.

Volpa was tasked with developing a local PR strategy which would:

1. Capture the attention of local audiences of all ages in Perthshire, Tayside and Aberdeenshire
2. Highlight the unique opportunity to see a sport never-seen-before on a large scale in the U.K.
3. Reach local audiences through multiple media platforms including social media, online, print and broadcast
4. Introduce the people behind the medieval armour to bring personality and a sense of ‘Team Scotland’ support to the sporting event
5. Complete the activity within budget - £2000

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**Rationale behind campaign, including research and planning:**
While our budget was small, our geographic target area was also compact which enabled us to execute a highly targeted campaign to gain strong regional coverage in the run up to the event.

With a limited number of hours available due to the low budget, we knew the key to the campaign was getting journalists excited about medieval combat. So, the phone calls
pitching the opportunity to step back in time, dress up in exceptionally heavy armour and wield a mace in the medieval surroundings of Scone Palace was put to the local press.

Who knew that offering some shiny helmets, blunt swords and the chance to hit a medieval warrior would create such a media stir…

We know our local press and, having built strong relationships with them over many years, the campaign required a sustained, steady stream of content for the press to sink their teeth into. From feature opportunities meeting the fighters, to informative press releases, to photo opportunities. Our plan covered all these options to ensure we hit all of our targets.

**Strategy and tactics, including creativity and innovation:**

Our strategy was simple and had three key tactical stages:

1. Find the human-interest stories behind the event and sell Scotland’s team and their back stories into local media, thus humanising/personalising the championships

2. Issue a series of press releases/photo calls in the run up to the event to keep the press informed and engaged with the event

3. Generate multi-platform noise across the local press on the opening day of the tournament to drive last minute ticket sales

The innovation came in selling the personalities of the medieval fighters, whose stories, quirks and visual appeal when fully ‘suited and booted’ guaranteed a captive local audience.

**Implementation of tactics:**

Our first wave of activity was to engage with local features writers to generate coverage in Saturday supplements in the weeks leading up to the tournament, targeting a family audience in the Press and Journal’s Your Life and the Courier’s Weekend supplements. Features writers from both publications personally visited Scone Palace to meet Scottish medieval fighters and produced online videos as well as immersive content for their print publications.

The second wave was a steady flow of five news stories for local press, photo call and interview opportunities in the run up to the tournament:

- announcing the tournament being hosted at Scone Palace,
- the drawing of the teams,
- a call to action not miss the event,
- a photo call for the opening ceremony,
- the results release as the tournament came to a close.
Regular communication was maintained with local press and the offer of access to the talent meant a sustained level of coverage in the two weeks leading up to the event. In the run up, coverage was secured in the Perthshire Advertiser, online magazine Small City Big Personality, and again in the Courier and P&J.

A final, third, tactical wave came into force on the opening day of the tournament in a final drive to generate interest and potential foot fall where we secured media interest on all platforms with BBC Good Morning Scotland, STV News, Courier, Perthshire Advertiser, Tay FM and Getty Images. A photographer from Getty was outwith our local remit for the event, but was tipped off by one of our local reporters. His photos of the event were printed as far afield as Australia.

The icing on the cake came when, at the closing ceremony, one of the USA participants received a marriage proposal from his partner on the steps of Scone Palace (he said yes!) The resulting story and video generated some bonus local press coverage, which the local media lapped up.

**Measurement and evaluation:**
In depth multi-platform feature and news coverage of Team Scotland medieval fighters, highlighting the opportunity to see a unique sport (objectives 1, 2, 3 and 4) was achieved in the following publications/platforms:

- Press and Journal Your Life supplement
- The Courier news pages and online
- Courier Weekend supplement
- Press and Journal Weekend preview
- Small City Big Personality
- Perthshire Advertiser
- Tay FM
- BBC Radio Scotland (Dundee team)
- STV Dundee
- Braemar Media

Digital engagement was measured through Scone Palace’s Facebook page (objective 3). From May 10-14 the page achieved:

- 295 new followers
- 480 821 overall reach
- 27 369 users engaging with content

In the run up and during the event, Scone Palace sold 5039 tickets, a significant number of which were from the local area:

- 40% of the pre-sale tickets were from the local area (PH, DD, KY postcodes)
- Including local on-the-day sales during the event, Scone Palace estimated 65% of all ticket sales were from the local area
- Approx 2600 tickets were sold at the gate (tactical wave 3)

Client testimonial:
"The level of local press coverage generated by Volpa as we approached the event date was phenomenal and we then saw this expand out to national coverage. They coordinated all press activity over the 4 days of the event and this was an invaluable resource to have on site. Their level of professionalism was second to none and we received very positive feedback from many of the journalists in attendance."
Stephen Brannigan, Scone Palace

**Budget and cost effectiveness:**
The actual budget was £2,000 and this was solely spent on PR time. The project remained within budget and delivered ticket sales revenues in excess of £80,000 for the event.