

General Information

Country:	TUN
Gender:	F
Handedness:	Left-handed
Date of birth:	1988-12-28
License:	28121988000

Further Personal Information

Family	Husband Erwann Le Pechoux
Occupation	Athlete
Languages	Arabic, English, French
Higher education	Sports Science - Paris-Est Creteil University: France

Sport Specific Information

When and where did you begin this sport?	She began fencing at age five in Tunis, Tunisia.
Why this sport?	She spent time in fencing halls with her mother, who competed internationally in the sport and also became her first coach. "My family are all athletes. They have motivated me on my fencing journey. I have always had people around me encouraging my passion. Sport is my life, because it has taught me so much. It taught me how to behave as a woman, as a friend, and as a sister. I would be lost without fencing."
Club / Team	BLR 92: Bourg-la-Reine, FRA
Handedness	Left

General Interest

Hobbies	Fashion. (Instagram profile, 01 Jan 2021)
Memorable sporting achievement	Winning a bronze medal in individual foil at the 2016 Olympic Games in Rio de Janeiro. (tokyo2020.org, 28 Jul 2020)
Most influential person in career	Coach Sergei Tikhonov, her family, and her husband Erwan Le Pechoux. (tokyo2020.org, 28 Jul 2020; asbr-escrime.fr, 23 May 2012)
Hero / Idol	Tunisian fencer [and her mother] Henda Zaouali. (olympics.com, 19 May 2021)
Injuries	<p>In September 2021 she had surgery on a knee injury that had troubled her since 2019. She postponed the operation until after the 2020 Olympic Games in Tokyo, with the surgery further delayed when the Games were postponed until 2021 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. (Facebook page, 17 Sep 2021)</p> <p>She suffered a knee injury while at a training camp in the United Arab Emirates in 2020. (thenationalnews.com, 27 Jan 2021)</p> <p>She suffered a knee injury ahead of the 2016 Olympic Games. She was still able to compete at the Games in Rio de Janeiro, but underwent surgery on her knee in September 2016 and needed seven months to recover. During the semi-finals at the Games she also sustained a back injury. She returned to competition in April 2017. (FIE Fencing Channel YouTube channel, 27 Nov 2017; Facebook page, 30 Apr 2017; infosfoot.net, 25 Dec 2016; Instagram profile, 19 Sep 2016; bbc.co.uk, 14 Jul 2021; devdiscourse.com, 23 Jun 2021)</p>
Sporting philosophy / motto	"When I enter a competition, I'm more aggressive. I've been like this since I was a child. My mother was the same, she was aggressive and loved winning. She was very passionate about fencing and I feel like that came to me naturally. That helped me a lot through many difficulties I faced in the sport of fencing. As an Arab, as an African, as a woman, coming from a country with no fencing culture, you have to prove yourself." (thenationalnews.com, 27 Jan 2021)
Awards and honours	<p>She and volleyball player Mehdi Ben Cheikh were flag bearers for Tunisia at the Opening Ceremony of the 2020 Olympic Games in Tokyo. (Facebook page, 09 Jul 2021; kawarji.com, 09 Jul 2021)</p> <p>She was named the 2016 Female Athlete of the Year by Tunisian News agency Tunis Afrique Presse. (Facebook page, 01 Oct 2016; spacemanager.com, 25 Dec 2016)</p>
Milestones	She became the first fencer representing Tunisia to win a medal at the Olympic Games when she claimed bronze in individual foil at the 2016 Games in Rio de Janeiro. She was also the first fencer representing Tunisia to finish on the podium at the world championships after winning bronze in individual foil at the 2014 edition in Kazan, Russian Federation. (SportsDeskOnline, 21 Jun 2018; citroen.tn, 17 Dec 2015)
Famous relatives	Her husband Erwann Le Pechoux has represented France in fencing. He won gold in men's team foil at the 2020 Olympic Games in Tokyo and silver in the same event at the 2016 Games in Rio de Janeiro. Her mother Henda Zaouali has represented Tunisia in fencing and competed in individual epee and individual foil at the 1996 Olympic Games in Atlanta. (SportsDeskOnline, 04 Apr 2022; olympics.com, 19 May 2021; asbr-escrime.fr, 23 May 2012)
Ambitions	To open a fencing academy in the Middle East or Tunisia. (thenationalnews.com, 27 Jan 2021; thenationalnews.com, 27 Jan 2021)

General Interest

Other information

RETIREMENT THOUGHTS

She says the postponement of the 2020 Olympic Games in Tokyo made her consider retiring from the sport. "I never thought of stopping my career after Tokyo, but when the Games were postponed, and with all my injuries and everything, I told myself, 'Okay, I think it's going to be my last Olympics', because I want to respect myself and I want to finish at the top. I'm not going to lie, it crossed my mind that I may stop after Tokyo. I'm a person who wants to experience other things because I'm not getting a lot of money from fencing. So as an independent woman, I have diplomas and I want to make another career in something else." (olympics.com, 19 May 2021; thenationalnews.com, 27 Jan 2021)

SURGERY POSTPONEMENT

After sustaining a knee injury in 2019, she chose to delay surgery until after the 2020 Olympic Games in Tokyo. When the Games were postponed for a year due to the COVID-19 pandemic, she delayed the operation again and finally underwent surgery in September 2021. "Two solutions were offered to me - have the operation knowing that it was not the right timing one year ahead of the Olympic Games, or be patient with my pain and carry on. In 2020, four months away from the Games, my biggest fear happened - postponing the Games because of COVID-19. This news devastated me, I was lost, angry but understanding with this global pandemic. Despite everything, I continued intensive care and accepted that this pain was part of my daily routine. I don't have any regrets because throughout the preparation I fought and never let go." (Facebook page, 17 Sep 2021)

INSPIRING THE NEXT GENERATION

She says she felt added pressure as a role model after winning a bronze medal in individual foil at the 2016 Olympic Games in Rio de Janeiro. "It's a responsibility because there are a lot of young girls following me. I have some pressure and responsibility because I want to show them how to get this medal, not just in sport or in other careers, to show that she can do it. It's not because we are Arab or from Africa that we can't, just believe in yourself, be confident and don't let people judge you. For me, it's very important that we have equality between women and men." When she retires from fencing, she says she would like to open her own coaching academy. "I'm thinking of people like me, people who don't have a big structure, big clubs, a lot of fencers to practice [with]. So my plan, and I hope it can work, is to build an international academy for all the people who don't have big federations, they can join our academy and I can share with them how to improve in fencing, my experiences and go with them to competitions, to be their coach." (bbc.co.uk, 14 Jul 2021; olympics.com, 19 May 2021; thenationalnews.com, 27 Jan 2021)

FURTHER EDUCATION

She has studied for a master's degree in sport psychology and high level performance at Paris Descartes University in France. She is also a certified physical education teacher. (thenationalnews.com, 27 Jan 2021; LinkedIn profile, 01 Jan 2017; escrime-xxi.fie.org; 21 Aug 2016; olympics.com, 19 May 2021; bbc.co.uk, 14 Jul 2021)