

## **2021 British Canoeing Slalom ACM report.**

### **World Class Programme**

2021 saw a much welcome return to racing. The ever changing covid environment around international travel meant a cautious approach was taken in order to support the health and wellbeing of athletes and staff, and to mitigate risk in the build up to Tokyo 2020. Athletes and staff worked exceptionally hard, under tight restrictions, to operate safely and it is testament to everyone's efforts that we had no covid cases within teams. I would like to recognise the immense challenge this has placed on everyone and the access impacts to both the HPC at Lee Valley and the restricted team sizes at times.

The WCP has managed an exceptionally busy year delivering a challenging calendar with 5 major Championship events and 4 World Cups across the season. We had full teams competing again in the second half of the season with the juniors joining in Solkan, and following Senior Selection in August, a full team attending the last 2 World Cups and the World Championships in Bratislava.

The athletes produced some fantastic performance across the season with notable performances including-

- Tokyo Olympic games- Olympic team all reaching the Final in their first games and an amazing Silver medal for Mallory Franklin. Adam Burgess also a fraction from making it two medals for GBR.
- Bratislava World Championships- Joe Clarke winning Gold in Extreme Slalom a new event in Paris, Kimberley Woods winning Bronze in K1, Mallory again winning Silver and the K1W team winning Gold
- U23/JNR Championships- The Junior and U23 teams also showed their level in Tacen and Solkan. At the World Championships, Beth Forrow won Gold in C1W, Jonny Dickson and Chris Bowers won Silver and Bronze in U23 K1M and Nikita Setchell won Gold in Extreme Slalom. At the Europeans, another medal for Chris Bowers with Bronze in K1M and again for Nikita with Silver in Extreme, and in the team events, the U23 K1W and Junior K1M both won Silver.

The year has also seen a number of staffing changes as we set up the programme for the Paris cycle. These include-

- Greg Hitchen moved into a Podium coaching role with the senior team moving from his Lead Academy role.
- Nathalie Siegrist joined as Lead Academy Coach. After many years working with the Swiss national team Nathalie will bring experience and new ideas to a young vibrant team of athletes and staff.
- Luke Smyth joined as an Academy coach moving from the ENTS programme. Luke has shown great qualities moving into the role and is a promising coach for the long term.
- The role of WCP transition coach came to an end in Nottingham with Neil Buckley sadly leaving British Canoeing. Neil has played a key role in supporting many young athletes over the years and would like to say a huge thank you for all he has done.
- Two important members of the support team in Adrew Powell (physio) and Yianis Konstantonis (analyst) will also be leaving the programme in the coming months.

Andrew has been with the programme for 6 years as Senior physio and Yianis leaving after his second spell with the Slalom programme

- Finally, Paul Ratcliffe left his role as Performance Director with British Canoeing after a long successful spell in post. Paul has made an immense contribution to our sport over the years both as an athlete and as a coach and leader within the WCP and will be a big loss. I would like to thank him for his years of dedication, professionalism and support and wish him every success in whatever lies ahead.

I would also like to mention Fiona Pennie who has finally hung up her paddle following an outstanding career. Fiona enjoyed a great round off from the team out in Bratislava winning K1W team gold and finishing 5th in the K1W Final which was an amazing achievement.

Moving into the Paris cycle we have UK Sport funding confirmed, in principle, for the next 3 years which puts us in a strong position. This cycle promises to be an exciting one with a squad of hungry athletes ready to make their bid to compete in Paris. With 2 new medal events in Extreme Slalom we will have to learn fast and develop new ways of training across multiple events. It will be vital for Slaloms long term sustainability in the games programme that we embrace this new challenge and grow the sport in the future. The cycle also has the prospect of a home World Championships in Lee Valley which will form an important hurdle on the way to 2024 qualification and so we look forward to building towards a fantastic event for our Slalom community to enjoy.

Finally, I would finish by thanking all the athletes, staff, stakeholders, parents and families for their continued support this year. Thank you to the countless volunteers that are involved with our sport, everyone from club and race officials through to Slalom Committee and International Panel members, the energy, passion and effort that is invested on behalf of our sport and the athletes is as ever greatly appreciated. We could not have achieved the performances we have without everyone's effort and we all look forward to another year of racing in 2022.

### **England Talent Programme.**

The beginning of 2021 saw the launch of the [England Talent Canoe Slalom Talent Strategy 2021-25](#) which has led to a number of positive outcomes this year:

- Established the Slalom School programme in support of both athlete and coach development through inclusive training camps and events. 10 training camps at various white water venues will have been delivered by the end of the year.
- Introduced increased levels of [Talent Club Partnership](#) funding and breath of support available to clubs. 5 clubs have been established as partners (Holme Pierrepont Canoe Club, Lee Valley Paddlesport Club, Stafford and Stone Canoe Club, Frome Canoe Club Wyedean Canoe Club).
- Partnered with the University of Nottingham and Nottingham Trent University who have both agreed to invest into Canoe Slalom in Nottingham. Each University is funding the cost of a [Canoe Slalom University Performance Coach](#) to work with their student athletes. Coaches have been appointed and work is currently underway.
- Through a collaborative process involving World Class Programme, National Association and club coaches, this year sees the formal launch of the [What It Takes](#)

[To Progress](#) athlete development framework. The intent is that the document will act as reference point for decision making to help coaches create effective and appropriate learning environments suitable to the needs of their athletes and the constraints of the environment that they individually operate within.

The mental health and wellbeing of athletes and coaches alike has been significantly challenged and tested again this year, the easing of restrictions and the ability to go racing, both domestically and internationally helping to rebuild a sense of normality. We are proud of all our athletes' development and performances this year, overall 11 Talent Programme athletes have been selected to the Junior GB team all classes and a further 6 athletes have achieved reserve standard performances across the Junior and U23 team. England Talent Athletes achieved 2 finals at the European Junior Championships

It is with sadness that we announce that Ian Raspin (Rasbo) will be stepping down from full time employment as the England National Talent Squad (ENTS) coach towards the end of November this year. Rasbo has been involved in Canoe Slalom for over 40 years, initially through his athlete career which culminated in competing at two Olympic games and the achievement of multiple medals at World Championship and World Cup events and most recently through a coaching career that has spanned almost 21 years.

Rasbo has had a phenomenal impact on the pathway, having worked with numerous athletes that have gone on to Olympic, World Championship and World Cup medals. Rasbo's time within the ENTS programme has seen him support athletes consistently to World and European Junior finals, earning numerous medals along with GB's first individual WK1 Junior European championship title since 1997.

We are delighted that Dan Goddard has been appointed as Rasbo's successor and will start in December. Dan brings with him a wealth of experience, expertise and passion to the role. It is hoped that Rasbo can still remain an integral part of the Slalom Talent Team, working with the programme on a part time basis.

Looking ahead to next season we intend to expand Slalom School provision and support more international training and race camps, a key component to missing our athlete provision over the last 2 years.

A huge thanks to all of those that have played a part in the programme this year, the athletes, their parents, volunteers, clubs coaches and programme coaches alike, thank you for your support, patience and understanding as we all try to navigate through 2021.