

To: Slalom Committee
From: Rich Ramsdale, Head of Talent
Subject: England Talent Programme 2019/20 Report



The impact of covid is felt in every aspect of everyone's lives, our athletes within the England Talent Programme are no exception to this and have been significantly impacted, as have their peers in other home nations.

Athletes have endured and continue to face huge disruption and uncertainty in every aspect of their lives. From missing huge blocks of school time, suffering isolation from friends and peers, impact to their GSCSE and A Level exam results (along with the threat of impact in 2021) to restrictions on access to facilities, clubs, coaching support, gyms, even rivers, lakes and canals in the summer along with access to domestic and international races. This has all proved massively challenging to athletes and coaches alike, all trying to maintain momentum of motivation and progression.

The 2019/20 season saw a typical start to winter preparations, with squad selections completed in November with just under 100 athletes included to programme, and squads undertaking winter camps in Nottingham, Lee Valley and Teesside white water centres.

Plans for the summer included support of international race camps, a mix of ECA junior cups, a training camp in Tacen (host site for this year's Junior World Championship) and a training week in the south of France in the summer holidays. New for 2020 the Programme were looking to include the provision of summer camps in HPP and Scotland, with the intent of trying to maximise the amount of time that athletes spend on white water in sunny conditions.

Obviously very little of our summer plans came to fruition and this has been challenging and frustrating for all concerned. Given the disruption and in light of what is fair, safe and in the best interest of athletes' health and welfare, we took the decision to freeze our current 2019/20 England Talent programme places until at least March 31st 2021 extending athletes' current programme places beyond the end date of November 16th 2020.

The mental health and wellbeing of athletes and coaches alike has been significantly challenged and tested, those athletes that are juniors for the last time in 2020 have been particularly effected as they have missed their final opportunity to race and perform at a Junior World Championship event. Coaches have been resourceful and resilient in their support of the health and wellbeing of athletes with this at the forefront of their minds as they navigate their way through each day. The programme has been able to play a part in supporting the young people we are connected with, able to be a positive influence, offer some inspiration, maybe just an hour's worth of distraction, or some sense of structure and 'normal' as the worry and the noise surrounding the virus continues.

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 2020.