

BECOMING A BIATHLETE

The Absolute Beginner

Ideally you should be fit and especially keen on running (if you are not already a cross country skier), and shooting – if not both. The BBU is the National Governing Body (NGB) and has no resources or facilities to train a potential biathlete from scratch. This is probably not the answer you want to hear, but there is some help now available!

Clubs in the UK

In addition to many clubs in the Army, and the RAF Biathlon Union, there are now two Clubs and two biathlon facilities, specifically aimed at civilians in the UK:

Cairngorm Biathlon & Nordic Ski Club (CBNSC)
Wessex Biathlon & Nordic Ski Club (WBNSC)
Budleigh Farm Target Shooting Club (BFTSC)
East Grange Biathlon Centre (EGBC)

CBNSC & WBNSC are Members' Clubs and have been established specifically to develop the sport in then UK. They cater for all levels within the sport from beginner to expert with CBNSC focussing on youths and juniors. WBNSC is strong on roller skiing. BFTSC trainings in shooting skills only whilst EGBC runs Biathlon & Range officials' courses for more experienced skiers and generally, but not exclusively, supports military athletes.

- **CBNSC** is based at Glenmore (Aviemore) Scotland under the direction of 6 times Olympian Mike Dixon. The Club has its own website: www.cbnscc.co.uk and the Secretary Karen Lawrie can be contacted on 01479 812509.
- **WBNSC** operates in the South West of England. Secretary is Rupert Butcher (Email: rupert@wessexbiathlon.org; web: www.wessexbiathlon.org). Former Olympic Cross Country athlete Martin Watkins is amongst the coaches.
- The Chief Instructor at **BFTSC** (01647 440 835; www.budleighfarm.co.uk) in Devon is Arthur Harvey, who has been teaching at National & International level on many different weapons for many years.
- **EGBC** at Kinloss in Scotland is run by Gordon Seaton who is very experienced as a biathlon, shooting and cross country coach. The GBR National Development Squad trains there annually. Contact is on 01309 674073 and there is further information on this BBU website – **see link to East Grange BC.**

There are a number of cross country ski clubs in the UK where you can learn and enjoy straight cross country skiing. For more information see the websites:

www.snowsportengland.org.uk (England)
www.snowsportscotland.org (Scotland)
www.snowsportwales.net (Wales)

or for the NGB of Cross Country in the UK (Snowsport GB): www.snowsportgb.com

Equipment

The Biathlon Clubs will be able to "let you have a go", but if you are going to be a serious athlete you will eventually need your own skis and roller skis, as well as laying out some £ 750 for a second hand rifle or up to £ 1500 for a new one. Again, the Clubs can help on this or check out the official BBU kit supplier RMA Sports UK Ltd: www.biathlonsport.com.

The Armed Forces

The Armed Forces (mainly the Army) provide the backbone of the British teams, but even then many of the athletes will not have skied until they joined the Forces, at around 18 years of age. This puts GBR at an automatic disadvantage compared with many of the "biathlon nations" where skiers as young as 5 or 6 are already being taught the rudiments of shooting. Some 90% of the World's top biathletes are members of their own Armed Forces / Customs / Border Guards etc.

Progress to National Teams

Athletes are selected for the National Teams, initially at annual selection races in Scandinavia each November, and then on results and merit. To reach the standard required to race on the World Cup circuit an athlete needs to be totally single minded, and must either have a very understanding employer or have private means or a sponsor! Some 7 months per year will be spent training (for several hours per day) and then another 3 or 4 months racing. The European Cup circuit demands slightly less, but if you want to progress, even this will necessitate almost full time training. **It goes without saying that any potential GBR athlete must be British Citizen / full UK passport holder.** If selected for the National squads you will additionally have to pay team "subs" (currently c£ 1200 pa) and sign standard BBU and WADA anti-doping contracts etc.

Contacts

The BBU Head Office (one man, part time!) is in Brecon, Wales. (There are no "home nation" offices). Please Email Mark Goodson, the Secretary General for further information: info@britishbiathlon.com or call 01874 730562.