



18 SEPTEMBER 2023

CHAIR'S ANNUAL REPORT FOR SEASON 2022/23

INTRODUCTION

I write to you as Chair of the British Biathlon Union for the sixth consecutive year. As we reflect on the events and accomplishments of the past year, once again it is evident that this has been a period of significant growth and transformation for our organisation. Unwavering dedication to excellence and commitment to our Athletes has provided opportunities for them to perform and develop to the highest level of competition.

Over the course of the year, we have witnessed changing requirements of the team as it continues to grow. In response, we have consistently strived to adapt, innovate, and provide value in everything we do. Through strategic initiatives, collaborative partnerships, and a keen focus on operational efficiency, we have positioned ourselves for success whilst still driving hard for a strong financial backing beyond International Biathlon Union support.

This annual report serves as an overview of our achievements, financial position and a look towards the future. It also highlights the dedication and contributions of our talented team members, whose hard work and passion have been instrumental in delivering success.

SPORTING REVIEW

It has been an exciting year where we have seen the impact of our 2021 Talent Campaign coming to fruition. Having accelerated the development pathways for a number of these Athletes, many have now competed internationally on the IBU Regional Cups and the IBU Junior Cups this season. With most of these young Athletes still having a residual 3-4 years in the Junior field, they are on a growth trajectory as they gain more race experience and build on the technique and skills required for highly competitive Biathlon.

We have continued learning on this journey with the Athletes, initially navigating COVID, seeking to find the balance between education, and then finding the best training opportunities to develop them. The journey has demonstrated that British talent is out there

to be sought, nurtured and developed through our system and we launched another Talent Search this season. The Talent Campaign also reached our British Athletes living overseas with some great access to snow and local club training. We have worked hard to build relationships with their in-country coaching structure and embedded them into several of our camps to build a great team spirit and ethos.

At all levels of our programme, we witnessed growth and development:

- **Tier One UK Hubs:**
 - We have grown our UK presence with representation at the GB Roller Ski Series where we have seen Athletes at all levels from Biathlon, Nordic and Para Nordic come together to race across the country. We have also launched a larger in-school's campaign where we have been providing taster sessions for pupils to try roller skiing and laser shooting. The children have been so engaged in these sessions and excited to try something new.
 - Launching taster sessions for Scouts, Cubs and Cadets has also been great fun, and as part of a Decathlon Stores Winter Campaign we have again been running taster sessions in their flagship stores too. Each session sometimes feels like a very small step in promoting the sport, but the culminating effect we hope to see is more youngsters in roller ski clubs and then they could potentially be our talent campaign Athletes of the future.

- **Tier Two National Development Programme:** We launched our second talent campaign and delivered a great programme of training taking on board all the lessons learnt from the inaugural programme the previous year. 15 Athletes were then selected and transitioned onto snow camps, culminating at the British Championships.

- **Tier Three Performance Programme:**
 - We were delighted this year to have a full male and female team competing in all IBU Junior Cups, allowing us to take part in the relays throughout the season. These events concluded at the World Youth and Junior IBU World Championships in Kazakhstan, where we had our largest ever Team of 13 Athletes competing.
 - Quentin Wedderburn also represented Team GB at the European Youth Olympic Winter Festival where he embraced and learnt from the experience and enjoyed competing alongside the wider Team GB Athletes. Notably both our male and female junior teams climb in the nation rankings, and we hope to see a continued progression next year.
 - We also excitedly had 2 Junior Athletes represent Team GB at the World University Games in the USA; Cara Loates and Chloe Dupont.

- **Tier 4 Elite Team;** The Athletes who competed on the IBU Cup in Trimester 1 were Marcus Webb and Ciara Mitchell. Ciara retired from the sport following the first trimester and Marcus Webb continued onto Trimester 2 and 3, securing a place at the World IBU Championships. Credit goes to his hard work and commitment to the sport. Marcus now has his sights firmly set on the Olympics 2026 and we hope more team mates this year will make the transition onto the IBU Cup.

FINANCE & SPONSORSHIP

It has been a great year of growing relationships internationally with our wider National Federations and the International Biathlon Union. There really is a Snow Family out there supporting us and daring to dream with us. Without them much of the activity you have seen this winter would not have been possible, from support through development grants (€30,000), training camps, coaching pathways, educational webinars, mentorship programmes, provision of kit, collaborative training camps with Biathlon Canada, regional competitions and the list could go on. But all have helped to transform our ability to reach an entire new cohort of talented Athletes and grow awareness of the sport for all.

Despite the IBU support, finance continues to be our greatest challenge and while our BBU membership and lottery have helped generate some income, financial pressures on our athletes persist. We hope with a more stable operating and financial foundation in place, along with a compelling narrative, we can exert significant collective efforts to secure crucial sponsorships. These sponsorships will be vital in sustaining our progress over the next cycle. Following this coming season's results, we will also resubmit our application to UK Sport.

GOVERNANCE

We continue to annually review our processes and policies to ensure they remain current and reflective of the requirements of the BBU. A full strategic review will take place this year and any changes or broadening of the scope of the plan will be shared with members.

THE FUTURE

The Summer has seen forty athletes training with the BBU system and within international programmes, with a Development and Junior Team supported through monthly training camps, a new Talent Campaign launched this year, and engagement in the GB Roller Ski Series. The Summer also saw 6 Junior Athletes compete at the Summer World Championships 2023, with the plan for the summer training to culminate at our inaugural British Biathlon Event on the 29th October 2023.

Following our selection races in November in Austria, we hope our IBU Cup team will consist of 4 Athletes (2 male, 2 female), a full male and female Junior Cup Team this year (with even greater depth in numbers), a full OPA Team and our talent programme continuing to flourish on a series of camps.

As well as a full IBU Programme of competitions, we expect to have up to 4 Athletes at the Youth Olympic Games and many of our Athletes competing at the British Championships in 2024.

As we focus on expanding our capacity, strategizing for the future, and achieving our goals, our top priority remains the efficient development and management of our athletes, providing them with the platform to showcase their maximum potential. Additionally, generating revenue takes a close second as it plays a crucial role in achieving our ambitions successfully.

SUMMARY

The Board and I are proud to share this report with you, our valued members, as it not only celebrates our achievements but also provides transparent reporting of the BBU. We remain dedicated to delivering excellence, forging strong partnerships, and providing financial stability for all the Athletes we serve.

Thank you for your ongoing support, and we look forward to your continued involvement as we embark on the exciting opportunities and challenges that lie ahead.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "R. Weighill", with a horizontal line underneath it.

Rob Weighill
Chairman