CHAIR'S ANNUAL REPORT FOR SEASON 2025/26

John Mead – Chair, British Biathlon Union

INTRODUCTION

Following my first year as Chair of the British Biathlon Union (BBU), I am delighted to report that the 2025/26 season has been one of the most successful and significant in the recent history of British Biathlon.

Whilst much attention naturally focused on the Milan Cortina Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games, the true story of this season has been the continued acceleration of British Biathlon's long-term development and the validation of the vision set out in Target 2030. Across Olympic and Paralympic programmes, we have demonstrated that British Biathlon is progressing at a pace few would have predicted only a few years ago.

The season saw Jacques Jefferies and Shawna Pendry qualify for and compete at the Olympic Winter Games and Scott Meenagh compete at his third Paralympics, a tremendous achievement and a reflection of the hard work of athletes, coaches and support staff throughout the cycle. More importantly, however, the wider programme continues to gain strength and depth.

This season both the men's and women's teams finished the season ranked 24th in the World Cup Nations Cup standings. This achievement places us several years ahead of the trajectory outlined within Target 2030 and secures valuable opportunities for future growth. As a result, Great Britain now holds two men's and two women's World Cup start places throughout next season and three start places for both genders at the World Championships.

At youth and junior level, we equalled our best-ever championship result with a remarkable 12th-place finish at the final Youth and Junior World Championships. Equally encouraging was our continued progress within the IBU Cup circuit, where the women's programme maintained its top-20 ranking and four start places, whilst the men's programme moved from 24th to 21st in the Nations Cup standings, narrowly missing out on an additional quota place.

These achievements demonstrate not only growing performance at senior level but also the increasing depth of the pathway beneath it. We now have 31 internationally ranked athletes across Youth, Junior and Senior categories, comprising 12 women and 19 men. This represents a large and stronge performance pathway now assembled within British Biathlon.

The future is equally encouraging. Nearly 70 athletes have registered for our latest Talent Identification campaign, and 25 have now attended a number of training camps to continue their pathway with us. Also three British youth athletes have secured places at prestigious Norwegian sports schools from August 2026, providing them with outstanding opportunities to accelerate their development within one of the world class biathlon nations.

Alongside these achievements, I would like to congratulate every athlete who has contributed to these results. Equally, our coaches have worked tirelessly throughout the season and deserve enormous credit for the progress being made across every level of the programme.

STRATEGIC VISION – TARGET 2030

Twelve months on from the launch of Target 2030, and the strategy is already delivering tangible results.

As we enter a new Olympic and Paralympic cycle, British Biathlon has undertaken a comprehensive review of its performance structures, staffing models and development pathways. Our objective remains clear: to build a sustainable, world-class system capable of achieving long-term international success despite operating within a challenging financial environment.

The season has seen the implementation of a revised performance structure designed to improve athlete support, communication and accountability. Clearer pathways now exist across Development, Performance and Elite levels, supported by enhanced coaching provision and more individualised athlete monitoring.

The programme continues to maximise collaboration across the international biathlon community. Partnerships with Sweden, Canada and Slovakia are providing valuable opportunities for athlete and coach development, whilst stronger integration between Olympic and Paralympic programmes is creating greater efficiency and shared learning across the organisation. Our Talent Identification programme continues to be a key pillar of future success. The response to the latest campaign has exceeded expectations and provides confidence that British Biathlon is increasingly recognised as an attractive and credible high-performance winter sport pathway.

Our focus remains unchanged: building sustainable competitive depth whilst creating an athlete-centred environment that enables individuals to maximise their potential.

PARA BIATHLON AND NORDIC DEVELOPMENT

The Paralympic programme has continued to evolve positively throughout the season.

Whilst responsibility for the World Class Programme sat beyond the BBU until 30th March 2026, we were proud to support Scott Meenagh as he competed at his third Paralympic Winter Games. Scott's continued presence at the highest level of international competition remains an inspiration to athletes across our system.

Alongside supporting existing elite athletes, significant effort has been invested into creating a more sustainable long-term para pathway. During the season we established a dedicated development programme, and we now have six athletes progressing towards future Para World Cup participation.

At community level, important steps have also been taken to broaden participation. Working alongside the British Paralympic Association and disability schools across the country, we delivered a number of introductory and taster events designed to engage young people with disabilities and create new entry points into para nordic skiing and biathlon.

These initiatives represent an important foundation as we work towards building a fully integrated Olympic and Paralympic pathway in line with the ambitions outlined within Target 2030.

FINANCE, FUNDING AND PARTNERSHIPS

Like many minority sports, British Biathlon continues to operate within a challenging financial landscape.

During the year considerable effort was invested into pursuing support opportunities through UK Sport and the Home Nations. While these applications were not successful on this occasion, the Board remains grateful for the constructive engagement and feedback received throughout the process. We continue to believe that British Biathlon's recent trajectory, growing participation numbers and improving international performances position the sport strongly for future investment opportunities, but currently remain self funded and supported by the International Biathlon Union.

Positively, we secured Sport England development pathway funding for both Olympic and Paralympic programmes over the next four years. This investment provides important validation of the work being undertaken and will strengthen athlete development opportunities within England over the coming years.

Financial sustainability remains one of the Board's highest priorities. Whilst the International Biathlon Union remains a critical funding partner, we recognise the importance of diversifying income sources and reducing reliance on any single funding stream and Athlete contributions. The pursuit of commercial partnerships, philanthropic support and new revenue opportunities will therefore remain a major strategic focus over the next twelve months. Overtime we will look to better configure the Board structure to ensure more commercial expertise.

Our ambition is simple: to ensure that financial constraints never become the defining factor limiting the potential of our athletes.

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND GOVERNANCE

British Biathlon continues to strengthen its position and reputation within the international biathlon community.

At the 2026 International Biathlon Union Congress, our Secretary General stood for election to the IBU Executive Board. Whilst unsuccessful on this occasion, her candidacy reflected the growing credibility and influence of British Biathlon internationally.

We are particularly proud to have secured the successful bid to bring the 2028 IBU Congress to England. This represents a significant endorsement of the organisation and provides a valuable opportunity to showcase British Biathlon on the international stage.

Our influence continues to grow through representation across several key international working groups. We maintain representation on the Para Working Group, contribute through the Coaching Forum, and continue to invest in leadership development through IBU mentorship programmes and coaching education initiatives. Two members of our leadership team successfully completed year-long IBU mentorship programmes during the season, whilst numerous coaches enhanced their qualifications through IBU development opportunities.

Domestically, governance remains a priority, and we continue to strengthen our systems, policies and operating practices to ensure British Biathlon remains a modern, transparent and athlete-focused organisation.

THE FUTURE

The progress achieved during the 2025/26 season provides enormous confidence for the future.

Our World Cup rankings now provide greater access and opportunity than ever before. Our athlete pathway is deeper than at any point in British Biathlon history. Our coaching workforce continues to grow in capability and experience. The talent entering the system is stronger than ever.

At the same time, we remain ambitious. The phrase often used within British Nordic circles, "Better Never Stops", captures perfectly how we approach the next chapter. The coming year will focus on consolidating gains, supporting the next generation of athletes, strengthening our financial position and continuing to build a performance culture capable of competing consistently on the world stage.

Target 2030 remains our roadmap, but increasingly the milestones it contains are moving from aspiration to achievement.

CONCLUSION

The 2025/26 season will be remembered as one in which British Biathlon accelerated its progress and demonstrated that it belongs on the international stage. From Olympic participation and record World Cup rankings to pathway development, para expansion and international recognition, the organisation has continued to move forward at an impressive pace.

None of this would be possible without the dedication of our athletes, coaches, volunteers, officials, partners and supporters. Your commitment, passion and belief continue to drive British Biathlon forward.

Thank you for everything you do for the sport. The journey continues, and the future looks bright.

John Mead
Chair, British Biathlon Union
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