

British Canoeing Canoe Slalom and Kayak Cross Report

2023

World Class Programme

Senior Team

Year two of the Paris Olympic selection process and the prospect of securing maximum Olympic quota spots for Great Britain sat at the forefront of the teams collective intentions.

With the inaugural presence of Canoe Slalom and Kayak Cross in the European Games in Krakow this season began unusually with World Cups, albeit on the well-trodden venues of Augsburg, Prague and Tacen.

World Cups (Key results)

Augsburg, GER

- Woods 7th (C1W), Clarke 2nd (K1M) and Bronze (MKX)

Prague, CZE

- Burgess 8th (C1M), Woods 5th (C1W), Franklin 4th (C1W), Dickson 6th (K1M), Franklin 3rd (K1W), Woods 1st (WKX)

Tacen, SLO

- Burgess 5th (C1M), Miller 5th (C1W), Clarke 9th (K1M), Clarke 1st (MKX)

Seu D'urgell, SPA

- Burgess 8th (C1M), Westley 4th (C1M), Dickson 9th (K1M), Clarke 2nd (K1M), Franklin 9th (C1W), Woods 3rd (C1W), Clarke 2nd (MKX), Woods 2nd (WKX)

Paris, FRA

- Burgess 10th (C1M), Woods 5th (C1W), Franklin 3rd (C1W), Dickson 2nd (K1M), Setchell 4th (WKX), Woods 2nd (WKX)

Overall Series

- Woods 2nd (C1W), Woods 1st (WKX), Clarke 1st (MKX)

European Games, Krakow, POL

The European Games were a fantastic spectacle for our team, providing a significant insight into what an Olympic experience is like for those seeking to represent Team GB in Paris and beyond. On water the team achieved two team medals to start competition with Kettle, Burgess and Westley winning Bronze in C1M and Ogilvie, Woods and Franklin Silver in C1W. In the individual categories Woods and Franklin achieved final results in WK1 alongside Burgess in C1M. Gracing the Podium with fantastic

performances were Joe Bronze in K1M, Mallory Bronze in C1W and most notably Ryan Westley (C1M) winning the first ever European Games Gold in Canoe Slalom for Team GB and in doing so securing GB a C1M spot at the Paris Olympics.

World Championships, Lee Valley, ENG

The World Championships at Lee Valley were a fantastic spectacle, an occasion that our athletes truly rose to in not only making history as our best results at a World Championships to date but furthermore qualifying all available Olympic quota spots for Paris. Meeting the effort and quality delivered by the event organisers and the awesome volunteers the team roared out the blocks to win three team medals on day one. The C1M team of Kettle, Burgess and Westley backed up European Games Silver with another at the Worlds agonisingly close to the French in Gold. In the K1W event Spicer, Woods and Franklin combined excellently to win Bronze. The first British anthem of the event was to honour our C1W Team of Miller, Woods and Franklin who stormed to Gold with a superb run. The girls and programme would like to give recognition to Sophie Ogilvie who won Silver at the European Games with the team and contributed heavily to Worlds preparation before sadly having to withdraw through injury. It is also important to acknowledge the skill and calm with which Ellis slotted into the team and delivered exceptionally in the winning run!

In the individual slalom events Great Britain achieved 6 finals, Burgess in 5th (C1M), Dickson in 9th (K1M) and Franklin in 8th (K1W). Three of those finals were converted into medals with a GB one, two in C1W with Woods in Silver and Franklin securing a superb second World title with Gold in front of the home crowd. Last but not least Joe Clarke made it a super Saturday dominating the field in both the semi-final and final to romp home for Gold in the Kayak Men's event.

The final day played host to the Kayak Cross event which makes its Olympic debut in Paris. A long day of fierce competition after a busy schedule saw GBR's Woods and Clarke make the final 4. What followed over the next 10 minutes of competition will stay in the hearts and minds of all British spectators for many years to come as both athletes delivered superb performances to be crowned World Champions.

A massive thank you to Gemma Wiggs, her events team and the amazing volunteer team for hosting a phenomenal event.

The World Cup Final in Paris doubled up as the Olympic Test Event and a final opportunity for teams to race an international on the forthcoming Olympic course. In front of sizeable and raucous crowds Burgess (C1M) delivered his 6th straight final to close out a year of great stability. Woods continued her strong year in C1 finishing 5th and in doing so winning Silver in the World Cup overall series. Franklin riding the high of being World Champion delivered again to win Bronze and close out a fine international season. The final GB medallist in Slalom was Jonny Dickson who building on multiple finals this year went even better this time winning his maiden senior medal with a stunning Silver. Kayak Cross closed out the international racing year and witnessed Nikita Setchell delivering a personal best making the final and narrowly missing out on a medal in 4th. Joining her in the final was Kimberley Woods racing for overall World Cup Gold. In finishing in Silver she took the overall title underling a fantastic year as World Champion, World Cup winner and World number one accolades despite not making the final in Paris shared by her teammate Joe Clarke.

U23 and Junior

The Championship season at Junior and U23 took the team to the familiar venues of Bratislava and Krakow with the Europeans first up in Slovakia.

European Championships

The team events saw some stellar racing with U23 Bronze for the K1M of Dickson, Haylett and Patterson, Silver for the Jnr C1W Team of Kontchakov, Blythe-Shields and Gold and European Champions for the C1M U23 Team of Kettle, Linksted and Adams-Rozentals.

Individually our junior slalom team achieved four finals: Zoe Blythe-Shields 6th (C1W), Ed Macdonald 7th (C1M), Hannah Rhodes 9th (K1W) and Jonah Hanrahan 9th (K1M). In U23 finals were delivered by Lois Leaver 5th K1W, Ben Haylett 6th (K1M), Phoebe Spicer 10th (C1W) and Sam Leaver 15th (K1M). These excellent results were boosted by Peter Linksted who in his final year as an U23 won a fantastic Bronze medal in C1M.

In Kayak Cross our U23 team were agonisingly close to three medals with two fourth places from Ellis Miller and David Patterson. Sam Leaver continued to demonstrate his calibre in this sport as he blasted his way to Silver. Sam was joined on the podium by a fantastic performance from Hannah Rhodes who won Bronze in the junior category to take home her first individual championship medal.

World Championships

At Krakow the team kicked off the event in style at the team event. Our U23 C1M team of Kettle, Linksted and Adams-Rozentals backed up European Gold with World Silver. The K1W team of Spicer, Leaver and Miller went one better to become U23 World Champions.

In Canoe Slalom our junior achieved two final results through Blythe-Shields 6th (C1W) and Kontchakov 9th (C1W). The U23's raced strongly to gain four finals through Spicer 4th (C1W), Miller 8th (C1W), Linksted 9th (C1M) and Miller 10th (K1W). Our fifth finalist a performer of the event for GB was Adams-Rozentals who delivered the run of his life to date to take a superb silver in the C1M category.

In Kayak Cross the U23 team once again brought the fire with a 5th place from Miller in the Women's event and a double podium in the Men through Dickson in Bronze and Leaver bossing the event to become World Champion.

After a busy summer of racing we would like to congratulate all of the programme and home nation coaches on all their commitment and craft they exude in preparing environments for development and performance across the pathway. Furthermore to all the clubs and parents/guardians who show unending dedication to the paddlers in order to maximise their experience and enjoyment of paddle sport.

Programme

Saying Goodbye

It is with great sadness and immense gratitude that we have to say goodbye to some esteemed colleagues this year as they move on to adventures new. Zof Campbell our performance wellbeing coach and safeguarding lead has supported athletes and staff alike with great skill, care and compassion over a number of years. Sabrina Heimler has been an integral part of our performance lifestyle support team working predominately with Academy athletes to support significant transitions and developments in their personal, academic and sporting lives. Andrew Cornwell our strength and conditioning academy lead for the last two years, a highly driven and dedicated practitioner who role modelled a curiosity in everything he did. Finally a special mention for Andrzej Wojs who started as a specialist Canoe coach over 15 years ago and has gone on to fulfil many roles across the organisation

at HPP and LV thereafter. Andrzej worked tirelessly through his time with us mastering the English language and culture (even taking milk in his tea in the latter years!) alongside providing rich learning environments for the athletes in his care.

We thank all of the above for their unrelenting commitment to our athletes and the pursuit of continuous growth within their craft and wish them all the best with their next steps.

Looking forward

As I type four athletes have recently been selected to race for Team GB at the Paris Olympics next year. We would like to congratulate the following athletes on their nomination:

Mallory Franklin – Women’s Canoe and Kayak Cross

Adam Burgess – Men’s Canoe

Kimberley Woods – Women’s Kayak and Kayak Cross

Joe Clarke – Men’s Kayak and Kayak Cross

These athletes came through a rigorous and intensely fought competitive process lasting two years. In addition to recognising their selection we would like to express a heartfelt recognition and thanks to all athletes and staff who worked tirelessly to develop and perform throughout this process. It is clear to see that everyone contributed in ensuring the strongest possible team heads to Paris.

The programme has 3 clear priorities moving forward into 2024:

Paris 2024 - Supporting the Olympic team to enjoy to Olympic experience and deliver the best possible performances for Team GB in Paris.

Kayak Cross Quota - Support a group of athletes to target the qualification of an extra Kayak Cross space at the Prague World Cup 2024.

LA 2028 - To support our identified LA 2028 cohort of athletes in their development and maximise the experience they have to evolve their love and performance of paddle sport supported by strategy submission to UK Sport.

Our volunteers

Great Britain hosts the finest races on the world circuit, a statement exemplified by this year’s World Championships at Lee Valley. It’s easy to notice the superb work of our volunteer sector when you see them excelling every day at a major event. It is however noted that they do this all year round with tireless commitment up and down the country. Simply put without their ongoing passion and presence we would not have a sport we all so dearly love. Our warmest thanks and recognition to each and every one of you who gives up their time to enable paddlers to pursue their love for paddling.

England Talent

Progress and Achievement

England juniors continued to perform well at GB Junior team selection with a total of 13 English boats selected to the 20 available spaces, with a further 7 qualifying as reserves. The team performed well across the World and European Championship events. Notable performances were Zoe Blyte Shields (LVPC) achieving finals at both Junior Worlds and European Champions Hannah Rhodes (LVPC) achieving a final in Canoe Slalom and a bronze medal in Kayak Cross at the European Championship. English Talent athletes were also part of a number of Junior and U23 team medals.

The wider programme attended 2 world series events (Prague and Bratislava), with 38 athletes involved, competing against the world's best athletes. A slalom school camp was held in France (21 athletes) and the opportunity served as an introduction to international camps for athletes and families at the beginning of the athlete pathway.

We have welcomed two new members to the coach team in 2023, Will Coney and Jake Brown joined in June to take up two new co-funded club Slalom Pathway coaching roles. They are supporting increased Slalom School delivery, and Canoe Slalom and Kayak Cross event provision, alongside supporting club provision and recruitment initiatives. Both Will and Jake have been in attendance at div 2/3 event in support of paddlers and were both instrumental in supporting the pilot Kayak Cross Head to Head event that ran as part of the HPP Prem event in July.

We also welcomed Alan Edge back to the sport. Alan has a wealth of coaching experience and expertise with over 25 years of hands-on elite coaching and coach education experience. He has a rich history in the sport of canoe slalom, having been a GB senior team athlete, the Head Coach for GB Teams between 1983-2000 supporting multiple World and European Championship titles and the team coach for GB Canoe Slalom's first ever Olympic medallists in Barcelona 1992 and Sydney 2000. Alan returns after 15 years working as a Performance Director in Olympic and Paralympic sports. He is attending Slalom School events, working to provide opportunities based on the needs of coaches to support their development and education.

14 young athletes were nominated by the Talent Coaching group to attend the Talent Inspiration Programme (TIP) that was run in parallel with the Canoe Slalom World Championships. The programme was designed to inspire and enthuse young athletes through an insight into what it is like to compete at a major championship. The athletes were joined by two club coaches (Kirsten Eatock (Stafford & Stone CC) and Katie Shattock (Taunton CC)) who gained valuable coach development input to help them within their coaching journey.

This year has seen the launch of the Slalom Club Support Scheme. The Scheme is designed to act as a financial catalyst to kick-start, or support existing projects, which drive development within the slalom pathway. A total of £14,000 has been invested in grants directly to grassroots clubs this season, including: purchasing of junior sized kit, running of introduction sessions, venue enhancement, coaching qualifications, kayak cross boats, and computer equipment to support the running of events. Thank you to members of the England Slalom Committee who sat as part of the awarding panel in support of the process.

This year a huge amount of effort, time and resource has been invested in supporting the wider pathway by providing development opportunities and support programmes, a selection of which are highlighted below:

- [Slalom School Programme](#)
- [Slalom Coach Development opportunities](#)
- [Slalom Technical Progression Guide](#)
- [Slalom Progress Awards](#)
- [C1 Webinars](#)
- [Combined Canoe and Kayak Prizes](#)
- [Slalom Club Support Scheme](#)

Looking ahead

It is with great sadness that we announce that Andrzej (Drej) Wojs will be leaving British Canoeing at the end of the year. Drej has been with British Canoeing for 17 years, having worked initially with the World Class Podium Potential programme when it was based in Nottingham, and for the last 8 years, he has been a key part of the England Talent Programme, working at Lee Valley.

His presence on the river bank and involvement with our coaching team as a colleague and a friend will be greatly missed. All the staff at British Canoeing wish him well on his next steps. Drej's last formal working day will be Dec 31 2023.

Adam Johnstone will be replacing Drej as National Talent Coach. Adam is a highly experienced and knowledgeable coach with a number of strong links to clubs and coaches throughout the southern region. We are currently recruiting for a suitable replacement for Adam's role.

A Slalom Coaching Conference will be hosted at HPP the day after the Slalom Committee ACM (November 26). The event has been well received with around 50 coaches due to attend and it is really positive to bring the slalom community together to discuss coaching and wider development.

We hope to conclude the successful Slalom Technical Progression Guides and release the final 2 sections in the project. The current videos have been accessed nearly 8,000 times since their release last year and have started to gather world wide appeal in the global Canoe Slalom community

Next year we hope to be able to broaden the number of athletes within the programme that have exposure to international residential camps at targeted future championship venues. This is in an effort to not only better prepare them with venue exposure but also to replicate the inspiring opportunity of the TIP at a site that will host an age range championship event within the next 2 years.

We recognise the decline in numbers across the pathway (e.g. those attending entry level events, competing at junior selection, meeting qualification standards for regional squads). Our ambition is to facilitate discussion and action in 2024, to reverse this trend. We are committed to supporting grassroots initiatives that support club development. As part of an action plan, we are investigating an opportunity to work with an experienced agency to review and assess (in collaboration with the community) the effectiveness of the competition pathway.

Conclusion

It has been another successful period for the England Talent Programme, and there is much to be proud of, both on and off the water. A huge thanks to everyone who has played a part in the programme this year: athletes, parents, volunteers, clubs coaches and programme coaches alike - we are incredibly fortunate to be able to work together as a community to support and drive the England Talent Programme.