

Slalom Committee Athlete Report ACM 2022

I took over the role of Athlete Rep this year so have been finding out what the role entails throughout this year. A big thank you to thank Martyn Setchell for his previous work in this role and his advice over this year.

I would like to thank all the parents, volunteers and coaches for the support they have provided to all the canoe slalom athletes over the 2021/22 season. It's been a great season and paddlers have really appreciated having a full season's racing.

Most of the events I attended this year were Division 1 and Premier races as a Women's K1 Division 1 paddler and a Section Judge. I did also manage to help out at the Div 3/4 that my local club runs at Proteus each year and ventured to Slovakia and Ceskia as an International Judge at the ECA Europeans Championship races. It's always great to see the GB athletes competing abroad as well as at domestic races.

There have been a few challenges at a few races regarding timing and results but we have to remember we are all volunteers trying to provide the best quality races as possible. If any paddlers have any comments over the season or if you want to chat anything through do seek me out. My email details are on the Canoe Slalom website. You might also see me handing out or taking back Div 1 and Prem WK1 and WC1 bibs on the river bank.

I did an informal survey at one of the Prem races asking several paddlers and parents about how they would feel about points being given to paddlers who have not paddled at a minimum of 5 races, with a range of responses. Several premier paddlers commented that they had really enjoyed being on the start line with the GB paddlers and that they had had some great conversations with them, despite it being challenging being chased down the course by them. It is always good to hear the opinions of the paddlers so do seek me out on the bankside and share any thoughts.

Find below a perspective from a young new paddler and his family:

"We started the year at Nene, Div 4 event. It was very relaxed (ie no real pre-planned times for things but this was fine for Div 4 and a great introduction to events for Ollie). Everyone was very friendly and made us feel welcome. The Div 2 event later in the year was much more organized. All the events have been great from the point of view that they were so supportive of all the paddlers and there's a great feeling of support across the clubs, eg when everybody at the finish line cheers on the paddler coming down the course.

We loved the Bala events, they are well organized and there's a great atmosphere, although from a spectator's point of view they did go on a bit. I think we finished about 7pm one time.

My favourite was Llandysul (apart from Orton Mere of course!) - it should be a pilgrimage in every slalom paddler's year! The setting is absolutely stunning, events well run and great facilities.

Cardington : free hot drinks for judges, great idea, maybe a good way to entice people to volunteer. It's a bit worrying when we arrive at an event and there aren't enough judges, but they get there eventually. Maybe there should be some kind of expectation that parents will judge each time (but I think a bit of training would be required for non-paddlers).

We have been impressed with the setting of the courses, in that they may seem challenging on arrival but the paddlers soon develop the skills and improve with each run; this means the courses have been set to the right level for the division I think.

We quite like the old card system for posting the results, but can see the advantages of the online system.

Overall, fantastic fun and we have never come back from an event with negative feelings. All down to the jolly good sports who run them, and of course the hardy trainers who give our youngsters so much support, encouragement and enthusiasm.”

I hope to continue to provide information for athletes or just provide a sounding board. If you have questions or do not know where to look for information/advice please ask. If I do not know I will do my best to find out or point you in the right direction.

The canoe slalom community remains a great place for all ages to develop different skills and enjoy the company of likeminded people. If you are new to the sport it's a great place to make some lifelong friends.

Best of luck to you all next year

Sally Atkinson