

## **International Programme – Update**

The winning, for the first time ever, of the Men's Relay Gold Medal at the World Orienteering Championships in 2008 was an outstanding success for the British Orienteering international programme and the outcome of many years work by athletes, staff and volunteers. The last 4 years have been extremely successful, the best in the history of British Orienteering, with individual and relay successes, however international programmes and competitors do not stand still and British Orienteering is determined to stay at the cutting edge of international competition.

The commencement of a new funding cycle from 2009 has presented opportunity to review the programme in the light of the new Whole Sport Plan; this review has provided clear evidence that change will be beneficial and add renewed vitality to the programme. The programme has been good, now is the time to make it better!

The British Orienteering Vision is 'more people, more places, more podiums'; the international programme is responsible for delivering the 'more podiums' aspect of the vision. The key recommendations made in the review will enhance the programme and bring about 'more podium' places. The key recommendations are included later in this document and take note of the many contributions made by athletes, volunteers and staff for which the review group is very appreciative.

The group performing the final stages of the review, Dave Harrison, Jon Cross, Heather Monro and Mike Hamilton believe that changes to the staffing structure are required to add renewed vitality to the already successful programme and to seek fresh insight into the benefits of the established 'traditions' and opportunities presented by the programme.

After consultation with staff and other key personnel the group has agreed staffing structure options to respond to varying levels of funding and to manage any risk to British Orienteering.

The 'Initial' implementation phase (Sept – Dec) will see the appointment of an International Programme Director. This full time role is significantly changed to all current roles and is to enhance British Orienteering's International Programme and its success by implementing the review recommendations; in summary the role is:

- Leading the development of the talent identification and development structure that starts at Club Talent Squad and develops athletes through to competing in World Orienteering Championships; there will be a 'hands-on' approach across the programme but with a focus on the 'development' athletes.
- Developing the 'Talent Pathway' in order to achieve consistent, sustainable success in the World Orienteering Championship as detailed in the Whole Sport Plan.
- Influencing coaching and the support programmes across the club and regional talent structure to integrate them with the national squad programmes.

The position will be filled by the applicant best suited to tackle the challenges that lie ahead; it is expected that there will be keen competition for the position. This position is dependent on funding from the Sports Councils and the role may be changed dependent on the level of funding and staffing structure adopted.

The 'International Programme Director' will be based at the National Office, although if a Centre of Excellence is established a significant part of their time each week will be required at the Centre.

The Second Implementation Phase will depend upon the level of funding available. The International Programme Director will lead the appointment process of staff into the programme. The likely options on the technical side are:

- a) Pessimistic funding: the Programme Director role will be adjusted and technical experts brought in to provide coaching etc on a part time basis.
- b) Medium funding: the Programme Director will take direct responsibility for the Talent Pathway and Development athletes and a 'National' or 'Senior' Coach will be employed full time to support the World Class athletes and to work with the Programme Director to coach the development athletes. Other part time staff will also be used.
- c) Optimistic funding, the 'ideal' model for the staffing structure that is possible within the current budget is seen as being the Programme Director supported by:
  - National or Senior Coach (Full Time) – to coach the athletes currently in the 'Performance' Squad, support the Talent Coach in coaching athletes in the 'Talent' Squad, lead the coaching at one of the centres of excellence.
  - Talent Coach (Full Time) – to coach the Talent (potential) Squad; to support the Senior Coach with the Performance Squad; to lead the coaching at the second Centre of Excellence if that structure is established; to liaise and support the development of the 'identification' parts of the talent pathway.

### **Implementation of Phase 1:**

- 31 August Job Description agreed for the position of International Programme Director; current staff consulted with
- 13 September International Committee updated and asked for comment;  
Wider consultation of the recommendation and way forward commences
- 26 September Advertise the International Programme Director position
- 31 October Final date for applications
- 12 November Interview date
- 1 January Successful candidate to commence employment in the new position

## **International Programme – Review recommendations**

The Review Group believe that the delivery of the following recommendations will significantly enhance the programme however the Group also accepts that there will be resourcing challenges.

- a) The Long Term Athlete Development (LTAD) model of a performance orienteer is based on a 12 year period from learner in the sport to becoming an experienced World Orienteering Championship performer.
- b) The programme will focus on developing the sustainable aspects of the programme ie it should focus on developing a performance culture in a pool of athletes from which World Champions will come. This is a bottom up approach rather than a top down approach in the belief that the World Class athletes (currently probably only 3 or 4) have the ability to determine their own training and competition programmes with focused support from British Orienteering.
- c) The Talent Pathway is from club/community through to WOC athletes and includes 3 stages, talent identification, talent development and performance. The stages will be delivered through:
  - a. Club/Community Talent Groups: regular coaching and competition
  - b. Regional Talent Squads: regular coaching, competition and wider experiences
  - c. National Talent Squad: increased contact time with top coaches, SS/SM support, detailed personal development plans, by invitation on the basis of the ability to achieve at a WOC within 10 years; if a centre of excellence approach is implemented the squad will be based at the centre;
  - d. Performance Squad: proven athletes on the international stage and particularly at WOC; personalised programmes.
- d) The contact time between athletes and programme coaches must be increased particularly with the future champions – the establishing of a centre of excellence approach should be seriously considered and implemented unless other, quality assured, mechanisms for increasing contact time can be devised.
- e) Planning must be long, medium and short term and contain milestones for monitoring the progress of programme, staff and athletes.
- f) Personal development plans should be put in place with all programme athletes, from young to more mature; long term planning will include 'milestone' targets for individual athletes.
- g) The 'Skills Grid' will become the basis for athlete development – accepting that considerably more detail will need to be added.

The Skills Grid will also be the foundation for coach development and potentially lead to an athlete talent identification tool.

- h) Communications between athletes and staff should be increased and be proactively driven by staff – regular, more frequent, contact time will improve this however there should be a systematic approach that includes the recording of notes and storing of notes in a central filing system.
- i) Sports science and sports medicine (SS/SM) support is essential to the programme and must be delivered to athletes as an integrated part of their personal development plans. If possible this should be delivered through the Institute of Sport structure; if centres of excellence are implemented the SS/SM support must be integral to the centres.
- j) The selection policy, recently circulated, ties the role of the technical staff into the selection pathway and processes and should be implemented.
- k) The development of coaches and coaching across the Talent Pathway is key to the successful delivery of the programme and must be prioritised and built into all planning. All coaches working on the Pathway will have personal development plans that are supported and monitored.
- l) A plan to communicate these recommendations and the way forward should be developed.
- m) The initial implementation phase of the staffing structure should be commenced as a matter of urgency whilst recognising the challenges this causes British Orienteering particularly in regard to confirmation of funding for April 2009 onwards.

Mike Hamilton on behalf of the Review Group, September 2008