
SPRINT PERFORMANCE STRATEGY REVIEW

The purpose of this paper is to update the Clubs attending the Sprint Racing Committee 2020 Annual Consultative Meeting on the progress of the Sprint Performance Strategy Review. This Review is born out of the recommendations following the Sprint Situational Analysis, a co-commissioned piece of work by British Canoeing and UK Sport that was started in late 2019 and concluded at the start of 2020.

Sprint Situational Analysis

Supported by British Canoeing, a panel of four independent experts conducted a series of in-depth interviews with people from the sport. These people included; past and present athletes, coaches, support staff and practitioners, club representatives and the paddling community. A standard agenda of questions and areas of questioning were asked which included; female athlete development, crew boat processes, leadership within the programme, culture and facilities, selection policies and athlete development.

The panel, led by David Parsons (former Performance Director of England Cricket and now sports consultant) analysed the work and pulled together a series of recommendations and findings. This body of work was produced to understand the factors contributing to the underperformance of the GB team and consider the potential for Canoe Sprint to be competitive across multiple events and to win more Olympic medals. There were 4 high order themes that the panel identified – Strategy and Leadership, Training and Coaching, the Centralised Model and the Domestic Clubs.

The panel found that whilst the sport is ambitious, it was recommended that it should set out a long term strategy, identifying the key processes that will be necessary to achieve its aspirations, whilst also investing in the leadership of the sport.

Sprint Performance Strategy Development

A high level Sprint Performance Group was set up to direct the work around a new strategy for the sport. Six sub-groups were also formed to undertake work under the following headings; WCP and Performance Athlete Development, What it Takes to Win and Progress, Facilities, Competitions, Coach Development and Clubs and Talented Athlete Development. These groups were comprised of a mixture of staff, athletes, coaches and leaders from the community. They met on a regular basis to consult the current status of their area and what needed to be improved. Recommendations were fed back and the draft sprint strategy was compiled.

The Draft Sprint Strategy

The Draft Sprint Strategy was submitted to the September Board meeting for review and feedback. This content will now be revised into a second draft for a further whole sport consultation in October. It is intended for the Final Sprint Strategy to be reviewed by the Board in January.

Consultation Process

A comprehensive consultation process was undertaken to seek feedback on the emerging draft strategic framework in early August. This process took the form of a survey that was distributed to; all British Canoeing Sprint staff, PLT and SMT, all lead Sprint Racing Club contacts, Board members, WCP athletes, Talent athletes and parents, Sprint Committee members and Home Nation leads. Feedback was also sought by way of a series of focus group consultation sessions. These took place with; athletes, staff, independent external experts, a British Canoeing Leadership group and Sprint Racing Canoe Club representatives.

The feedback from the various sources was collated where common and generic comments and themes were extracted to present key headline feedback in terms of positives and areas of concern or those that needed work.

Key Headlines

The vast majority of survey completions and comments were from people who identified themselves as from clubs. The general direction of the strategic framework was widely supported by people that answered the survey and who took part in the focus group sessions which was encouraging to see. Areas that required more work or understanding were how Performance Academies would work, Governance and control within clubs and a more explicit explanation of the 'What it Takes to Win and Progress' area. The Mission and Vision elements also gained a lot of comment and those areas were to be further worked on. It was routinely expressed that this was a draft strategic framework in which to build the actual Sprint Performance Strategy around, so any detail would follow at a later draft stage.

Further work was then undertaken to develop the Vision, Mission and Ambitions as well as shaping the language of the document to resonate with respective readers. The Chairs of each group were then tasked to answer key question on and to present;

1. A clear vision statement for their area
2. 3-5 key goals
3. Key tactics, enabling actions, responsibilities and timeframes within each goal
4. Clear Performance Rationales

Future key dates

The UK Sport funding submission is due on 16th October with the funding outcome to be communicated in December where the draft strategy content will form part of the overall submission. Work on the overall Performance Sprint Strategy does not end there, further consultations, task and finish group work and Strategic Group consultation will happen into 2021 to further shape and expand upon the early work to endeavor to get the sport to a place in the future where we want it to be. The Board will be asked to consider an updated report in December following further work and consultations with the anticipated final strategy ready for Board in January 2021.