

Athletics Development Officer Annual Summary

To provide the formal element of my annual summary I have attached my Sports Development Officer (SDO) Annual Report as requested on a yearly basis from the Guernsey Sports Commission (GSC). The Commission drive some of what we do and their relevance features later in this document in terms of looking forwards. Please take the time to read SDO report as it details various elements of Guernsey Athletics activity over the year including schools, community, performance and workforce.

One key change which happened midway through 2018 was the appointment of Lee Merrien into a formal role that would prioritise school-links development, and as a secondary aspect involve assisting me with overall sport development aspects. Lee's report provides a strong insight into his activity over the past few months which myself and the board view as successful and valuable. GSC are in the process of implementing a new model of teaching PE in schools - myself and Lee have been sure to be proactive in keeping a close relationship with GSC and aiming to be in the best position to bring athletics into schools in a way that falls in line with GSC's overall philosophy. The fundamental strategy that GSC are to utilise is that of Physical Literacy – which is an aspect of athlete development that Lee and myself buy into.

These changes being implemented by GSC lead onto wider positive developments that are internally happening with the Commission. Along with the longstanding Jeremy Frith, other well respected figures in the world of sport (their experience reaching far beyond our island) have been tasked with significant consultancy work that could be extremely influential in the imminent direction of Guernsey sport. I am pleased to report very positive meetings with these relevant parties over the recent months and am keen that we, Guernsey Athletics, fall in line with a reinvigorated GSC and their upcoming strategies.

Though there will still be some time until such direction comes to light – from my conversations with GSC and other work I have recently advised the board of directors that coaching and athlete development are the two cornerstones for ongoing strategy. Though work on the specifics will come as and when GSC move forwards – discussions have led to the conclusion that effective coaching at all levels will yield ongoing success and growth. Myself and Lee are extremely passionate about athlete development and will be continuing to try to impart this to not only our club coaches but also PE teachers. To us, effective coaching has to include a primary consideration for athlete development...the subject of which is under continual research and scrutiny.

The reasons that I believe coaching (and by extension athlete development) is a worthy single pillar to build our ongoing aims around is because:

- Youngsters' experiences in the sport, and thus their want to continue, are going to be directly affected by their coach – both from a programming and personal perspective
- An engaging and knowledgeable coach can therefore be directly responsible for an athlete remaining in the sport either as a long-term participant or a competitive performer
- The personal element of coaching can allow management of athletes' expectations, e.g. early and late developers
- For this to happen, an understanding of – or access to understanding of – athlete development is key

Therefore some of the standard metrics regarding member numbers, event participants, national level performances, number of volunteer coaches, etc should all be positively effectible by continual

focus in this area. Of course this is not exclusive – as directives such as developing or recruiting officials and other volunteers would fall outside of this.

I have attached the recently circulated Coach/Athlete Structure as I wish to use this forum to give further explanation and context. Clearly given the above, this framework will be important for the implementation of effective coaching across the club. Foundation and Development coaches will be exposed to athletes from 11-18 years old (approximately) and it was identified that it is important to give these volunteer coaches as much support as they require in order to deliver sound coaching principles including those in line with current athlete development research.

All coaches operating at those levels will receive a degree of mentorship as required by the Development Team. Delivery of training to young developing athletes is something that I have increasingly learned we cannot take lightly and therefore I have implemented this approach so that myself and Lee, as professionals, take responsibility away from the volunteers to an extent. We will continue to seek out CPD opportunities for the coaching team also but appreciate that this great team of volunteers already give up a lot of their time so may be limited with what more they can offer by way of learning – hence we will continue to help every coach as best we can on each individual's terms.

At Performance level – many of the coaches have established their coaching philosophy and do not wish for further input, therefore the strategy of retaining some sort of professional responsibility changes. Continuing to be athlete-centred, athletes and/or parents will be invited (or can request) to meet with me to discuss their ongoing development with regards to possible linking with a Performance Coach...and then facilitating the best coach-athlete “fit” or “match.” This process isn't – nor should be – an exact science and can happen at various ages/stages. It is worth noting that this same principle of applying art to the science will occur in terms of athletes being guided through the pathway from Foundation to Development – but at those levels by necessity more relevance is given to the event groups than the personal qualities etc of the coaches.

I hold this process up as a key element of our ongoing success and would welcome any member's queries or comments regarding this. It is a structure that has evolved organically over a few years and will continue to do so to best serve all of our existing demographic.

I would also add that I will be continuing to prioritise my own learning in the direction of coaching and athlete development and would welcome any conversations with members who are interested in discussing.

**'Athlete Development' and 'Athletic Development' are terms that can be interchangeably used and refer to the same concept. The 'athletic' refers to making athletes more athletic and thus you may see this term used elsewhere. However it does seem to refer more specifically to the physical elements whereas we are interested in developing all the qualities of athletes on an individual level*