

Chair's Report to the 2019 ACM

Once again, we have (almost) delivered a full domestic programme of racing for paddlers of all abilities. The changeable weather still creates problems with rain either falling in buckets or not at all, and consequently we have lost several races yet again this year. Overall the strength and breadth of our domestic competition structure, delivered by individual canoe clubs, continues to provide excellent opportunities for competitive racing for all abilities and across all ages.

Other reports to this ACM have covered the solid year that our GB paddlers have had across all age categories. The Home Nation, Podium Potential and Podium development programmes continue to support aspiring paddlers and their success is evident in the GB Selection series where many paddlers achieved performance standards as evidence by the depth of reserves across all events. Rising standard of paddling amongst our junior competitors have many pushing towards GB squads; U23 and Senior as well as the Junior team. I won't delve into any further details save adding my congratulations to everyone for their commitment and achievement.

Participation numbers are a cause for concern. The numbers entering Division 4 competitions continue to decline with a drop over the last decade of over 40% and that is also reflected in depressed Division 3 numbers. This is of great concern as failure to attract more paddlers into the sport has the potential to impact long term viability of races with the danger that some may disappear from the calendar altogether. This issue cannot be addressed just by running more Div4 competitions and, amongst other things, we need to look closely at the structure of the calendar to support an effective entry pathway, the growing participation of paddlers at European junior races and the overall impact that Home Nation development programme have on the ranking system. Detailed understanding of this complex landscape should be a key area to focus on during the forthcoming year.

Slalom Committee and Home Nation Slalom Committee funding for the Slalom specific coaching modules has supported a significant number of aspirant coaches during the year. It is hoped that this incentive will help to establish more club coaches to encourage Slalom participation and financial support will continue during 2020.

Volunteers are the bedrock of the sport and I would like to take this opportunity to thank all volunteers for their efforts throughout the year. However, everyone experiences changing circumstances in their lives, and we cannot rely on the same people being there forever and recruitment of new participants is critical in ensuring the sport thrives moving into the future. The turnout for the World Cup earlier this year was impressive with many Slalom stalwarts volunteering to help to create a showcase for the sport. Many have already signed up for the European Championships in 2020 and I am sure that we will all play our part in providing an equally spectacular event.

We continue to play an active role in various British Canoeing committees to ensure that issues that are important to Slalom are debated. Many of the subjects that we are concerned about are also prevalent within other disciplines and through discussion and common understanding the case for change can be made even stronger. Clearly an example of "Stronger Together"!

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to thank the members of the committee for all their efforts and dedication in supporting Canoe Slalom. We are fortunate to have an able and enthusiastic team and this year we welcome Deborah Catty to the role of Secretary, and I am sure we all wish her all the best in her new role.

Dave Spencer
Chair, Slalom Committee
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