



BRITISH BIATHLON UNION (BBU)
19th ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING (AGM)
RUHPOLDING, GERMANY
31st JANUARY 2016

CHAIRMAN'S ANNUAL REPORT

Introduction

This time last year I was anticipating that our second attempt to introduce new Articles of Association (AoA) would be supported by the Members at the AGM, And, so it was, with a unanimous vote from those who attended in person or voted by proxy at the AGM; thank you.

I was delighted to also report that the BBU had turned a financial corner with a 4-year sponsorship deal, which would see us through to Pyeongchang and the Olympic Winter Games in 2018. Just as importantly, it would allow us to "balance the books" at the end of the forthcoming Financial Year – the first time we would have done so for some time.

As many of you are now aware our sponsorship contract was prematurely, but amicably, ended when Mike Moran the CEO of Aspen Healthcare Solutions moved to pastures new. I remain extremely grateful to Mike and Aspen for the lifeline they gave us, as without their support GBR may well have ceased to compete internationally after Sochi 2014.

We now find ourselves once again in a difficult time financially and, coupled with the retirement of three senior athletes, we are also facing difficult times on the International stage. I shall comment further on these issues during this Report.

Sporting Review

The 2014 – 2015 Season was the last of the IBU "percentage" quota and qualification system. From the start of the current season "IBU Qualification Points" (IBU QPs) have replaced percentages; they are similar to the well tried and tested FIS Points long used in Alpine & Cross Country races. It is early days, but I am pleased to report that all the GBR athletes who started a World Cup race in Trimester 1 (November & December) have maintained their WC qualification for Trimester 2. However none of our IBU Cup athletes have yet qualified for WC in Trimester 2, although they all re-qualified for IBU Cup in Trimester 2.

At the end of last season the GBR Men's Team final position in the WC Nations Cup was 24th. I congratulate the athletes: Scott Dixon, Alex Gleave, Lee-Steve Jackson, Kevin Kane & Marcel Laponder, as this was better than anticipated 12 months ago. It meant that we kept our quota allowing 2 men to start each World Cup, with 4 in a Relay – assuming all 4 are qualified. As I write, at the end of Trimester 1, our Men are now 25th, but if they fall to 26th or below, we shall only have one WC start place next season. Unfortunately this is a likely scenario due to the retirement of Jackson and Kane, and also a difficult decision taken by the Board that, in view of our financial plight, there will be no GBR participation, and thus no Points, at the expensive World Cups in Trimester 3 in Canada, the USA and Russia.

In the Women's WC Nations Cup the GBR final position was 26th – an improvement of 4 places from 2013 – 14, so many congratulations to the now retired Nerys Jones and particularly Amanda Lightfoot. Alas, Amanda is now the only female in the GBR team at any level; no others made the grade at the National Selection Races in November.

On the IBU Cup last season the Men finished 27th from 43 Nations with the women 28th. At the end of the current Trimester 1 the Men are in 30th place, and obviously there is no Women's team. Financial constraints mean that we shall not enter any IBU Cup races in Trimester 2. However we shall still have a quota of 3 athletes once we return to the IBU Cup circuit.

One very positive note last season was the performance of the Junior Men from the Cairngorm BNSC who represented GBR at the 2015 Junior World Championships in Minsk Belarus. Scott Dixon achieved the best ever GBR result in this event with an 18th place in the 15 km Individual. At Kontiolahti in Finland he also achieved a Personal Best in the 20 km when he became the first ever GBR athlete to compete in both the Junior & Senior Worlds in the same season. He was joined in Minsk by Calum Irvine who is back at University this season, Sam Cairns and Robert Circus. The latter two will miss the British Champs as they will represent GBR at the Junior Worlds in Romania. They will again be supported by Si Burke with a new member of the BBU Support Staff, but a familiar name, in JC McBride. Their participation is largely funded by the BBU Lottery and some anonymous donations, for which I am most grateful.

I am also grateful for all the work done by all our Support Staff. Simon "Ginge" Allanson is in his second year as WC Team Manager and is to be congratulated on his recent promotion to Sergeant. On the WC, Ilario Maddalin is our new Wax Technician, replacing fellow Italian Fede Fontana, who moved to the USA team. LBdr Lee-Steve Jackson coached the Army Advanced Biathlon Development Squad (AABDS) in Ruhpolding during the summer and manages the IBU Cup team in winter. Sadly, for him, we cannot afford a wax technician! Up in Scotland, but no longer a part of the BBU, the ABDS is coached by former GBR athletes Cpl Ben Woolley aided by SSgt Adele Walker & Sgt Scott Cassidy. Behind the scenes I much appreciate the assistance of Wolfgang Pichler & Daniel Graf in Germany, Alexis Bouef in France and Matthew Rees in the BBU Back Office.

As always we have seen some departures in the past 12 months. Neil Marshall was the Director Military for nearly 4 years. I thank him for his very positive contribution and the amazing strings he pulled to acquire several hundred new biathlon rifles for the Army's athletes. We all wish him well on his promotion to Major General and his posting to Florida! As already mentioned, WC staff Fede Fontana and athletes LBdr Lee-Steve Jackson 16 Regt RA, Bdr Kevin Kane 3 RHA and Cpl Nerys Jones AGC retired after the 2015 World Championships.

Lee first competed for GBR in the European Junior Cup in 1999, the same year as he made one of his two Junior World Championship appearances. After 2 seasons on the European (now IBU) Cup circuit he first raced in the World Cup team in 2002 - 03 and has started in 126 WC races since. Three European Championship appearances were overshadowed by 9 consecutive World Championships from 2004 and two Olympic Winter Games (Vancouver 2010 & Sochi 2014). In his final World Championships race in 2015 he recorded an all-time Personal Best of 38th from a field of 125 in the 20km Individual; this just beat his 42nd place at Sochi 2014.

Kevin made his IBU Cup debut in 2005 - 06 and joined the World Cup Team the following season. With a total of 62 World Cup appearances and a further 45 IBU races to his name he is one of a small group of GBR international centurions. His first of six World Championships was in Östersund in 2007 and 2 years later he recorded his PB in the Pyeongchang World Championships finishing 60th in the Individual. We may not quite have seen the last of him as he came out of retirement to help win Nations Cup Points at the WC 2 Relay in December. Nerys was a GBR biathlete for 6 seasons from February 2010. She has raced mainly on the IBU Cup

circuit where she has over 50 starts to her name plus 14 on World Cup. She has competed in four World Championships with a PB of 62nd in the 15km Individual in Khanty-Mansiysk 2011.

After the British Championships the BBU Selectors had to inform three familiar names that their International careers were over. So with many thanks for their efforts, I also say farewell to: Cpl John Dunnett 1 Regt RLC (14 x IBU Cups since 2010 - 11); Cpl Dan Fuller RTR (25 x IBU Cups since 2009 - 10) and Cpl Sean "Jim" Bowen 1 CS Bn REME (1 x IBU Cup in 2013 -14).

And, finally, I am sad to report the death of a great servant of British & Army Biathlon, and one of the UK's finest shooting coaches, Arthur Harvey. Arthur died aged 81 in September, and a fitting tribute was published on the BBU website and in the Ex Rucksack programme.

Sponsorship & Finance

I have already mentioned the debt we owed to Aspen Healthcare Solutions, but without replacing their income stream none of us should be under any illusions about the future.

The Board and the international athletes are most grateful for the financial support we receive from The International Biathlon Union, The Army Winter Sports Association and "in kind" support from UK Sport and our suppliers such as Bob Anderson at RMA Sports (UK) Ltd. But, if we do not substantially, and quickly, improve our finances, we will not survive after Pyeongchang 2018.

By chance, a few weeks before the loss of our sponsorship, the Board had appointed a Consultancy called "Apt" to look at all avenues of our fund-raising; sponsorship; branding and marketing. Their main remit was to source additional revenue from the end of this current season onwards, with a view to financing athletes capable of a Top Ten Olympic or WC place by the Beijing OWG in 2022. Like the Board they were somewhat surprised when we lost the existing sponsorship, and although Apt, as well as the Board have been examining short term solutions their main work effort remains "from the end of this current season onwards".

A good deal of ground work has been carried out with Apt resulting in an exciting new brand for the BBU. This may seem a strange thing to do at a time when finances are so tight – the thinking though is that we need to up our game in this area to improve our appeal; especially to potential sponsors.

Our "shop window" is our website which has been completely redesigned; I hope you agree for the better. With it comes a re-vamp of the BBU Lottery and a new on-line Shop will follow these will be discussed further during the AGM. A "Supporters Club" is about to be launched and some re-branding has already gone public. We are now very much focussing on a "British Biathlon" strap-line rather than the more formal "BBU" approach, which we retain for legal and more formal occasions such as this Report and the AGM.

It is worth noting that, apart from a relatively modest initial fee agreed before we lost our sponsorship, Apt will only receive further fees if they are successful in raising funds. Thus the work mentioned above has not impacted on our current cash flow. I am very grateful to Apt for what they have done for us thus far and it has been a pleasure working with them.

With little chance of new revenue coming in during an active season, the Board had little choice but to cancel participation in the events already referred to above; indeed we had to make some £ 45,000 cuts during the current financial year. The AGM will be informed of the very latest position, but at present it looks as though we are on course to make at least £ 35,000 of savings, although this of course would mean carrying a debt forward into the next Financial Year.

Governance

After a considerable amount of work by the Board in late 2014 the new AoA were adopted at the 2015 AGM. In practice there has been very little change in the day to day running of the BBU, but our governance is now fully in line with the requirements of UK Sport and the Sport & Recreational Alliance (SRA), under the terms of the Companies Act 2006.

The BBU is run by a volunteer Board with a part time paid Secretary General, who works closely with the BBU Support Staff. On behalf of the Members and athletes I wish to thank them for their enthusiasm and sound advice during a difficult period:

Col Jon Campbell (Development); Carl Carrier (Member Elected Director); Mike Moran (Sponsorship); Col Adrian Thurgood (British Championships) and those on the "Apt Working Group": Mark Goodson (Sec Gen & Finance); Eddy Lowe (Sport & Technical); Maj Gen Neil Marshall (Military) & the Athlete's Representative LBdr Lee-Steve Jackson.

Additionally I am indebted to Gordon Seaton (British Biathlon Rifle Club) and for the unfailing support of Charles Brooks (Hon Legal Advisor) and Nicola Walker (BBU Lottery). Nicola has run the Lottery since its inception 5 years ago and is shortly relinquishing this role. It is an unpaid position, akin to the "in kind" sponsorship I have referred to. So if there is a volunteer out there who wishes to help raise money even in a small way, please do volunteer!

Conclusion

2015 started off with great optimism as international results were better than expected, whilst our continued sponsorship and appointment of Apt were guiding us towards a brighter financial future. But, as you have now read, we once again have to cross the Sponsors' Start Line and are nowhere near the Finish.

The Board and International athletes are all optimists by nature, but equally we have to be realists and I repeat that unless we find a new income stream none of us should be under any illusions about the future. I look to all the Members to help boost our membership numbers and revenue stream. Everyone can do their bit to help ensure we have a great future - get out there and spread the word about British Biathlon. For example, you can use all your social media contacts to drive traffic to our new website and encourage them to become supporters through our new Supporters Club.

Finally, I wish everyone connected with British Biathlon – and hopefully that will be a growing number - every success in 2016.

André Oszmann

Chairman

30th December 2015