

Appendix

National Training Squads / Funded Activity 2021-22

Introduction

One of the key priorities for the Performance Department has been to help players bounce back following the height of the pandemic which severely impacted the players from being able to compete internationally. This, along-side the significant changes to the structure of world events have been incredibly challenging for all players and staff.

Background

Sport England have been very supportive to NGB's through the pandemic, understanding the significant challenge this gave sport as a whole. As such, they provided further support, and flexibility in terms of funding spend. From a Talent funding perspective, this funding is allocated by Exchequer funding through Sport England, and is normally requirement to be spent within the financial year or funding cycle.

As a high proportion of activity was unable to take place, including domestic training, the talent spend had been reduced overall. With the flexibility Sport England was able to provide, the Performance department had a greater resource which could be used within the last financial year to support a higher level of activity to help players bounce back from the pandemic / restrictions.

This funding has been focused on providing more funded opportunities in international competition and training. Over the last year we have supported a wider group overall to give players the chance to be able to benefit from the exposure, as well as giving players the opportunity to prove themselves as we move to smaller selected squads from the start of next season.

Funded Activity

Over the course of this season, we have funded a wide range of activity predominately across the Junior and Aspire training groups. Members of the Junior Training groups have had at least three fully funded competition since September 21, and member of the Aspire Squad have had at least one fully funded international competition within the same period.

As size of events varies, it has not been possible to take the same group to each events, therefore this has been split across a wider range of events which has helped the team gain greater insight into new events which will be important for future competition / programme planning.

International Competition funded / supported by England Performance Team* (since Sept 21)

- Sept 21: WTT Zagreb, Croatia
- Sept 21: WTT Otocec, Slovenia
- Nov 21: WTT Szombathley, Hungary
- Feb 22: WTT Spa, Belgium
- Feb 22: WTT Metz, France

- Mar 22: WTT Vila Real, Portugal
- Mar 22: WTT Otocec, Slovenia
- April 22: WTT Linz, Austria
- May 22: WTT Berlin, Germany
- May 22: WTT Wladyslawowo, Poland
- May 22: WTT Platja D'Aro, Spain

*please note that Major events such as European Youth Championships, etc are funded in addition to the above competition activity.

International Training funded / supported by England Performance Team (since Sept 21)

- Oct 21: Training Camp – Italy National Centre
- Nov 21: Training Camp – Hungary
- Nov 21: Home country training camp, Ireland (selected Aspire players)
- (Dec 21: Training Camp – Sweden – cancelled due to covid restrictions)
- (Feb 22: Training Camp – Sweden – cancelled due to covid restrictions)
- Apr 22: Training Camp – Portugal National Centre, Porto
- Sep 21 to Present: Euro Talents – Selection and squad camps (Kacper Piwowar)

Conclusion

Following the increased activity this season, we have seen a significant improvement in terms of the leading young players in each category, rising quickly through the world rankings with a proportion consistently operating around the top 90 to 110 in the world (based on our current juniors), and even higher in the cadets with one player now ranked within the top 35.

Many will argue this is due to the difference in how world ranking are now calculated and this has certainly had an effect. However, performance at events are now consistently around the last 16 and some quarter finals which is perhaps a better indicator of how the players are improving.

Whilst the ranking system is still in a significant period of flux, ranking is used internationally for selection to higher tier events (such as Star Contenders, world Youth Championships, etc), so it cannot be a factor that we completely ignore. Ranking will be based on an individuals' ten best results from next season which is a significant investment both in commitment and investment. Whilst it is intended to support some events through the current level funding we receive, it is not possible fully fund everything that is needed, therefore there is a requirement for players to self-fund a proportion of the programme they need.

What we have observed over the course of the season is that England players can be competitive at an international level, but the need to regularly compete in these events is essential if the goal is to produce future medallists for England.