

Athlete's commission report – 2022

I'd like to start this year with a little discussion about the international performances this year, 2022's Powerlifting calendar was more normalised this year and we saw some fantastic team and individual performances.

The year kicked off to a great start with GB team wins at the European classic Championships for Men's and Women's M1 teams. Sadly we didn't have a team at the European University Cup but hopefully with the BUC's recognition coming through and the University committee taking shape we'll see better organisation to get things in place for teams at future University internationals as this is clearly a great development opportunity for the sport in GB.

The Men's Open Equipped team took a 2nd place finish at the European Championships, I believe one of our best Equipped team performances in several years and Women's team taking 3rd. We've heard quite a lot of bashing the equipped team performances in recent years, however, these results should not be ignored, the team has great potential but its an ageing group of lifters and without many juniors coming through the equipped ranks, the future of the team looks a bit uncertain.

The classic teams on both the men's and women's sides keep going from strength to strength, one World open Champion (Joy) and four European Champions (Sophia, Bobbie, Jurins and Kieran) the future for the classic team looks very bright with numerous juniors now breaking through into the open and the tide of performance improvement seems to know no end and is very exciting.

I wouldn't normally mention my own performances in this report, but it is pertinent to my next point, the World Games should be the crowning Competition in our international calendar, like the Olympics the WG takes place only once every 4 years, however, given the event is Equipped only we end up being severely under-represented in these Championships and mine was our first medal in the World Games since 1993! If we don't want to wait another 30 years for another medal we need more focus and development on the equipped team.

OK, now onto home Championships this year. Membership numbers are back to pre-Covid levels so we continue to see Championships becoming full within minutes of the entries opening, whilst this may look great on paper we are running the risk of not providing enough opportunities to get on the platform, particularly at the divisional level.

Our Development and Championship director has sadly resigned from his position this year having only been in the role for a few months, we had however begun to see some fruits of his labours and the Gymshark British Juniors was probably the highlight of the British Powerlifting calendar in 2022 (despite the timing of the Championship not being ideal clashing with exam season) and I know Ben worked hard with JBS and the rest of the team to bring this Championship together.

I continue to believe these roles should be committees so the workload can be spread between more volunteers and the knowledge and experience of our wider membership can be better utilised.

I feel a bit like a broken record stating what we as lifters want to see from our Championships. Better venues, more of a spectacle and the event to feel less like a divisional with a different set of lifters, holding national Championships in sub-par venues is not only not inviting for those who have qualified it doesn't represent how we want the sport to be represented to the none Powerlifting community.

The involvement of SBD as the main Sponsor of our Classic open national Championships I hope is a step in the right direction, however, there needs to be more robust guidance and support for willing promoters, I know this is what we expected to see our Championship director bring to the table this year, but I did not see this prior to Ben's resignation either, there was a lot of talk of partnering with Universities to host a series of national Championships but nothing ever came to fruition.

As it stands there is no standard guidance documentation for potential/willing promoters and no clear budget for Championships etc...all of this needs rectifying if we are going to attract promoters, we also need to give them the autonomy to make their own decisions on how to best run the Championships. Set the guidelines, given clear expectations, give the budget and let them get on with running it.

I believe Chris Curtiss as our performance director has been working with Universities to get testing set up to help steer team performances, mostly focussed, at least initially on our junior teams. I'd like to see Chris driving more collaboration across the coaches of all the international teams, bringing consensus on key topics, such as team selection and performance criteria. We have some excellent and experienced coaches in British Powerlifting and using their knowledge and experience and sharing it with future and assistant coaches would be fantastic and ensure we have a crop of coaches developing alongside the Powerlifting team.

Personally I've really struggled to find the time to conduct the Athlete's forums, with my job and three Children, my own training and competing it's been very difficult for me to find the time, however, I've decided to stay on as the Chair of the commission as I'd be concerned nobody else would be willing to take up the role and with both Ben and Dave resigning I didn't want to leave another hole in the board. However, if we have any lifters who feel they could contribute to the Athlete's commission and are willing to host a number of forums or do some data gathering please get in touch with me as its vital we continue to provide the board the insight from a lifter's perspective, I'm particularly interested to get somebody from the juniors involved as I know you'll be better at connecting with this group than I am! (please e-mail me or feel free to DM me on social media).

I'd like to summarise this report with a number of things that I think would help us move forward positively and I believe what the lifters in the majority also want to see:

- 1) More transparency – On-line AGM's / ideally AGM voting on-line / More detailed financial reports made available on the website.
- 2) Championships – Better venues / better music / more professionalism generally / more autonomy for promoters – clear budgets and expectations / Need to move the date of the junior British to avoid the exam period.
- 3) Organisational matters – need to re-introduce cheaper associate membership (following WADA rules on members only in warm up room) – I know this is coming now / need to see committees set up and volunteers given opportunity to volunteer (Championship / Development / Performance committees should exist by now).

Tony Cliffe

Chair of the British Powerlifting Athlete's commission.