



HP Program Plan

Question: *What is the WALES High Performance Program and what does it mean for Welsh shooting?*

Much has been said about the High Performance Program and indeed the question is often asked, “how does it benefit the sport overall?” In the first instance it is necessary to understand that the Program is geared toward the top level of the sport, those few athletes, across the Olympic, Paralympic and Commonwealth disciplines that are capable of winning medals at those events.

As a sport we all benefit from the results achieved internationally and, in particular, from those of our Olympian, Paralympian and Commonwealth Games medal winning athletes. It is NOT just about granting monies to individuals or member associations to send teams away which is the general perception and expectation in the past. The idea of sending teams away with the thought or hope that with international experience the medals will come is false; the travel is only a very small part of what is required.

It is: **Talented individual + Quality Coaching + Appropriate competition + Support Services = Success.**

Putting all the above formula together we will get success for the WTSF.

The international scores and medals will come, but only to those who are capable of shooting those scores daily, in practice and at local competitions first. Importantly a MQS is only a minimum requirement; across all sports at the high performance end there is a need to demonstrate and achieve repeatability of the world/Commonwealth benchmark.

The following ‘scenario’ may assist in understanding what is required.

In discussing the importance of repeatability and peak performance there is a view in shooting circles that the achievement of a MQS by an athlete justifies national selection, funding etc. The argument runs that, for example, 120 in men's trap or 580 in women's sport pistol would have won a medal at “one” of the World Cups last year so therefore it should be the MQS.

If I am (theoretical scenario here) an athlete who has shot that score once in ideal conditions, and maybe 118 on one other occasion. My average best in domestic competition is in the 117 region.

Clearly I deserve national selection and HP support! It is after all well known that at benchmark events the poorest qualifying performance for finals is often below the “MQS” standard, and medals are often won with pretty modest performances, compared with world records. So my 118 will get me into the finals, and might even get me a medal!

What this view ignores is that usually every athlete that gets to finals has shot the “MQS” qualifier numerous times under varied conditions, and has peaked at well above that standard on a number of occasions. Then, under the pressure of benchmark event (BME) conditions, possibly exacerbated by unfavourable conditions, they can “fall back” on a “MQS” qualifier or better to achieve medal winning performances. The “one off” athlete, on the other hand, usually cracks under the pressure of BME, or finds the conditions don't suit, or gets the immediate pre-BME preparation wrong, or maybe even does his/her best, which under those conditions, isn't good enough.

The moral to all this is that not only should the achievement of a MQS not be seen as a right of entry for selection or support, it should be seen as a **minimum** prerequisite, should have been demonstrated on numerous occasions, and under varied conditions of climate and competition pressure. Only this repeatability demonstrates worthiness for selection and support, not the one off performance, this all relates to performance based selection at the highest level – obviously different criteria need to be considered for development athletes.

The accepted view is that a minimum of five, preferably ten repeats, represent the cut off point to demonstrate “proven” performance.

The above scenario is a comment from another sport in which I have adapted by substituting our sports terminology.

Welsh Target Shooting Federation Ltd) is the body charged by Sport Wales with the task of winning medals and is funded by Sport Wales. The High Performance Program (HPP) managed on a daily basis by the High Performance committee, consisting of the High Performance manager the National HP Coaches, athlete and Sport Wales representative. And reports to and overseen by the Welsh Target Shooting Federation Board which is made up of representatives from the four WTSF shooting associations and a representative from Sport Wales.

The current focus is on achieving medals in Glasgow 2014 and Rio 2016; to this end those few top athletes will be supported via a new program as described within this presentation.

The program is, unashamedly, not about promoting the top scoring Welsh Athletes but rather those Welsh Athletes who are able to achieve medal results internationally. Until now, qualifying scores have been set at an achievable standard that required a stretch to reach, in order to attract more shooters to the squad level; however the funds available cannot hope to provide adequate support for the numbers able to achieve these scores and so those who are truly seeking "medal winner status" will need to be capable of much more than just scores.

The program is also about nurturing that next generation of athletes, who will someday represent Wales/Great Britain at the highest level. To this end the HP squad has been introduced.

The HPP is about winning medals.

The program will employ a number of part time coaches to drive the implementation of programs designed to win medals at the highest international level, and to assist the athletes and their coaches in achieving set goals. On the sports science front we will work with the individual athletes and coaches to ensure appropriate access to agreed services that will improve their preparation for successful competition, including sports psychologists, sports nutrition, masseur, physiotherapists and pertinent medical support. The program assists with travel, training, Athlete personal allowances, ammunition and target costs.

The flow down effect from these program areas is that the knowledge gained can be disseminated to coaches by invitations to selected coaches to attend coaching workshops and national camps conducted by the National High Performance Coaches (NHPC). This information can then be feed through the club, programs reducing the need to fund research on such items enabling them to use these savings to spend on their coaching and athlete development programs.

The funding also provides the opportunity for WALES to develop programs such as:

- The generic portion in both coaching and officiating courses,
- Operational policies which have been drawn up by legal resources and approved by the board may be used by the member bodies and,
- Also conduct major competitions which are an integral part of the program.

This reduces the need for member bodies and clubs to spend money and time in such areas, allowing them to allocate their funds and resources to development of the next generation of shooters.

HP Squad athletes will receive support funds to assist in their travel and training costs.

This money is not unencumbered though; recipients will need to agree to a plan for their own development in the run up to Glasgow, the demands of which will be rigorous. A medal at the Commonwealth Games means our sport will be in the public eye and the more successful we are, the more likely the sport is to grow.

Athletes will be monitored using various 'tools' eg. Modern Sports Science, Welsh Ranking Lists, a decaying points system and history graphs which all show form achieved both here and importantly abroad

These tools are invaluable in determining whether a competitor who may consistently shoot the qualifying score in Great Britain but is unable to achieve under pressure at the major events should be sent, bearing in mind our stated goal is to medal. Conversely, the same tools serve to highlight problems such as just described and may enable us to assist an athlete in overcoming those areas of concern.

It is important to understand that the role of the National High Performance Coach is not restricted to that of an individual coach, rather someone who develops and coordinates a national program designed to win Olympic/Commonwealth Games medals. Each competitor should be working on a program agreed by the NHPC with a coach to 'hone' their skills. Here again clubs should be spending monies to support a coach; this need not be large sums but at least cover the incidentals such as petrol, phone etc.

Those coaches should then work in with the National HP Coach to ensure the success of their athletes, whether that be at national or international level. This is not to say that the National HP Coach does not or will not provide individual attention, but it is impossible to be everywhere; many sports operate on a centralised training centre and athletes need to weigh up the pros and cons of moving to that centre. Welsh Shooting is targeting South Wales for this centre due to the proximity of current and planned facilities Air weapons and 50mtr facility at Cardiff, Shotgun at SW 2000 and the Sports Science and medical backup at the Sport Wales National centre.

Details of the new plan will be made available on the web site: www.wtsf.org.uk

Statement

- The HP Program & Squads are separate to Team Selection Policy.
- HP Squad membership does not mean the athlete will go to all Events, rather he/she will work out a schedule in conjunction with the HP set up
- making a team does not mean they are a squad member
- The MQS is NOT a travelling score

Structure

- The HP Squad will comprise of 4 levels, known as; The HP Squad, the Talent Cymru, the Junior 2016 Squad and the EAD (Elite Athletes with a Disability) Squad.
- Qualifications for Consideration to the HP Squad: The athlete must be committed to the 2010-2016
- Program, have a training & competition plan, developed in conjunction with their personal coach and the WALES HP Coach; must have signed an athlete's agreement

The HP Squad is split across 3 Levels (traffic light system) and the following details the entry level; (must also have a current MQS)

- **Green**
On track to Medal at Commonwealth Game or Medal at Benchmark Event or Medal at a World Cup
- **Amber**
Amber are the ones on track for medal but may need a bit of intervention
- **Red**
Need "review" of what needs to get them up through amber to green

The Talent Cymru squad (TC)

Entry to this squad is that the athlete must be considered a genuine Commonwealth Games Medal chance or by appointment by the HPPMC following the HP Coaches recommendation with supporting reasons.

'Planned' Junior 2014/18 Squad

This squad will cater for up to four from each of the three/four shooting sports at the Commonwealth Games and is designed to fast track those members into the 2014 Commonwealth games with entry based on recommendation and supporting reasons by the HP Coach. Athletes must within 12 months demonstrate they will be capable of achieving MQS in the near future

EAD review still in progress

Caveat to the above: Athletes who meet specific criteria will be eligible for selection into the WALES HP, TC or Junior 2014/18 SQUADS. Athletes with potential may also be selected to join the Squad (regardless of MQS status) at the National Coach recommendation. If due to health reasons or extenuating circumstance a person who has not completed the specific selection criteria, but is deemed to have potential to reach Olympic/Paralympic Games/Commonwealth Games may be invited into the Squad in certain circumstances by a WALES Selection Panel decision.

Funding

Funding is subject to funding levels. The funding is the amount allocated to a squad member to enable an agreed plan for the twelve month period.

Standards

- Agree to program with personal coach and WALES National Coach
- Training Camps; agree to minimum upfront with High Performance Group; non attendance to agreed, will be penalised
- Competitions; agree to program balanced with training against funds
- Reports from athletes and coaches; Monthly
- Match Fitness; agree up front on program which should include physical & mental conditioning
- Squad membership agreement; Read & Sign, Code of ethics

Assessments

- Squad membership will be assessed

6 monthly on;

Demonstrated commitment to the plan in the areas of training

- both physical and mental and
- achievement of at least one MQS Squad Training Camps may, where there is full attendance and a control competition is run, qualify as MQS
- a review of competition results vs training and overseas vs GBR results
- an athlete who has met all their agreed targets would stay in HP Program
- if targets are not met, then a review of their status will be undertaken by the HPPMC, which may result in removal from HPP
- a review of the personal coach, athletes and HP Coach Relationship will also be taken into consideration

12 monthly;

- as above with a review of reasons to continue and with the same conditions on overall performance
- including a review of the next 12 months plan
- *For Team Selection:* where discretion is to be used then the matter will be decided in favour of the athlete with the best current international performances. The selection criteria will nominate which process will be used, bearing in mind our stated goal is to medal.

FAQs

Question:

I have shot the MQS so am I in the team to?

Answer:

Not necessarily, positions will be filled first from the various HP Squads depending on those athletes programs. A MQS is the minimum prerequisite. If space is available and you meet all the requirements you may be offered a self funding position.

Question:

How do I get international experience if WALES will not send me to a International match?

Answer:

The best option for those seeking entry/selection is to go to the various GBR competitions, National Championships or other sponsored shoots and build their ranking.

Question:

Clearly, last year there was discontent over the scores the High Performance Committee set for international travel, have you lowered them?

Answer:

You are right, there certainly was and probably is still some discontentment, however the board supported the High Performance Committee and clearly the results from the World Cups show they (the scores) are on the mark. In fact the scores in the rifle program have risen significantly. I must also point out that the score is only a pre-requisite and shooting that does not necessarily guarantee a place on a Wales Team.

Question:

Is there is any requirement for shooters to attend the international circuit such as in other sports prior to being selected for International matches, Championships?

Answer:

We strongly recommend that those aspiring to reach the top should attend the shooting circuit which has many world class competitions open to all. An athlete should be doing their "apprenticeship" if you like on the circuit, however this is always a case of trying to balance the costs against performances and it is here that association support is required to assist those aspiring to become Olympians.

Question:

We keep referring to shooters as athletes, but surely this is a contradiction, most of the time they are standing still, there does not appear to be much physical effort required, like other sports.

Answer:

There has been a tendency for people and shooters not to understand the relevance of being fit, obviously they do not need to be built like swimmers or runners, but a degree of both physical and strong aerobic fitness will directly enhance the quality of preparation for successful medal performance. Evidence clearly points to a fit person being able to cope with the stress of competition far better than an unfit person. We have introduced more sports science and medicine into the program in recognition of the need to improve performance and change attitudes within the sport, developing a stronger work ethic